



**ATLANTA
REVIEW**

POLAND

International Section Edited by
Cecilia Woloch

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ATLANTA REVIEW

at the Georgia Institute of Technology

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WELCOME

Not so long ago, we had yet another public pronouncement about poetry being dead. The news of its demise travels faster in the world of social media. This argument seems to resurface every few years, and I have learned to meet the news without anger. Instead, I feel pity for those who think this because it is so clearly false—that is, if one takes a moment to look beyond the necessarily narrow definitions that would lead to such a conclusion. If poetry were dead, then there would be no reason to fear it—as so many people do. Poets continue to legislate the world, unacknowledged though they be.

Each spring we feature poetry from living poets from some other part of the world. Our guest editors spend months (or years) working on these projects: gathering works, translating, or arranging for translations, sequencing the poems, and writing their introductions. While we often have several guest editors working at a time, our policy has always been to publish the work on a first-completed, first-submitted basis. Last year, our Taiwanese editor narrowly beat this year's editor, Cecilia Woloch to line. A year into the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it seems as if the timing couldn't have been better. Woloch has spent years visiting Poland, with a special interest in the lands near the lower Carpathians—the homeland of her ancestors. To find herself so near the Ukrainian border during this period has given her work heightened purpose. As she explains in her introduction,

Perhaps the end of this war, when it comes, will be the end of the story I've been working for more than twenty years to tell. The response of the Polish people to this war, their solidarity with and generosity toward the people of Ukraine, the efforts of every individual I know in Rzeszów to help the women and children who've fled the violence in Ukraine, gives me hope that even our darkest and bloodiest histories might be healed. I'm romantic enough to believe that this is possible, and that telling our stories, our truths about ourselves, however complex, matters, that language matters, and poetry, that transcendence is possible, and transformation.

So, yes, poetry matters. And we welcome the poetry from Poland precisely because sharing across borders is the only hope we have for

understanding others. Polish poets, like poets in many parts of the world, have risked oppression, and even their lives, to offer others a glimpse into their cultures. As you read these poems, contemplate the sacrifice the writers and editors made to share them with us. As for those of us at Atlanta Review, we are yet again in awe.

We are equally pleased to bring you poems from our general submissions, where this year there are several poems with international connections, including the poem “The Immigrant’s Forgotten Apple” by Glen A. Mazis, which is a haunting work about what is lost over generations, and “Sher Darwaza, Kabul, 1962” by Rosalind Pace, that offers this:

When two friends say goodbye in Afghanistan
they say “Menda ne bashen.” “Zenda bashen.”

Every day I am saying this by heart.

But I am not saying goodbye.
I am saying a prayer.

May you not be tired. May you be alive.

And so, this is my wish for all of us: to not be tired, and to be alive—attentively and compassionately alive.

As always, much love to each of you,

Karen

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Broken Triptych with Melting Ice Cream

This was the year I misplaced happiness
In the sound of something breaking

The recipe only needed three ingredients
in some drawer, I don't know, what a mess

just out of sight
a cheap can of sweetened condensed milk

maybe it slipped into that crack behind the stove
there, where the once whole stood

with a cup of heavy cream & a tblsp of vanilla, seriously
mixed up in funeral bills I can't pay

couldn't I have tried to stop it
no eggs to separate

still, the power went out & there's
the fall from Old English "being" to "thing"

they call it comfort food
that elegy I plan to write

the gun doesn't make sense
they say to fold the ingredients carefully

could I have given it to someone to hold onto
dying nights concealed & carried

handle it gently
buried in the ever-growing file of probate court papers

all that time I consumed almost living
it melts quickly in sunlight

wherever you've gone
all those feathers drifting down

please tell me
did I give it to you

rose auslander

Poem That Wants to Be a Chinese Painting

gray branches
of the ancient apple
gnarled, unleafed,

each one bent
by glowing crimson globes
that tug

the limbs
toward heavy-headed
golden grass

Rebecca Baggett

In France, Even the Dandelions,

les pissenlits, are a fair surprise.

I watched as tendrils thin as wire
spiked from the shaggy lawn.

Even as first buds fattened
and uncurled, I suspected nothing.
Then this morning! Petite faces

opened in unison, glowing centers,
petals of gold, some wild and surging
marriage of marigold and daisy,

inches tall to two gangly feet.
Hardly discernable as the nemesis
that brings me to my knees each spring.

I knew then what I was seeing.
These lovely tenacious flowers,
tough, in full force, all around me.

Gaylord Brewer

Prayer to the Wind, the Smoke, and the Stars (Łódź Ghetto)

All around us are ghosts. Here and there they trudge
not knowing they are dead. Wind swirls around their coats
hung loosely over bones more visible by the day,

candle smoke carrying them to a time when they could worship
openly. Rabbis ask God, *what harm would it do, to lift us
from this existence?* All around us are ghosts,

and we walk though them, and we say to each other
*how is it with you this morning? Did you get an extra ration
of bread and soup? That cough of yours, is it any worse?*

*and did you hear about the poor schlepper who tried
to enter the ghetto—can you imagine! This must be paradise!*
we say, as we walk into snow that fingers our holey coats,

holding our identification tight against our skin. Upon waking
a state of being entered my soul, the stars shone above the rooftops
and factory smoke. We close our eyes to see those stars.

If we poured ourselves out, what would be left to count? Our bones
held up in the stiff wind? When we were children we ate well,
we were loved, still had some family left to love us. Someday,

we tell ourselves and each other, we will find the moon
in a sky not coughing, count the stars become fatter
on those souls who've given in to the wind. What surrounds us

but the future, changing faster than we can trudge
toward faceless factories, saying follow me, your face to the wind,
and I will breathe into you and hold you up.

Ronda Pizsk Broatch

Somewhere, You Are Walking in the Vienna Woods

I haven't given up finding you. Meanwhile my cats
curl into the velvet crevice of a doll's bed.

I still believe in the happiness of hummingbirds,
how tulips fold into themselves for the night
until they can't anymore,

until they've opened one too many times,
petals cupping rainwater beneath naked stems.

As a child I fingered my family's wedding rings,
gold fillings, sometimes with the tooth still intact.
Coral earrings, enamel pendant adorned

with blue birds, the words *Andenken an Mariazell*
engraved on the other side. Oval photographs, faces

of the dead almost severe, enveloped in black paper,
the old German script penciled on the back.
My heart was quiet in those days. Once

I thought I could fly. Once, I carried what I loved
in a small wooden box and slept with it. My dreams

filled with feathers, with apple trees.
Those who loved me best gave me bits of wood,
scraps of yarn, carried my stones, my sticks,

and when I lost my sweater, another one
was knitted for me. In moonlight the old stories

smell like honeysuckle. When you died,
the apples still clung to the trees. Sometimes the stars
sing in German. And the delicate mechanism

that makes the robin scurry and stop, scurry, and stop,
over the lawn, pulling up the worm, is its own parable.

Once, as Juliet's mother, I wore your aunt's wedding dress,
so tight my thin twelve-year-old body barely fit within
the whale-bone stays.

I wondered at the bride, so small, so slender
she almost disappears before her life can go on.

Ronda Pizsk Broatch

Whistle and Moan

You are no longer the four-hooved archer
with spiked tail and hair of fire
but a snake-bearer no one wants to claim,
the one not picked for the game.

The sky is a lie but the moon is true,
at least half of it
revealing the sun's dark secrets
and the bright places we like to land.

Truth is

we all came through the mother portal,
urged by a rising father. We grow,
breathe, falter and flail, blow wind across
the bottle mouth, through the poem

that whistles and moans. Things gather
each day in you, the children you never had,
the pets and friends you've lost.
The universe listens amid the noise.

Amid the noise, you whisper your song.

Brian Builta

Selkie

I.

He thinks of me
as a member of the species
phoca vitulina. I know
because I watch him
from the waves,
see him seeing me,
a slick head, whiskers,
a flick of flipper or tail,
a sweet detail of seaside
scenery, a note in a list
of animals seen.

II.

I did not know that the skinning
would involve a knife, I thought

it would be a gentle peeling
back of seal-fur from woman-flesh

but she gave me the blade, handle first,
said, please undress me.

III.

He thinks of me now
as a woman, has forgotten
that I prefer my food
still wriggling. Give me
rockfish clams and mackerel,
salmon squid and crabs!
I wish to scrape my teeth
on cod scales, feel my prey
perishing in my throat!

IV.

I hid the seal-skin where I thought
she'd never find it, hoped

she would prefer legs to fins,
children to pups, and above all

my caresses to the rough embrace
beneath the waves.

V.

He does not understand
That I will only stay
on land for breeding season.
These racing pulses
are for the surface.
I will slow my heart
back down
for the deep dive.

Rachel Aviva Burns

The Shade of Your Tree

(for Amber)

There are flowers growing next to your gravesite.
A tiny, delicate cluster, reddish-orange,
growing up out of hard, rocky soil.
And a very small tree, no more than
three feet tall, sits right above you,
its black-brown trunk and branches
artfully gnarled like the trees
in the Chinese landscape painting
that hung in the room that you slept in.
I bring it water each time I visit.

But the best thing, the part you would love,
is the patch of soft earth between the
tree and the flat smooth rock that serves
as your headstone. That little patch of earth
is the perfect size for a small desert animal,
perhaps a rabbit, to make its bed.
I imagine it happening, and I smile.
A furry brown cottontail, curling up
under the shade of your tree,
finding refuge from the hot summer sun.

Johnny Cordova

Dialogue

I cannot say it would be different this time,
that the yearning of clouds to be rain will fail,
the singed leaves will float up to meet the sky
as if better things were happening there,
where we cannot see threads plundered from the day,
hours uncoiling.

The stars continue to burn, explode
into darkness,
the Vallam Kali unwinds again, snake-boats
race against the river's ripples,
on the shore, ankle-deep in mud and lotus,
each side cheers on its champions.

Love, you have gone where I cannot follow,
I listen to the drip of water on stone.

Shaheen Dil

Fox

From my kitchen window one frigid February morning, I spot a red fox sprawled on the lawn industriously grooming his paws the way my cat does (I say *his* only because of that robust, cocksure machismo that smacks of alpha male)—then extending his front legs like a cat poised between hoisting itself up on all fours or squatting like the Sphinx of Giza, but this unflappable denizen of our nearby wood merely proceeds to stretch the length of his body out on the grass like a redemptive yawn, toes to tail tip, before rolling onto his back—white bib and belly gleaming in the bright sunlight—and turns over again, pleasuring himself in the seclusion of a rear yard removed from neighbors pulling out of driveways or walking their dogs—utterly at ease and apparently well insulated against the cold, taking the air after a pre-dawn breakfast, I surmise—altogether content to linger before strolling off into a thicket of shrubs, disappearing within his realm of stealth and shadow.

Linda M. Fischer

The Oyster Bar at the Old D.H. Holmes Restaurant in the French Quarter

It had the feeling of a bar maid from
a Renoir Painting, old mahogany and glass,
high ceilings and thousands
of liquor bottles before a huge silver mirror.
The bar counter was a long snake of dark mahogany.
This is where I met Mother for a lunch one weekend
after I had run away to New Orleans.

She came down from Alabama on the train and
stayed at The Marriot Hotel on Royal Street.
We sat near a window at a small table
looking out onto the street trying to make
conversation. The waiter with his short, pearl-handled
knife opened the oysters. He served us fresh oysters
from the bar.

We could see ourselves reflected
in the beveled mirror, sitting on bentwood Thonet
chairs whose curves recalled a Degas woman stepping
into her bath.

Mother, slight, thin, nervous, concerned that everyone
was looking at her, drank her black coffee slowly, and we said little.
("A daughter whom we have to help out.")

A heavy sadness lay between us as blue as the wisteria
in our yard -- my father's coldness and brother's cruelty,
Mother's guilt over my sickness.

And hours were passing,
carrying us farther and farther apart.
We would live our separate lives,
without knowing one another.

Margaret Guilbert

Sappho, Summoned

“Now you are a broken seal: / A scarlet stain upon the earth.”
—*Sappho’s Fragment 105(c) tr. Anita George*

The resplendent blue of the friezes and columns
has bleached away. I rise reluctantly to the circling
of sparrows.

Passing through the walls of a holy city,
I see smoke. Through shrine after shrine,
centuries departed

from Mount Olympus or the Corycian Cave,
a holy man supplicates the heavens.

He has no beard.

Before him, a fiery pillar is fed odes
to garlanded girls and the goddess who steps
with foam-cooled heels.

I cannot return to sleep, seeing the preservation
of Greek kings and scripture from the bonfire.

It is my ink

which makes the fire rise, red as the poinsettias
blooming in these holy walls,
cardinal red

like the hair of a girl I once knew.

Into the coals they drop what I wrote to her,
slip after slip consumed.

Audrey Hall

Near Palm Springs, Thinking of Dylan Thomas

The force that twists the old sea floor
up through this basalt
folds my ages upon themselves,
pressing memory's writhings
into unrecognizable forms.

When you walk out onto the desert you see shoes,
shell casings, empty wallets, hair brushes,
guttled appliances, mutilated furniture,
drifts of broken glass, once jagged and cruel,
now polished into gentle pebbles.
Remnants of luxury and violence and revelry,
their significance already eroded by sun and run off,
at the fault's next burlesque left step and squeeze up,
these signs will be reassigned,
abstracted and inverted
in continuous counterpoint
with conglomerate beds far below.

A slow fugue of subsidence and uplift
sings in this desert and in my old face—
the wisp of feather clinging
to a high heel among the ocotillo
tells how the signs by which I know myself
are subducted into new meanings.

Susan Harvey

Pip in the pasture

*“... the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects,
that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal
orbs.”*

—*Moby Dick* XCIII

Wordless, heartless,
timeless joyousness
comes to some in silence,
but for me it was enfolded
in the abominable roar of a tractor
on one of those ever-changing
spring days. Let me tell you.

The tractor lumbers like a large animal
through stands of thistle high as your head,
but it also seems to be bounding
over waves of grass like a boat.
After the first bone-jouncing hour
you are time-numbed. Clouds spill
over the hills beyond your field,
then gold light fills your eyes,
then rain drums on your hat. The colors
of the grasses change with the changes
of light, so it could be that
many days have passed.

You can't tell if you are rolling slowly
or racing along. When you turn at the end
of a row it seems that the landscape
may be slowly swirling while you are still.

Before the prow of the tractor,
multitudes of tiny insects swarm up
from the firmament of the grass—
fundamental elements of life
more felt than visible (you will discover
red welts on your belly, arms and throat tonight).

You look up and back,
and there following above your wake
are barn swallows and kingbirds
and meadow larks and blackbirds and a raven,
all exulting over the feast you have
aroused from the grass.
For a moment you still know
the names of the birds,
then words are lost to you,
but you don't need them anymore
because the birds are words,
they are their own names.

Who can tell it? Who can tell
what the grasses and the birds
and the tractor and the insects
and I were part of,
and the sky.

Susan Harvey

The Second Waltz

Well the brutal sunlight skids down
and tumbles on the cracked concrete road
as a shred of the sky falls cluttered
between buildings.
The laterite facades burn like regret.
It's a day like this that makes me want to break
out of my body and wade
into the blue of an unreachable sea.
See the laundry fluttering
from the window like impatient handwaves;
See the heat vomiting
technicolor onto the fabric and cicadas
pitching broken notes from beneath.
What a terrible day I think
and sink into the sofa as the invasive
smoke's rubbing nicotine into my breath.
The world could just as well end like this,
not with a bang, nor with a whimper,
not in fire, nor in ice (I suppose!)
If not the thin melody of a vinyl record
edges through to me
like schooners charting a new territory.
Suddenly you open the door,
your face earnest like the sun breaking red,
"Care to dance?"

Aiden Heung

When You Appear This Time

it's on a cliff above the sea
June morning, newly blooming sea roses
magenta and white petals filling the air
with their sharp tang
wind blowing hard enough to send
white spray up against the rocks

and you're not dead, you're laughing
not a snicker either or a giggle
you throw your head back when you see me
and laugh so completely, I have to join in
though all I really want to do is cry
hard enough to bring you back

Joanne Holdridge

Possum

Lunch was a turkey sandwich with mustard sunlight from
backyard lit windows. Turning away, chewing a last
bite, my vision's edge caught

a
lash
 of
 skeletal
 tail
 attached
 to a lumbering mass as odd
 as cottage cheese, an improbable
waddle couching

 two curl,
 tail young,

treble clefs on measures of
fur, a toothed snout adagio
sounding her ballad forward,
persuading disbelief, pondering
her destination toward my
suspicious dread to do what
she's been plotting all
along: depositing her
andante where it doesn't
belong to take up
a slow residence
and play dead
un dernea th
 my hard
 earned
 deck

Alexander Komives

Trumpet Sounds

In my old age, wearing my
floppy hat to meet the sun
for another moment to walk to
the mailbox, sip an espresso at the café
 o-la-la! life! I buy a bag of sumo oranges
 a farewell gift for my friend from Seoul
 for who knows if I ever see him again?

I take the longer route home
through the park over
unpaved trails for pull ups and stretches
where dogs bark behind the bungalows called
Barcelona and the latter-day saints
erected a temple and Saint Gabriel sounds his
trumpet so soon I reach the intersection
where I decide which way to go
on Palmilla Drive, under the golden air, the tap-tap of
my walking sticks like a metronome to music
turning right toward the
pillars holding up the canyon for
another day of luck,
sidestepping the snails

Georgia San Li

Origins

I listen to the conch shell, holding it
to my ear in the hope of finding home.

Long ago, in the sea, we were no more than molecules.
Now bombs, now missiles. Now sacred sanctuary gone.

Forgotten amber of prehistoric thought.
Maybe life was always violent and unforgiving.

The drip of water in cave walls, the fire burning inside.
Men and women with animal masks dancing, shadows dancing

stretching out before the fire.
Along the beach, waves move against the shore.

The seashells spread out in multitudes
a kind of heaven in the sand.

The conch shell's washed ashore
pointed towards the night in prayer.

Miles Liss

Monument Valley

Tse Bii' Ndzisgaii

On a cream colored horse named Halo
I ride among
sandstone mountain stubs
shaped by the
windsweep of eons.

When we crest
into broad view we shudder
—both of us—
as long ago forever
melds with the shift of now.
He has walked these red hills
just hundreds of years
yet he knows the land
as only a horse can.

My guide is a shy young Navajo
and while we make our way
around russet rock columns
we shadow the story of time.
Layer on layer stand ready to tell it
but he is a boy
and I am in awe
so we are unable to listen.
Halo, of course, could interpret
but when you have seen
what Halo has seen
it is not always easy
to translate.

After I have left them
and dusk turns to star night

Halo will settle into his makeshift pen
and watch over the camper where
the boy and his dad
make their home.

When the weather grows cold
they will make another
while the horse keeps their secrets
and his own.
For Halo speaks only in Snowfall—
though he sometimes is heard speaking Rain.

Ellen Malphrus

The Immigrant's Forgotten Apple

My mother never asked her parents where
their home had been before they fled,
raggedy array of small children staring
from the deck of the booming freighter
at the docks lined with tired officers
who would chop the family name in half,
too much effort to write every syllable.

My mother never asked her own mother
about life in that small Ukrainian village,
if the fear of seeing her children slain
by Cossacks riding by swinging swords
helped her mother hold back her tears
seeing them hold hands marching off
knowing they at least they would live
without listening in bed for the hooves.

My mother never asked if her mother's
father walked for days among the apple trees
pulling down a Doneshta for one last bite
kicking the dirt, watching the clouds run
in blackened groups across the fading sky
inhaling with a great tug on his lungs
the fresh scent of fruit in his own orchard
now outlawed for Jews by the Czar.

My mother never asked her mother if
she was terrified, even though she knew
the story, arranged marriage by letter,
from uncle to father, to bring her down
from the little town in the wilderness,
the scrap business lean, among too many
trees, no real factories, old sheds, pots,
to go to the dingy streets of Philadelphia.

My mother never even asked the name
of the small hamlet in the Ukraine
since her mother stood at the ironing

board whipping her hand back and forth
furiously, yelling at her husband to stop
listening to the ballgame and clean
the store, sell more ice cream and cigars,
my mother knew it was wrong to ask.

My mother never asked her mother why
it was wrong to ask for the stories
about old times most kids see in dreams
at night when quietly with shuffling feet
older generations climb down from past
places to tell tales that seep into hearts,
except she knew without asking how
it was naked swords who cut these ties.

My mother never asked her mother why
she believed peppermint oil in a glass
taken each evening would stifle bellowing
belches that echoed through the hallway
coming from a pain deep in the belly
of something swallowed generations ago
indigestible and sticking below the ribs
like kicks from a soldier to get out.

After my grandmother's heart attack,
I sat bedside with her in the hospital,
home from college, my family at work,
asking questions about eight kids
on a lower deck of a freighter, raising themselves
in a big city, some sent to an orphanage
after saying goodbye to rows of apple trees
in a Ukrainian village whose name she remembered.

Glen A. Mazis

A Drive with My Mother

So much of my mother is recalled
by a rusted marquee in upstate New York,
where, sixty years ago, bright lights promised a double feature—
“Sleepy Hollow” and “Wind in the Willows”—
to a pre-TV, movie-loving mom.

And so my brother and I

first tasted fear as we huddled against the pellets of hail,
the wind-whipped fury of an unexpected storm,
while our '38 Chevy navigated the shoals of Route 22,
a slippery, unplowed lane narrowed by drifting snow
until—magically—we were safe, inside the theater,
and memories of that blinding blizzard
melted into

talking toads and headless horsemen.

And yet, so many years later,

I never drive Route 22

without remembering wipers, ice-clogged and useless,
my brother's open window, the only eye in the storm,
and my mother's hands,

clenched, white on the wheel.

Carol Milkuhn

Elegy, With What Little Remains

I've been writing my father's obituary since fifteen. To kill him, maybe, or save myself some pain. Maybe it's a way of coping,

starting early. Still, it's hard for a son to put his father in the ground prematurely, have him burned,

reduced to ash and a few words—a date of birth, a handful of places he worked, and who survives;

much harder for a father to write one for a son. They gave him six months, my grandpa, to write my uncle's.

I imagine he waited, took his time, prayed, in what little faith remained, to a protestant god on whom

he'd soon give up. I imagine my father, twelve, at home with the babysitter, brother dying

down the road. My father still lives, but I'm afraid each time I press and flatten him on paper, he fades a bit.

Some details should stay between kin—how it was at the end, how his skin sagged in the sleeves of his letterman jacket,

the name of the cancer that killed him, that I'm afraid will kill me too. That's it. That's all you get. He lived, and then he didn't.

Weston Morrow

Late Summer 2020

A mile down the road there's
a rabid raccoon. At night
an owl howls in the thin woods.
There is the clucking sound of wild
turkeys during cocktail hour.

I pull a caterpillar from the pool
turning it right-side up on the concrete.
Its yellow eyes, the color of deli mustard,
flash from its monochromatic body.
Deer dung on the grass by the pool.

Poisoned by nerve gas in his tea
Navalny lies in the Charite hospital
while throngs of people circle the squares
in Belarus. Putin and his police
are ready to pounce. The demonstrators
are fearless—perhaps
from their desperation,
but also, from their desires.

Here, somewhere in America,
another policeman shoots
another unarmed Black man.
Indefensible. Unjust,
inconceivable except...

Another day has passed.
Is it Tuesday or Wednesday?
Only another hour of rage
in a summer of rage.

Jo-Ann Mort

The Stroke

(Variation on a theme by Wallace Stevens, for Grandma)

At dusk, in the car, potholes and thistle skeletons
 Transform in the gloam, like pine trees
 Transform on a cow gutted hill.

The Pocono's birch bones accelerate west.
I remember her mottled skin, how her eyes
Enlarged in proportion
As she dwindled from chopped Jello and canned pears.

Thistle-eyed, insistent,
She could not speak,
But the birches cast their stripped stems
Toward abandoned coal mine shafts,
Transformed in the crepuscular light.
The spikes in her eyes leveled the room,
As she fidgeted with her wheelchair
And knocked her knee, smiling,
"I'll do it myself" and almost beat against the pane
To the birch's nicked trunks;
 It was action against diminishment.

She transformed in the bleached room,
 Transformed as the snow
 Transformed the road,

Transformed as her hand gripped her dinner tray,
 Transformed her body's pen,
Boisterous as the birches
 Flooded with her hands' plea.

Or was it the mine shafts' plea?

Out the dashboard, I watch how thistles
 pull themselves against low mists
 like she transformed in the room.

I watch how Sacramento's lights gather from the east,

Build like the red bloom in her eyes.

And I remember the spikes,

stripped stems lashing empty shafts.

Gabrielle Myers

Ekphrasis on the Cover of *Bitter Drink, Bitter Moon*

To get the sun out of the moon, first call the crows. They can
wait in the trees, but you will need their beaks. Next, sink
the moon halfway into the sea while its shadow watches

from the sky, remembers its power over the tides. Now, call
the birds down from the pines. Have them peck the thinnest
surface, the deepest craters until light tumbles into the yellow

sky. Then we wait. Then we watch, us and the crows, as the sun
stretches its arms and slips the moon off like an old sweater.
The water knows its fire, but does not steam. It holds

the ashes of the fishes like a tincture. Drink—something
charred on our tongues. Breathe—something bright
to scorch the darkness living in our lungs.

John A. Nieves

Pantoum b/w Post-Dirge (7" Series #4)

If you could sleep against my shoulder, this dirt
would have no home on our bones, no occasion
for its darkness to seal us up as a reminder that I
was meant to keep your tiny eyes in the light. O, you

would have no home. On our bones, no occasion
would coax the flesh away. I could see and feel that blush
was meant to keep. Your tiny eyes in the light O, you
could yawn the sunlight off your face knowing it

would. Coax the flesh away. I could see, could feel that blush
of life shed between you and your shadow and the heat
could yawn. The sunlight of your face knowing it
might not ever see us again. That heat made the shiver

of life shed. Between you and your shadow, the heat
of you could sleep against my shoulder, this dirt
might not ever see us. Again, the heat made us shiver
for its darkness to seal us up as a reminder that died.

John A. Nieves

For Horse Girls

I know how to make bread. On Fridays I mix the yeast,
water, eggs, oil, salt. I add the flour, cup by cup.
No need to measure. When I braided the dough,
I think of horse girls

like this woman, at the top of a hill,
how her dog's auburn tresses cascade over my pup's wiry black fur.
I like how she faces me: arms down, unguarded.
She says she learned to braid on a horse.

I nod like I know. *Horse girls know how to braid.*
When I was young, my hair made my mother crazy.
She called it rat's nest and tried to break its spirit. But I did not want
to be broken.
So I gave my one beauty to a boy with clippers.
No guard, I said.

My grandmother braided my mother's hair so tight
she could not close her eyes. Little boys on the school bus behind her
pulled her blonde hair. My uncle put June bugs in her plaits to watch
them writhe.
They would tear off their own legs to break free.

When I was bald, my shaved head whispered something naughty
to the man in Army fatigues behind me at the 24-hour diner.
Something about rules and gender and skin—a provocation.
I did not know this man, or why my hair
made him glide like a green dragonfly over
plates and coffee mugs and sugar packets,
landing on the beautiful boy beside me

he called *Faggot*. My friend was okay—he only broke a nail.
The soldier scuttled off into the dark Texas night,
limping in circles like a crippled June bug in the porchlight.

I know how to make bread. On Fridays I beat the dough,
and think of my grandmother. She baked when she was angry.
She baked every Saturday. When I braid the dough,

I think of horse girls, racing their anger over hillocks and streams,
their braids flying
like spears.

Sarah Orman

Sher Darwaza, Kabul, 1962

Why should I tell you about this?

I stand in front of years of terrible war,
remind you of the Afghan proverb:
*when you shake a man's hand and say hello,
you should remember him always.*

Cring cring, my bicycle bell
scattered a small herd of goats.
A boy, also small, chased them
with a stick. Maybe his girlcousin
was a student of mine. "Is this a book?"
"Yes, it is. No, it isn't."

Every day I pedaled and pedaled
into the wind, going and coming,
book bag strapped to my back,
early morning haze tinged with blue,
late afternoon sun turning the air golden.

Why should my memory still breathe

this dust, dry earth, dust of roses. dust
of rotting fruit in the ditches, dust
of falling stars, dust in wavering notes
of songs, acrid smoke from charcoal fires,
lamb kebobs and burning fat, sweet smoke
from tandoors all over the city baking naan.

In the news today a young woman
carries her dead sister from the rubble
of a school. What will she do
with her own life now. She says, "I will
continue the work of my sister. We will
not stop. They cannot stop us. This is
what we do."

Every day I pedaled through
the ancient pass called Sher Darwaza
where the cannon fired at noon
and the ruins of Babur's beloved garden
still existed on the fourteenth terrace.
Every day, going and coming into the wind.

When two friends say goodbye in Afghanistan
they say "Menda ne bashen." "Zenda bashen."

Every day I am saying this by heart.

But I am not saying goodbye.
I am saying a prayer.

May you not be tired. May you be alive.

Rosalind Pace

Blue

The April sun slants
across the bay and turns
the Pamet River a deeper
color than turquoise, the color
mountain people glaze

their bowls with, half a world
away. They'd never seen
the sea, yet could invent
this deep-sea-blue, extracted
from the ishkar plant,

going back four hundred
years, this skill passed down
to many sons and daughters,
enshallah. I watch
the evening and the tide.

Now women in Istalif
a few kilometers from Kabul
dress in black, and walk
through rubble and sweet
smoke from dung fires, wailing.

Half a world away
I want to echo the tern's
cry, or be the empty
space in the arc a gull
makes on the updraft.

I am dressed in black
although I'm not in mourning,
and yet some part of me
has gone, some urge to sing.
The water's now a deeper

blue, then a silver sheen,
then dark. I cannot speak

about my small complaints.
No bombs or land mines here.
I'm still alive. So are you.

Rosalind Pace

The Physics of Fleeting

The lemon tree fills the kitchen
with the fragrance of dream,
if one is fortunate enough
to have a kitchen,

indiscriminate blossoms
a century ago outside
the dirt floor shack
if one was fortunate enough

to have a dirt floor shack,
shared with chickens
and a goat, a pair
of shared shoes by the door

which is not a door
but a blanket
if one was fortunate enough
to have a blanket

to hang on the jamb by day
for shade and nights drift
on the indiscriminate
fragrance of straw dreams.

The sunflowers lean east
before dawn, following
the sun before it rises, and
when it arcs behind the clouds,

finches will soon fly out
of the sun bringing yellow
when the purple cosmos bloom
but for now remain there,

two cardinals, red hearts
sitting under the blue spruce,

where I put the iron lasts
that formed those shoes

that each boy slipped on
then off handing to his brother
waiting for the flash,
cracked photos black and white

gray and brown,
aliens listing in steerage
if one was fortunate enough
to huddle in a dank hull

then smuggle their condition
past the inspector's light,
pupils tight against that small sun,
hot lemon seed in a fist pocket.

The beach roses scent the tide,
rise and fall against the bright
thin sky scenting the fog
climbing the granite wall

at Grindstone Point,
if one is fortunate enough
to summer here, or perhaps
stumble upon to gaze

out to Mark Island Light
and think of one's own lost
summers, wistful wild
roses along the fence

bordering one life from
the next, the way the
neighbor's still climb
the white lattice someone

painted every other year,
if one is fortunate enough

to make painting
the rose lattice priority,

until the day it is not,
and they are carried away,
the Realtor showing the house
flanked by forlorn roses,

that know not everyone
has the clarity of mind
wild or not to tend roses,
and day by smaller day

fragrance becomes memory,
stray roots crossing
under the grass
until one day a shoot,

if one is fortunate enough
to have a wild rose come up
from behind,
and turn its wild eye to you.

A half-dozen colored balloons
billow toward the clouds
above the cemetery
on Father's Day,

a small group looking up,
if one is fortunate enough
to have a small group
miss you enough

to park three cars
alongside your grave
and release your soul again
in case it did not

fly up in color on its own,
did not free itself

from black and white,
gray and brown

to ride the blossoms
of colored balloons,
a woman tying back her hair,
then with a palm to her cheek

watching them rise,
indiscriminate
fragrance, next to you
on a bus, on a train

behind you in a checkout lane,
if one is fortunate enough
to have fragrance pull you
into the here, and now.

R.A. Pavoldi

Small Primer on Loneliness

You spend a lot of time waiting, develop skills in the art
of talking to yourself. You spend too long listening

to the wind lispings in the trees. You go places alone,
searching the eyes of those gathered with others,

the lone crow exiled
at the end of a branch.

No one looks back at you, standing out
with your scarlet lipstick and that mood

ring on your finger, the one that says you're blue.
In front of the cafe, you walk in the wake of a

strange woman's perfume. You're chasing
some music no one else can hear, pining

for a someday when someone will. Without
the architecture of people, the shapes

of days unform themselves. And nights have a way
of expanding the face of the clock.

You go to the wall and cross off each box
on the calendar, a prisoner grinding it out to the end

of the sentence. You climb the silence of the hours
like an alcoholic, waiting until 5 o'clock each day

before you indulge in marking the "X."
Later in bed, you brush the hair from your face,

wishing it was someone else's gentle gesture.
Each night you wish mornings would stop

greeting you and your hereditary sadness. Your skin
has a hunger for touch that could devour your heart.

You think of your late aunt, all those nights she'd sit
alone at the top of the basement stairs and weep

into her hands, as overwhelmed by loneliness as
the number of blue checks on her gingham skirt.

Anne Rankin

Between Bites

This world isn't gentle.

Can you hear the startled, dying murmur?

The soulful coo of a mourning dove
 beating wings against your chest,
 feathers floating your rib cage.

Loneliness clutching telephone wires.

Storm bait waiting for a signal fire.

My anxiety curdled in a bird's breast.

Two turtle doves minus one is love grieving.

I'm not unkind. There's a bestiary of sorrow
 belonging leaves in my mouth. A toothless
 sucking on gummed expectations.

As the day grows old, hope grows silent on a wire
 outside my house with the windows
 wide open.

A milky warm November in New York.

Nothing is seasonal this year
 besides the day's dying
 licks of flame burning the horizon.

The wind picks up as night descends,
 stirring and rattling leaves.

A crisp serenade pulling skin taunt.

Oh, but that autumn moon
 glimpsed between branches;
 Her rippled reflection as if all the dark sky
 were a lake of drowned cares.

Did the young opossum witness her murky swim
 before falling into the mostly empty trash can.

There's no mourning dove in this morning;
 Dragging a can bouncing, jostling across the yard
 toward the back fence woods.

 Screeching little beastly squealing in protest.

Hush, you sea of noisy, I whisper,
 tilting the trash can on its side.

Night will find the opossum gone before the rain.

This world still chews on pieces of me.

Kindness slips in between bites.

Sage Ravenwood

Destiny

There was no love in the beginning—
only airbrushed photos, biodata, resumés exchanged.
Weeks later, our first meeting with family hovering,
teacups of conversation, shy glances
then time alone, flights of stairs to the rooftop,
Indian night stretched over us.
I saw you then for the first time, outlined in candlelight,
graceful in sari, hands delicate in gesture
tides of discussion in the tug of moonlight.
And we divined what flowed beneath the surface—
fire, air, water, earth to fuse two worlds.

Neither of us in search of soul mate or romance
only blind trust in what was written in the stars—
marriages must be made in heaven.
We awaited our wedding day,
to be showered with rice, flowers,
blessings of Ganesha.
knotted the auspicious thread, and together
encircled the sacred fire seven times,
for eternity we now belonged to one another

The universe found a way to bring us together—
within the same sliver of rainforest, parrots
hovering over the canopy, and in what little light
escapes the leafy sieve,
I glimpsed your lime green feathers.
heard the enchanting piccolo of your voice.
Was this serendipity or destiny?
Children flutter around us.
We course together through their blood,
intertwined in their every cell,
and in living this improbability
of shared place, shared purpose, shared creation,
we have learned to love.

Sarath Reddy

Waiting on Water

I stumble down the slant to the beach, steep dunes unpeopled,
beds of seagrass unmolested, gulls crying for lovers lost

then found. The openness of sky, restless breakers, waves within waves,
knocking rocks, of which I'm now afraid—there've been many bodies

of water in my life: oceans, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, named and
anonymous ones we vacationed by, always wetness rippling

across skin, rush sliding in, play of limbs beneath, shudder of breath
released. Should I not have forsaken the shore, not married myself

to an inland plain, the view too predictable, a calm clearly visible, locked
land's measure too gentle absent the pounding tide, a beating meted out

by the moon's blinking eye? I have no theory of buoyancy but I dream
of the sea, my return, your return to me, because I have no choice—

caught in the eddy of this scene. Scarce are the dawns I don't wake
to the sighing of the drowned. Ribbons of eelgrass tangle my dreams.

Ellen Sazzman

The Barefoot Contessa*

for Dd

My wife is a modern day barefoot
contessa traipsing through our yard
shoeless in green overalls,
long gray hair tied up under a homemade
hat for sun protection and that regal look.
She tends the gardens. I watch
from my office window as goldfinch,
flickers, bluebirds and orioles
visit feeders scattered around the field.
Today she is working on two raised beds
where seedlings have found a home
they never imagined. It's a rural setting
near a small village on the Maine coast.
A tributary of the Harraseeket River
rises and falls behind our house
where herons, hawks and eagles swoop
low over the surface hunting their prey.
I have spent years living in major cities
tightly wound with people and uncertainty.
Here there is quiet and a sense of place.
The birds understand. They flop into
the birdbath, have a drink, take a dunk,
wait to play catch up with others
lined up at the feeders. In the morning
we slice orange halves for the orioles
who whistle their familiar tune.

Marc Swan

Note:

The Barefoot Contessa is a 1954 film with Ava Gardner and Humphrey Bogart.

Love Poem to a Man I Never Met

I never called you Dad or my father-in-law but only know you from photos, smile on your face, fat cigar in fat hand, and family stories: your Depression

era joke about one hobo wiping bird shit out of his eye, telling another hobo, "For the rich, birds sing!" Or the story of family sitting in the hot car,

sweat rolling down cheeks as they wondered what fantastic toy you'd buy for your son. When you came out of the store laughing, your son Norman was jubilant, waving magic

from a fly swatter as it danced in air, his swift, shining sword. I ease into the earthiness of stories that soothe with truth from the grave. Ghost tethered to memories,

life span a few lines in stone, creation now of other mouths, you're the hero of stories you couldn't imagine. You come into this room, barely parting the air

as you move, silent as one candle, your flame floating your spirit to guide and bless us. When I first heard the fly swatter story, I thought, "How mean." Years later I saw

humor and deep love, the imagination necessary to teach a child to adore a fly swatter, qualities bathing Norman's award-winning experiments.

O unknown man, if you gave me a hug
—o dead man alive in my life, I drink
your winning wine to heal my heart where
Norman and I love to serve each other.

Marilynn Talal

Chagall Landscape

Geometry of towns and shapes,
the mythical home scraped
in paint, the immigrant's loss—
that fleshy cavity never filled.

Mystic fiddlers and rabbis,
always a floating woman,
often a chicken or goat.

Bearded peddlers and pale refugees
bearing humble brown sacks
of loss. Rabbis lighting
candles in the dark.

The fiddler passive, resigned,
who plays quietly and accepts
his fate.

The animals—chicken, horse or goat,
existential anchors,
persistent optimists
impervious to loss.

Lush bouquets and breasts
bursting forth with
Byzantine exuberance
of fragrance, fullness and succor.

Always a floating woman,
often a bride aloft
in a dreamscape of roses,
and skies full of flying lovers
clasped in eternal embrace—
the antidote for loss.

Gail Tirone

Poolside Tabula Scalata

For MVT

You say shadows gather there like panthers,
famished claws unsheathed in laddered light.

No, I counter, they are plunging starlings
stitching their dark reticulations.

Whatever, you transit the evening sky,
quenching your bones under chlorine blues.

What caprice of the deep turns you to me,
suspended weaving arms unweaving

time, gone and drawn to burning webs of gold:
what refraction could show me as you are?

Eric Trump

Ship's Cat on Noah's Ark

The voyage-long dilemma:
telling apart the authorised rat—
the authoritative rat—
from all the rest
who simply slipped on board.

H M Truscott

Return Trip

The Greyhound's exhaust loitered in a cloud of humidity. Sunlight splotched sweat-stains across our shirts, brushing the trees red. You wore your frizzy hair in a tight bun. Heat lightning crackled the sky's blank canvas.

I wheezed, dragging our luggage, pointing to the church where, years ago, I was born again. We shared our lunch at Bob's Hotdogs before dipping donuts in coffee (Janie's Pastries!), and you blushed a smile I'd never seen before.

Signs directed us past Sassy-but-Sweet Boutique to the childhood home I never had, a mansion built to stand through Armageddon. We sighed. The walls slick blue, the shutters white as lies, the porch a flat yellow, the house was stuffed

with dreams I never brought to life. The door had a gold-plated knocker, a laughing sphinx posturing atop an expertly carved urn. Wind shook the great magnolia. Leaves fell onto clovers. Hydrangeas lined the picket fence.

This was not where I learned my first words, reading books like *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Clouds almost touched the roof's perfect tiles. I dropped our bags, checking my phone for texts. In the breeze, you held me close, saying, "I love it."

Jason Gordy Walker

Solipsism

Because the hour of night
can occur at different points—
the space between you and your kite
stretching the afternoon sky,
blank thoughts as you stare
at an unread newspaper,
dreaming the wildest dream
then a hint of familiarity about it
the shattered lie.

Any minute you might find
yourself surprised, waking alone
and everyone suddenly absent. Tiny whirlwinds
of doglessness where the dog once curled,
and no sound in the entire place
except your breathing. Outside, the rough cone
of the pine tree traces
an arrow, poised to leave the empty world.

Then maybe you see faces,
secret like the lost gold of noon—
a lighted house,
the cratered moon,
and photos, everywhere you look,
fading.

Mercer Warriner

Chance

First thing I want to know is who's gonna pick me up off this floor of a morning when my head is packed with kitchen sinks and how I will never see Italy. I'm still in bed, trying to punch up the lure of coffee, but even that isn't working, so I pick up my phone instead and turn on a tarot reading. *This may not apply to everyone*, the reader says to the entire *YouTube* universe, but I'll take that chance. Good as any, I'm guessing, and I'm watching her movements, shuffle and flick as cards fly out of the deck in that way the future always does no matter how nicely you ask it not to. I wait for the reader to turn over the cards, I'm expecting the 5 of empty, the 3 of need though I know there isn't such a thing. *Ah*, she says, *good news, today something is going to happen*. Then, she says to the entire *YouTube* universe *remember this might not apply to everyone*, but yes, she says, *something is going to happen*, and I can't help but wonder how she knows.

Francine Witte

Maybe is Such a Friendzone Word

Maybe can't commit,
but still wants to sleep

with you. Whispers
someday into your ear. Maybe

doesn't care that you have
places to go. No. Maybe shakes

its bobblehead yes, then no, then yes.
Maybe doesn't care that you wear hope

like a sweater, that it's never
warm enough to take it off.

That you time your eggs so you don't
miss a call. That you hide behind

a bookcase waiting for all of those
words in all of those books to jump out

and form the sentence that will finally
tell you, once and for all, that you are loved.

Francine Witte

The Hearse

A hearse is an omen crossed with a station wagon. A hearse
is an ambulance's understudy, unless an ambulance

is a hearse's. A hearse is the latest thing in limousines.
I queue behind one to order my coffee. A child would love

its rear window, the curtains bunched on both sides,
the matching valance. I can see it: below the open door, shins;

above the bumper, a muddle of puppets. I love it: a woman
could stand at that window and wash dishes, and to be

enshrined in the minds of passersby, she would not need
to be beautiful or even gentle. A hearse is a trailer park

diorama. Once hexagonal lanterns swung from carriages
mourners hired. In the drive-thru, I idle behind a Lincoln,

white, with a dollhouse wall sconce on its side. A hearse
is a pick-up truck with a fancy cap, a camper pasted

to a porch light. It carries the absence of moppets
and kitchen sinks. Its reflectors are lightning bugs' husks.

Jane Zwart

International Feature Section

Poland

Edited by

Cecilia Woloch

Introduction: Navigating the Liminal

It was poetry that brought me to Poland in the first place, poets who made the path for me to get to Poland, almost thirty years ago. In those early post-Communist years, traveling to and within the countries of the former Soviet Bloc was not for the faint of heart. But I'd wanted to get behind the Iron Curtain for as long as I could remember, even as a child. This had to do, in general, with my desire to explore whatever was shadowy or hidden from me; more particularly, it had to do with my desire to get at the source of my family's secrecy about our origins, which lay somewhere in that vast, mysterious landscape. More particularly still, this desire had to do with the secrecy around my paternal grandmother, who I'd always been told I was "just like," and who seemed to have vanished, inexplicably and utterly, years after she'd emigrated to the U.S. and some years before I was born. But who was she? I only knew that she'd come from a village in "the old country," somewhere in "the Carpathians," a country I couldn't find on any map, if it was even a country at all. I'd heard that she might have been a Gypsy, a witch, a fortune-teller, a midwife, a political rebel, a Communist. From the time I began to want to write, I knew that it was her story I wanted to tell, but I didn't know where that story began. And how to cross those borders, both the external and the internal ones? It was the act of writing, particularly poetry, that taught me to navigate the liminal, to trust my intuition, to go on my nerve and luck.

Practically, it went something like this: in the early 1990's, in London, I met a British-Pakistani poet. Zahid had contacted me because he'd read an article about the work I was doing in Los Angeles as a poet-in-the schools. Almost as soon as I sat down at a café table across from Zahid, I told him that I wanted to get to the Carpathian Mountains; I wasn't exactly sure where those mountains were, but I thought they might be, at least in part, in Poland. Zahid put me in touch with another British poet, named Sarah, who was a traveler, as I was, and a frequent visitor to Poland. She and I started corresponding by letter, and she put me in touch with people she knew in Kraków, young artists and poets who could help me there, she said. Another friend of a friend put me in touch with a professor he knew in Warsaw, who agreed to meet my train in Warszawa Centralna. It was December of 1993; I traveled from Berlin with a friend from California, a man I knew through the poetry community there, who'd agreed to accompany me. "Why not," he'd said when I phoned him, "I've never been to

Poland.” Almost no one traveled in Poland then.

When we stepped off the train in Warsaw, I felt as if I were stepping through a scrim of shadows into another time, another world. Ken and I could never have found our way out of the underground maze of Centralna Station without the professor as a guide. He led us through a series of dimly lit passageways, filthy and stinking of piss, until we emerged, at last, at street level, and I stood facing the most monstrous building I’d ever seen. The Palac Kultury, Stalin’s “gift” to the Polish people. “Our great shame,” the professor said. An enormous, soot-covered wedding cake of a structure, it seemed to loom over the city like the very face of the dictator. I was terrified. I was thrilled. I’d long imagined the world that lay behind the Iron Curtain as colorless, forbidding, bleak, and I wasn’t disappointed. The Soviet-era buildings of Warsaw looked like prisons, and the older, pre-war buildings looked like the crumbling remnants of a forgotten fairytale.

A few days later, Ken and I managed (this wasn’t easy) to buy tickets and board a train to Kraków—a city less forbidding, by far, than Warsaw, but gloomy, atmospheric, mysterious, too. It was in Kraków that I first began to sense the presence of ghosts. A man in fingerless gloves selling postcards of his photographs on Florianska Street could have been my favorite uncle. Sarah’s young poet and artist friends, emerging from ancient buildings and dark alleyways into the snow-lit market square, looked and sounded familiar to me from the moment I met them. Where did I know them from? They seemed to appear and disappear in the streets of Kraków like a kind of phantom brigade. At the end of a week, one of those young Polish artists hoisted me onto a night train to Budapest – Ken, being too tall for a couchette, had chosen a seat in a different wagon. This seemed to us at the time like the easiest or the cheapest or maybe the only way to get back to what we still thought of as “the West.” (Ken could travel by train from Budapest to Berlin; I could get an inexpensive flight from Budapest to Zurich, then travel by train to southern Germany, where I was living for a few months.)

Sometime after midnight, after Ken and I had been cut off from one another by the closed dining car between our wagons, the train passed through a range of mountains that looked wild and uninhabited. I wondered if these might be the Carpathians. I would discover, later, that we’d passed within sixty miles of the village where my grandmother was born, the very destination to which I believed the randomness of my wanderlust, and my luck, would somehow lead. There seemed no other way to get there, since I didn’t know the name

or location of this village, and I half-suspected it might no longer exist, or might never have existed at all. But I sensed that night, on the train to Budapest, that I'd come close enough, almost, to reach out and touch it.

Sarah and I eventually met in person in London, a year or two later, and we continued to keep up a furious correspondence, exchanging news of our lives and our travels—neither of us stayed more than a few months in any one place in those years; I only stayed long enough in Los Angeles to earn enough money to travel again—as well as poems. Within another year, Sarah had met and married a Polish botanist and given birth to a child. They were living in a tiny Polish village—somewhere on the outskirts of Warsaw, I thought—and she was lonely. Why didn't I come and visit?

By then I had made a second trip to Poland, to Warsaw and Kraków, in late spring, when the landscape was brighter. But Poland was still a daunting place to travel, especially for a woman who hadn't yet learned how to fit her mouth around the Polish words for “Excuse me,” or “Thank you.” I planned to be back in Europe in early 1999; I could manage the train from Berlin to Warsaw. So, I wrote to Sarah and told her that I'd come to wherever it was she was, if she'd just tell me how to get there. I was at home in Los Angeles when I got her instructions; I unfolded a map on my desk and traced one finger along the route her letter had described: I'd need to take a train from Warsaw to Krakow, and from Krakow, another train further south and east to a town called Krosno, where Sarah would meet me with a car and drive me further south to a village I couldn't see on the map – so small it wasn't marked – and just there the tip of my finger touched an area that was green, part of an arc of green on the map across which was written the word *Carpathians*. Sarah was living in the *Beskid Niski*, the lower Carpathians.

And so, in the early winter of 1999, I took a creaky, drafty Polish train from Warsaw to Krosno, a journey of more than nine hours through a landscape so empty and strange and forbidding that I thought I might vanish into it forever. I was cold and hungry all the way, and more than a little afraid; no one else on the train spoke a word of English. Darkness fell and the stations got further and further apart; some consisted of only a rusted sign and a bench. I wasn't sure how I'd know where to disembark. That I managed to get off at the right station, where I spotted Sarah jumping up and down at the end of an otherwise deserted platform, trying to keep warm or excited to see me—she told me later I was the first person they'd invited who made it all

the way—still seems to me like a miracle.

I had by then acquired a single clue to the ancestral village: an old envelope given to me by an elderly cousin of my father's – probably by mistake—with a return address somewhere in “the old country.” I had done my best to decipher the handwriting and had sent the address ahead to Sarah—via letter, of course, because she had no access to email in those days, there being no phone lines in the village where she was living. Sarah had shown this address to her husband. Almost the first thing Lukasz said to me the night we met in their kitchen, the fire in the woodstove blazing, my mattress of fir branches spread on the floor, was: “I think I might know where this village is. It's just a whim I have, but would you like to go? It's not far from here.”

It still seems like a fairytale to me, that point at which my life as a poet changed—really, my whole life. I went to my grandmother's village, or what was left of it: a few scattered houses, an old wooden church, a ribbon of asphalt road that no one traveled, an eerie emptiness. I didn't understand what I was seeing, what I wasn't seeing, why it seemed as if something were missing, why there seemed to be “no there there.” But I would return to the Carpathians again and again and, over the years, with the help of Sarah and Lukasz and the village priest and a whole constellation of friends that kept expanding as I went, I began, slowly, to piece back together the history of the place. The village of Wisłok Wielki had once been inhabited by people who called themselves Rusyns or Lemkos or nothing at all or, later, Ukrainians, as well as Gypsies and Jews; it was a political hotbed for many years and came to a tragic end in the forced removals and dislocations that followed WWII. It was part of a lost world, its history all but erased and yet interwoven with my father's family's history, in that village as well as in immigrant America, and with my grandmother's path through her times, and with her fate—murdered at fifty-three in Detroit by the third of her husbands, a man also from the village, a political accomplice or foe. The discoveries I made gave rise to poems, and the writing of poems brought discoveries that could not have been made any other way. The place is a story I'm still telling myself, twenty years on.

Poets make a world—for ourselves and for one another. I've visited Poland at least once a year since 1999, writing and doing research, giving readings and teaching workshops, and watching the country transform, like a series of time-lapse photographs, from a country of shadows, haunted by history, into the kind of modern European country it's always meant itself to be. And yet, even as the land-

scape has brightened, and the overlapping circles of people I know in Poland have expanded, the questions this landscape and these people prompt me to ask myself have only deepened: What is a country, after all? What do borders have to do with our individual and collective sense of who we are, and language, and poetry? Some years ago, I was being interviewed, after a reading, for Polish radio. The interviewer asked a question that, at first, floored me: “How does it feel to write in English when you have a Polish soul?” It took me a minute. “But my soul isn’t Polish,” I said. “My soul doesn’t have a nationality. I think no one’s soul does.” The soul is borderless, I believe, and as poets we’re always navigating the liminal, no matter where we’re writing from.

The region of southeastern Poland where the lower Carpathians lie, that borderland where my father’s mother was born, still seems to me a liminal place, a threshold between worlds—even more so now, in the late summer of 2022, with war raging just across the border in Ukraine, a war that is in some ways a continuation of all the wars that have gone before it, wars that have shaped this region of Poland and my family’s history, our sense of who we are, or are not—people from nowhere, citizens of “a fictional country,” as Vladimir Putin has proclaimed. But aren’t we all citizens of fictional countries, since all borders are human made, and therefore the product of someone’s ambition or imagination, and therefore fluid and permeable?

I don’t think anything that’s happened to me in Poland has been a coincidence. Nor do I think it’s a coincidence that my visits to Poland, growing longer and longer over the years, from weeks to months, culminated in my year as a Fulbright fellow in Rzeszów, a Polish city an hour’s drive from my grandmother’s village, less than an hour’s drive from the Ukrainian border, just as the Russian invasion of Ukraine began. Perhaps the end of this war, when it comes, will be the end of the story I’ve been working for more than twenty years to tell. The response of the Polish people to this war, their solidarity with and generosity toward the people of Ukraine, the efforts of every individual I know in Rzeszów to help the women and children who’ve fled the violence in Ukraine, gives me hope that even our darkest and bloodiest histories might be healed. I’m romantic enough to believe that this is possible, and that telling our stories, our truths about ourselves, however complex, matters, that language matters, and poetry, that transcendence is possible, and transformation.

Certainly, in Poland, poetry matters deeply. Poetry has long held an elevated place in Polish literature, and even in Polish history. So many Polish poets are heroes, having risked so much to resist op-

pression that they've become cultural icons. When Poland, as an independent nation-state, disappeared from the map—partitioned into nonexistence, between 1795 and 1918, by the Russian and Austro-Hungarian and German Empires—Polish language and culture persisted, and Polish poetry. Adam Mickiewicz, the Polish poet, dramatist, scholar, and political activist, is to this day considered a national hero—but of which nation? There are monuments to him not only in Poland, but in western Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania.

When the Polish Republic came into being, or back into being, after WWI, Polish poetry flourished, along with art and culture. The interwar period gave us the Polish-Jewish poet, Julian Tuwim, who co-founded a group of experimental poets as well as a cabaret comedy troupe wrote lyrics and satires for literary and leftist political journals, and created a body of work for children that's still much beloved in Poland. There's a sculpture of Tuwim, seated casually on a park bench, in his native Łódź today.

Zuzanna Gincburg, one of the most fiercely independent Polish poets of the interwar period, is more celebrated for her feminist poetry now than even when she was alive, although she was a darling of Polish literary circles in her time. Born in Kiev, she died in Kraków in 1944, killed by the Gestapo after more than two years spent in hiding. Today, she's revered as the daring and exotically beautiful Ginczanka, the dark-eyed Jewess whose most beloved and well-known poem insists, "Not all of me will die."

During WWII, Polish poets like Anna Swir, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Zbigniew Herbert joined the underground resistance to the Nazi occupation. Swir's work as a nurse during the Warsaw Uprising features in her poetry, along with her meditations on the female body, motherhood, and sensuality. Poet and translator Jerzy Ficowski joined the Polish Home Army as a young man, was arrested by the Nazis and detained in Pawiak prison, got out of prison before the start of the Warsaw Uprising and, when it broke out, fought in Mokotów, for which he was awarded the Polish Cross of Valour. After WWII, when Poland came under Soviet dominance, its poets—Herbert and Ficowski among them—played a central role in resisting the oppression of the Communist powers. Ficowski traveled with the Roma (Gypsy) people, making it harder for the Communist Department of Security to keep track of him; he wrote about Romani culture, introduced the Polish-Roma poet Papusza to the world, and was active in the attempt to preserve Jewish culture in post-war Poland. His narrative poem "Letter for Marc Chagall," was published in 1957; he wrote the definitive biog-

raphy of Jewish writer Bruno Schulz in 1967. In December of 1975, he signed the famous Memoriał 59 (Memorandum of 59), a letter signed by Polish intellectuals protesting post-war changes to the Polish constitution.

Even the poets who produced a large part of their work in exile kept Poland central to their poetry, and thus made it central to the poetry of the world. Both Czesław Miłosz and Adam Zagajewski spent many years in the U.S. and became American literary icons, as well as Polish literary and political heroes. As a translator, Miłosz introduced Western literature to a Polish audience, and as a scholar and editor, he brought a greater awareness of Slavic literature to the West. The anthology he edited, *Postwar Polish Poetry*, is on the bookshelf of almost every poet I know in the U.S. In Krakow, the café once frequented by Nobel laureate Wisława Szymborska is still frequented by poets from around the world, who continue to imbibe her presence there, years after her death. Polish poetry has played a part in keeping the Polish language and national identity from dying, even as identity and language, as they must, have remained in flux.

The complexity and difficulty and beauty of the Polish language, and the fact that it's not spoken much outside of Poland, make translation central to its continued vitality and impact. The deeper I dig into the translation process—although my grasp of the Polish language is still very limited—the more fascinating and magical I find it, and the more in awe I am of the translators whose work is represented here, all poets themselves, as well. If writing a poem is itself an act of translation, an attempt at a kind of transcendence through language, the attempt to translate that translation, that transcendence, takes us ever deeper into the act of language, and into the liminal.

I don't feel qualified to assess the whole landscape of contemporary poetry in Polish, which is neither monolithic nor homogeneous, and certainly it's not stagnant. But I can say that there's something essential in this poetry—essential, perhaps, to the life of the soul. It doesn't shy away from engagement with politics and history, and yet it retains a hermetic quality—mysterious, inward-looking—that reaches always for the spiritual. There seems to me also a heightened awareness of the past in the poems gathered here, an engagement with memory and with the gaps in memory, with absences and silences and the slipperiness of the present, an acknowledgement of how suddenly the world can change, and how unforeseeably. What you won't find here is grandiosity or sentimentality; instead, you'll find subtlety and irony and tenderness toward an often-brutal world, and a door always

left ajar into another world. When Boleslaw Leśmian, in Sarah Luczaj's incandescent translation of his poem "The Girl," rails against reality, "What a world! Bad world! Why is there no other world?" he speaks from the dream of the poem, a dream we're dreaming still.

Cecilia Woloch

The Girl

Twelve brothers, believing in dreams, investigated a wall from the
dream-side,
And from beyond the wall a voice was crying, a girlish, ruined voice.
And they fell in love with the sound of the voice and imagined the
girl,
Discussed the shape of her mouth from the way her singing vanished
into grief ...
They said of her, "She weeps, so she is there!" and they said nothing
more,
And they left the whole world, crossing themselves—
and the world lost itself in thought at that moment ...
They grabbed hammers in their hard hands and started smashing into
the wall, clattering!
And the blind night did not know who was human and who hammer?
"Oh, let's crush this cold rock before death rusts the girl over!"
So, pounding into the wall, said the twelfth brother to the others.
But their hardship was in vain, in vain their arms' union and effort!
They gave up their bodies to the waste of the dream that tempted them!
They broke their chests, split their bones, rotted their palms and their
faces whitened ...
And they died in one day and night, their one perpetual day and night!
But the shadows of the dead—my God!—didn't let the hammers fall
from their hands!
Only time passed differently—and only the hammers rang out
differently...
And rang ahead! And rang behind! And upwards after each repeating
thunder!
And the blind night did not know who was shadow, and who hammer?
"Oh, let's crush this cold rock before death rusts the girl over!"
So, pounding into the wall, said the twelfth shadow to the others.
But suddenly the shadows lost strength, as shadows do not oppose the
dusk!
And they died once more, because you never can die enough ...
And never enough, and never as you want to, in your death throes!
And outlines disappeared—and all trace—and their story finished!
But the skillful hammers—my God!—did not give themselves to
mourning!
And they hit the wall themselves, their own bronze resounded!

They stormed in the dusk, stormed in the shine and dripped human
sweat!
And the blind night did not know, what a hammer is when there is no
hammer.
"Oh, let's crush this cold rock before death rusts the girl over!"
So, pounding into the wall, said the twelfth hammer to the others.
And the wall collapsed, a thousand echoes shaking the mountains
and valleys!
But beyond the wall—nothing and nothing! No living soul, no girl!
Nobody's eyes or mouth! And nobody's fate in the flowers!
Because it had been a voice and only a voice, and nothing but a voice!
Nothing—only crying and grief and dusk and not knowing and loss!
What a world! Bad world! Why is there no other world?
Against treacherous daydreams, against miracles wasted into
nothingness,
Powerful hammers lay in a row, a sign of a hard job accomplished.
And there was the sudden silence of terror! And there was emptiness
in all the skies!
And why do you deride this emptiness, when the emptiness does not
deride you?

Boleslaw Leśmian
Trans. by Sarah Luczaj

(Untitled)

Since I met you, I carry lipstick in my pocket; it is very stupid to carry lipstick in my pocket, when you look at me as seriously as if you saw a gothic cathedral in my eyes. And I am no temple, only forest and meadow — the trembling of the leaves that gather themselves in your hands. Back there the stream trickles, that's time escaping, and you let it flow through your fingers and you don't want to catch time. And when I take my leave from you, my painted lips stay untouched, and I have carried lipstick in my pocket anyway, since first I knew that you have a very beautiful mouth.

Halina Poswiatowska
Trans. by Sarah Luczaj

(Untitled)

and I want life — low
I don't want deep
I don't want across
or alongside

I want it to be coiled
around the jutting wall
the texture of wild vine
I want it to climb the windows
doors —
its smell
overrun the house
to circle with the earth
with my heart stuck inside

I want to be wet grass
in your mouth
in your hands
I only want to be wet grass
till I'm out of breath
I just want to be stupid grass
at your feet
to grow by the roadside

Halina Poswiatowska
Trans. by Sarah Luczaj

from Dear Ms. Schubert. . .

Language

Dear Ms. Schubert, I'm writing you in
Polish. A strange tongue. It sticks to the palate.
It has to be translated, constantly,
into foreign languages. Sometimes it gives off
a dull smell and tastes like apathetic mustard.
Sometimes though, it relaxes in love.
Do you remember how dizzy our words were
when we ran along the beach, and rain
 washed from our mouths the remnants of speech?

Stupidity

Dear Ms. Schubert, I've been observing
stupidity for quite some time now. It's a hit worldwide.
It flexes its muscles in a toxic gym. StairMaster.
Barbells. Weights. A confident fitness.
Apparently from even before birth. A holy icon
of rippling flesh. Rattling on like a plume of words
chronically doped.

Sudden Brightness

Dear Ms. Schubert, do you remember that night when you
stripped me of words? Carefully, slowly, so as not to
damage the edges of the dark. Everything wooed us: the
murky laboratories of happiness, the damp underground of
Edgar Allan Poe, the secret service of the Illuminati. And we
were only afraid of one thing: acute inflammation of light,
a disease in which sudden brightness could kill us.

Ewa Lipska
Trans. by Robin Davidson
& Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska

God May Prefer Donuts

God may prefer donuts.
What are our sins to him.

Still the same comedy dell'arte.
Shameless banality. Unpaired love.
Incestuous dreams.

God may prefer donuts.

What's it to him, one more betrayal
worthy of sin?
A burning paraffin sea?

God may prefer donuts.

Unbelieving sleds
stall for time
on innocent snow.

Ewa Lipska
Trans. by Robin Davidson
& Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska

Cornflowers and Poppies

Mr Andrzej

takes me through the forest to the sawmill tells me
about the streams that multiply in the thickets
suddenly he stands on the little bridge and asks if i am not afraid
if the lady is not scared of that current beneath us

we are coming out of the wild undergrowth, the fields
he picks a head of wheat, offers it like a rose and asks
if you can pick flowers if you can
pick poppy heads from the lady's mouth to make wreaths

Mr Andrzej

looks into your eyes as if he wanted with this skyblue
to make your head spin and to mow the whole field
of cornflowers down with his eyelashes then reach his hand out for all
the surrounding flowers for bouquets, wreaths, stoops

we stop in the forest he takes my
hand places it on the trunk of a great tree
and asks if i feel if the lady feels how
wet it is—it's the morning dew in the forest

cornflowers and poppies remained in the fields

Mr Andrzej

asks me to remember the tree please
remember that when wet, it buds and groans
since then any old rain can keep me from sleeping

Grazyna Wojcieszko
Trans. by Sarah Luczaj

from Incantation

Viking

II

Viking after his stay in the primeval forest
his long exile ending in my eye looks in a bad state to me
the grass tells me it rustles as if in warning
he has an urgent request not to come too close

he asks how you can sit in front of the television like that
while he wanders from stoop to stoop in the hope
that he'll find a human hand in the haystack he searches for
the gentleness of empathy and tact sniffing for goodness

those in cars
are asked to take their feet
from the gas pedals
so he can cross
the road

The London Theatre—Final

soldiers lie like puppets in their
places because the show has not yet
started motionless they fight their nerves

meanwhile

pomp and splendour are winding
through the halls in the salons pearls
wink at the sight of me glance
sideways do not speak of
the clattering old cart or its
barefoot four wheel drive
don't pass comment on the splintered wood
don't gossip about the birch twigs
my vehicle parked alongside the limousines

covered in resin and pine needles still smells
smells of eternally green wild forest

meanwhile

pomp and splendour are winding
through the halls diamonds
choke in the bars when they should be
delicately coughing off their embarrassment
because they just can't find it
salon after salon they search for the stage
corridor after corridor and rooms
full of armchairs red armchairs

evergreen with a loose crown of branches
growing in spreading circles
I sit down in the spacious box on the upper floor

meanwhile

the curtain goes up and puppets
hurl bombs at each other
tear each other's clothes off cut each other's
throats with knives cut off
their little arms and legs rip their guts out

the audience delighted
await the end of the first act

behind the fallen curtain they put the bits of puppet
into a bucket then the gilded hall and the rubbish heap
new soldiers wait anxiously in the wings for the second act

meanwhile

the commentaries of bleached
collars the choking of pearls
and diamonds the delicate appeal
in the direction of the one who
hisses and squeals and snorts and

sticks needles in the armchairs with branches
in her mouth and whistles like a hooligan
Scotland Yard appears helpless faced with
the present circumstances and fears that this
day will go down in history as the day when

the hissing of the pine spread out beyond the capital

Grazyna Wojcieszko
Trans. by Sarah Luczaj

from Amplified Insides—A Soundtrack

And if. Bow of the wheel. Cross-sections. Parabolas. Big birds circling singly or in flocks. The moraine chain stretches. So far. No less freely. Old women fall asleep. With crossed legs. So high. What's needed? For it to be? And to be how? Do the sandy shoals remain (so) the same? After rain. Where is the secret circle? What, then, do they carry in the freezers? Loose peas? Powder? Pow! Nothing will come of it. White whitens when it becomes spirit. Does god stroke your head, when everything is in order? So where do infections come from? Usually viruses. At the inter (and) national airports. The image is scanned. The weight is weighed up.

I see. Summer bundles in the chapped garden. Summer rags in the burning wardrobes. Shoes gummed to the teeth. We set out in lost barques. Light falls from the escaping lamps. I bend the edge to the rest. I walk under the boughs. From hand to hand. In the depths away from the resettled houses, I dig. I scrape around. I raise an eyebrow. I hammer splinters into the wooden sleep. Since when? We have black pupils. We sleep like living snakes. Is there room in the skeleton for pulp from hollowed out bodies? And in fish for unswallowed mercury? Birds plunge their beaks. Song flows out. I close the evening tightly. In a bow made of legs. The fire's unguarded.

You need to stand. Up. Amongst other things. For instance. The forest base.

Slightly moist must. Wind breaks in the branches. The river's cut off. The nailed bridge hangs. Children fall asleep like truck drivers. At the edge of the road. The train goes on. Someone's hair touches the bars. How high is freezing? How low does god go? A woman holds a watering can in an abandoned hand. Long dusk soaks

all the way along the stem. The sacks are probably hidden. The murdered don't remember. Those who kill would rather not. I rip the tiny fishbones

from the meat, it takes years. Wilted nooses go pale. Daybreak's skint,
smokes a roll-up. Flu winter. February snow. A crushed huddle of
people
walk into the glassed cabin. There is no smoke. It moves.

Ida Sieciechowicz

Trans. by Sarah Luczaj

Chronology

Seven years old,
he went down with meningitis,
then told of how children would be taken from his ward
covered over with bedsheets.

At the age of eighteen—the year 1970—
he poured buckets of petrol
all over the District Council Offices.

Twenty-two when he met mother
beneath a tall birch tree in Jelitkowski Park.

Twenty-six when they married,
thirty when he became a father.

He discovered a passion for sailing shortly after.

A yachting club in Stogi, countless sea miles
all over the Gulf of Gdansk,
West Germany, Denmark, Sweden.

This one time, I lent him a baseball cap
and a passing boom knocked it from his head into the water.

He then jumped into the Dead Vistula,
because I liked that cap,
and it was already autumn.

Sixty years old when he flew to Tunisia with mum,
then a few years later I talked them into Greece.

A young Dad, the nurse says
when I visit the hospital
the day after.

Kamil Kaczmarek
Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

On a bus from Rumelange

I remember that time in Berlin
when you took me to Checkpoint Charlie.
On the way back,
you let me drive the Benz
all the way home.
In Szczecin, we stopped at
Chrobry Embankment.

Or that Christmas when
I flew in from Spain.
The winter was severe,
Sopot and Jelitkowo snowed in.
We sipped some mulled beer on the beach.
We even have a photo from that day
wearing jackets identical in colour.

And that November day
we went to the cinema in Przymorze
to see the new Bond movie,
to the library by the town square
and to Zaspas for pizza.
The streets wrapped in misty
dampness at the tail end of the year.
Inside, our eyes stung with smoke
from the wood-fired stove.

In between, there were hundreds of ordinary others,
when you just called up
asking how my day was,
to sort out repairs
or announce that
you had just picked up
another Kapuscinski for me.
Now, two years have gone by
and I am reading your diary.

A grey, hardbound cover,
the checkered paper well worn,
absorbing the green ink
of seventeen year old thoughts.

You write about girls,
relationships with your parents,
your mother's love.
About Volunteer Labour Camps
in Frydman,
struggles with your studies.

Carefully, with real effort,
you split the text into chapters.
Addressing your reader,
who now, fifty years on,
happens to be your son.

Kamil Kaczmariski
Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

Circles

Before now, only the flood, impassable roads; signs in the sky,
marks in snow as black as tar. You remember the ash,
though the fire was only imaginary—perhaps this is why the courtyard
has turned into fog; the rails overgrown. The walls fallen.

It all returns like hunger. We are swallowed up by all that
which cannot be filled, made of glued together pieces;
open like veins, to the bone.

You will forget about this when winter returns. Circles will remain,
tremors; a stick poked under an ice floe, the empty lake
covered with ice as if with thin foil.

Joanna Lech

Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

Signs

Swelter smouldering in the hand, infecting the grasses. Choking the earth,
as we run across the fields; collecting clams, chewing leaves
like sugar. Winds tossing sparks about, smoke stinging the eyes.

Over the woods, a sky, in it: fire. This image—the river taking on water
and swallowing suns. Children moulding nests and sucking thumbs at
bedtime.

August pours ash into their hair, etching signs in the heavens.
Dives the waters with a stone in its throat.

This image, Anna, cannot be swallowed. As if it were swelling within me;
a mark in the bend of the arm. A scratch on the eye. A dream which cuts
the skin

deeper than knives and stuffs moss into arteries, feathers into mouths.

Joanna Lech

Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

Weaving

You will forever remain a foreign tongue. A river torn from its bed,
that scratch in the eyelid. Skeletal disfigurement, I know it off
[by heart,
through dreams touching the components of your flesh. There is no cure
[for this;
December must be swallowed whole, the taste of salt follows it,
[waters will recede,
snow will melt. Only noises, scabs, thaws will remain; as if they were
light diseases, carried on a stifling wind.

Everything weaving within you: in that place where silence
will fall, only shiver remaining; a tree growing, river springing up.
[Look,
we are there already, in fields, where hay is drying and the earth
rots.
Perhaps I am still that shore, that trampled rye.
A crack; now I have within me all that sowing, whole seeds.
Like traces sprinkled across skin. Like rust seeds. Bitter harvest

Joanna Lech
Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

The Sea Departed—Part 1

The sea departed. It departed in a flurry, a hurry, having first summoned its mounds with a sudden chatter; followed by nothing more than fragmentary, unevenly peaking waves flowing over the grey tablecloth of sands, not unlike bubbly wine, its bright pearls bursting and dying down with a hiss.

It is already far off, dragging its heels, sighing, returning, running up, scrunching gravel, grabbing handfuls of it and returning again, and running off again, and again, and again once more, and then again...

Meanwhile, the sands build up. Each move, each splashing wave covers them with smaller doses; each recession adding to their shores.

And they lay there, so squashed and cast down, drying with tiny surfaces, regularly carbonated, crumpled up like a great, broadly spread out sheet of gold-ashen mortar, its trails trimmed with the sea's silver tasseled piping.

And the sea is ever further off, ever more quiet, focused in ever shorter whispers, withdrawing, absorbing and imbibing scattered waves, until they have all been turned back towards the highlands of their own assertions, swaying ever so slowly, heavy across the abyss, as full as an eye, and as fathomless, almost motionless.

Large fishing vessels, the tide having carried them away from the jetty, are stuck in the amassed depths, also motionless, as if one by one, in sequence they formed a most odd arabesque in the distant background.

By the shoreline, at the same time, bluish clouds begin to swirl and smoke, which in the pearly brightness of a matt morning sip on a whole range of amethyst tonalities.

The sky is low, whitish here and there, drizzling for a moment with pale light exhaled across in fumes, for the world to then silence, dull down, extinguish, all in a dreamy lilac shade.

Deep shoals emerged with sands slightly sparkling with gravel, stretched out, blossomed, suddenly darkened like long, long rows of hyacinths, towards Villers, towards Beuzeval, towards Houllgate, towards Cabourg, as far as the ocean's rocky edges.

To the right, a delicate lace of the bindings and arcades of the Great dam at Roches Noires, tossed to the violet transparencies; to the left, a jetty looming in the deep mists, its masts and moorings become a vision of ginormous irises swaying over a muddy abyss.

And there, far off, as far as the eye can wander, a patch of angular fog is turning blue, shivering with inner transparency. That is the sea.

Something musical flows through this moment, something symphonic. Some vast, mono-tonally vibrating sonority of flowing lines and muted colours, all dreamy. Some infinitely soft, wavily arising and descending sonority of intangible, fleeting, most ghoulis shapes.

Some closeness of all and also distance at once.

Some subtle scale of diffused tones and semitones, from a silvery bolt of the lightning of seagull wings striking the faint lilyness of the air, to a deep violet of wildly growing, ragged hills which sit there like giant nests of dark amethysts.

Some immeasurable immersion, colours overflowing, lights, shadows, some absorption of light into the background so odd, ghostly, blurred contours and fading apparitions barely visible across it.

And then a song.

A simple song, quiet, rather spoken than sang, flowing together harmoniously with the music of the moment.

*...Ils ont choisi la mer,
Ils ne reviendront plus...
Et puis, s'ils vous reviennent,
Les resonnaitrez vous?*

*...Or, ils n'ont plus leur âme,
Elle est restée en mer,
Ils ne vous reviendront plus,
Ils ont choisi la mer...*

*Maria Konopnicka
Trans. by Marek Kazmierski*

Dust

cold evenings would draw them to our house in the gantry they'd
leave their heavy boots drink their strong teas utter hoarse words
slowly squinting as they did so as if the light caused chaos
consternation they spoke about death as if we were in need
(seems they had brought back an especially pure form of it back
from sweltering libya around the gulf of sidra) their hardworking
hands dropping ash into flowerpots eternal ashes leaving
suddenly
wringing their hands like thieves go with god they would utter on
the doorstep which made us sleep uneasy disturbed by creaking
floorboards breathlessness and a thirst which chokes us still

Malgorzata Lebda
Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

bright lights

ice floes cracking light fails the bottom feeding her mud the
milkman riding down the main village street but it is not he who
pulls her out from the depths she is five and doesn't yet believe in
death although sometimes space gives the illusion and the signs
dark bruises rough scabs on sunday mornings in a cold church
she stares into the bright lights of the chandeliers squinting her
eyes who art in heaven she sings this for weeks on end

Malgorzata Lebda
Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

surface waters*

for weronika

when I recall the surface I am reminded of her long dark hair and her back covered in freckles and the crisscrossing of beams of light scattering off all imaginings and asparagus needles I can't yet write about her illness about the plants fading once more I turn my gaze in search of an exit from this cold

Malgorzata Lebda

Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

praise be to water

those children had to feed on panic and common rue we knew all about their hiding places their dark attics of the roofs of their barns facing westwards of the fragile crowns of their trees they spent days hunting birds so that come evenings by candlelight they could study the smooth anatomies and textures

of wings ultimately they belonged to the waters which is why when the first of them surrendered his body to the cold lake they stayed without asking questions together returning the sign of the cross although if they did believe it was in chaos and not in dust in the autumn they could be seen in nearby fields from which they extracted edible tubers their faces swollen with sun their lips ready for snow

Malgorzata Lebda

Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

mice and death

I kill
what is my limit?
the bed is peppered with mouse droppings
I've laid out blue jelly beans on plates
and then there are the mouse corpses behind the cupboard, in the drawer
after the harvest the mice race like mad from the fields to houses
climb the curtains, scratch in the cupboards
one mouse shut in the wardrobe devoured half a dressing gown
one mouse kindly drowned itself in a potty
one mouse jumped onto my head at night
probably for fun
how can you live without killing the mice that won't let you live in peace?
get a cat?
a cat to do the dirty work for you?
to kill for you, in your name?
so you can wash your hands?
praise it and say *kitty kitty*?
happy that it gifted you with a mouse not a bird?
because cats also hunt for birds

Irena Wiszniewska
Trans. by Nasim Luczaj

hunger

I eat
not in order to live
I eat
to drown out the hunger
nothing can kill
the fridge is my friend
always at an arm's reach
at night, when silence hurts
and thoughts are like rabbits on their way to slaughter
I open the fridge and there I find
pulp of love, sausage of hope, minced
leftovers of a beloved blanket
please help yourself, take it!
eat though you don't need to
though you're not hungry
devour out of habit
for fashion
out of powerlessness to change
yourself or the world

Irena Wiszniewska
Trans. by Nasim Luczaj

maiden poseidon

suddenly all her friends are summoning the powers of saturn
but for her it's enough to kick the scales over—no more maddening
weights
to wrap the scarf round her neck—pack the stones for the beach and
disperse
all those beautiful stories in the rising sun
to say thanks for the good advice and reply that clearly I will need
fewer pebbles in the pockets for my pilgrimage
in the prints of newborn turtles into the womb of *poseidon*

Łukasz Kaźmierczak / Łucja Kuttig
Trans. by Nasim Luczaj

the format of memory

I put a new day down in the sun it dries up in crowded trams
soaks up the onion from floury rolls
with opium you tell me about your star
sign that it's libra while I was simply born under a super-star
and my feet step on the scales at the start
of each season in fashion and of every working day

I am constructing a work on the engineering of the body
you open the balcony window and take out some
juice and a cigarette from a new packet I give you
the title of “engineer of letters” I wait on
the made bed—*come give and clean up*—that's how you like it
that's what you say about me about changing
sheets and crying rivers out in jazz notes

you've heard all the tunes before you take me out of the room
like a floppy disk with an inconceivably small memory of touch

Łukasz Kaźmierczak / Łucja Kuttig
Trans. by Nasim Luczaj

More Slowly

The same. Heaps of discarded clothes,
of time. I look at you, think of the country
where I live. It too knows us thoroughly.

Sad months approach. Loud light
runs up from behind.

To rub the wind and sun into my bones, to forget
in order to once again begin a day
a dozen years before.

As if I didn't have a tongue,
as if my tongue queried its identity,
as if all the above at once.

Julia Szychowiak
Trans. by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese

A Child Slides Across the Broad Shoulders of the River

It will ponder what it has glimpsed. With its
head between pillow and dawn, the dawn
on the playground like a bucket of sand.

Morning sky will be a plank where one can
hear the knocking of the pulse. As if a song
peeping inside could be heard.

Julia Szychowiak
Trans. by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese

Grandmother's Voice

Even when she could no longer see or hear,
her voice saw and heard.
She couldn't tell day from night,
but there was light in her voice.

In it you could hear the frail sixth child,
daughter of a clerk for Warsaw's streetcars.
Girl asking for a bagel from a market vendor,
a Jewish woman who scratched under her wig.

And also the voice of the young adult
who had more luck than sense,
as she catalogued her wartime escapades in old age.
Escapades—times she escaped with her life.
Her home, just before the Gestapo
swept up her mother and brother.
The courtyard, where a moment earlier her friend,
surrounded, had leapt from a window.
(She ran in to identify the body,
but the watchman said, "Young lady, get out of here.")
The court on Leszno Street, where she brought cash
to Mr. Henryk in the Ghetto.
The round-up on New World Street.
The Warsaw Uprising.

In her voice, you could also hear a woman in love.
The one who slammed the door on her way out.
Either break up with him, her mother said,
or don't show up at my funeral.
He: twenty years older and divorced,
a schoolteacher.
She slammed the door. And elsewhere in the city,
her sister fell into a trap.
The next day the door was sealed shut.

And, later, the voice of the postwar period:
she had two small daughters, a husband
beloved by his students, schoolmaster
with a meager salary, my grandfather
whom I never met; her mother
and sister rescued from Auschwitz,
who lived with them under one roof;
she kept books for the Union of Writers
and Stage Composers, and worked another job
to make ends meet. Once when cleaning house,
she hauled a rickety bench with a drawer to the trash.
Wads of banknotes spilled out—
grandfather's secret stash.

Grandmother's voice—calm as when with a trembling hand
she gripped her sick husband's buttock
to give him a shot in the outer, upper part.

Grandmother's voice from my early childhood:
resting after the operation
she let me look at the stitches on her belly

because you always wanted to know everything.

The voice of a practicing Catholic
laced with doubt.

And that of a woman astonished
at reaching eighty,
ninety, and then
a hundred.
She recalled going with her friend
to the Writers' Union guesthouse in Konstancin.
Walking into the dining room,
Tadeusz Różewicz glanced at them:
"We're not getting any younger, are we?"
And the three of them burst out laughing.

My grandmother's voice full of silence
when it came to pain, fear, rickety benches.
I was tempted to break through her reticence.

But near the end of her life
when she started to speak on her own,
it was I who clammed up in response.

Krystyna Dąbrowska
Trans. by Karen Kovacik

Words in the Air

In the square stands a booth with a sheaf of blank paper.
On a string hang sheets with writing, attached with clips,
like freshly developed photos, drying.
A bearded guy hovers by a sign
I'M COLLECTING YOUR STORIES
He doesn't approach anyone. Doesn't have to.
They come to him to read and sit and write.

A child about dinosaurs. A young woman
who survived several suicide attempts
about how she no longer covers the scars on her wrists.
Another on how she walks about with music in her headphones,
and everything is pantomime.
A black man writes about oppression.
Someone else about his illness. That's in remission. For now.
A Hindu woman, that she had an arranged marriage,
and loves her husband a lot: though they grew up in separate worlds,
they've managed to forge their own.

Some write for the first time about themselves
as if they suddenly opened up
to a stranger while traveling.
They write anonymously:
their stories are their signatures.
The guy will collect them in a book,
but before he reviews and sifts through them, before
they're shut between covers, they sway in the air—

Krystyna Dąbrowska
Trans. by Mira Rosenthal

The Noise of a Broom Wakes Me

The noise of a broom wakes me from the courtyard
a moment ago still my beating heart
and now it seems that someone's brushing out the entire world.
A breath comes whistling, opens the balcony door
slicing through the rooms like a scythe
pulling out from under me all the building's floors.
Brooms come to mind from that city where I was yesterday
small green brooms wading in ditches at dawn
I could never make out what they fished from the swift water.
A broom comes to mind that, at three in the morning
between the old temple and a stand of mountain ash,
lashed the sidewalk softly.
Meanwhile the broom in my courtyard bustles louder and louder
louder than the sun, alert as a dog.

Krystyna Dąbrowska
Trans. by Mira Rosenthal

Replacing Windows

The slim, brown-eyed guy
who is installing my windows
tells of a time he replaced
those at an old woman's house:
the old-fashioned kind, box sash
—no longer able to fasten—
for the new, super tight type
with adjustable tilt,
a gift from her grandchildren
for the approaching cold.
She watched them take the two
wings of worn-out windows
from her dusty rooms.
When her husband was alive,
he would paint them, see to upkeep,
oil them once a year.
And now—set free,
undressed from curtains,
so light in other hands.
I picture her, how she came
out of the house, waited
till they loaded everything and left,
and as they moved,
the glass flashed in the sun
just for a minute, unclear.

Krystyna Dąbrowska
Trans. by Mira Rosenthal

Rescue

for my Father

or it's a wild tree
you feel sorry for
and jealous of at the same time

as when the light of twilight
shines in the spokes of a wheelchair

or like that silver broccoli shaped cloud
which one night will finally save us
turning us into surprised oxygen

Tomasz Wojewoda
Trans. by Cecilia Woloch

Tsantsa

I dreamed a solar system
where your medicines circulated instead of the planets
and in place of the sun, your head
with its rays of hair

one day, drained of blood
that sun will shrink
as in a jungle
taking with it all the planets

Tomasz Wojewoda
Trans. by Cecilia Woloch

from Parallel Lives

Jacek Dehnel's series "Parallel Lives" imagines alternate fates for famous writers. Horace, the writer of odes, has died in battle. Miłosz is a rural squire in his native Lithuania, Szymborska a botany teacher. The remains of Zbigniew Herbert, who presumably did not survive World War II, are exhumed in what is now Kazakhstan. And, Tadeusz Borowski, author of *This Way to the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, who survived Auschwitz only to die a suicide after the war, escapes into Romania, thus evading the muse of tragedy.

Quintus H.F. [Horace] dies in the battle of Philippi

Eyes obscured by sand and blood and grass,
he lies face to the earth, spear's blade in his back.
The lather of battle's now passed. His crown canted toward the heavens.

He hears throngs of receding steps,
thinks now
the gods have abandoned him.
But it's the rhythm of unwritten odes,
slanting,
that moves over the plain,
skirting the dead strewn to the horizon's edge.

Squire Czesław M. inspects his lands in Szetejnie

From spurs to riding crop, he's vigilant:
meadows, fields and ponds he sees as from the air,
sketched on some map of property lines,
the windmills, lumber saws, and stills.

The dark is coming
but he doesn't grasp it,
and only at the forest's edge
does he see the sun whirl faster
than usual across the sky,
not as it should.

He rubs his eyes and gives the horse a lash.
Far off, a lamp sways over a table,
casting light on columns of gains and losses.

Tadeusz B. evades Melpomene, muse
of tragedy, while crossing
the Polish-Romanian border on a bicycle

He's gotten used to passing: people with bundles,
horse-drawn carts with children, chairs, and eiderdowns,
parched roadsides, horses' swollen corpses,
abandoned pots, signs of an army in retreat—
so many he passes unawares.

Yet there she stands,
strumming a lyre made from flaming oak,
her wings now smashed, a graft of cloud and stone
resembling the goddess of victory,
she who stands on other bridges and frontiers,
her helmet bronze, topped with a bloody plume.

He travels on past the river to another life
with some children, chairs, and eiderdown and wife.

Wisława S. teaches botany in a middle school in Piła

When she takes Proletariat Street from school
with her permed hair and dowdy crocheted sweater,
she's the delight of all the old ladies in town.
They glance in long mirrors in their tiny foyers,
cock heads, pat chests, and smooth their hair,
content that things have not progressed so far.
Her very being could be cast in doubt
if not for the sixteen-tome herbarium,
laconic notes scrawled in its margins,
as if she'd strewn black sand in its pages.

Jacek Dehnel

Trans. by Karen Kovacik

A Woman of Fifty Running to Catch the Tram

while she's running
and there's nothing sublime in her movements
though by the magic of her effort she'd like to
anchor down the tram

I almost forget
that she could be my mother
who came into the world
barely in time to beat
the outbreak of the war

faster faster

Jerzy Jarniewicz
Trans. by Piotr Florczyk

Outdoor Fun & Games

It was the day he ran to her—platform
No. 3, track No. 6, a city in
the south—with a water for the trip, but
she chose a trip without water. Sky
without clouds. Stream without
stones.

And a window with the view
of fields golden with wheat,
all aflame from the sun,
infinite, up to the borders of Warsaw.

Jerzy Jarniewicz
Trans. by Piotr Florczyk

A Simple Poem About Love

We dropped our clothes
and started making love so revolutionarily
that the edifice of the national bank shook,
the stock market hit the bottom
and the brokers howled at the fire consuming
their guts and wallets.

We crashed into each other until the walls of
reform schools collapsed,
and the avengers with baseball bats came out and marched
towards the ministry of internal peace.
The battalions of riot police scattered,
dropping their shields, helmets, and notebooks,
their black crown victorias their only remains.

You saddled me so defiantly that the investors
panicked and began packing their bags
and returned home on budget airlines,
hastily transferring out Sasnal's oil paintings,
all the acquisitions of their Vistula mission
(a tenfold increase in price
within five years).

I swallowed you like an anarchist, until the gothic galleries
of Target and Costco fell into ruin,
the cast-iron ATMs melted in the walls
of Chase, Citi,
Wells Fargo, PNC, U.S. Bank,
Bank of America, State Street, TD, OneWest,
HSBC, Deutsche Bank, SunTrust,
Bank of the West, Umpqua, ING and Schwab.

I love you—our naked bodies orbit around Europe, haunting it
like unfledged, innocent Communism.

Jerzy Jarniewicz
Trans. by Piotr Florczyk

Whenever I Hear

Whenever I hear the names of Russian rivers,
an echo breaks through layers of memory,
bounced off the bottom of an invisible current:
the water stands still, thick, and freezes over.

Jacek Gutorow
Trans. by Piotr Florczyk

Madame Cézanne

She sits in a chair, silent. Doesn't have to
say anything, it's the objects speaking
in a separate language so familiar to her.
The silence of the water in the jug. Paper on the wall.
The painted wind messes up her hair.
She sits smiling at the edge of a glance:
reality, she says, that's reality.

Jacek Gutorow
Trans. by Piotr Florczyk

Two Poems from Rapallo

1.

Three steep paths, the quern of waves.
Moon over a *salita*.
To memorize this place.
The voice, the shattered vase.

2.

An outgoing wave. Anchored rocks.
In the evening the bay illuminates the depth
and silently convenes all
reflected, scattered lights.

Jacek Gutorow

Trans. by Piotr Florczyk

At the Pond

The end of June. We're going out of Dante
and into Virgil. Dragonflies skim
the water surface, a stork plods in the nearby rushes.

I want to walk along the bank, but suddenly feel
that in this weather the blue pond is intransitive.
I can only watch how things change:

a cloud lights into the next frame,
a flaky bark of birch carries
a knotty message.

Jacek Gutorow

Trans. by Piotr Florczyk

Transitivity

so this is the exodus the exit
toward straight ahead behind a baby walker
the pistachio delinquent speaks dada
the shadows under the metallic sconce reply
things can no longer be this clear
they must converge into one larger darkness
she loves the frolicking day-breaking
without her the days are unloved

Krzysztof Siwczyk
Trans. by Piotr Florczyk

Kolbuszowa, Documentary Shot in 1929

laughing lads
knocking off each other's caps,
navy blue policemen
saluting for show,
peasant women at a market
wearing white shawls
tasting fresh pickles,
elders gazing off
beyond the frame with 19th century eyes
helplessly looking
for the past in the future

dozens of Jewish children
wearing funny hats
marching along main street
turning slowly
into hunted game

in thirteen years' time
they might have been all of twenty

marching soundlessly
hand in hand,
leaving school now walking
down main street, like trees they breathe
in this August heat

yes, I see precisely

as they march past without a sound

watching them go
dark-eyed adolescent girls
wearing flowing dresses
applying lipstick before the camera.
adjusting their hair seductively
imperceptibly turning
into hunted game

yes, I see it clearly
small boys and girls
strolling down the town's main street,
singingly and invisibly
turning into a cloud
of black birds

they are being watched
by laughing adolescent girls
circling over them,
I hear their torn dresses swishing,
the chattering of broken wings

down the dusty sidewalk
soundlessly marching
thirty little girls
and thirty likely lads

from townhouse windows
shorn girls wave to them
painting their lips
with damp soil

rains washing their sweetness away,
wind blowing their dreams away

a screeching magpie with a gold band in its beak
is tidying up in the thicket

yes, I see it clearly

children marching
through the heart of town

girls in black swarms flying away

Jacek Napiórkowski
Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

Forces

R.R.

In each and every town there live at least three
of those I would like to join, at dawn,
waxing the river.

In every city beautiful girls weep
and when you return at night
you hear them killing their young, cursing the storms.

In every town there is a village a hundred times worse
than pre-war villages, where they put sacks on the heads of the sick
and let them bark from the bottom of the lake.

In every town there is an invisible town, the capital of the heart,
a shelter from the rain and your smile, children and animals
graze there for light.

In every town there is a purple tower from which
the most talented and precious leap
with songs upon their lips.

In every town two roads diverge, if they came together
there might be an end to wars, sickness, hunger
and hollow laughter.

There are in each city places which cannot be described
And yet, if they were gone, the cities would become pitiful banners.

In every city a man and a woman pass each other by,
going to school, living on neighboring streets,
gazing up at the same sky and longing, dying unaware of one another's
existence.

In every city there are beings needed and justified by no one,
the antennae of mutated gods, hawkers, cultists, and peddlers,
still, they change the world.

The fate of every town depends on the severed waters of nearby rivers,
where boys seek evidence of the existence of something more
important.

Every city has its own tyrant and savior, but only
in one did you always want to lead a revolution.

Every town sways like smoke in the mirror of your eyes,
and gives you the only option.

Every city worships itself and trusts only itself.

In every town you can turn yourself into a nation.

Jacek Napiórkowski

Trans. by Marek Kazmierski

Bucha 2022

Ola and Olena
ran away from home
in an unidentified
windowless vehicle
sprinkled with alien blood

in the basement they left behind
two old books
the smell of their insomnia
and new corpses of neighbors
the sight of which
they were spared.

Krystyna Lenkowska
Trans. by Krystyna Lenkowska
& Cecilia Woloch

When I Was a Fish

When I was a fish
or a bird
I didn't need reputation
nor the safe tomorrow

nor a solid bed
with a soft pillow
for the body

I wasn't looking for reasons and answers
I wasn't carving holes in the table with my elbows
nor in the mattress

I was keeping silent or singing

when I was a fish
or a bird.

Krystyna Lenkowska
Trans. by Krystyna Lenkowska
& Cecilia Woloch

Via Giulia

The very first watchmaker here was the sun,
winding the local clocks and mechanism
of clouds and wind. Also the spinning
dial of streets, fountains, squares, and the thrum

of irksome scooters, the dancing of plastic
seized by the Tiber's carousel. At noon,
the body yearns for its own shadow, refuge
of outline where it may lie down, just as

this city did at the same age. But this time,
the silhouette has hips too narrow, shaky
like flame, the shadow fast so breath can't catch
its shade: body of air, not yet filled with lime.

Life: scraps of paper, numbers, words and cries,
a trace of touch inscribed on skin, a warmth
that's still dispersing, a scent. What went before,
and what it is that's fleeing toward the sky.

Tomasz Różycki
Trans. by Mira Rosenthal

At Day's End

So much light! And I, a man of the North,
go promptly to the center of the square
and soak my skin as in the sea's saltwater.
Rinse out my eyes. There's so much light, my brother!

At least take some of it. Fill up the corners
of the room, every inch of basement and
the drawers, then all the way up to the attic.
From time to time, make use of it in winter,

gather your friends around and serve it up.
Lock it in bottles, to be uncorked on
New Year's or a birthday, some occasion
of sadness, or a wedding, or for nothing

at all. Clean light, without bad additives—
not our daily fair. This light dissolves in coffee
like a lump of sugar, like blurring dusk,
not yet, not quite, just wait a second, now.

Tomasz Różycki
Trans. by Mira Rosenthal

Epoch

I've said goodbye to the twentieth century,
its porches choked with bindweed, its wild weeping
and wild grapevines. When, finally, the black
patrol car leaves, then you can hear the panting

of the train, the horses snorting, sweat steaming
in icy air. Nervous, you wonder what is worth
taking for good: a useless notebook, minor
snapshots, cheap religious medals? The cities

and forest on the road sleep like huge darkened
churches. I'll not come back here, windows draped
with dirty towels, signs of widespread plague.
I've hidden a handful of words not yet infected

below the sand. For you. The rest, the still warm body
I left outside, in order to see how the epoch
will take care of it at night. What shape will be carved
in the flesh, what will be waiting when morning arrives.

Tomasz Różycki
Trans. by Mira Rosenthal

Contributors

rose auslander has written the book *Wild Water Child*, winner of the 2016 Bass River Press Poetry Prize; chapbooks *Folding Water*, *Hints*, and *The Dolphin in the Gowanus*; and poems in the *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Baltimore Review*, *New American Writing*, *New Ohio Review*, *RHINO*, *Roanoke Review*, *Tinderbox*, and *Tupelo Quarterly*.

Rebecca Baggett is the author of *The Woman Who Lives Without Money* (Regal House Publications, 2022) and four chapbooks. Recent work appears or is forthcoming in *The Sun*, *The Southern Review*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Salt*, and *Tar River Poetry*. She lives in Athens, GA.

The most recent of **Gaylord Brewer's** 16 books of poetry, fiction, criticism, and cookery are two collections of poems, *The Feral Condition* (Negative Capability, 2018) and *Worship the Pig* (Red Hen, 2020). A volume of creative nonfiction, *Before the Storm Takes It Away*, is forthcoming from Red Hen.

Ronda Pizsk Broatch's latest poetry collection is *Chaos Theory for Beginners*, (MoonPath Press). Ronda's journal publications include *Fugue*, *Blackbird*, *2River*, *Sycamore Review*, *Missouri Review*, *Palette Poetry*, and NPR News / KUOW's *All Things Considered*. She is a graduate student working toward her MFA at Pacific Lutheran University's Rainier Writing Workshop.

Brian Bulta lives in Arlington, Texas, and works at Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth. His work has been recently published or is forthcoming in *Jabberwock Review*, *Juke Joint Magazine*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *New Ohio Review*, and *TriQuarterly*.

Rachel Aviva Burns is a writer and artist living and working in New York City. Her poems have appeared in publications including the *Bluestem Magazine*, *Eclectica*, *Sand Hills Literary Magazine*, and *Vallum*, as well as previously in the *Atlanta Review*.

Johnny Cordova's poetry is forthcoming this year in *Salt Hill Journal*, *Slipstream*, *San Pedro River Review*, and *New York Quarterly*. He recently returned from ten years in Southeast Asia and lives on Triveni Ashram in the high desert of Arizona, where he and his wife co-edit *Shō Poetry Journal*.

Krystyna Dąbrowska is a poet, essayist, and translator. She is the author of four books, including *Białe krzesła* (White Chairs, WBPiCAK, 2012), which received two of the most prestigious Polish literary prizes: the Wisława Szymborska Award and the Kościelski Prize. Translated into multiple languages, she lives in Warsaw.

Robin Davidson, poet and translator, is the author of two poetry chapbooks and the collection *Luminous Other*. She is the recipient of a Fulbright professorship at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland and a National Endowment for the Arts translation fellowship

Jacek Dehnel, born in 1980, is a poet, novelist, and translator. He has published ten

volumes of poetry and numerous works of prose. As a translator, he has brought into Polish Larkin's *Complete Poems*, Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*. Dehnel lives in Warsaw.

Shaheen Dil's poems have been published or are forthcoming in over two dozen journals and have appeared in numerous anthologies. Her first poetry collection, *Acts of Deference*, was published in 2016 by Fakel Publishing House in Sofia, Bulgaria. She is a long-term member of the Pittsburgh Poetry Exchange.

Linda M. Fischer's poems have appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *Aurorean*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Poetry East*, *Potomac Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *Valparaiso Review*, *The Worcester Review*, and elsewhere. She has published three chapbooks, was nominated twice for a Pushcart, and won the 2019 Philadelphia Writers' Conference poetry contest.

Piotr Florczyk, translator. His most recent books are *East & West*, poems, and several volumes of translations, including *Building the Barricade* by Anna Świrszczyńska, which won the 2017 Found in Translation Award. His new volume of poems, *From the Annals of Kraków*, is based on Holocaust testimonies.

Margaret Guilbert is an award-winning writer from Alabama who lives in New York City. She has published two chapbooks of poems with Finishing Line Press, *My Grandmother's Engagement Ring* (2015) and *Blue Electrode* (2021). Her play, *A Scene of Captivity with Waltzes and Mirrors*, was staged twice at Harvard's Agassiz Theatre.

Jacek Gutorow (b. 1970) is a Polish poet, critic, scholar and translator, and a professor of British and American literatures at University of Opole. His first collection of poems translated into English, *The Folding Star and Other Poems*, appeared in 2012 from BOA Editions, as a Lannan Translations Series Selection.

Audrey Hall is a poet, literature scholar, and marine biology enthusiast from Mississippi. Her poems appear in *Okay Donkey*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and others. She reads for *Black Warrior Review*. Her poetry has been nominated for a Best of the Net Award.

Susan Harvey was a professional harpsichordist and musicologist for many years, but now lives and works on a ranch in Northern California. Her poems appear in reviews nationally, and she has been a Pushcart nominee. Her chapbook *Colloquies* was published by Red Bird Press in spring of 2022.

Aiden Heung (He/They) is a Chinese poet born in a Tibetan Autonomous Town, currently living in Shanghai. A Tongji University graduate, his poems written in English have appeared in *The Australian Poetry Journal*, *The Missouri Review*, *Orison Anthology*, *Parentheses*, *Crazyhorse*, *Black Warrior Review*, among other places. He's on Twitter @aidenheung.

Joanne Holdridge lives in Devens, MA, but spends as much of the winter as she can skiing the White Mountains of New Hampshire. Before she was able to devote her winters to skiing, she taught poetry and literature courses to ESL students at Bunker Hill Community College for three decades.

Jerzy Jarniewicz is a poet, translator and critic who lectures in English at the University of Łódź. He has published twelve volumes of poetry, thirteen books on contemporary Irish, British and American literature, and has translated the work of James Joyce, Seamus Heaney, Raymond Carver, Philip Roth and Derek Walcott.

Kamil Kaczmariski is a blogger, writer of travelogues, short stories, and reports from running events, currently based in and writing about Luxembourg. Following the publication of his book of poems *Aita* (2018), his essay on a journey to Rwanda, “Imana’s deep sleep,” was featured in the Polish travel magazine *Poznaj świat*.

Marek Kazmierski, translator: Born in Poland, raised in England. Writer, actor, author, translator, filmmaker, and visual artist. Winner of the Penguin Decibel Prize and Bike Philosopher of the Year Award in the UK, trustee of the Griffin Trust for Excellence in Poetry in Canada.

Lukasz Kaźmierczak / Lucja Kuttig is the author of the prose poetry collection *Kokosty*, with collages by Marta Motyl, and Agresty, winner of the Klemens Janicki Poetry Competition. They are currently working on a pamphlet, *Orzechnia*. Orzechnini - Orzechnica - Orzechniczka, thanks to support from the A. Włodek Prize.

Alexander Komives teaches physics and a bit of astronomy at DePauw University. In his spare moments he strolls, reads, wonders, and watches the world. He has been writing poetry his entire life, but not until recently has he started using words. This is his first piece published in a literary journal.

Maria Konopnicka was a Polish poet, novelist, children’s writer, translator, journalist, critic, and activist for women’s rights and for Polish independence. Born May 23, 1842, in Suwalki. Died October 8, 1910 in Lviv, Ukraine, she was one of the most important poets of Poland’s Positivist period.

Karen Kovacic is a translator of contemporary Polish poetry and has been awarded fellowships in translation from the National Endowment for the Arts. She’s the editor of *Scattering the Dark*, an anthology of Polish women poets, and author of the poetry collections *Metropolis Burning* and *Beyond the Velvet Curtain*.

Malgorzata Lebda (b.1985) grew up in Żelaźnikowa Wielka, a village in the Beskid Mountains. Ultra marathon runner, mountaineer, and photographer, she holds a PhD in Literary Theory and Audiovisual Arts and works as an academic lecturer in Kraków. She has published five volumes of poetry and been awarded multiple prizes.

Joanna Lech, born in 1984 in Rzeszów. Author of the novel *Tricks* and three poetry books: *Collapse*, *Relapses* and *Trans*. Winner of many literature awards: R. M. Rilke, Polish Society of Book Publishers, Creative Scholarship of the City of Krakow and the Grazella Foundation award. Compulsive traveler, photographer, and reader.

Krystyna Lenkowska is a poet, translator, and essayist; she has published 14 volumes of poetry, one novel and a volume of translations into Polish of poems by Emily Dickinson. She is a member of the Polish Writers' Association (SPP), the Association of Literary Translators (STL) and ZAiKS.

Bolesław Leśmian was born into a Jewish family and educated in Kiev. He developed a unique literary style, combining elements of the fantastic with folklore, the grotesque with realistic observations, the symbolic with the visionary. A marginal figure during his lifetime, Leśmian is now considered one of Poland's greatest poets.

Georgia San Li is at work on a novel, poetry and other writings. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Litro Magazine*, *Eclectica*, *California Quarterly*, and elsewhere. She has worked in cities including London, Tunis, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Paris, Wilhelmshaven and Tokyo.

Ewa Lipska (b. 1945 in Kraków, Poland), is associated with the Polish New Wave, along with poets Adam Zagajewski and Stanisław Barańczak. The author of over thirty volumes of poetry, she has received numerous prestigious literary prizes, including the Robert Graves PEN-Club Award for lifetime achievement in poetry.

Miles Liss earned his MFA in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. A winner of the 2021 AWP Kurt Brown Poetry, Miles lives in the DC area with his wife, the poet Zakia Ahmadzai. A collection is forthcoming from *Death of Workers Whilst Building Skyscrapers Press*.

Nasim Luczaj is a Carpathian-born, Glasgow-based writer, translator, and multidisciplinary artist. She is the author of *Hind Mouth*—a pamphlet in the *Earthbound Poetry Series*—and her poems are forthcoming in the weird folds: *everyday poems from the anthropocene*, an anthology published by Dostoyevky Wannabe. More at nasimluczaj.com.

Sarah Luczaj is a writer, translator and counselor based in Glasgow, Scotland. She is the author of the poetry collection *An Urgent Request*, as well as *Creative Regeneration*, and *The Chi Book: Reiki from the Roots*, both from Wayward Publications, and the co-founder of the *terrealuma* healing refuge (www.terrealuma.com).

Ellen Malphrus is the author of *Untying the Moon* (foreword by Pat Conroy). Other publications include *Chariton*, *Weber*, *Southern Literary Journal*, *William & Mary Review*, *Natural Bridge*, *James Dickey Review*, *Yemassee*, *Fall Lines*, and *Our Prince of Scribes*. She is Writer-in-Residence at USC Beaufort and divides her time between Montana and South Carolina.

Glen A. Mazis taught philosophy for decades at Penn State Harrisburg, retiring in 2020. He has published more than 90 poems in literary journals, a collection, *The River Bends in Time* (Anaphora Literary Press, 2012), a chapbook, *The Body Is a Dancing Star* (Orchard Street Press, 2020), and recently *Bodies of Space and Time* (Kelsay Books, 2022).

A former English teacher, **Carol Milkuhn** has spent her retirement exploring her interest in creative writing. In addition to being published in several journals, she is the author of two poetry chapbooks, *In the Company of Queens* and *Modern Tapestries, Medieval Looms*. She lives in upstate New York with her mini schnauzer, Atticus.

Weston Morrow is a poet and former print journalist. His recent writing has appeared in *Meridian*, *Lake Effect*, *The Journal*, *Poetry Northwest*, and elsewhere. His visual art has appeared in *Ninth Letter*. He lives in Columbus, Ohio, and can be found online at www.westonmorrow.com.

Jo-Ann Mort is a poet and journalist, having returned to writing poetry after a 22 year hiatus. Her poetry is informed by her activism and her travels. Her poems have recently appeared in *Plume*, *Atlanta Review*, *Upstreet*, *Stand*, and *The Women's Review of Books*. She lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Gabrielle Myers is a writer, professor, and chef. Gabrielle's memoir, *Hive-Mind* (2015), first poetry book, *Too Many Seeds* (2021), and forthcoming poetry collection *Break Self: Feed* (2023) explore food production and nourishment through ecopoetics. Access links to her memoir, poetry book, published poems, essays, articles, interviews, YouTube channel, and seasonal recipe blog through her website: www.gabriellemyers.com

Jacek Napiórkowski is a Polish poet, writer and translator. For many years he was editor-in-chief of the quarterly *Nowa Okolica Poetów*. A graduate of The City University of New York (USA) and The University of Hull (Great Britain), his work has been translated into English, Italian, Croatian, Spanish, and Serbian.

John A. Nieves' poems appear in journals such as *Copper Nickel*, *American Poetry Review*, *American Literary Review*, *North American Review*, and *Southern Review*. His first book, *Curio*, won the Elixir Press Annual Judges Prize. He's an Associate Professor at Salisbury University and an editor of *The Shore Poetry*.

Ewa Elżbieta Nowakowska is a poet, essayist, and translator, the author of eight poetry volumes, a book of essays, and a collection of short stories. She is the recipient of several prestigious literary awards in Poland. She lives in Kraków and teaches at the AGH University of Science and Technology.

Sarah Orman is a writer and lawyer in Austin, Texas. Her personal essays and poetry have appeared in *Narrative*, *Stonecrop*, *BuffaloX8*, and *Choosing Judaism: 36 Stories*. She also writes on *Medium* @sarahsorman.

Rosalind Pace is an award-winning poet with a long history of working as a poet-in-the-schools. She mentors a memoirs group, teaches a poetry seminar and lives on a quiet road near the sea. Her poems have appeared in many journals.

Self-trained poet **R. A. Pavoldi** has published in *The Hudson Review*, *North American Review*, *Italian Americana*, *FIELD*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Hanging Loose*, *ARS MEDICA*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Margie: The American Journal of Poetry*, and others. The Napolitano-American dialect and school of hard knocks gave him his voice.

Halina Poswiatowaka (1935-1967) was a lyric poet from Czestochowa, Poland, author of four poetry collections, and a doctoral student of philosophy, before her early death of a heart condition which she had suffered since she was a child.

Anne Rankin won first prize in Sixfold's Summer 2014 Poetry contest. Her poems have appeared in *The Healing Muse*, *The Poeming Pigeon*, *The Awakenings Review*, *Hole in the Head Review*, and *Passager Journal*. Her poem, "left unsaid," was a finalist at the Belfast Poetry Festival 2022.

Sage Ravenwood is a deaf Cherokee woman residing in upstate NY with her two rescue dogs, Bjarki and Yazhi. She is an outspoken advocate against animal cruelty and domestic violence. Her book *Everything That Hurt Us Becomes a Ghost* is forthcoming fall 2023 from Gallaudet University Press.

Sarath Reddy's poetry explores the world beneath the superficial layers of experience, searching for deeper meaning in his experiences as an Indian-American, a physician, and a father. Sarath's poetry is forthcoming or has appeared in *JAMA*, *Off the Coast*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, *Poetry East*, *Hunger Mountain*, and *Cold Mountain Review*.

Mira Rosenthal is a past fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts and Stanford University's Stegner Fellowship. Her honors include a PEN/Heim Translation Fund Award, a Fulbright Fellowship, a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, and residencies at Hedgebrook and The MacDowell Colony.

Tomasz Różycki is the author of eleven volumes of poetry and prose. He has garnered almost every prize Poland has to offer. His volume *Colonies* (translated by Mira Rosenthal) won the Northern California Book Award. He teaches French Language, Culture, and Literature at the University of Opole.

Ellen Sazzman is a Pushcart-nominated poet whose work has recently appeared in *Peregrine*, *Delmarva Review*, *Another Chicago*, *Paterson Review*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Sow's Ear*, and *Common Ground*. Her collection *The Shomer* was a finalist for the Blue Lynx Prize and a semifinalist for the Elixir Antivenom Award and Codhill Press Award.

Ida Sieciechowicz won the Anna Swierszczynska Poetry Competition for the best poetry debut in 2019 for *AMPLIFIED INSIDES. A soundtrack, Swing, baby, swing!* (Krakow 2019), translated into English by Sarah Luczaj. She is a lecturer English language consultant in the National Securities Market Commission.

Krzysztof Siwczyk is an award-winning Polish poet, critic, and essayist. His work has been translated into numerous languages, including Italian, French, and German. He lives in Gliwice and works at the Rafał Wojaczek Institute in Mikołów.

Julia Szychowiak (b. 1986) is a poet. Her debut collection *Po sobie (After myself)*, 2007) received the Silesius Poetry Award and the Prize of the Polish Society of Book Publishers. Her work has been translated into English, Spanish, German, Bulgarian, and Slovak. She lives in Księżyce and Warsaw.

Marc Swan lives in coastal Maine. Poems have recently been published in *Gargoyle*, *Crannóg*, *The Nashwaak Review*, *Speckled Trout Review*, among others. His fifth collection, *all it would take*, was published in 2020 by tall-lighthouse (UK).

Marilynn Talal won a Creative Writing Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Stella Earhart Memorial Award from the University of Houston where she earned the Ph.D. Her two chapbooks, *The Blue Road* and *Burden Sparked with Eternity*, were published by Presa Press. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Paris Review*, *Rattle*, and elsewhere.

Gail Tirone lives in Houston. She's a Best of the Net nominee and a finalist for the Red Mountain Poetry Prize, 2020. Her poetry has appeared in *NDQ*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *The Hong Kong Review*, *Mediterranean Poetry*, *Cha: An Asian Literary Journal*, *The Weight of Addition Anthology*, and elsewhere.

Eric Trump is a writer and translator who currently lives in Dunedin, New Zealand, where he teaches at the University of Otago.

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Jason Gordy Walker is an MFA candidate at the University of Florida. He has received scholarships from The New York State Summer Writers Institute and Poetry by the Sea: A Global Conference. His poems have been published in *Broad River Review*, *Confrontation*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Measure*, and *Poetry South*.

Mercer Warriner's poems have appeared in *Jabberwock Review* and *The Penn Review*. She is also a children's book author whose novels include the *Spell Casters* series and numerous *Nancy Drew* and *Hardy Boys* books. She has degrees from the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia University and lives in Brooklyn, NY.

Irena Wiszniewska is the author of the interview collection *My, Żydzi z Polski [Us, Jews from Poland]*, as well as other books on Jewish life in Poland. She makes street art by storytelling in the marketplaces of Provence, Odessa, and Madagascar. Poetry is her form of dialogue with the world.

Francine Witte's poetry collections include *Café Crazy* and *The Theory of Flesh* (Kelsay Books) and *Some Distant Pin of Light* (forthcoming from Cervená Barva Press,) as well as chapbooks *Not All Fires Burn the Same* (2016 first prize winner, Slipstream,) and *First Rain* (Pecan Grove Press.) She lives in NYC.

Grażyna Wojcieszko, born 1957 in Bydgoszcz. She lived for many years between Cracow and Brussels, where she worked for the European Union; she now lives in Bory Tucholskie in rural Poland, where she has built a retreat for artists and writers. She is among the foremost emerging poets in Poland.

Tomasz Wojewoda (b. 1988) is a Polish poet, translator and literary critic, the author of three collections of poems. He lives in Rzeszów, in southeastern Poland.

Cecilia Woloch (editor) is an American poet, essayist, and educator, based in Poland as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Rzeszów during 2021-2022. She has published six collections of poems and a novel-in-prose poems. When she isn't traveling, she lives in Los Angeles.

Jane Zwart teaches at Calvin University, where she also co-directs the Calvin Center for Faith & Writing. Her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Southern Review*, *Threepenny Review*, *TriQuarterly*, and *Ploughshares*, as well as other journals and magazines.



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