



**ATLANTA  
REVIEW**

**POETRY 2021**

*Grand Prize Winner*

**Melanie Tafejian**

*with Contest Judge*

**Katie Farris**

Volume XXVIII, Issue Number 1

# ATLANTA REVIEW

at the Georgia Institute of Technology

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*Atlanta Review* appears in May and December.

Subscriptions are \$20 (\$25 Int.) a year.

**Available in full text in Ebsco, ProQuest, & Cengage databases.**

Subscriptions are available through Ebsco, Blackwell, and Swets.

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**ATLANTA REVIEW**  
**686 Cherry St. NW, Suite 333**  
**Atlanta GA 30332-0161**

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*Atlanta Review* is a nonprofit literary journal.

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## WELCOME

In December of 2019, I was on the last international trip I would take before the pandemic shut down travel. I was in a restaurant in London, where I took a photo of one of my favorite Banksy prints. It was hanging in the women's loo, and that made me laugh. The original work appeared on Waterloo Bridge and depicts a young girl reaching for a vibrant red, heart-shaped balloon. Except for the balloon, everything else is in shades of grey. The words, "There is always hope" are graffitied on the wall behind her. Waterloo Bridge was also a favorite subject for the French impressionist painter Monet, who created a series of 41 painting of the bridge. He was especially fascinated by the atmospheric nature of London's fogs. Of course, those fogs were a result of the extreme pollution in the city. My favorite song by the Kinks is "Waterloo Sunset," where the speaker reflects, "Every day I look at the world from my window" and "As long as I gaze on / Waterloo sunset / I am in paradise." Waterloo station is the busiest rail station in the U.K. and also a monument to Wellington's victory over Napoleon.

So, why this reverie about Waterloo Bridge, and what could it possibly have to do with Atlanta Review? Certainly, the ongoing limitations of the pandemic is part of the answer, but there is more. Hope, as Emily Dickinson wrote, "sings the tune without the words." In this issue of the *Review*, you will find some words for that tune. You will also find words that remind all of us that we have responsibilities. Inherent in hope is the desire to move forward, to make things better—to believe in something that is, for now, just beyond our reach. I imagine that the scientists who created the new vaccines were filled with hope and determination. The winner of the 2021 International Poetry Prize, **Melanie Tafejian**, reminds us that the need for climate change also requires hope and action—not unlike what Londoners had to commit to in the early 20th C. to conquer the industrial fogs. War and isolation continue as other ongoing plagues, and we have poets who reflect on these challenges, too.

As we end another year of pandemic limitations, it is critical to find comfort and inspiration—to embrace hope rather than despair. We hope these stunning poems help you do that.

*Karen Head*

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## Ascension

Arising from the green valley  
where goats munch grass  
sounding the bells around their necks  
each time they choose  
a new spot—  
the glacier is revealed  
its snowy jagged peaks  
dare you to approach  
there is such disharmony  
in its two seasons.

We scale its trails in  
black fly heat  
our stories punctuated  
with shallow breaths  
and welcome the cooler air  
over the ridge where  
you motion to a view  
that somehow makes  
me want to weep.

The sapphire lake  
a perfect circle  
a reward for the climb  
the pull to be  
in the water guides us  
we plunge our feet in  
and wait for numbness.

Slick brown tadpoles dart  
across our submerged flesh  
their squat newly sprouted legs  
out of place on their squirming bodies  
like teenagers they swim around  
suspended in a world between first kisses  
and wishing to be tucked in each night.

Our backs recline against  
sun baked rocks and  
I know that someday I will want  
to be back in this moment.

Without ever touching you  
I am holding your hand  
I am kissing your forehead  
looking inside you and  
making a decision to stay here.

You thought you knew mountains  
And then  
this.

*Amy Allen*

## What the Ancient Olive Said to Me

Way before my insides wizened  
into a husk you wait to climb  
under and into, thinking you can  
imagine yourself an old olive,  
I witnessed people marching,  
dressed the same back and forth  
on this road, the sagging faces,  
the fighting—I learned this is  
what humans make of movement  
and speed, what you use your leafless  
limbs for, the grace and gesture of swords  
and guns, war that makes motion  
into stillness. Maybe you long to be  
planted, grounded, to feel the earth  
everywhere cradling your roots that  
spring forth when you hold still,  
to take your growth long and slow,  
sure of where you come from.  
All this goes back to the first  
tree, the one who taught you  
all this and you decided  
to do it anyway.

*Joy Arbor*

isn't it pretty to think so

There were things you said.

Fingers on the zipper teeth,  
two hands.

I wasn't sure if I was being seduced or threatened or both.

Fair enough. You warned me you were touchy,

grabby,

pully,

bitey.

My favorite of the dwarves.

You said, "well aren't you cool with your leather jacket?" and I  
might as well be.

But smoking cigarettes on your balcony is still bad,  
even with the jacket.

I squint

to show you where I used to live.

I can pretend the skyline is coastal New England,

avoid your roommate,

ignore our phones,

but smoking cigarettes on your balcony is still bad, and we  
probably should not.

*S. Aulet*

## Javelina

They slept snout-to-snout, snuggled, probably dreamed of  
prickly pear flat pan-shaped leaves red fruit  
squeaked as they chewed.

Maybe they remembered frisk-hopping in the creek  
bed or lying on their sides taking nips at the air.

Nestled under her rump, twin reds opened their swollen eyes.

They yawned, purred. Awake, they moved  
into her groin. Followed the scent of her milk. Rolled and tumbled  
over each other, squalling.

Their burps and toots smelled of watermelon rind and carrots.

*Marsha Blitzer*

## Without Praise or Blame

i.

My grandfather's grandfather was the first carpenter to begin rebuilding Chicago after the fire of 1871. His name was Adam. He placed his wooden ladder in the ashes and the feet started to smolder.

ii.

I put my faith in the calendar. It rains for nine days straight, all the trees turn yellow. The day we leave, the sky clears and we kneel in the forest. She dips her hand in the stream and brings water up to my cheek, my forehead. I want to go down for the sake of going down, trusting in nothing more than gravity and ashes. My love wants to dirty itself before you.

iii.

The north star pointed out to me when I was nine by a man who knew his way around ruin. I learned to sail from watching a beached Portuguese man-o-war. I learned the art of contortion from loving a woman who never forgave me. I like watching the horizon, and instead of seeing infinity extending, imagining Galveston.

iv.

Another try at descent—digging a trench to contain the wildfire with desperate hands. We won't go down unless it is demanded of us. These words are only substitutions for substitutions. The heifers and rams were offered in place of us, words in place of them.

v.

The earth is still but we are tumbling, like hoop snakes, picking up speed. We won't be denied.

vi.

I offer this turning away. Here, this is yours, too.

vii.

This life is the longest night of watching there is.

I say, I love you and I mean, I will love you if.

The Sufis say, if God feeds me I will eat. If not,

I will wait.

*Joshua Boettiger*

## Duality

Elsie's eyes are a hellish red gravy,  
twitching and careening,  
slot machines dealing dreams  
of limp-necked squirrels  
and tug-of-wars radiating  
into the afterlife.

Aubrie and I split between laughter and terror  
when her lips peel back,  
revealing a snarling, vicious side of her  
we only really see when an unexpected visitor  
knocks at the door.

The killer in our beloved black lab  
can remain dormant for days at a time. Meanwhile,  
her favorite pastimes include fleeing from brooms and kitchen clatter,  
busking for belly rubs, lobbying for walks.  
At dinnertime, her seedling eyes beseech us for  
just a bite of provolone cheese,  
just a taste of pulled chicken,  
if we can spare it.

We can and we do,  
more often than not,  
flinging the food offhandedly,  
her jaws expanding like a bear trap.  
Once or twice, I've seen a small nose reflected  
in her inky eyes, slackened lines, a mouth,  
eyes within eyes, careening, twitching.

*Caleb Bouchard*



## Syrinx in the Subway

This early evening rain reminds me  
of the flautist beneath the streets  
of Chicago, breathing a wage.  
And how each tumbling sorrow,  
each love slaughtered for the sake  
of music meanders in the tubes  
between silence and Jackson.

Wandering, it carries us weightless  
to our trains as the trembling  
leaves, as the doors slide shut—  
as the leaves, now trembled  
beneath a press of rain must  
bow, buckle and strain, if only  
to shake loose from their loads.

*Devon Brock*

## Through the Window at Sunrise

I never noticed before  
until the songbirds woke  
and the barn owl found its sleep,  
that the streetlights signal sunrise  
like a long fine wedge of geese  
flickering off then over  
the blunt edge of the hillside  
to where nighttime pools briefly  
and too soon evaporates. O Love,  
O wherefore have you flown?

*Devon Brock*

## You Ate Too Many Baby Carrots

The adult carrots that look a little less appetizing become babies. Pressed into baby shapes for the market. You ate the whole bag at once. Gnawing at the halves so the little cylinder at the center would secede from the outer layer. Some things are so fragile they break into their component parts. At the hospital, doctors muck out your intestine, leaving scars the shape of countries. The nurse says they'll help you attract women. *War stories*, she says. A fistful of carrots, gumming up your intestine. *Agent Orange*, you reply. The anesthetists begin laughing, desensitized to the gore. One of them says something about the sugar content in a carrot being too high for rabbit intake—how it's a weird choice for the cartoons. Your father's girlfriend says he cried before the surgery. But, over the phone, he won't admit this to you.

*Ian Cappelli*

## Titan flower

You call us with your pink  
maroon skirts twirling slowly open,  
pleat after Marilyn pleat.

Corpse flower, seven feet  
of green spike skyward. Your *come hither*  
draws flies with perfume.

You wait a patient decade between blooms,  
burst, multitudinous floescence, sequins of thousands  
of glittering stamens and ova.

Forty-eight hours and it's over.  
But who could take more staring through steamed windows,  
greenhouse dripping into the mouth of you.

Upside-down umbrella, amorphophallus,  
dew-dappled verdant spectacle rising magnetic, release us  
from your garish grasp, rare irresistible stink.

*Cathy Carlisi*

O it's a beautiful house

O it's a beautiful house  
but the empty side lot holds my eye—  
right for nine apple trees  
gravensteins, maybe  
semi-dwarf; that's what I'd plant there  
not keep it empty—  
full sun all day  
downward sloping to the west  
good drainage; this is what I think  
when I trudge past  
on my pandemic walks—shall I knock  
on the door to remind the household  
what it's missing:  
how about shade from the south  
sun in September, October  
any month?  
how about the fruit  
that first chonk into the first  
ripe one? how about the moon  
on those trees,  
birds who'll nest there, bees  
in the blossoms? there's a reason why  
first folks were banished  
from Eden: God wanted an orchard  
to himself.

*Grace Hughes Chappell*

## After the Aubade

We never made it  
    to mountains, too weak  
for anything but woods.  
    Here each light knows  
it is lonely. Each stone unsteady,  
    its touch a tendril.  
Deer cannot see  
    the dross they will become.  
We pretend patience, yet we know  
    we are not whole—we are  
each a broken blend of matter  
    that wants to be used. To be owned.  
The deer waits to become wolf,  
    and there will be no provenance.  
No pity for a girl who thinks she has lost,  
    who believes she has owned.  
The deer's body dries and I still ask you  
    to come back, as if you came to me at all.

*Lauren Claus*

## Wild Hope

Playa Grande, leatherback  
built for grace in water, traveling 10,000 miles  
of freezing ocean between nestings,  
hauls her thousand pounds ashore,  
a half hour to trudge from water's edge  
to wet sand to dry—finding a space  
for massive flippers to kick up sand  
with the fury of a mother who knows  
her eggs are desired by dogs, plovers,  
ghost crabs, monitors, raccoons, coatis—  
creatures who agree on little else.  
Her midnight excavation watched by  
rangers, pilgrims, the only living species  
in her genus, *Dermochelys*.

She lays 80 eggs, plus 30 unfertilized—  
an offering to predators after hatching,  
then carefully covers the site.  
She knows she leaves evidence—  
her weight, her strain through a night of work.  
Before returning to her ocean home,  
she wastes a precious hour,  
gyroscopes across the sand,  
spins the illusion of many nests,  
and then resumes her own pursuit.

By day, she follows jellyfish,  
waiting for them to rise  
up the water column every evening.  
She shears them with her perfect scissor jaws—  
mostly water, but also protein, collagen,  
trying to avoid the masquerade  
of delicately dancing ocean plastics,  
castoffs that thwart her body's task,  
keep her from digesting.

In danger this whole half century,  
she casts herself far from city lights,  
moving her nests in search  
of a space to plant her hope,  
spiraling through time and loss and current,  
never knowing if her effort will be enough.

*Patricia Davis-Muffett*



## The First Day

The robot places the cactus in the middle of the room, spreads sand around its base, carves flowers for its crown out of an old tin can. Later, it will dig labyrinths for groundhogs, trapdoor burrows for spiders spread shimmering handfuls of nuts and bolts to draw down the vultures the occasional migrating crow.

The robot connects all these dreams to a base of clockwork gears soldered wire and lacquered diodes, rolls up carefully-plotted blueprints to file with the government; the job is done. It closes the door just in time to miss the sun creaking up against one wall for the first time leaving a streak of yellow paint in its wake.

*Holly Day*

# Obsidian

Sand—  
black.  
Cosigüiña calling.

Heat of your  
inner thighs,  
my Earth.

Quick to curl  
toes in the  
shadow of  
          explosions  
          like  
          waves  
in the waves  
or  
anywhere  
on Earth.

When  
lava strikes  
deep,  
does the  
          water wash  
  
          over

or the fire  
burn, first?

Ring of Fire  
starlight nightly,  
quickly crystallizing,  
          something

from inside  
the Earth.

*Benjamin Faro*

## Questions of Earth and Stone

Do you drive here along the river,  
collect words,  
insistent with the heat of beginnings?  
It is how I think of them,

curled new on your tongue, breath warming  
each syllable. Roots coiled deep  
in the solar plexus.  
Our dialects of air and trees.

These are questions of sky.

Will you carve six cedarwood wrens, each tiny heart beating  
wild beneath the breast bone?

Will you loose the wind over forests of sycamores, their branches  
releasing a century of stillness?

Will you pause the sun over the lake, set aflame the cresting fish  
while we, just from our bed,

hold these aspen hills in cupped hands?

Love, I need you to rout questions  
from earth and stone.

I am leaf.  
I am wing. I am air.  
Disquiet me.

*R.L. Farr*

## A Curse

I've yet to stretch my tongue  
around all growl and mewl  
of this animal world. I try to forget  
the sound of a chosen rock—  
clack of claw, rub of thumbs, crush  
    of melons, glass metamorphosing  
        into shrapnel,  
a match waking to life, the breath  
that ends a prayer, the silence  
that ends the breath.

I gently press a tomato into the holy space  
between my nostrils and lips. *Speak to me,  
Grandmother; through this new skin.*

Nightshade is the color of the dirt  
beneath the roots of aspen and bristlecone  
reaching into the underworld,  
a pattern of whorl and herringbone darker  
than my throat. A curse is just a prayer  
recited backwards. Even the children  
at the dairy farm know this,  
    forgetting to latch the gate  
        between the animal  
and the tongue pointed at the sky.

At the neighborhood council, we argue  
over the cows. Last month, they escaped into the woods  
and now haunt the wolves with moos.

*Lisa Grove*

## Boxwoods

The boxwoods will not be  
made tidy, though I take  
my blade to them with every turn  
of the season. One long winter,  
the shapes I had carved  
seemed determined to hold  
before bursting into disorder  
after a week of rain. Now, even  
to approach these thrumming  
green hearts is to know  
the impertinence of life  
and be awed by it. A branch  
as strong as bone  
has found the socket  
between two bricks. It wants  
to thrust itself inside my walls,  
enter this house in which I  
have kept myself for so long  
apart. Oh, to touch  
the creeping fingers!—  
trace the scars whose number  
I will soon increase. If there is  
falseness in my celebration,  
let me be forgiven, allowed a shade  
in which to linger, a spirit  
renewed in the coolness  
of morning, a body  
as supple as fine brown roots.

*Graham Hillard*

## Salt Pond Eel Hunt

We descend where the sea kisses strip of asphalt shoulder  
down granite escarpment to hard-packed pebble sand beach,  
to exposed kelp pods baking a stink in the sun of low tide,  
black nets of wormweed, branching fronds of golden rockweed  
and the slender pop like bubble wrap of their air bladders  
collapsing between fingers and under bare feet.

Always shoeless over the rocks, seeking grit, any traction  
on the green grinning mats of Irish moss and sugar kelp.  
Easing into the bracing cold rush of the Atlantic, the water hides  
sharp-edged traps: crusted barnacles, shattered limpets,  
shy pointed periwinkle snails, mussels pried open, scuttling crabs.  
The starfish eat from their centers, all mouth and legs;  
pulled from their homes, they pucker on the hand.

The rocks flash quartz, glint sedimentary layers millions of years  
in the making as you hinge them up, always away  
so their hidden crabs or eels, flightless underwater bullets,  
don't shoot right into your lap. Reach out your hands  
and feel the cool quick slip of a darting eel. Conquest failed,  
rocks crash in bursts of glittering sediment, guarded retreats.

The tide comes in, encroaches on the eels' kingdom.  
Soon lobsters will stash themselves along the cove.  
Listen: Dust settles—Flip rocks; Make a mess.  
Remember we resent even God for playing God's part.

*Pamela Huber*

Moment at the Cliffs

*Acadia National Park, Maine*

The lighthouse looks back,  
modest. I look  
like a whale turning the earth

blue. My breath rising uphill  
in foam of turbulent waves electric.  
I cling. I must. Water rushes

hands. Grasping for gravity  
over the side of the cliff,  
over me. Why did I feel

the urge to jump? Come,  
make visible *there-you-are's*.  
Seagulls preen each other,

lamenting. Like a shofar  
the cliff, fog, foghorn:  
I never learned to love within.

\*\*\*

I never learned to love within.  
The cliff, fog, foghorn  
lamenting like a shofar.

Seagulls preen each other,  
make visible *there-you-are's*.  
The urge to jump comes

over me. What would I feel  
over the side of the cliff,  
hands grasping for gravity?

I cling. I must. Water rushes  
in, foam of turbulent waves electric  
blue. My breath rising uphill

like a whale, turning the earth  
modest. I look.  
The lighthouse looks back.

*Natalie Jill*



## Cairns

We pause by the cairn, marking our way—  
*look up at the sky* I tell my daughter  
    *the wind is sculpting clouds*  
*ever shape-shifting—*  
our laughter, stronger than shadows sifted

restores us. We place one more stone  
on the cairn, to confirm the path for those after—

our laughter, now even stronger than shadows sifted  
ever shape-shifting;  
the wind is sculpting clouds—  
*look up at the sky* I tell my daughter.  
We pause by the next cairn, marking our way.

*Kitty Jospé*

## Hand to Mouth

She would use this term to refer to our life  
after Tehran—the shidors, the street bazaars—  
to our life on the farm, she was already pregnant  
on the plane when we crossed the earth

and took to an acreage on the Trinity River—  
chickens, goats, gardens—she'd say  
*I nursed him for two years*, meaning my brother,  
and it was as much for him, and for me,

and for my sister, not hand to mouth but hand  
to earth, earth to bursting berry, earth to zucchini  
and to rhubarb, and hand to teat, milk to bucket,  
bucket to table, table to mouth, and later, when he's

middle-aged and has broken down, she'll blame herself,  
my mother, she'll say *I was so depressed when I carried him*,  
*we were so poor* and she'll bring her hand to her forehead,  
and her hand to her eyes and cry, and it will come  
as it does, in poverty and in grief, in waves.

*Holly Kelso*

## Sand Wave

I see  
through  
my skin to blue ocean  
veins, the crash in my chest  
not remarkable, predictable—

A cliff fell                      on three people                      today.

Does sand                      house waves                      we no longer fear?

The ocean                      crashes so near,                      so near.

My heart reminds me:  
*you're water, my dear.*  
The beach gently  
holds my foot to  
its ear.

*Katie Kemple*

## Symbiosis

Neck bent, tasting for salt, a doe  
laps at a pothole in the logging road.  
A mountain bluebird chitters in the pines.  
I sit in the shade on a wind-felled tree  
thinking I can make some sense of this—  
a deer drinking in the wild gulch of need,  
a bird out for sex. Buck rubs in the timber,  
fungus: a mushroom's orange lipid noses  
through the decomposing log, its white stem  
held in the softening mulch like a hand  
holds the polished handle of an axe.

*Chris Ketchum*

## Spinning

The spiders are back, scuttling below umber eaves, riding the eyes of webs. The light stifled now, lower in the sky, as if a weight of shadow had descended, and November

takes us by surprise. We'd barely laid away the magical jabber of July, September's musings. We'd barely begun to notice the crowd had moved on, or learned our lines for the somber

masque we appear to have signed on for. How do we live it out now, our losses accruing each day along with the falling leaves. How do we play out the liabilities of November as spiders do,

sailing the centers of their own beginnings, tending to whatever tears apart. Spinning.

*Jacqueline Kudler*

## Saint Julian's Day

I set my steaming tea  
on the patio table

and walk to the garden  
flimsy pajamas wet

with dew and seed,  
muddy feet breathing  
rosemary and marigold

sun hot on my head  
beauty filling me  
till I want to fall

among the rows  
like stricken Paul  
on Damascus road

and cry my mother  
through the old screen door  
rushing to see what's wrong

gasping *I don't know*  
between sobs like a toddler

calming down amid whispering  
that all manner of things

will be well in this world  
and the next.

*Michael Lyle*

## Rules

The sun and moon are banned, so too  
are the stars. This poem must be

its own natural phenomenon. Nothing with bright  
or iridescent wings hovering about nor brooks

that babble one straight into nirvana. There is no  
Nirvana here & hell is at capacity. No one

under the age of 20, please. Also, no puppies  
or unicorns or anything that conjures an *awww*.

Family members, living and dead, are asked  
to exit the poem at this time. We all have heartbeats

here but prefer the phrase miniature explosions  
of internal electricity. No current lovers or exes

or Roman myths. This poem is working very hard  
at being modern, thank you. Think random Wednesday

afternoon in Scranton, New Jersey. About 2:13pm. Sirens &  
yelling & laughing are permitted, but this poem

will resist using the words *body & flesh* & most especially, *soul*.  
Instead of *beautiful*, the poem will make an effort

to describe such a thing in more concrete terms. But really  
what this poem is dying to tell you is how

last night when we sat under a glowing canopy  
of a million brilliant lights—ok, fine, they were stars

(as long as I'm breaking the rules)—there might have been a heartbeat  
where I fled to the back of your pupils & never came back

*Aimee Mackovic*

## Neighborhood Association

Sleep, said the child to her dream  
until it fell with rain into morning.  
Doves called from the high-pitched roofs  
that filled each street by design  
around her. She used to think them owls.  
She knew better but still confused

the word mourning with morning.  
She liked to imitate the doves  
because they spelled everything with vowels  
in a language of lungs, full in the mouth  
and throat, no need to use

the tongue. The dream seeped  
into the edges as water on paper, leaving  
waves to show it had once existed  
like those in the ridge  
of stone she lived on. The doves  
unfolded into flight when ready.

*Angie Macri*



## They Say This Is Your Year

The idea is: a blue bird  
landing to perch upon  
my shoulder signals  
good luck,  
but the talons  
on my flesh  
don't feel like fortune.

*William May*



## The Shapeshifter in Therapy for Survivor's Guilt

First time I saw her, she was crying in a pharmacy.  
I transformed into a puppy and licked her ankles.

She kicked me, pointed out the absence of consent  
and threatened to call the cops. True, she had a point,

but later when I became a scattering of rose petals  
across her windshield, I thought I saw her smile

before she turned the wipers on. It was tough  
spelling out my apology in the clouds—I'd never

stretched myself that far—but I meant it.  
That Friday, I let her ride me through the park,

then became a butterfly and kissed her forehead.  
She texted later, said she was lonely but didn't

want to rush things so I became the rain  
and pattered off the eaves until she fell asleep.

Soon, she started to have fun with it: *Show me  
a baby goat, a pterodactyl, a giraffe with flippers.*

She even made videos for her family—her  
playing badminton with Virginia Woolf,

cooking a grilled cheese with Abraham Lincoln.  
I started to wonder why she never asked to see

my true self. Sometimes, lying next to her,  
I'd change back and wait for her to wake up

and run away, screaming. Every time  
she stirred, though, I'd become a quilt

that smelled like her favorite perfume.  
But it turns out she liked me best as water.

Days she didn't want to talk, I'd just  
fill the bathtub and let her soak in me,

flowing over her scars like I was  
pouring down the rungs of a ladder.

*Michael Meyerhofer*

# I'm Not Any of the Things I Used to Be

XXIV

He wasn't a man whose looks improved with a five o'clock shadow. Salt and pepper bristle more like dirt drifting over sharp features. A clean shave and short haircut, shirt unbuttoned at the collar, made him—a smile fluid across his face. And yes, again and again, I've thought about our last hour together. Our simple lunch at the kitchen counter. His fingers brushing mine as he passed the plates to rinse. The lingering kiss at the open French door. Brake lights trailing behind as he drove down the hill. I remember the feel of that smooth cheek in the palm of my hand. His last gaze, kind. His youthful fury long since spent. Old widows advise—Keep busy. No one wants to be the person who can't get up in the morning. The day hollows into evening. The time I would take him. Erase the day's vexations from his face.

*Julie Murphy*

## Bird Church

In the paling hour before dawn,  
birdsong rises to a buzzy volume  
and then recedes. The morning muting  
chases sound away, along with the darkness

as if all the trees were also retreating. As if,  
overnight, the trees had crept closer  
and closer, linking branches  
with one another to form a dome

over our house, leaning down  
to get a better look  
at the human world of sleeping.

*Dorothy Neagle*

## Scavenger Forces

In a birch forest on the first day of the new year  
I feel my emptiness empty again

When trees speak it is without sound and if I hear them  
it is not as a hearing self but as one of many sensing

My sensate empty is the best one I have  
Last night I wore sequins to be touched on my body

by what light was pitched by the fire and gibbous moon  
and I learned of a ten-thousand-dollar door

that was stolen then returned and much later replaced  
My friends are far away

and we don't even all want a piece of the moon  
tonight I swear again to myself I will listen

but about my promises and my lies I infrequently am correct  
One lie is the size of a tender finger

One clips itself to the bare clothesline  
I buy four plants and record our meals like a psalmist

removing their remnants from between my bony teeth  
There are five scavenger forces I want to come pick among me

and an unsudden anaphora understudies my speech  
Is there a way to make frost undead in a New England poem

Why say we know the cold when it's written all over us  
Why say *Then we go swimming in January* even if it is sometimes  
true to our line

The sun has set at four p.m.  
We find strange new games to play

*Sarah Payne*

## Small Town, Indiana

Time moves backwards here,  
smoke smells rise from a chimney  
by the highway as I speed past,  
hours early this fifth anniversary of  
the second attempt at the world's  
longest divorce. At the diner, folks hover  
over coffee and hash browns,  
savor time as it comes.

In my absence the trees turned back to  
shrubs behind our old rental,  
while winter salt shrunk the houses  
down a couple sizes. Rain faded the  
neighbor's brass awning  
to turquoise, just as he'd surely hoped,  
and across the street, cedar shakes  
loosen in a grin on the porch.

The wood pile out back is lower now.  
Around the block, over the railroad tracks  
where we took that selfie, looking into  
each other's eyes, both trying not to laugh;  
I turn right on the first road that leads to  
a hidden path to the park, a dead end. It's  
mediation day, and I've all but forgotten  
the two blocks from Hope Street to home.  
Past downtown, the same chiropractor's  
still on hold with the same insurance  
when I stop in to buy vitamins, a few  
bucks a bottle more now. Soap smells  
the same in the bathroom where I did  
bloodwork and vaginal swabs  
for five home births. You'll get half of  
whatever is left of my \$370 life, after  
legal fees. Snow is predicted by evening,  
tears are on the brink. We've paid  
retainers for four hours, scheduled six  
to be on the safe side, three lawyers



next door chatter behind closed doors to  
decide our fate. You sit across,  
frown into your phone. Nothing  
changed in a decade, another table,  
lawyer, phone, window. This silence  
still hurts, still costs everything  
more than I have, my new-to-me tires  
ready to drive all night when this is over,  
back to Granny and Grandpa, two dogs,  
a cat, and all the kids. Our midwife  
agrees to be our emergency contact,  
in case something happens to anyone.  
After we sign and forget to give back the name  
I borrowed, I will roll home along the river, watch  
trees grow tall and snow return to the ground,  
remember that unlike up north in the land  
of milk, honey, and progress where I tore out  
my guts to find refuge from you,  
here time reverses heart attacks, but  
songs sung on tire swings last forever.

*Sarah Degner Riveros*

## Ash, discomfort, and regret

I love listening to you read.  
Your tongue  
carefully picking around words—  
a heron—  
legs and beak and sheen of swamps.

I want to kiss your lips—  
taste the strange botanic crush—  
garden trimmings,  
long established ivy ripped up by the roots  
plaster dangling from its tendrils.  
Architecture crumbling  
with the weight of accumulated responsibilities.

I know you'll taste of ash,  
discomfort and regret,  
the faint metallic clang of history repeating itself:  
church bells pealing backwards in the night—  
an Unsettling din.

*Danielle Roberts*

## Illuminance

I have cried nightly for horses. the smart  
coal of their hooves. I have been running  
weekly, to find the farm where I fed foals  
sweet carrots and pulled wildflowers  
from gravel. to find the strong red barns.  
rusted wagons. at the end of my street,  
fireworks bulleted the sky. it's a ceremony—  
buying discarded family photos at a thrift store.  
lost and found: out of focus faces. they are  
my families now, despite their strangeness.  
the unfamiliarity of their celebration.  
sometimes, I think it would be nice to die  
as someone who was always kind. who had  
no enemies. blood un-hated and bright.  
it would be nicer, maybe, to believe  
that I could find love in a negative. an emulsion  
of silver. I have never touched a gun, but  
I know what one can do. I can imagine  
how heavy the metal. the sound it would make.  
inevitable recoil. blood. echo. dust turning  
to mud. I can imagine the violence  
one night can hold. a gallop. the fear of summer.  
what one person whispers to another as a lens  
blinks awake. here, the sand speaks in flakes

of bone. in leather left behind like choked oil.  
I cry and my mouth is open. yells escape  
like animals. like horses. fall from the redness.

*Sara Ryan*

## The Thickness of Memory Is the Thickness of Air

My world was a world of coal.  
Choppy rocks the size of a sergeant's fist.

A black that gleamed.  
Soot on the hands from the handling.

I tell my children how the dusty man  
delivered the coal in a great wheelbarrow—

shovels that tumbled the small mountain of black—  
how we slept

by the heat of one fireplace,  
how later I hid in the coalshed

to keep from beatings.  
I lived in a world

where fog was my element—  
the dense, breathing air

glistened with an English rain.  
Woolen air, fragrant

with the curling of smoke,  
high in the sway of chimneys.

I tell my children of a living  
they can't imagine,

ruled by a rougher touch, by thickness,  
by air you could see

and all the hazy wraiths of the world  
emerging.

*Nicholas Samaras*

## Endeavor

It is exhausting this endeavor to appreciate  
beauty before I get in the way hard to do when  
so much of this world is poisonous like dart frogs  
I wonder at their colors until I swallow  
my own tongue even my mother's box of  
pears can fell me drunk on their sugar I weep  
for her loss she never wanted a quilt for a son she is  
haunted by patchwork needle and thread visions of  
thimbles dance in her head though the thimble she  
fears most; it signifies the act define  
r-e-d-u-c-t-i-v-e will you please besides I am more of a  
throw really close knit and soft I just want to  
keep you warm I worry my mouth sounds are too  
abstract a child's gurgle far more  
alarming in a man can you understand  
my chewing I'll unhinge my jaw and swallow you like an  
egg

*Adam Schechter*

## Arctic Negative

—*Meade River, North Slope of Alaska*

As we should always then remember to insist  
that we shovel us over ourselves

after night-fire cooking what of the caribou  
I vaguely remember what remains

is water lessening and hardening. Ptarmigan  
hours, again. The salmonberry

days going unspoken away. Inupiaq if I can't  
recover language outside the land.

The chum salmon and humpback whitefish

when I lack netting in the river. The lover  
absent to whisper *this is all*

*for us.* Winter is standing up. To say that  
nothing grows, it does—lichen

alive under snow, like thoughts. If this is all  
for us, it is undone because of us.

I'm scrolling through all of myself in this  
house of too many things. Current

pauses itself to reflect, then reverses stream.

*Bret Shepard*

## Tundra Forms

I receive experience quietly, like tundra  
disappears stories. Below lupine  
and willow

permafrost  
is conjunction.

The frost covering the windows is called  
*fern frost* or *ice flowers*.

As if I had to recover, it is called  
winter. As if I am  
the artificial

room, I give in to the desire  
to hurt flowers with my hand—

into pieces  
as if my fingers were the teeth  
of a saw. It is called field dressing because

I am taken apart  
like an animal on the tundra.

*Bret Shepard*



Job Interview: Is there anything else you'd like to say about yourself?

I don't participate in potlucks,  
but I have a doctor's note  
explaining why. The more  
you talk about teamwork,  
how each division functions  
as a family focused on support,  
the more I wonder what  
you're covering up. My résumé  
may be slightly exaggerated,  
but not in ways you're likely  
to find out. I considered faking  
an interest in caves, bitcoin  
or collecting porcelain spoons,  
but was afraid my lies  
would have a long half-life,  
become how I was known  
throughout the company.

The last time I got fired  
I was 24. I'd hated  
every minute there yet afterward  
I felt bereft. My accent  
is so faint no one suspects  
I'm fluent in redneck,  
which I still speak at home.  
When you asked me to name  
my greatest flaws, you must've  
guessed I'd say perfectionism,  
pushing myself too hard.  
Like you, I claim to hate clichés  
but use them anyway.

Because I feel safest in the shower,  
I had to speed on my way here.  
When I heard sirens coming

from behind, I recognized  
how minor my crimes are,  
and also how relieved I'll be  
to finally get caught.  
I wear long sleeves all year  
because of my low iron,  
hives brought on by verbs  
like *incentivize* and *steward*.  
Last night I planned an answer  
with the perfect mixture  
of humility and wit, then realized  
I'd despise you for believing it.

*Carrie Shipers*

## Mickey Mantle

### *Mickey Mantle*

everyone knew that line of poetry  
with its alliteration, meter and metaphor—  
the mantle of greatness  
on his big supple shoulders.

The Mick, The Commerce Comet, The Switcher  
—none outshined the name his father gave him,  
a trochaic handle he knew was fit for fame:  
“It sounds like a made-up name,” he said,  
amazed at his good fortune.

When he arrived in The Big Apple at 19  
radiating blondness and boyishness,  
toting a hayseed’s straw suitcase,  
the New York papers heralded him  
as Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb in one.  
Across town, another rookie,  
Willie Mays, slipped in sans hype.

I met my old hero after he gave a talk  
to a bunch of insurance agents, showing  
old movies of his glory days.  
He autographed a baseball card  
and looked up at me with a sad glance.

Mickey Mantle was living off “Mickey Mantle,”  
signing baseballs for pay  
and blotting out grief with booze  
until he decided he was done,  
went into Betty Ford, came out  
and told the world he was an alcoholic.

Sometimes he spoke pure poetry  
in his Oklahoma twang:  
the applause scattering through Yankee Stadium

when he walked up to the plate  
sounded like rain hitting the tin roof,  
he said after he retired.  
He would give anything  
to hear that sound again.

*Henry Stimpson*

## Welcome, Mouse

I'm a torpid lump in a stuffed chair  
when something blurs across the floor.  
"Henry!" cries my wife.  
I jump up, run to the garage  
and return brandishing a fishing net.

This is a safari in our living room.  
Suzanne is the beater and I'm the hunter,  
creeping slowly, slowly—  
I've got him cornered by the chair.  
Now!

I slam the net down on nothing.

He zips across the room,  
and dives under the baseboard heater  
into a snug square gap  
between pipe and floorboard  
where he, a baby,  
stares up at me a moment  
with tiny liquid eyes  
and then drops into  
the netherworld  
of underflooring.

Days later we find  
a pierced baggie in the cupboard  
spilling fragrant dried basil.

Welcome, Mouse, to our house.

*Henry Stimpson*

## The Visitor

In the season of so much death, we were told  
stay indoors, leave sparingly, cover your face.  
That spring a robin smashed daily into my grandmother's  
kitchen window. I heard once, a robin tapping glass  
symbolizes the death of someone you love.  
At night she prayed the bird away. Morning  
after morning the bird was there—throwing  
herself—all feather and bone. My grandmother  
hung white sheets to cover the window, to hide  
the glare. The flag of defeat. The harbinger of death,  
pounding the cloth. The bloody sheet fluttered.  
Inside wooden and glass figurines lined shelves:  
parrots and cardinals, flickers and jays.  
Outside my grandmother split bulbs: spider lilies,  
dahlias, purple iris. Behind her the robin—  
chest bright as wet rust—hurling herself  
into the place we were all dying to escape.

*Melanie Tafejian*

## Zink Dam

Just six days ago we were there on the hardscaped shore  
watching the silty Arkansas sluice over and down,  
Tulsa's midday heat churning above the current.

Blue cat, channel cat, paddlefish, bass—  
who could hope to overcome the torrent off the weir?

They pool in pools just south, where  
fisherman or a dry spell may take them  
one by one, one thousand by one thousand.

But what's stayed with me is the power of the water  
as it poured over the inert concrete earthwork.  
That force is here today, in the cool draft of new autumn air

that brings the mockingbird's songs from the elm  
straight through the window as if it were no obstacle at all

and carries with it the whish of traffic  
from the nearby avenue  
where the cars glide by silvery and light.

*Lauren Tess*

## Letter to my Ex's Daughters

Like Chicken Little, sometimes it feels like the sky is falling because it is falling. But, you'll be okay.

Like Red Riding Hood, there are wolves. Lots of them. If one follows you, run. If they're wearing glasses that don't quite

look right, run. If they say you are the most beautiful woman in the world and *I've never felt this way* and *I want to marry you*,

run. Like Hansel and Gretel, people will make promises made of cloud, of air; they'll build houses made of chocolate and

gummy bears, whisper things like *I want your heart*. Don't be distracted by their glittery candy. Your mind is your

best tool. Sharpen it. Unlike The Princess and the Pea, there are no princes and if a man presents himself as one, he is

delusional. Or a wolf. One thing to learn from this pea brain story—you should be skeptical of everyone who tries

to woo you, so go ahead and place something small under their mattress; let them prove they're worthy. Like Sleeping

Beauty, you may fall asleep, maybe even for years and years, which can happen in this overwhelming world, but it won't

be a man who awakens you, even if he sings you songs, reads you books of poems, draws you warm baths, if he says everything

you've ever wanted to hear, even if he has two daughters who say *I love you* every night, even if you wish you could give them sky, wish



you could stay, but you can't stay because he really is a wolf dressed  
in his finest regalia and you'll hear some small voice inside whisper—  
*Wake up.*

*Chrys Tobey*

## Crossing the Bayou

If I get off work early, I'll drive  
    all the way  
to a truck stop near the highway  
that sells enormous pink plush elephants,  
& gator teeth  
& all manner of cheap cutlery  
& has a backroom full of slot machines  
    under a big neon sign that rotates all night  
    above the sterile glow of the gas pumps.

And when my first 20 bucks are gone,  
    I'll put the last five  
    toward a tray of fried pickles or a po'boy,  
    a daiquiri or diet coke,  
then take the slow way home  
over that bridge  
    where the moon's eye on the water below  
    follows me closely from shore to shore.

*Alex Thomas Turissini*

## Combine

I walk with the combine  
    mowing down the last of  
The late autumn broom

Corn. Think of the hands  
    before me, Puritans from  
Rehoboth. Hands snapping

The necks of desiccated  
    stalks to reveal the ear:  
Ruby-red. Most forearms

Prickle with raised rashes;  
    sore calves and angry  
Shoulders—discomfort

Medicated in long yawns,  
    the body a conduit of  
Earthly exertion, imperfect

But complete handiwork.  
    How clean the feeling; the  
Combine groaning through

The last acre of crop. I think  
    I see the farmer in his glass  
Booth. Face glazed and

Slumped. I hold no judgment,  
    think: we are the same.  
Look down at my feet,

Silenced in plastic. The  
    rubber soles not even  
Touching the dirt.

*Matt Vekakis*

## Helsinki day and night

All afternoon my head hurt as though I had drunk too much at lunch.  
The sky was a shirt, washed so often it held onto  
    only the memory of blue.  
Every corner was the wrong corner, every street the wrong street.

Around nine I left the hotel and went out again.  
I crossed the park; someone had turned off the green lawns.  
I walked until I got lost. The buildings were talking quietly,  
    the stone wolves and frogs on the cornices  
    telling each other stories, the way  
    voices from café tables ripple over the street.

There was a little bit of light that shone from everywhere,  
    and everything was flat and looked at itself in the light.

A barracks, with a sign about how it burned in the war.  
Two figures on a bench. The orange tip of a cigarette.  
A double row of trees climbing the hill to an observatory.

And when I turned the corner  
    an old man was walking an old white cat on a leash.

*Jay Wickersham*

# DAN VEACH PRIZE FOR YOUNGER POETS

2021 Winner

Haneefah Bello

In a series of couplets that yokes together such images as “salted pears,” “cheeks stuffed with crows,” and “God’s tears,” Nigerian poet Haneefah Bello creates a landscape of the body that is both familiar and mysterious, and lovely all the while. Her poem “Duplex” takes its form and title from Pulitzer Prize winning poet (and Atlanta’s own) Jericho Brown, who invented the duplex form, and demonstrates a sophistication with image, language, and music beyond her young years. In the form, each couplet repeats and twists an image from the previous one, then introduces something entirely new, so that the poem picks up an energy as it develops, yet maintains a kind of haunting repetition that creates unexpected tensions. What spoke to me about Bello’s poem in particular is that it is a love poem that chooses to focus on the physical aspects of the lover, but they are never quite what you expect them to be—a body “full of tongues,” teeth that are not in the mouth but “[forgotten]...back home”. “Duplex” is remarkable and tender, intoxicatingly strange, and very worthy of this year’s Dan Veach Prize.

*JC Reilly*

## Duplex

For dinner, my lover served salted pears.  
If it can go wrong, it will go wrong.

Everything went wrong: hope cracked our spines.  
You were milk, and my body was full of tongues.

I was milk, and your body was full of tongues,  
Cheeks stuffed with crows, anthracite for eyes.

I kissed your cheeks till my eyes bled anthracite.  
Tonight, my breath belongs to the moon.

Tonight, I will wear the moon on my breath.  
Hunger will be back. You will forget your name.

Hunger is your name. Forget your teeth back home.  
Love is the difference between rain and God's tears.

Love is God's tears, crimson dew in dawn's blue.  
My pearly eyed lover, salt of the earth.

*Haneefah Bello*

# POETRY 2021

## *International Poetry Competition*

### **GRAND PRIZE \$1000**

Melanie Tafejian

#### *International Publication Prizes*

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Stuart Gunter \* ww harris \* Ann Herlong-Bodman  
Heather Jessen \* Suz Lipman \* Tim Louis Macaluso  
Flannery McAleer \* Julie Moore \* Jo-Ann Mort  
Michael Nelson \* Gail Newman \* Veronica Patterson  
Wanda S. Praisner \* K.R. Segriff \* Xiao Yue Shan  
Julie Cadwallader Staub \* Tara E. Sturgill  
David Tucker \* George Uba \* Jocelyn Ulevicus

#### *International Merit Awards*

Danielle Alexich \* Megan Kiekel Anderson \* Diane Bliss  
Steven Cahill \* Suzanne Chick \* James Clinton \* Patty Crane  
Nancy Davis \* Jonathan Drake \* Becky Gibson \* Audrey Hall  
Bill Herring \* Shilpa Kamat \* Jen Karetnick \* Robert Keeler  
R.J. Lambert \* Ibe Liebenberg \* Katharyn Machan  
Shams Momin \* Adriana Morgan \* Michele Randall  
Kelly Rowe \* John Schneider \* Robin Schwarz  
Claire Scott \* Christopher Shipman \* Winifred Spar  
Kristina Van Sant \* Alejandra Vansant \* Mary Warner  
Lee Woodman

## Welcome to Poetry 2021!

The editorial team at *Atlanta Review* was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm from poet Katie Farris for judging this year's International Poetry Contest. First, Katie is an excellent poet and poetry translator. Her newest collection, *A Net to Catch My Body in Its Weaving*, is a stunning and important celebration of a body undergoing chemotherapy. Not many writers could find beauty in this experience. Katie is a badass, in every possible way, and we are simultaneously honored and awed by her willingness to give her time and spirit to our journal.

Katie told me the reading the poems in our finalist-pool was something she negotiated along with managing her illness, saying that “poems help, and what a beautiful selection you’ve given me!”

As for her selection, Katie said:

*“As ever, choosing just one poem feels like an impossible task. I decided on ‘For Years I Was Afraid to Go Home,’ for the subtle way it engages environmental disaster and our flawed individual responses to it; for the ways we long for home and mourn it even as we’re standing right here. Other outstanding entries included ‘them bones,’ ‘Ending with What She Said in a Narrative of Snow,’ and ‘Animals Living in Solitude.’ All of them deserve the kind of good readership and thoughtful editing you’ve already invested in them. Thank you for making me a part of this.”*

All we can say is, “Thank YOU, Katie!”

This is special collection of poems, and we hope you enjoy them as much as we have.

*Karen Head*



## For Years I Was Afraid to Go Home

Ghosts of frost lifting from windshields. Smoke  
heavy in the hills. Better to be

in a place where I don't know  
what's normal, where I can't question

the biblical rains. Where I can't remember  
how as kids we watched the salmon run, their bodies

shining silver coins, the way they became  
a mass pressing each other down, racing

to make it out alive. Muscle on muscle—memory.  
Instead, in Albania I eat fish killed

with dynamite, throw trash to the wind.  
Old women in Yerevan read my fortune,

in coffee black as the sea bottom. In Bologna  
I eat myself silly in pasta, stop reading the news.

At the fish markets the shrimp and urchins—  
still plentiful—mock me. Sometimes

when the days grow quiet, I long for the world  
I once knew. I remember bees

filling saddle bags from oregano flowers.  
I imagine their homes smell like an afternoon

in a garden somewhere, with grape vines  
and white bowls filled with lemons. Of course,

here too, even in the imagination  
they are dying. No amount of looking away

will save us from the low bellow at our door. Home  
is everywhere I turn. The sun—a split cantaloupe.

The sea—a salt mass I turn to.  
The sea buoying my body into the coming dark.

*Melanie Tafejian*

## Eclogue 19: The Light in the Darkness

*As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.*

—Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*

Take a sunset if you will  
qualia of the electromagnetic spectrum  
light just being light being curious  
about itself as origin then as origin  
of origin in a regression cold  
as the edges of cliffs or the pointed  
ends of discontent grown succulent  
in the desert like the many arms of a Spanish  
Dagger insouciant in its phyllotaxis  
 $((1 + \sqrt{5}) / 2 = 1.6180339\dots = \Phi$   
by every god and father) because  
it's all numbers every countless bit of it  
speed of this constant of that fractal  
and blooming in alarming cadences of spin  
and angle and fecundity and all of it  
essentially unknowable except as surface  
and scale pretty of this glory of that  
how three plus green equals trillium  
(*wakerobin tri-flower birthroot* tripled  
leafish bracts whorled about a scape)  
how you take a sunset parse its every  
intention grow smaller with it until  
it snaps shut its lovely its mere being  
happy of this gone of that.

*John Blair*

## Yoin

*Japanese for an experience that lingers in memory long afterwards.*

We were four women walking the beach long after midnight, our feet sinking in the cool sand, listening to the ocean expand

and recede in the dark. We'd flown to Florida to briefly escape our separate lives: one from her troubled marriage,

another from the demands of children, the third still mourning a miscarriage, and the fourth, a different death.

We talked softly. Small holes in the sand spit and bubbled. A ghost crab skittered sideways like an arthritic hand running piano keys.

By moonlight we saw the reptilian body emerge, large as a manhole cover, dripping seafoam. A sea turtle come home to lay her eggs.

She labored, scraping toward sea grapes and grasses well above the tideline. We made a broad space, then waited like midwives

as the turtle swept sand behind her, dug a hole with her flippers. The work was hard. She strained her head forward, the folds

of her neck stretched smooth, jaws opening. She gasped. Groaned. Heaved sand shoulder high, flinging left and right.

Whumps from her rocking shell shuddered the ground. The sea smoothed onto the beach, shushed back to itself.

She expelled the eggs beneath her and rested before ploughing sand into a crest over them with her flippers.

Like a particular shell pocketed from the beach we each carried that  
night  
differently when we returned to our own lives—how the sea turtle

used her nose to anchor in, and drag herself by inches before melting into the water; how the mound she abandoned was large as a human grave.

*Marion Starling Boyer*

## Things

Sometimes I step from my balcony into the future, my hair is grey, and it is likely that my name is Edna. One thing is for sure—I no longer want things—to be wealthy, to write a bestseller, to be a Lancôme presenter.

Still, there are things that make me sad: An overripe banana, neon light, chipped nail polish, an empty vodka bottle in a playground, a thin dog, a man in a brown suit, a little girl with makeup, the click-clack of heels in a hospital corridor, a thin menthol cigarette.

Sometimes I step from my balcony into another country, Greece for example. I am in an all-white Tavern, eating Tzatziki, drinking Ouzo, octopuses are drying on the wall, the sea is blue.

Still, there are things that make me sad.  
But sadness has nothing to do with things.

*Limor Weisberg Caspi*

## Another Yahrzeit

My sisters and I pass  
through the cemetery's iron gates,  
and we follow the path  
to our parents' graves.

It is a clear winter morning.  
Warm spirits of the dead  
greet not our bodies—  
but reflections of our souls  
in marble and granite stones.

We huddle and speak of the ways  
the world will never be the same.  
We haven't kept the calendar  
as closely as intended,  
and we regret burning our candles  
a day or two late.

The birds offer us grace  
with the soft beating of their wings  
among the limbs of old trees  
lining the yard's perimeter.

The birds are messengers for the dead.  
They sing and fly from one branch to the next,  
as our parents' spirits draw near.

They have been waiting to see  
the dutiful row of us—  
bound together—

a flesh and blood fortress  
against the cold—  
in their defense and their honor.

As we recite our solemn prayer,  
birdsong bright as liquid silver  
saturates the air.  
It is also a prayer of mourning,  
rising above our own.

*Allison Creighton*

**Note:**

The Yiddish word, “yahrzeit,” means “time of year.” In Judaism, yahrzeit is the anniversary of one’s death in keeping with the Hebrew calendar. On this day it is customary for the closest relatives to burn a yahrzeit candle and to recite the Mourner’s Kaddish.



## Valentine's Day

*for Mary Catherine*

The winter jasmine is blooming on the bypass  
west of the firehouse. Cold today, but tomorrow  
in the sixties the weather report claims. February  
in Virginia will do that—swing like a lefty batter  
aiming for the lights. Hot, cold, hot, until it snows  
one day in April, after spring has settled in for weeks.

What shall I get you for Valentine's Day? What do you  
need? A laugh that takes years to unfold? Shifting shadows  
in leaf light? A set of guitar strings to keep in your car?  
Some high heels? There is a place called okay where  
I sit mystified, waiting to meet your exquisite heart. I see  
you now and then: something hopeful, useful, and true.

*Stuart Gunter*

## them bones

it was years before i'd write about my mom's death      i  
told her once how i knit sighs with each breath      they feel

like silvery cobwebs blistering with time      or air so  
high it suffocates itself      we are born & die alone

but we get to burn with such a blaze we think we're gonna  
glow forever      death is omnipresent      our end

looms over our shoulders like clouds that can't make up  
their minds which mountain they should crash into or if a

bird is a poem with feathers      or if there's really a big  
difference between a sonnet & the rust on my father's ole

f-150      my mother in the seat aside him as cancers pile  
atop each other      in a mass      at the base of

her skull      a cluster of angels      each of them  
metastasized fists of carbon & time & crows & fate & bones

*ww harris*

**Note:**

Title & lyrics for device of golden shovel from a song by Alice in Chains

## He had followed us

for days. We thought we'd lost him, this sea cow,  
cousin to the elephant, grinning as if recognizing us,  
my husband at the wheel, I on the bow—  
marshes on one side, sand spits on the other.

No more dolphins leaping and flashing,  
diving without a splash. Here a five-hundred pound  
animal, a manatee with a truncated trunk,  
short flappers, tiny teeth, and an unknowable

smile which makes me consider our mammalship:  
he and we floating through these murky waters  
together with alligators basking on each bank,  
thick-skinned, rough-bodied with sharp teeth

and powerful tails, the last living reptile related  
to the dinosaur, but for now  
the manatee stays close, his thick skin  
grayish brown, no speckled barnacles, no rosettes

as on Ms. Bishop's fish. Just wrinkled leather-like skin  
with splotches of green slime—algae  
I'm thinking as the grandfather of all gators  
slips into the water. I hold my breath. The manatee

nudges the reptile aside. The reptile yawns, his body  
iridescent in the morning sun, water  
in his mouth sparkling. A mutual agreement between  
two species. Live and let live.

Eons it takes to learn this. Centuries go by and one day  
that unused, long-buried DNA surfaces.  
Somebody nudges. Somebody yawns. Water sparkles,  
sparkles, sparkles. We sail on down the waterway.

*Ann Herlong-Bodman*

## Whenever I Walk Into the Museum

I want to touch the Babylonian lion.  
Always the guards are right to keep close  
eye on me, here, this short jaunt from  
the pottery studio where every surface, raw,  
fired, or bisqued is fingered and caressed,  
handled by anyone who has a hankering

but gently, oh so gently. We've all broken  
or dinged one another's pots—the hazards  
of sheltering creativities and clay in tight  
space that shouldn't be dusty with silica  
but is. Two-thousand-six-hundred-years-old,  
the lion struts with ferocity barely restrained.

I want to sleek my fingers across his mid-snarl  
fangs. I want to palm his turquoise surround  
from gloss to porous brick. A guard steps  
closer, protective like this lion, with dragons  
and bulls, once protected Nebuchadnezzar  
who, if alive now, would've mastered talking

heads and tweets and this combustion of clay,  
copper and artisan bestiality—birthed to stalk  
the throbbing desire of any supplicant's heart—  
would've been lost. Yes, you ancient king,  
I stand, awestruck. Not of you, but of surviving  
art from unknown hands—this blazing lion

who, still, seduces and bites.

*Heather Jessen*

## Sad Poem Right Out of America

*He sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film.*

—Jack Kerouac on mid-century photographer Robert Frank

In Frank's black-and-whites,  
people gaze at the lens,  
from inside the hollows  
of streetcars and trains—  
here a cheek cut by shadows,  
there a girl's small white hand  
barely resting  
on the "whites only" seat

His camera captures  
the tabloids  
stacked at the newsstand  
of a man born elsewhere,  
small American flag  
taped to his register by its wooden stick,  
papers' headlines screaming  
about the Convention

Row of Panama hats  
on the men at the stand  
like the ones on the cover  
of my grade-school text:  
*Howdy, Neighbor*  
in five languages  
down the bright cover's side

Back then,  
neighbor Erma—  
her "Frawley for Mayor" potholders  
in every house on the street—  
bellowed, "Howdy, Neighbor,"  
in passing on the sidewalk,  
always a little heartier  
at election time

Erma Frawley is long gone  
That America is gone  
The faces, streetcar, newsstand  
likely gone as well

Today a man hurled himself  
over a wall,  
swam in the sewage  
seeped from a plant at the border,  
to pick lettuce  
in a searing field

I think of that sad day  
fifty years ago,  
when Americans,  
ever so briefly united,  
stood in fields and backyards,  
on hoods of cars,  
in shirtsleeves and summer dresses,  
to catch a glimpse  
of the passing train

Inside it, the body  
of Bobby Kennedy,  
on its way to Arlington National

A different photographer,  
Paul Fusco,  
shooting in the color of his time,  
peered out from that train,  
instead of in,  
clicked his shutter at the people  
standing in pairs and in knots—  
here a pocketbook over a bent elbow,  
there a hand-painted sign—

One hand waving goodbye  
as the funeral train passed,  
another saluting,

or perhaps  
visoring a forehead,  
to block the terrible glare

*Suz Lipman*

## Persia

Summer, 1341

The lovers lay entwined,  
twilight darkening to Shiraz,  
the poet, Hafiz,  
drunk on his beloved's hair,  
on the nightingale's song—  
only that morning the magnificent bird  
spilled its blood  
into the rose's willing mouth

Hafiz wept with joy:  
the arrow, discharged,  
could only fly forward—  
he would never leave the garden  
of her midnight hair

Autumn, 1977

The poets wailed for ten nights,  
watered gardens with their tears,  
birdsong streaming past roadblocks,  
as billy clubs beat protesters,  
stripped wine from lovers' mouths

Nine dawns bloomed crimson,  
the smell of fresh sangak bread  
drifting from bakeries,  
stars shrouded by daylight,  
poets' words both carnation and gun

Winter, 2020

The mourners stormed the streets,  
ink-dark night pinking to dawn,  
midnight eyes swollen



beneath hooded robes,  
while tulips stirred open  
and desert larks sang

The wife had memorized Hafiz,  
just as that poet  
had memorized the Qur'an:  
"Oh, Wine Bearer,  
Take us away from the ways of the world  
And the sorrows of times past"

She ran into the crowd,  
blood-red banner sweeping behind her—  
the words "hard revenge",  
in Farsi and English,  
glinting like stones, like stars

*Suz Lipman*

## The Windmills

She wanted a closer look  
began asking me last week  
if we could take a ride  
up into the hills around Howard  
where her grandparents once lived;  
didn't matter that  
we had driven up there  
several times already this month. No telling  
what she remembers  
or why she repeats the same stories  
over and over. Her mind a Ferris wheel  
sometimes it stops in midair  
her thoughts suspended in the lights.  
My mother speaks  
of the windmill farm  
as if they were aliens  
stranded millions of light years  
from home. Suppose she's right,  
strange as they are  
with their hypnotic hum  
blades taking big bites of sky.  
She would have boarded willingly  
had they asked her.  
It takes everything I've got  
to be with her now, avail what time  
I have to her rambles about her cat, Tiger  
or the people upstairs  
that charge like a herd of elephants.  
Hers is the first face  
I remember, strong and knowing  
a look in her eyes  
that left few questions  
about our relationship.  
She peers from the car window  
head tilted skyward  
a luminous aster blue.

She wants to be closer  
to the windmills  
turning on the hillside  
temerity enough  
to light the Southern Tier.

*Tim Louis Macaluso*

## Taos, Missouri

### I.

Mostly this place is sky, a mouth cracked open wider than the land it swallows. It wraps itself around the farmland, gaping and indeterminate. I can't tell what time it is— the light rests inside nothing, white and grey becoming one thing with two split voices. At night I kick off my pants and blanket and sit upright in underwear and socks. Behind the door, my friends sleep in love. Behind the window, snow falls faintly over everything, touching it faintly, patting the houses down more solidly into the earth. I can't see it falling past my own face in the black glass of the window, but I recognize it from its silence.

### II.

Cows form tight groups and lay together in the snow. It pools in between their shoulder blades and in the middle of their foreheads. And the white horse standing still with flakes on her eyelashes without another animal to lay with— we debate her capacity to withstand the cold until the sky turns to a strange green and sends us home afraid of the dark, our faces frozen, our legs clumsy over the snow banks—one car slips suddenly into a ditch maybe a hundred feet ahead of us, the synthetic red of its brake lights spreads across the snow like spilled blood. I wonder how we can continue under such a subtle God.

*Flannery McAleer*

## My daughter reads aloud our horoscopes

as I drive us home on I-69, though she knows  
I don't believe in such prognostications.  
At 29, with juris doctorate and bar exam both  
under her belt, she's just finished her twentieth  
session of physical therapy for a constellation  
of muscle knots that've disabled her for a year.  
She declares I am Taurus (which I already knew), who's  
wedded to Earth, and I must admit that suits me fine.  
A Scorpio, her element is water, her planet Pluto,  
which is maybe why, she jokes, she was so upset when it got  
demoted to dwarf. Mars will have to do.  
Amid this global pandemic, as the planets danced  
around their maypole in the zodiac, she's been the center  
of my universe. She says I harvest the satisfying  
fruits of such loyal labor. She revolves  
around truth and passion, as she's brave and stubborn,  
which I'm thankful for, since traits like these fuel  
her resilience in surmounting her present fate.  
When she tells me my planet is Venus, I laugh,  
failure at romance that I've been, and laugh more  
to learn my favorite colors are pink and green, since blue is what  
I'm drawn to—moonlight and melancholy, October's wide-  
ranging sky. Evidently, I'm a great gardener,  
though my sowing skills are vastly underused,  
as the best I can do is plant some tulip bulbs in fall,  
then wait. She keeps people guessing with her turns  
of phrase and unexpected moves. (Grudges, I note,  
are easy for her to bury.) When in pain, nothing consoles her, sign  
tied to scarlet as it is, throbbing from the thorns  
it bears. I'm into tactile senses, she adds,  
and that is true enough, for I was the kid touching  
everything on store shelves as my mother  
slapped my wrist. Decades later, in the stores,  
I still stroke grapefruits and cantaloupe, snuffling their aromas,  
and paw plush blankets and cashmere sweaters.  
And book stores! O, the lovely matte covers I have

to smooth, too. I'm not one to have my head in the clouds.  
She's a star, though she admits her penchant for precision  
grounds her imagination in the mire of literal meanings.  
By the time we pull into the drive, I can't recall concrete  
details of what's predicted for our week—  
I'm not where I'm supposed to be,  
and actually lost in space.

*Julie L. Moore*

## Cocktails in Warsaw, 2019

Is it too obvious to write: God is crying?  
The rain falls in torrents from the Warsaw sky.  
I sit with Israeli friends at a wine bar  
under a canopy while tears drip through the slots.  
Three black cars with flashing lights speed by  
then slow down. The President is home  
next door in his castle. The city breathes  
with a busy modernity while the country  
gets pushed and pulled like an accordion  
between past and present, truth and lies.

Yes. God is crying, for sure,  
watering the graves that lie under every stone.  
Corpses gaze up at us through the smothered, buried earth.

I ask my taxi driver to take a detour past Mila 18.  
The rain breaks as Orthodox schoolgirls  
from Israel gab and flit on the sidewalk near the mound of grass,  
oblivious to the burial place of the young and godless heroes.  
Mordecai Anielewicz is a street in the ghetto  
framed by emptiness and Soviet style apartment blocs.

There is nothing for God to do but to water the earth,  
make it blossom again, touch our shoulders with  
the fresh green smell of summertime  
in a world as imperfect as ever.

*Jo-Ann Mort*

### *Notes:*

The President of Poland lives in an old castle next to the Bristol Hotel and Wine Bar; when this poem is written the current Law and Justice ruling party is attempting to rewrite some major facts of Polish history and control media.

Mordecai Anielewicz was a socialist-Zionist leader of Hashomer Hatzair youth movement in Poland, and head of the Jewish Fighting Organization, that led the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, in which he and most of his comrades died. Mila 18 was the street address where they lived in the ghetto, now a memorial as a mound of grass.

## Ending with What She Said in a Narrative of Snow

On front of the card she sent the year I moved, a panoramic black-and-white shot of northern gloaming: a dingy squat white trailer—  
two pinched windows, narrow off-center door—gladdened with a string of Christmas lights amid winter fields—flat black distances  
interrupted by a hedge of trees around a farm, and by another farther windbreak un-intrusive as the edge-of-field grass slumped around the trailer. No road in sight, only intuitions of one, slivers of telephone poles, commas quiet as voices heard far away.—

Open the card: *Season's Greetings*. Nothing else— a field of snow crossed in solitude. The first time I read her note, I thought it said *Dear Mike, I hope you're still alone somewhere*. Then I wasn't sure. Maybe *alive somewhere*. If I were suicidal or in a war—sure. Still, that glib phrase is ironic only in relation to what it might have meant. I've kept the card ten years now, take it out from time to time. And when I read *alone?* I feel lonely, yes, and enlivened too, kissed by all that can be said out of loneliness.

And if that's not enough, let me lean even closer, let me enter the colorless distances of the photograph. Before night falls, and the snow, let me stand in front of the trailer, let me stand there in my red coat, not so red as an apple, even redder in the snow. Let me walk away across the fields or down some road you'll never see, my back turned on your world of color. Let me grow smaller and smaller, until I'm just a dab of color, until I'm a memory of where color used to be. Until I'm the one who comes home each night to the trailer, who, when you're alone with what you maybe wanted, hopes *home* meaningful more than emblematic, it's two windows bleakly glowing.

*Michael Nelson*



## I Went to Sleep in One World and Woke in Another

The hills are parched,  
the forest floor peppered with ash  
carried by wind across the Bay  
and over the California hills.  
We are, all of us, coming to the end  
of what we can bear. Some nights I wake  
with birds crowded in my chest,  
the lift of wings whipping paths of air  
down tunnels I travel in sleep.  
It is October and still the relentless sun  
scorches the days with the heat of another  
world, one we enter with the past held heavy  
in our hands. Still, the trees' calm presence,  
the generous shade they share, cools  
the anger that makes my body tremble.  
I lift a leaf, hold its shape in my hand.  
Veins like mine. Dark tattoos  
of age, blemished, imperfect. It is fall,  
the earth littered with star-shapes,  
crumpled shadows, crisp edged, burned.  
I don't know much about trees. I don't study them.  
But I know the feel of wind when it stirs the leaves.  
And apples, bruised and battered, dark messages  
fallen to earth. Time will pass over us like a hand  
that strokes a child's head. Grief and loneliness  
will pass. Breath, the flutter of lashes. Sleep.  
How the past seems to come closer  
as the present recedes into darkness.

*Gail Newman*

## On the inland passage to Alaska

we entered fjords through sudden  
openings in looming stone walls.  
In round inflated Zodiacs we skirted  
pale blue icebergs. It was late April.

We crossed a bay, where humpbacked  
whales rose and dove, rose  
and dove, their curved tails catching  
the last gild of late sun.

When we came to the glacier,  
the ship stopping an exact specified  
distance from this sky-cliff of ice,  
it calved a high-rise that collapsed

and shattered the water. Shocked,  
we cheered from the deck, yet  
the fractured glacier shuddered  
inside our bodies, a silent crack

as the mammoth white bone  
splintered, and in a Costa Rican  
rainforest, the canopy  
slit, admitting too much light

for what's below to live.

*Veronica Patterson*

## Reading *The Magic Mountain* During the Pandemic

Because days become longer and longer, I decide to reread Mann's huge novel—young Hans Castorp's three-week visit to his cousin in a Swiss sanatorium.

I read it in college but can't remember the end. Time slides away as I move through the first chapters—Hans, enjoying the food, walking about the property, resting on patio chairs

in the fresh air—a bit like me here in lockdown. Soon he becomes flushed, has chills, trouble breathing, finds blood on his handkerchief—his cigar tastes vile.

He begins to take his temperature. That's when I recall his cousin telling him that in winter, bodies are brought down in bob-sleds because roads are blocked.

Chekhov said if there's a loaded rifle on the wall in the first act, it must be fired in the second. I stop reading, put the book back on the shelf.

*Wanda S. Praisner*

## In a Tent City

there are bare feet sneaking  
through moist mud piles  
heaped between thighs  
of plywood skin  
cardboard lungs  
of garbage bag plastic black-green thoraxes  
in the swampy moonlight  
breath  
crackling past kites run aground

there is a soft heart beating beneath  
children's ribs pressed to soft bellies  
of mothers surrounded by well used hips and  
the bent spines of displaced millionaires  
who left their millions and children  
beneath  
some distant sands

there is an arm stretched forward  
to receive fentanyl's thin joy

there are missing limbs  
and false eyes

there are collective voices rising from the fire  
of a hungry gut gangly unwashed limbs  
pounding the unclaimed earth neurons crossed  
arcing lightning in a distant field

there is laughter  
pressed through narrowing throat-holes

there is life shining through  
living

as things always do  
through everything            until    they don't  
there is a calm before the bulldozer's roar

*K.R. Segriff*

## love poem for good timing

not desire but a brief fission in the order of things—what allowed us to love. the business of the hand is to take from what is there. you happened there, unsmiling, certain milk-orange tuesday hesitant behind you bird-like. there are occasional days that stir forth amidst the circular motion of other days repeating—the slow diligence of tindersticks before they grow into hearth. *okay*. okay, I say, closing my hand upon yours between the city sending people to smoke. there are places in which *I love you* means *I saw you in the middle of nothing else*. means *you were a boat that had its stem pointing elsewhere onward*. this love, shaped in fire and free of everything except choice, comes to me igniting still, and I look at you, finally. unlike what is said in retrospect, no one intends to survive. survival happens as land is pieced together on the horizon—a hallucination strangled from waterless days. coming as a surprise amidst an endlessness that braids air and water, dark and light reversible and mutable as static. it is finity that creates sense of the consequential. in running we were always, fatefully, one. the enormity of one, promising nothing. night was always putting hands around the neck of the day, breathlessness holding air as if saving it for much later.

*Xiao Yue Shan*

## Keep in Touch

*in honor of Sister Pat McKittrick*

Above, below, beside me  
the other Sisters of Providence  
sleep in their apartments  
but I'm awake and seeing your face.

I remember the way you recognized my car  
when I drove to find you, to strike up a conversation,  
share a pizza, give you bananas, protein bars, tampons.

I can picture that intersection with the newspaper stand  
where you tied your dog while you panhandled  
to keep your boyfriend from choking you.

I can't forget the way you met my gaze, listened, texted me.  
You wanted to stay in touch. I'm sure of this.

Now I read those last texts again, hearing  
how hopeful you were

about the man who stopped, promised to get you clean,  
see the country with him for free.

Careful, I texted back,  
this sounds dangerous.

A text from Niagara Falls  
clean and sober a whole week you exulted

then a cryptic text from Detroit  
another from Atlanta

then no word  
no

*Julie Cadwallader Staub*

# Tofu Journey

## I.

Sometimes I press tofu with a volume of Charles Bukowski's collected poems.  
In the refrigerator, tofu sandwiched between two plates, book teetering on the  
pinnacle.

Husband peers in to find Charles' pock-marked face, his hefty words mighty  
& bearing down.  
If I use "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy", my beloved dishes his disappoint-  
ment.

I'm the sole proprietor of tofu. Smashing, marinating, dehydrating,  
intermingling with  
vegetables soaked in sauces yielding from continents breaching far off.

## II.

Sometimes when I'm spiraling out, left floating in the frothy aftermath of  
disquiet,  
I watch a video on YouTube called "This grandma making tofu from scratch."

In a fuchsia coat swims a kind-faced grandma, arms fatigued from lifting  
beans in a basket.  
She smashes soybeans to milk with a massive, spinning stone that her  
grandson helps whirl.

He stokes the hearth as grandma's hands are compelled to task, discerning  
digits, the recipe's  
steps notorious to her fingers, like the moss' familiarity with the tree bark's  
furrow.

## III.

Sometimes I ponder the early American botanists. Men discovering, naming,  
pressing botanical specimens.  
Men forever claimed dominion over designation & flattening of  
the delicate things.



Ben Franklin called the foreign pods “Chinese garavances” in his London letter to John Bartram.

He penned his thoughts & packed a little parcel to be scuttled across the cannonballed mire.

That letter begat sprouting of tofu knowledge in the early Republic. Bean stalks clinging the walls of Kingsessing, knowingly savvy curds, infiltrating through each outstretched tendril.

*Tara E. Sturgill*

## Pearls

Waiting for the reporter with the page one  
story in her notes, who never calls  
and today is no different and she's now so late  
we will soon blow deadline,  
I lie down on the couch in my office and read  
Yang Wan Li's ancient poem again  
about waking to rain falling on a river,  
"like pearls spilling onto a glass plate,"  
the old civil servant wrote near the end of his life.

It's raining sideways here in Newark,  
garbage blows through the gas plazas,  
umbrellas whisper past my window and gather  
at the corner to fix the next election  
and scandals keep growing like mushrooms  
from the mayor's fingers.

Part of me wants to disappear into Yang's poem  
about the rain falling near his little shack,  
wants to become a passing traveler  
parting the low branches of the dogwood  
as the poet writes and the rain begins  
a transformation into words that will last a 800 years.

But I'm stuck here, waiting in this bad idea  
of a town, near the clock tower with a broken hand,  
in a brightly lit old worry shop called the Star  
drumming my fingers against the desk  
louder and then a little louder while the page one  
reporter drives like mad to get here  
through rain that is falling like pearls.

*David Tucker*

## Animals Living in Solitude

I once read in a book that we are animals.  
That helps. That helps to explain my brother,

neither bear nor sloth. I saw a picture of a platypus,  
a mole, a spotfin lionfish holed up in a salt-water trench.

The pangolin has a back rutted like an artichoke.  
When threatened, it curls into a ball.

The pangolin is an endangered species.  
At 75 my brother, endangered, plays jazz alone.

I tell him we are all rutted like artichokes—  
but still he curls into a ball. He once owned

a chartreuse Subaru and a Manx cat,  
the car dying first. He acquired other cars

but never another cat. I know for a fact  
he'd forfeit his entire ant hill if prodded

or merely asked to move aside.  
Fact #2: on his deathbed he will fail

to deliver anything approximating a speech.  
He never signed on to a social contract or agreed

to die for a cause. His remains will be found  
mysteriously unclassified, like a page torn

from that book I told you about, like a tail  
some cat improvised a lifetime performance without.

*George Uba*

## Sonnet for my Thirty-Four Year Old Self

*The pearl-grey city, the opal that is Paris.*

—Anaïs Nin

*To know Paris is to know a great deal.*

—Henry Miller

Back then—when the spring sparrows called—  
I could hop on a train to Paris for an afternoon  
without a ticket—wearing pink leather heels  
and a violet peach skin skirt, my hair long and  
curly racing down my back—crossing borders—  
so I could eat the world—*and I did*—while  
still maintaining my waist. Back then, I thought  
of myself as beautiful, a modest femme fatale—  
practicing French words in my head, flirting  
with my eyes—only my eyes—because French  
men like the chase—counting on my hands  
lovers as brutal and kind as Anaïs and Henry—  
losing daylight in the gardens—sipping Sancerre

while savoring a slim meal of olives with wet lettuce leaves,  
crisp haricot vert, salty anchovies and egg—slowing down.

*Jocelyn Ulevicus*

## Contributors

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**John Blair** has published six books, most recently *Playful Song Called Beautiful* (University of Iowa Press, 2016).

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**Marion Starling Boyer** has four published poetry collections and is proud to have been previously published by *Atlanta Review*. Her work can also be seen in *Rabbit*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *Modern Haiku*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, and *Escape into Life*. More about Boyer can be found at [marionstarlingboyer.com](http://marionstarlingboyer.com).

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**Cathy Carlisi's** poetry has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Mid-American Review*, *Southern Review*, *The Greensboro Review*, *The Atlanta Review*, and many others. Cathy is President of Americas for BrightHouse, a creative consultancy that helps organizations make positive impact through Purpose.

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**ww harris** has been published in *Bryant Literary Review* and *Canyon Voices*, and recently was runner up in the 2019 Blue Mesa Poetry Award and shortlisted for the Bridport Prize and the Grindstone International Poetry Prize in 2020. He lives in rural Cheney, WA, with his girlfriend, kid, five cats, and collection of guitars.

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