



Atlanta Review Poetry Prize, 2018

First Prize: All of this year's twenty-four finalists were strong, but there was one poem that haunted me from the first time I read it, stamping indelible images of a worn overcoat, a dung-filled field, and a shamed young woman into my imagination and memory. It continued to haunt me as I winnowed the finalists down to a dozen, and then to half of that. In the end, there was no contest: "Underground" was simply unforgettable—fitting for a poem whose subject is the fusion of personal and historical memory. The core of the poem is an incident involving a young African-American woman traveling by bus in the Deep South during the Jim Crow era; denied access to the whites-only bathroom at a rest stop, she is forced to squat in a field while others watch. Narrated with precise attention to detail ("throat parched and palms glazed in sweat," "She / clamped her painted nails," "church shoes," "a dung-filled field"), that section alone would be enough to make this poem strong. But the poet succeeds in framing it between layers of generational and historical time and memory, enlarging the poem's span back in time four centuries to the year 1619, when enslaved persons were first transported to America, and ahead in time another century, as an as-yet-unborn descendant of the woman on the bus gazes at her photograph in his grandmother's foyer. "Underground" comes to mean not only the Manhattan subway being ridden "this morning" by the daughter of the woman who rode that bus, "smuggling" four centuries of history under her mother's worn overcoat, but also the Underground Railroad smuggling escaped slaves to freedom, and the ways in which personal and historical trauma resonate underground, below the surface of consciousness, to affect the lives of later generations. I look forward to reading more of this fine poet's work.

Also: "The Tardigrade" was impressive in its melding of precisely observed visual detail with scientific fact, and in its use of strikingly original similes and metaphors to bridge the gap between technical knowledge and the sensory imagination. Those strengths plus the surprising "leap" at the end from the world of fact to a metaphysical plane are reminiscent of the powers of Elizabeth Bishop in a poem like "The Fish" or "At the Fishhouses." While only a first prize is awarded in this competition, "The Tardigrade" deserves honorable mention.

Julie Kane



Underground

When my wife boarded the subway
to Manhattan this morning, she smuggled
four centuries beneath the worn overcoat

she inherited from her mother: the coat
her mom clutched on a Greyhound bus
from Tampa to Talladega. The one she

laid across her seat at a rest stop midday
on a sweltering Tuesday in August,
throat parched and palms glazed in sweat,

as she asked for the bathroom key. She
clamped her painted nails as the cashier
refused to offer her a word, instead

pointed to the *White Only* sign and
motioned toward a dung-filled field
where she was forced to squat as

a busload of tourists watched her slide
her drawers to her ankles, trembling
to keep her balance, trying to spare her

church shoes and her grace. There is
a child, four generations from now,
who will remember a story he's never

been told, see himself in a frayed book
about Jim Crow, discover a dung-filled
field behind an overgrown rest stop and

remember a woman he's never met alive
on the wall of his grandmother's foyer:
bloodshot eyes that refuse to look away.

Carlos Andrés Gómez

Airship, January 1915

A piece of smurry night broke off,
silver and fish-shaped. It drifted closer,

shimmering, massive as a god.
The navigation light was a single slow-

moving star and the ship purred as it glided
over. Our upturned faces lit with appalled

fascination. Lost, windblown off course,
the zeppelin lowered, sprinkled the lands

with parachute flares – small fires
wafting down –

and found its way to Yarmouth's
cluster of coastal lights where Baptists

were closing the midweek prayer meeting
with the refrain *singing to welcome*

pilgrims of the night. Martha Taylor sat
at home knitting a sock. She set the needles

down before turning the heel, her fingers'
misery worse for the rafty weather.

On the road a dog barked and barked.
Two streets over, Liza walked the floor

with the baby, worn out, in a frap.
An unfamiliar throbbing noise drew Sam

Smith, a cobbler, outside to stand
with others in the wet.

The men in the gondola
wore fur-lined shoes with rubber soles.

They warmed themselves with coffee
from a thermos. One, lying flat on his

stomach, peered through a trap door
and dropped the first aerial bomb

ever to fall on England, and then nine
more, managing to ruin a church, to blow

apart buildings, a fishing drifter, Martha
in her chair and Sam standing in the rain.

Marion Starling Boyer

Felt calculus

Aliens are here and they are bacteria.
My heart is on heat
the sea swells
 sin king ti[d/m]e
It's no coincidence

We figure out the world
the exact moment we destroy
our ability to live in it.
 coll apes
 poi sun on us
the body a machine the brain a computer

You're the one I want to tell it all to.

Trying to hear birds through the silence
my brain pours inattention
 s weighing
d own this
p age

such a young species

We may be the only things
that understand things

Every morning the first word I say is
Yes.

Stephanie Christie

Why I Read Obituaries

I listen for a distant bell
even when the name is one
I couldn't have come up with.
Today it was Bruce Langhorne, 78,
his right hand missing two fingers
and much of a thumb, blown off
by homemade fireworks when he was 12,
which didn't keep him from taking up guitar
and learning so well he played with Dylan
and Baez, Lightfoot and Rush.
From the steps of the Lincoln Memorial
he performed with Odetta before 250,000
the day Martin Luther King Jr. said, "I have a dream."

There were folk-rock gigs in Hollywood
and a mid-career swerve to Hawaii, where he grew
macadamia nuts. Diabetes inspired him
to cook up organic low-sodium salsa
he sold as Brother Bru-Bru's Hot Sauce.
Death is the one news hook
late or soon we all achieve
but an obit needs a better reason
to tell its story. Mr. Langhorne's goes back
to '64, when he walked into the recording studio
carrying an enormous Turkish drum with bells,
and Dylan, in that jingle jangle morning,
he came following, to sing a song for us.

Don Colburn

The Ladies

When Mom and Mae got old
and both their men were dead
we moved the pair in Mom's house,
split the rambling maze of halls
and rooms into a sort of duplex,
dead-ending halls into closets,
cutting doors in walls, dividing
the place into two halves, separate,
but equal, right down the middle,
so each sweet lady would have her
privacy. We prided ourselves in
knowing that *our* splitting of the races
was actually equitable, each side
with nearly the same square footage,
each with its own same-size bedroom
and identical bath, complete with sink,
toilet, tub, just different colors—
one pink, one green. Each duplex
even had its own T.V. room, the kitchen
being their only common space.
Yet after all the pricy remodeling,
the opening of this and closing of that,
every day when I'd visit after work I'd find
the retired clerk and her former maid
in Mom's den in side-by-side recliners,
the old bluebird and the cardinal
washed colorless as sparrows by the soaps.

Mac Gay

interment

our family burns its dead and stows the ashes in closets for safekeeping. No one is sure what to do with ancestors anymore. Whether to scatter or to bury. But let's not dramatize every breach. Nor fear a bird at the window: fate is mostly weather, its workaday rendering. This sunrise reminds me as it fills the room of some other morning. The dew on my grandmother's patio, the screen's trick latch. Memory grows faster than pine, and more insidious. A fluent animal, the sky insists. *Tomorrow and tomorrow*—I had to memorize that once. In autumn, when everything recurs unwieldy, as if history will snap clear and soon, leave us rings to count

Ceridwen Hall

Samara

One day you'll wake, not in the cocoon
your body's warmth has spun for you,
but teetering on a precipice. Before you,
a chasm drops to the seams of Earth's
origins, where flagellates are etched
in the sediment of prehistoric oceans.
In sunlight, a silver ribbon of river beckons
to you from below. Then, you will know

you always have been teetering, barely
balanced, at the whim of Santa Ana winds.
You may feel a fondness for the scrub
on the plateau behind you, but your mind
will focus forward, recalling the seedpods
of maple trees – how they whirligig in fall.

Don Hogle

A Brown Girl

A brown girl in an urban whirl
of fast-food, in braids and at war
behind the counter, battles
fatigue on her feet, living
on the edge of a dime.

When

she looks up with native echoes
in dark eyes that I shy away from
like a kid or a broken man wanting

to stand, desperately digging
his way out of a hole.

She

sees more than me with those eyes;
like a crow's they grow dark on
her open brow before flying
into the furrows of her braided origin

where

we first met in a child's history
that tells where she came from but
never where she's been or can ever
get to, they'd never let you.

Come and be

urban with me, is my plea across
her counter's wasteland and me

putting change in
her open hands.

Joe Jackson

Your fruit, hallowed

Legend has it every pomegranate contains a seed from paradise.
As a child, you would be ready when the costly clustered
treats were cut open, catching every stray seed
before it fell. You would hope each time
to have a whole fruit to yourself, then settle
for luck, trust the one nectarjewel
to find its way into your mouth.

Time flies. Every month you implode, cradle
the ebb like a handful of pomegranate seeds.
You reimagine the stabbing knives
as soft fingertips popping nectarjewels,
practice the composure and elegance only
bearers of such jewelfruit can boast of.
You never miss a day of school.

You wait for somebody to say your body is a miracle,
learn that no prayer of yours will be heard
until the filth has passed.

The sacred is gnawed at, day by day, the mythical
spat out bare. Nectar is a fleeting sweetness.
*If a husband calls his wife to bed and she refuses,
the angels will curse her until morning.*
72 virgins promised to every man, free of bodily
pollution, their virginity always magically restored.
Bodies of fluid glass, blood pulsing silver.
The pomegranates hang low and luminous.
Pomegranates, heavy with harnessed juice.
Paradise is questioned
for its hypocritical abundance of fruit.

She longs to trample every pomegranate held dear.

The angels thrive in her fear of fists, cast a shade
on the marriage bed. Their wings mirror
her splayed limbs, horizon
of silhouetted mountains.

Dissolutions of newsprint, the release
of tea leaves' ink, a faucet's drip
in an arid peace.
She prays, week after week, to bleed.

Naima Cerulean Kazmi

Written by Window Light

*On Woman Writing a Letter
by Johannes Vermeer, circa 1670.*

This momentary world
is washed pure
of timeless savageries.
The slanted beam draws
your pen forward,
as you, bent over verse,
bow to this oracular light
and to words' random rhythm.

But your maid is her own muse,
moored in the flow of time.
Her radiant gibbous moon
looks to dangers far past
the harbored masts of Rotterdam,
or the glistening fields around Delft.
Her serenity as to crimes
done to her, or to her family,
or as witness to the taint of empire,
or to household scandals concealed
behind that looming tapestry,
or some such secret makes her
powerful, wise and kind.

Her dark form erect and vigilant
is the cloaking lens
for your orb of internal focus.
All depends on her confidence –
her watchfulness,
her placing your poem
into the hands of your lover,
her sealed lips, her prudence.
The picture says you are a servant
To how you feel in this moment
And your maid is time's patient mistress.

George Kramer

Marriage

For Catherine

Shallow along fringes of gray, the shore hovers
below morning fog, socked, immutable (seemingly).

Will the edge ever lift? You know, how bare limbs question
the root of everything just before May softens

into its emerald aura, before reds rage October's hill. I hold
you over time in all your colors becoming.

& what others often slip away from, or take leave
by detour, I hold you. As for that desert within a desert

when the valley cactus raises her dry arms, at the axils
where areoles protrude their wooly chins,

their bristled spines, I give you succulent magenta
from the floral tube. I store quench in my trunk & this

I vow for both of us—you, my most tender-rooted thirst.

Rosa Lane

What the Rat Told the World

*"I've wanted to write a poem about it."
—Florence/Chloe in "Ganesha"
by Jeffrey Ford*

The rabbit. The raven. The elephant god.
The girl in New Jersey
has raised her soul's altar
to worship them all, word by word.
Noose, parrot, sword, pomegranate:
brown, green, silver, crimson
all the colors of the moon she knows
will shout out her true name.
Her mother's a mermaid lighting incense,
her father's a toad in an unlit well,
her uncle swears he never traveled
all the way back from cold Hell.
"Whistle!" she hears in her head
and music happens, demons fly
from mountains she knows don't exist.
Where is her star? Long lost among sky's
riddled cave of sharp tusks and teeth.
A blue woman rises, lotus
of water becoming a twilight lake.
Rabbit. Raven. Elephant god.
Old fire in a universe
burning obstacles to dust.

Katharyn Howd Machan

Song for the Refugees

*—After hearing that 92 Cuban refugees were turned away
from the shore of Key West one weekend in December, 2016*

The huddled rafters close their eyes,
have buoyant dreams
of warm café con leche, its soft tan foam kissing their lips. Dreams
of lying in their beds on solid ground, the dry raspy sound
of guiro insects serenading them. Dreams
of steamy clubs where they danced with lovers,
bongos and conga drums and marimbas
beating in time with the steady rhythm of

their hearts. They wish they could lean into a rumba now,
but they don't dare: their hands
cling to thin frayed ropes, their ankles lashed to
makeshift inner tube rafts that save them from the
cold liquid darkness,
the nightmare

sharks. Hungry, they are, these rafters—
not just for rice, beans, and pulled pork,
but for that other thing: a word
sweeter than mango or cane or the chocolate from cacao,
a word that tastes like freedom

on their tongues. They know their futures are out there:
but like a shimmering mirage in the distance,
no matter how long they paddle, it always
seems to pull farther and

farther away. At the southernmost point in Key West,
cruise ship tourists turn their backs
to the ocean, take flat-footed photos of their

Tommy Bahama smiles. The rafters spot land in the distance,
a thin green disk that appears, then disappears on the surface.
They paddle hard, hoping
at last to finally touch bare feet onto dry land.
And though their bodies are exhausted,

though there is no music yet, they know
they will somehow begin to

dance. And
dance. And dance.

Bill Meissner

To My Father, On His Birthday

There is a snowstorm in Manhattan today
I know because I've seen pictures
and the first day of spring was yesterday.
(Or is it today? I can never remember,
but I know spring reminds me of you.)
But isn't the arctic melting?
And won't Miami be underwater soon?
And wasn't the phone call you made ten years ago
from the Miami airport?

What if I called today?
Yes, our dog is old but still alive.
No, I broke up with him soon after you left—
Yes, I think he's fine. I don't think he's married.
We don't talk anymore.

I know I'm getting older and you need
to say you want grandchildren.
But let's not waste time on that today,
Amilton. Papai.

Today, we'll talk about Russia because you've
been reading up so we'd have something
to talk about.

Today, you can explain to me Brazilian political parties
and the upcoming elections.

Today I can sing you a sad song over the phone,
and you won't understand the words,
but you'll cry anyway and we'll both
ignore the catch and tremor in your voice.

Aline Mello

Annie Kelly, 25

*The Central Maine Sanitarium,
Atwood Mountain, Maine
—June 17, 1922*

After Margaret died and he remarried,
I stayed on at Jim Gannon's.
I had nowhere else and each of them so needful
of what I made from the mill.
It was alright for a while, until McPhee
from the weave room caught me hacking up
a wad of linty snot, and saw the cloud of
pinkish blood smeared across my cuff.
He called the mill doctor, who pressed
a stethoscope to my back. "You've got TB,
Annie. You're out of work for good."
Jim's Canuck bride cursed me in French,
and I smiled behind my breath-mask,
the day the health nurse took my elbow
and helped me board the train.
As spite, I wore Margaret's straw boater,
trimmed with a sprig of snowberries,
pinned against the black band.
To bid us eat ("Eat now, eat!"),
the china plates are lovely—
creamy white with crimson stripes
milling the edge, a top mark
with a recumbent moose and pine, framed
at right by a sailor, left, by a harvester
leaning to his scythe. All of this,
topped by the North Star, underlain
with the word "Dirigo," our State's motto,
meaning "I lead" in the language of the Church.
I stare at the plates but feign no interest
in dumplings and stewed lamb. Mrs. Cleary,
who sleeps beside me on the porch, cackles
and says, "Made your bed, girlie, best lie in it."
Though, coughing bloody sputum to a tin bowl,
untwisting my sheets each morning I am

able, I cannot believe so little is true.
I am dying and beyond desire, save to go
down from this sleeping porch some starry night
when the lantern-bugs are lit, to strip away
my sweat-stained gown, and holding my arms
across my untouchable breasts, to fall
on to God down the side of this hill.
I have misled no one—any time, anywhere.
No one will follow.

Greg Rappleye

My Grandfather's Herringbone Cap

Among the working classes, the fishermen and millworkers, the Maine [Prohibition] Law is but gauzily enforced, and it is common to see hopelessly besotted Irishmen stumbling through the Five Points, their minds consigned by alcohol to the deepest states of vice and immorality.

—Report of The Biddeford Select Committee
(1905), p. 4

Fish-stained, sloe-ginned, spotted by
bean soup, cocked atop his fuddled head,
the cap's chevroned weave looks as if
he's mauled through a vat of split
herring, and dealt the fillets about his skull
in circled rays, skeleton-upon-skeleton,
each tail pinioned beneath the cap's
top button and herring bones fanned away,
fillets orbiting and slowly building
depth, layer upon layer of tweedy
articulated bones—all shoaled across
his bald spot, and schooling within his skull,
still and then startled, their pickled kin—
whiskey-lit shad darting lobe-to-lobe,
from synapse to synapse. His body lurches
to a pause, then wanders as to sea—
stumbling, his left arm cast away for balance,
the brim of his herringbone cap,
as if the relentless jaw of a mackerel
descending through a bait-cloud, trailing ribs
and spines along its gill rakes, the air gone
entirely wrong and nausea churning his gut.
His cap spins to street-cobbles,
the shiny satin lining, its maker's mark,
lettered in gold filigree, goes sky-up.
His guttering body collapses, too.
Comes then the faint clang of sea-bells,

heard by every drowned man, it is said,
sinking below two fathoms,
and the crowder bar of this net—
pushy, so pushy in its work.

Greg Rappleye

A Late Lunch in California

Maggie, old friend, sharing a last hurrah
in the sun, on my California terrace, loaded.
Even your breasts sprawl, in raucous silk.
Neon-blue parrots?
For God's sake, Maggie!
We can't do parrots anymore.

You slice a peach into yellow wine, a treat we acquired
with ciao and drawing lines through our sevens
the summer of '69.
Fleshy slivers, pried from their pit,
drift down my last Venetian goblet, fray,
wave tiny pink flagellae.

And you say,

Remember the mussels?

You spear a sodden peach slice on the point of your knife,
wiggle it under my nose, wink, leer, rasp:

Bella signorina, bella!

I hear the fishermen call, hear the harsh salt in their throats,
smell seaweed threaded damp and shiny
beside tight mollusks preening on the fishermen's stand

Remember how they opened the shells?

Their hands were rough, like old rubber tires
as they pried open the mussels with a wide knife
exposing such vulnerable meat

And now, it's my turn.

The surgeon's hands will be softer, I suppose.

You drain your peach wine from the cup.
Tilt your head to the sky.
The sun moves on.

Alice Campbell Romano

advice for women who have lost their husbands at sea

At first, don't move his empty chair.
Let strangers come to you with their butchered griefs
Let them offer you salted meats and dried flowers.
Visit family. Let them comb the salt out of your hair.
Tell them you simply don't know what to do with yourself.
Wait until the house is empty to fill rotten boxes with his treasures,
Kiss your children and tell them this is what he would have wanted.
Don't wear your favorite gowns and sweetest perfumes
Until you know the waters have pulled the muscles from his bones.
Sit in his empty chair.

Rebecca Rose

From *Nomad Poems*, Set down set down

Set down set down, in a Tunisian mining town, where young men
hang from doorless doors of light-rail trains and wave. Their river
is opaque, their canyon without trees, our hotel a faded jewel-box

blue with white botanicals, majolica and arabesque. We are
the only guests. In the entrance four boys sleep on tiles,
cocooned in sheets, their arms across their eyes, so incandescent

beaming barebone hot, this town of dust and street of dust,
and at the opening of day their fathers drink mint tea and wait.
Their practice is: behold the constancy of dawn. Their sun will
blossom holy red: incontestably it is a blooming rose.

All turn their heads to East, some wear white, some no shoes.
In this, the year before their spring. I imagine theirs the most
resplendent and the hardest place to live, as they, if they would
even glance my way, would have imagined mine.

Patti Trimble

From *Nomad Poems*, We are seed

We are seed. Or maybe arrow, target, punctuation,
density to hold. We are our favorite drinking cup,

sometimes filled, sometimes emptied of our resonance,
duende, fight. We are also elegant and ornamental lack,

erased when trees of oranges or bright autumn skies
pass clear on through. Even more invisible when winter

sinks so low the hills resemble horses who have lost the race,
heads bent down to drink in green and disillusioned grass.

I love their lesson: how to suffer failure without shame.
Hills, horses, none remember lining up at starting line.
Joined with Earth on lockdown, hunkered down to work.

Patti Trimble

Fernandina, Galapagos Islands

This is El Niño. What it leaves behind.
The lean season. A year of fasting.
The waters too warm. The algae dying.
You would not see this, if you arrived
in the verdant cove where our Panga craft
lands in late June. Color
is what you notice first. Tourmaline waters
splash against tanager sky, as two adolescent
sea lions romp in their nursery, their mothers
away at sea to hunt. Sally light-foot crabs
in traffic-stopping hues of yellow, red and blue
scoot across night-dark lava, long-cooled, lace-edged
by algae that glows like green curtain of northern lights—
those sun-charged particles that pelt the arctic sky.
Thunderous wing-clap: a flock of brown pelicans
lands center-cove. One toddles onto rocks,
pecks a marine iguana just swum in from
morning algae gorge: it scrambles out the way.

But higher, where pahoehoe lava hardened mid-flow,
we enter the back alley of evolution, pick
our way through Darwin's discards—
hundreds of marine iguanas strewn about:
head to tail, tail to head, the dead
already looking like fossils embedded in basalt,
as if they were sculpted from the rock itself.
The carcass at our feet tells the tale:
After feeding on the what little algae it could find
it dragged its lava-dark body up from the sea
to bask in the warmth of tropical sun,
until its body grew warm as the rock itself
and then, too weak to lift its legs and move,
it remained as the sun departed, and the lava rock cooled
and the iguana, too, cooled, and when the sun rose
it did not go down to the water:
its blood, like cooled lava, had ceased to flow.
Death came slow. Stop. It was a living thing
and then it was not.

Kelly Vande Plasse

The Tardigrade

For the last half billion years it has survived
among parched mosses of Antarctic tundra;
and crushed under layers of embalming ice,
like gray ash Vesuvius spewed upon Pompeii.
It has survived Yosemite's boiling cauldrons
that burp up air reeking of past-date eggs
cracked in the carton. It has survived
breath-sucking levels of CO₂ and twenty
hours at absolute zero, pelted by solar rays
in the black vacuum of space.
From snow-cruled Himalayan crags
to the death-dark floor of the Mariana Trench
where hatchet fish flash their lonely lights
it has thrived—its two hundredths of an inch body
resisting the weight of six thousand atmospheres.

Little water bear—this is not the life it would choose.
An algae-rich pond with fringe of purple loose strife
would do. And so, when the tardigrade wakes
to hostile world, it tucks its head and eight
caterpillar limbs inside its cuticle, like a seedling
furled within the seed, or a fetus curled inside the womb.
It purges the water from out its soft flesh
until it withers like milkweed pods burst to silk-
borne seed, last season's rose hips,
a mother's milk-drained breasts.

Inside this shriveled shell life slows.
A waning crescent. Neap tide.
An open-ended parenthesis
upon an endless night sky.
In torpid sleep,
the tardigrade builds another self within itself,
a fine glaze upon the delicate bowl.
Vitreous flesh: a glass lattice
a crystal castle to conceal
the death that roots inside each life,
the life that sprouts inside this death.

Kelly Vande Plasse

Selected Nightmares

Sometimes the good guy goes off script, goes evil, and an unsheathed hunting knife appears between you on the kitchen table. It is so out of sync, so funny, that you don't reach for it, don't react in time, but he does, and the wind picks up. Sometimes you draw your fist back, move to make break for it and... nothing. Nothing. Sometimes you are driving along a familiar road, not paying much attention, and a sinkhole opens wide in front of you. You're always going far too fast to stop. Don't bother trying out the brakes. They never work. Sometimes your mom is in the car with you. Sometimes she's screaming. Sometimes she is standing in the road, between the sinkhole and your brakeless, speeding car. Sometimes a huge, panting composite of your top five scary dogs is real and chasing you. Sometimes you feel its breath against your legs. You feel your flesh tear in its teeth. Sometimes you kick it and it morphs into the kind of dog you'll feel ashamed of kicking later. Sometimes you are falling from the sky. Just falling from the sky. You don't know what sent you falling but you're sick with remorse for it—so sorry!—as you fall forever, certain you will die. Sometimes you are dying, slowly, of mysterious diseases. Sometimes you feel fine and only guess that you must be dying because people keep buying you flowers and telling you they love you. Sometimes a filthy clown emerges from the woods and you are quite alone and miles from anybody's birthday. Sometimes you are pregnant. Often, you are pregnant. Sometimes the father is a succubus demon, but not usually. Usually, he's a friend of yours who's not your husband. Or better yet, he is your husband's friend. Occasionally, you do

get lucky and it's only aliens. They only want to cut your baby out and raise it to be David Bowie. (This is not a real nightmare. Please see Selected Delusions of Grandeur.) Sometimes you're pregnant with a loaded gun. Sometimes you give birth to a son and he becomes a man, comes at you with a loaded gun. Or else he looks just like your mother when he screams. Or else he looks just like the little dog you never meant to kick that day in childhood. Or else you have been hopelessly wrong about everything, all this time. You only thought that you were pregnant, but you see it now. You are still falling from the sky.

Chelsea Whitton

Your Fancy Bonsai Tree

Is curling like a prophet's wizened smirk, into itself, its leaves and branches frying in a murder bath of sun, and you confess to yourself that you don't love it anymore, that you don't want it now. It is so ugly, so deranged by heat and inattention, you cannot recall its former feeling. You can't picture it unravaged. So beloved was it, for all of seven seconds, that you threw away those kitschy, satin flowers. Kept since college, unpacked and repositioned in kitchen after kitchen, you remember them clearly—the red and blue pansies with glitterized leaves, the real-feathered ghost of a finch on a stick, lacquered fruit. False arrangements are better, you figure, just now. There is no bad faith in their drooping. You can re-bend their stems a thousand ways to suit your thousand moods. Whereas this tree, so longed for in a moment of whimsy, leaned one way every day, only further. It was all too real for you. Indifference grew like mildew. You "forgot" to water it, "forgot" to read that pruning pamphlet. Left it to waste in the blaze of your August kitchen until someone stuck a post-it note of mercy to its one, warped limb: please throw me away. And so today you wrap a bag around its wretched shape and ask forgiveness. Not for torturing the tree, but for believing you could buy your own transcendence, discount, at the boutique hardware store.

Chelsea Whitton

Refuge

The beginning of a vulnerability is
a dark lighthouse, the guard of the shore gone blind.
Memories and melodies beam in tandem, no more than morse code
half delivered. Meandering thoughts echo in the caverns
of an otherwise empty mind. The lighthouse still compromised.

A body—isthmus
between soul and reality, horrified by news
delivered between the two; sending envoys through
touch and taste taking in
water, bailed out by wrenching.

New places seem to be in braille;
fingers find the peaks of raised dots, but go numb.
The maps lost, constellations hidden, waves crash
on the shore of our accident. Rocks keep crying out, beaten by the tide.
Safety is only an illusion on foreign land.

The boat is burned for warmth.
It feels like a forgotten tradition.
We try to read the smoke, but it disappears undeciphered.
Maybe we'll learn to read each other's lips instead,
even if they always shoot the messenger.

Hannah Yoest

Contributors

Christina Beasley is a poet and public servant in Washington, D.C. She received her master's degree from Georgetown University and is an assistant poetry editor with *Barrelhouse*. Her poetry has appeared in *Hobart*, *Watershed Review*, *Collision*, and others. She has done residencies with VQR and Atlantic Center for the Arts.

Marion Starling Boyer has three published poetry collections: *The Clock of the Long Now* (Mayapple Press, 2009), *Composing the Rain* (Grayson Books, 2014), and *Green* (Finishing Line Press, 2003). A professor emeritus for Kalamazoo Valley Community College, she now lives near Cleveland. "Airship, January 1915" is from her forthcoming collection, *The Sea Was Never Far*.

Michelle Castleberry is a poet and social worker in north Georgia. Her works have appeared in publications including *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Poemeleon*, and *The Anthology of Southern Poetry: Vol. V—Georgia*. Her book, *Dissecting the Angel and Other Poems*, was a finalist for Georgia Author of the Year in Poetry, 2013.

Stephanie Christie investigates existential and political questions in her poetry, through both content and form. She creates poetry for text art and performance as well as the page, and has published three poetry collections.

Don Colburn is a poet and retired newspaper reporter. He has published four poetry collections, including three chapbooks. A new chapbook, *Mortality, With Pronoun Shifts*, won the Cathy Smith Bowers Contest and is due out soon from Main Street Rag. He has poems forthcoming in *Nimrod*, *Innisfree*, and *Southern Poetry Review*.

Noel Conneely has had work in *Yellow Medicine Review*, *Chelsea*, *Coe Review*, *Willow Review*, and other publications in Ireland and the US. He is looking for a publisher for a first collection.

Stephanie Conybeare was born in Canada, and lives in London and south of Toulouse in France. She has published fiction but now concentrates on poetry. Her most recent collection is entitled *Risk* published by Luniver.

Alyssa Cruz is a Filipina-American poet, born and raised in the suburbs of Seattle. She is a recent graduate of the U. of Washington, who had the privilege of studying poetry abroad in Rome, Italy.

Jennifer L. Freed's recent poetry appears or is forthcoming in various journals including *Zone 3*, *Connecticut River Review*, and *Worcester Review*; in anthologies including *Forgotten Women, a Tribute in Poetry* (Grayson Books 2017); and in a chapbook, *These Hands Still Holding*, a finalist in the 2013 New Women's Voices contest.

Mac Gay is the author of three chapbooks and a full-length collection, *Ghost Hunt*, forthcoming the summer of 2019 from Eyewear Publishing Ltd. His poems have appeared in numerous magazines, including *North of Oxford*, *Cutbank*, *Ironwood*, *Loose Change*, and *Plainsong*. His work is anthologized in the *Southern Poetry Anthology: Georgia*.

Malcolm Glass has published work in all genres in many literary journals and magazines, including *Poetry* (Chicago), *Prairie Schooner*, *New Letters*, and *The Sewanee Review*. His newest collection of poems, *Mirrors, Myths, and Dreams*, will be released by Finishing Line Press in October, 2018.

Carlos Andrés Gómez is a Colombian American poet and a graduate of the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. Winner of the 2018 *Sequestrum* Editor's Reprint Award in Poetry, 2015 Lucille Clifton Poetry Prize, and a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, his work has appeared in the *North American Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The Rumpus*, *BuzzFeed Reader*, *Rattle*, *CHORUS: A Literary Mixtape* (Simon & Schuster, 2012), and elsewhere. For more: CarlosLive.com

Ceridwen Hall is pursuing a PhD in creative writing at the University of Utah and reads poetry for *Quarterly West*. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *The Moth*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Grist*, *Rattle*, *Tar River Poetry*, and elsewhere.

Kim Hamilton is a West Coast poet, writer, and editor. Her work appears, or is forthcoming, in *The Mid-America Review*, *The Comstock Review*, *Spillway*, and *The Ekphrastic Review*, and she has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. In 2014, she published *Visitation*, a collaborative work with visual artist Carolyn Krieg. She holds an MFA from Warren Wilson College.

Caroline Harvey is recent graduate of Washington College. She lives in Sacramento, California with her two best friends and works as an editorial assistant at the *Sacramento News & Review*. This is her first publication.

Don Hogle's poetry has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *Apalachee Review*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Chautauqua*, *Pilgrimage*, *Stone Canoe*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, and in *A3 Review* and *Shooter*; in the U.K. Among other awards, he won First Prize in the 2016 *Hayden's Ferry Review* poetry contest. He lives in Manhattan. www.donhoglepoet.com.

Joe Jackson completed the MFA in Creative Writing from National University with a concentration in fiction and poetry. He is enthralled with the variance and subtleties of the poetic form, and eager to explore the utility, experimentation, and voices of those who practice the craft of poetry, both known and unknown.

R.W. Jagodnik's poetry has appeared *The Cortland Review*, *M Reiew*, *The Poeming Pidgeon*, *Borrowed Solace*, and *The Mantle*. Currently, R.W. cares for developmentally-disabled adults in Milwaukie, OR.

Originally from North Carolina, **Eric Janken** lives in Brooklyn where he is a Thomas Hunter Fellow in Hunter College's MFA Program. Recently, his work appeared or is forthcoming in *Shenandoah*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *Pembroke*, among others. He is a graduate of Appalachian State University.

Paul Johnson is a teacher of writing and literature at Conception Seminary College.

Marilyn Johnston's first chapbook, *Against Disappearance*, was published by Redgreene Press, Pittsburgh. She is the author of two full collections, *Silk Fist Songs* (2008) and *Weight of the Angel* (2009) published by Antrim House. She co-founded and directed the Wintonbury Poetry Reading Series in the Bloomfield Libraries. She retired from the library in 2017.

Judy Kaber's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous journals, both print and online, including *Eclectica*, *Off the Coast*, *The Comstock Review*, and *Crab Creek Review*. Her contest credits include the Maine Postmark Poetry Contest, the Larry Kramer Memorial Chapbook Contest, and, most recently, second place in the 2016 Muriel Craft Bailey Poetry Contest.

Ilya Kaminsky is the author of *Deaf Republic* (Graywolf Press) and *Dancing in Odessa* (Tupelo Press). He is also the co-editor of *Ecco Anthology of International Poetry* (Harper Collins) and co-translator of *Dark Elderberry Branch: Poems of Marina Tsvetaeva* (Alice James).

Naima Cerulean Kazmi is from Karachi, Pakistan and lives in Seattle, WA. An art-maker across disciplines, she enjoys drawing, painting, and playing the harp, with poetry at the heart of her practice. She graduated from Cornell University, and is an MFA candidate at the University of Washington-Seattle.

Raised in a variety of locales in a refugee family, **George Kramer** is a poet 24-7, lawyer Mon.-Fri., residing in Alexandria, Virginia. With the recent loss of a parent and children now grown, many of his recent poems deal with grief and renewing purpose.

Rosa Lane is author of *Chouteau's Chalk*, winner of the 2017 Georgia Poetry Prize, *Tiller North* (Sixteen Rivers Press, 2016), and *Roots and Reckonings*, a chapbook. She earned her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. Her recent poems have appeared in *Cutthroat*, *Folio*, *Nimrod*, *RHINO Poetry*, *The Tishman Review*, and elsewhere.

Katharyn Howd Machan is the author of 38 published collections, most recently *What the Piper Promised* (Alexandria Quarterly Press, 2018). Her poems have appeared in numerous magazines, anthologies, and textbooks. She is a full professor in the Department of Writing at Ithaca College in central New York State.

St. Cloud author and teacher **Bill Meissner** has published four books of poetry and two short story collections. His book, *The Mapmaker's Dream*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. He also the author of a novel, *Spirits in the Grass* (U. of Notre Dame Press), which won the Midwest Book Award. www.facebook.com/wjmeissner/

Aline Mello is a writer and editor living in Atlanta. She's an immigrant from Brazil and spends much of her time volunteering with immigrant students. She is an Undocupoet fellow and her work has been published or is upcoming in *Scalawag Magazine*, *Saint Katherine Review*, *The New Republic*, and elsewhere.

Joyce Meyers' books include *The Way Back* and two chapbooks, *Shapes of Love* and *Wild Mushrooms*. Her work appears in *The Comstock Review*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, and *Slant*. In 2014 she won the Atlanta Review International Poetry Competition and was nominated for a Pushcart. A retired lawyer and former English teacher, she lives in a suburb of Philadelphia.

Raynald Patrice Desmeules Nayler is a Foreign Service Officer and a Russian speaker. He has worked in Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus for over a decade. His most recent posting was as Press Attaché in Baku, Azerbaijan. He is currently studying Albanian at the Foreign Service Institute for an assignment to Pristina, Kosovo.

Linda Parsons is a poet and playwright and editor at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. She has contributed to *Georgia Review*, *Iowa Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Shenandoah*, and Ted Kooser's syndicated column *American Life in Poetry*. Her most recent poetry collection is *This Shaky Earth*.

Marge Piercy has published 19 poetry collections, recently *Made in Detroit* (Knopf), and 17 novels including *Sex Wars*. *PM Press* reissued *Vida*, *Dance the Eagle to Sleep*; they brought out short stories *The Cost of Lunch, Etc.*, and *My Body, My Life* (essays, poems). She has read at over 500 venues here and abroad.

Deborah Pope is the author of three poetry collections—*Fanatic Heart*, *Mortal World*, and *Falling Out of the Sky*. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Threepenny Review*, *Michigan Quarterly*, *Southern Review*, *TriQuarterly*, *Georgia Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Southwest Quarterly*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Birmingham Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Cave Wall*, among others.

Donna Pucciani, a Chicago-based writer, has published poetry worldwide in such diverse journals as *Shi Chao Poetry*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *Istanbul Literary Review*, *Acumen*, *nebulab*, and *Atlanta Review*. Her most recent collections of poetry are *Ghost Garden*, a chapbook on her Italian American roots, and *Edges*.

Greg Rappleye's work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The Southern Review*, *Shenandoah*, and other literary journals. His second book of poems, *A Path Between Houses*, won the Brittingham Prize in Poetry. His third book, *Figured Dark* was published in the Miller Williams Poetry Series. He teaches in the English Department at Hope College.

Donna Reis' debut poetry collection, *No Passing Zone*, was nominated for a Pushcart Award. Her non-fiction book, *Seeking Ghosts in the Warwick Valley*, published by Schiffer Publishing has sold nearly 3000 copies. Her poems have been widely published in journals and anthologies, such as *Atlanta Review*, *Evening Street Review*, *Hanging Loose*, and *Zone 3*.

Alice Campbell Romano is preparing a chapbook and poetry collection under the aegis of New York poets Jennifer Franklin and Michael Patrick Collins. Reviews, fiction and poems have been published in *Mom Egg Review*, *Concise Delight*, *Sage Review*, *Westwood Press*, and more. She's lived in Rome, Los Angeles, and New York.

Rebecca Rose is the Arts and Food writer for the Sun, an alt-weekly based in Santa Barbara County. She was formerly an editor for the website Jezebel and has previously written for *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Elle*, *Seventeen*, *Esquire*, and more. She holds a degree in Film and Video from Columbia College.

Marjorie Saiser's novel-in-poems, *Losing the Ring in the River* (University of New Mexico Press, 2013), won the Willa Award. A set of her poems won *Fourth River's* Folio Contest in 2017. Saiser's work has been published in *Poet Lore*, *Poetry East*, *Rattle*, and *American Life in Poetry*.

Main Street Rag published **LeRoy N. Sorenson's** first poetry book, *Forty Miles North of Nowhere* (February 2016). His work has appeared or will appear in *American Journal of Poetry*, *The Cider Press Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Sow's Ear*, and other journals. He lives in St. Paul, MN.

Matthew J. Spireng's book *What Focus Is* was published by WordTech Communications. His book *Out of Body* won the 2004 Bluestem Poetry Award and was published by Bluestem Press. He was first place winner in the 2015 *Common Ground Review* poetry contest and is an eight-time Pushcart Prize nominee.

Over the last few decades, **Anne Spring's** work has been published by *MANNA*; *Cotton Boll*; *Lullwater Review*; *The DeKalb Literary Arts Journal*; *Wise Woman's Garden*; *Earth's Daughters*; and *Wisconsin Review*. She has work displayed at the Atlanta City Detention Center, and has had her work used by a local playwright.

Marc Swan is a retired vocational rehabilitation counselor; poems recently published or forthcoming in *Windsor Review*, *Gargoyle*, *The Broadkill Review*, *Versé Daily*, and *Last Call Anthology*, among others. He lives with his wife Dd in Freeport Maine.

Ben Swimm is a recent graduate of the MFA program at Oregon State University, where he served as the poetry editor for the school's literary magazine, *45th Parallel*. His work has been published in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Salamander*, *Flyway*, and *Camas*. He lives in Palmer, Alaska.

Marilynn Talal's chapbook, *The Blue Road*, was just published by Presa Press. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *The Paris Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Rattle*, and other anthologies and journals. She was awarded an NEA and the Stella Earhart Memorial Award by the University of Houston.

Patti Trimble, poet and essayist, living in California and Sicily, has publications, awards, and hundreds of performances in the USA/Europe. Bob Holman called her 2014 CD, *Out of Round*, "A Classic Right Now." Patti also writes and lectures on visual art and writes for San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival.

Kelly Vande Plasse was awarded second place in the 2015 Writers @ Work Fellowship Competition and was a finalist for the 2015 Backwaters Prize. A former editor of *The New York Quarterly*, she has previously received awards from *The Atlanta Review* and the *Paterson Literary Review*. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two children.

Angie Vorhies is a poet, translator, and co-founder of San Diego Roots, a non-profit dedicated to educating, empowering, and cultivating sustainable local food communities. She loves red-tailed hawks and black phoebes and is currently a student at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University.

Chelsea Whitton's poems have appeared in *Main Street Rag*, *Poetry Ireland*, *Kindred*, and *Stand*. She holds an MFA in poetry from The New School, and is a PhD student at The University of Cincinnati. Her chapbook, *Bear Trap*, has just been published by Dancing Girl Press.

Raleigh Scott Wood graduated from Central Washington State College in 1977 with a B.A. in Music. He has been in several local poetry workshops, including the final year of Nelson Bentley's workshop at the University of Washington Extension. He is presently retired from a local retail drug operation and lives in Seattle.

Charles Wyatt is the author of two collections of short fiction, a novella, and two poetry collections. He lives in Nashville, TN where he was principal flutist of the Nashville Symphony for 25 years.

Hannah Yoest is a writer and editor living in Washington D.C., where she works for a weekly magazine. She graduated from the University of Virginia where she studied fine art photography and political science. She also studied and workshopped poetry with Josh Bell at the Iowa Writers Workshop summer course.

Joseph Zaccardi served as Marin County, CA poet laureate (2013-2015), and during his tenure published and edited *Changing Harm to Harmony: Bullies & Bystanders Project*. He is the author of four books poetry; his latest is *A Wolf Stands Alone in Water*. His poems have appeared in *Cincinnati Review*, *Potomac Review*, *Poet Lore*, and elsewhere.



Atlanta Review is indebted to our
incredibly generous donors.

BENEFACTORS

WALT WHITMAN CIRCLE \$1,000

ANONYMOUS

KATHY BETTY

ELIZABETH S. VALENTINE & ROGER GRIGG

STEVE & PAM HALL

FRIEDA LEVINSKY

SUSAN SHIRLEY & CHRIS SHIRLEY

DAN VEACH

ROBERT FROST CIRCLE \$500

HENRY & MARGARET BOURNE

PEGGY & ROBERT DENNIS

J. H. GRIMSON

LINDA HARRIS

GINGER MURCHISON

LAURA WIDEBURG

ELIZABETH BISHOP CIRCLE \$250

AREATHA ANTHONY • RUTH BLAKENEY
GAYLE CHRISTIAN • CAROLE P. FAUSSEMAGNE
MAGGIE HUNT-COHEN • STEPHEN MASSIMILLA
ALVIN PANG • HANS JORG STAHLSCHMIDT
SLOBODANKA STRAUSS • MARY STRIPLING
LISA SUMMERS • RENATA TREITEL

Patrons \$100

Nina Adlawan • Jacqueline Bardsley
David C. Benton • Steven Ford Brown
Emery L. Campbell • Robert Champ
Tom Chandler • Stephanie Kaplan Cohen
Catherine Colinvaux • Liz & Tom Cooksey
Barbara Clark • John Crawford
Terry Hensel • Ruth Kinsey
Joan Kunsch • Gloria Lewyn
Lee & Candace Passarella • Wanda Praisner
Ron Self • John Stephens
Jim Tilley • Stephen & Ruth Windham

Donors \$50

Dorothy Brooks • John O. Connell
Barbara Lydecker Crane • Peter Fontaine
Rebecca Foust • Dr. Edda H. Hackl
David & Christy Hand
Sandra K. Kennedy • Jay Kidd
Ed & Sylvia Krebs • Marjorie Mir
Janet Murray • Dean Olson
Korkut Onaran • Sherman Pearl
Diane Powell • Carol Senf
Peter Serchuk • Leslie Sharp
Michael Spence • Alicia Stallings
Jennifer Wheelock • Tonia Williams
David Zoll • Wanita Zumbrunnen

Friends \$30

William I. Allgood • Diana Anhalt
Rebecca Baggett • Virginia Beards
Jesse Bodley • Ronald Boggs
Gaylord Brewer • Bette Callahan
Robin S. Chapman • Shannon Dobranski
Mary Dowd • Booky Ellis
Catlyn Fendler • Karie Friedman
Steven Girardot • Rachel Hadas
Amy Henry • Mary Anderson Hill
Sandra Larson • Donald Lashley
Charles Liverpool • Perie Longo
Kay O'Connell • Maribeth Price
Lee Rossi • Andrew Schillinger



ATLANTA REVIEW

For more information about supporting *Atlanta Review*,
visit www.atlantareview.com/donate/

If you wish to make a donation to support the journal, please
mail a check payable to the **Georgia Tech Foundation**, with
Atlanta Review on the notes line.

Checks should be mailed to 686 Cherry Street, NW Suite 333
Atlanta, Georgia 30332-0161.

Contributions are tax deductible.



POETRY 2019



International Poetry Competition

Grand Prize

\$1,000

26 International Publication Prizes

Publication in the Poetry 2018 Issue of Atlanta Review

30 International Merit Awards

List of honor in Atlanta Review, free contest issue

Easy Online Entry:

<https://atlantareview.submittable.com/>

Deadline: May 1, 2019



ATLANTA REVIEW

Put the *Poetry* back in your life!

www.atlantareview.com

Coming in Spring 2019

Atlanta Review's 25th Anniversary Anthology

Subscribe or order your copy by mail at:

686 Cherry Street, Suite 333, Atlanta GA 30332-0161

or online at <http://atlantareview.com/subscribe/>