



**YOUNG  
RAVENS  
LITERARY  
REVIEW**

**ISSUE 15**

**WINTER 2021**



# *Young Ravens Literary Review*

*Issue 15*  
*Winter 2021*

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## ***Introduction***

*“The oak sleeps in the acorn; the bird waits in the egg; and in the highest vision of the soul, a waking angel stirs.”—James Allen*

In Issue 15 of *Young Ravens Literary Review*, we explore our “Waking Angels.” Following after the feathers of divinity, sprites of nature, and those moments of clarity where we become one with the cosmic creativity of the universe, our contributors seek out the variable muses and messengers of inspiration.

We discover grace in a sprig of clover, in the well-worn love of a grandmother, in marshes wild with bird trills. Sometimes, we seek out our waking angels in vain. Loss may strip the assurance of constancy and connection from our hearts. At times—relentless in the crush—we may feel boxed in and burned out (Seth Ketchem). Yet, still we find ourselves dreaming in the dark to try and understand the shape of our shadows, and those glimmers that catch and reflect our myriad hopes.

Sometimes, we may find our waking angels taking on an unexpected form. Perhaps it is the freedom as wide as wings to shrug off societal expectations of how one’s life should be, and enjoy cupcakes on the roof at the age of 62 (Lea Galanter). It could be as startling and simple as a dog print in snow as we gather strength and renewal from all that is mundane and precious in our world.

For bound deep in the gravity of our being, the longing to fly stirs us on daily—no matter how brief the flash of ascendance.

*Elizabeth Pinborough and Sarah Page*

*Jamie Ortolano*

**Double Light**



*Richard Levine*

**When You Find Clover**

When you find clover and milkweed  
floating on the night, as your sight  
measures your standing in the world  
to the farthest Milky Way star,

it's like hearing a voice you'd beg  
on your knees to keep on hearing  
as long as you live. Maybe it's the voice  
Moses and other prophets heard.

Here and now, no voice, no prophets,  
just me and this blessing of being  
a man out to walk in the night.  
And, as if from a trance, the Earth

shakes me, breathing a life-awakening  
fragrance into my nostrils.

*Mark J. Mitchell*

## **Household Myths**

Once there was wine here.  
Now sunflowers color an autumn room.  
The pitcher is painted with a tale—  
a gift for these lengthening nights:

A winged horse and hero  
who was allowed—once—to ride  
his back. A girl, rescued, perhaps,  
who loves the horse, without wanting.

She whispers a perfect nothing,  
unveiling stories on the other  
face of the ewer, where she  
strokes the horse's head,

light as a petal, and one  
pearly horn grows. It's long  
enough and bright enough to light  
flowers and songs.

*Rob Piazza*

**Epiphany 47**

When I'm pacing Garrison Lane  
reciting litanies of petty pains,

the Holy Spirit suddenly appears  
in the trinity of startled deer—

a mother and two fawns  
dashing across my neighbor's lawn.

## *Luke Maguire Armstrong*

### **Spring of Whisper**

Galleried forever in the fortune cookie of life.  
Garnished with dandelion.  
Frenzied with the idea that forever might be  
a makeshift elation  
assembled from recycled scraps  
collected on the shore of yesterday.

Whatever you say in a whisper holds my voice.  
In the void of patience, we cast our pennies.  
They shimmer gold and silver  
in the underwater sun.  
Glorious is each new day.  
Endless are the jarring blows  
that shake us trembling off the path.

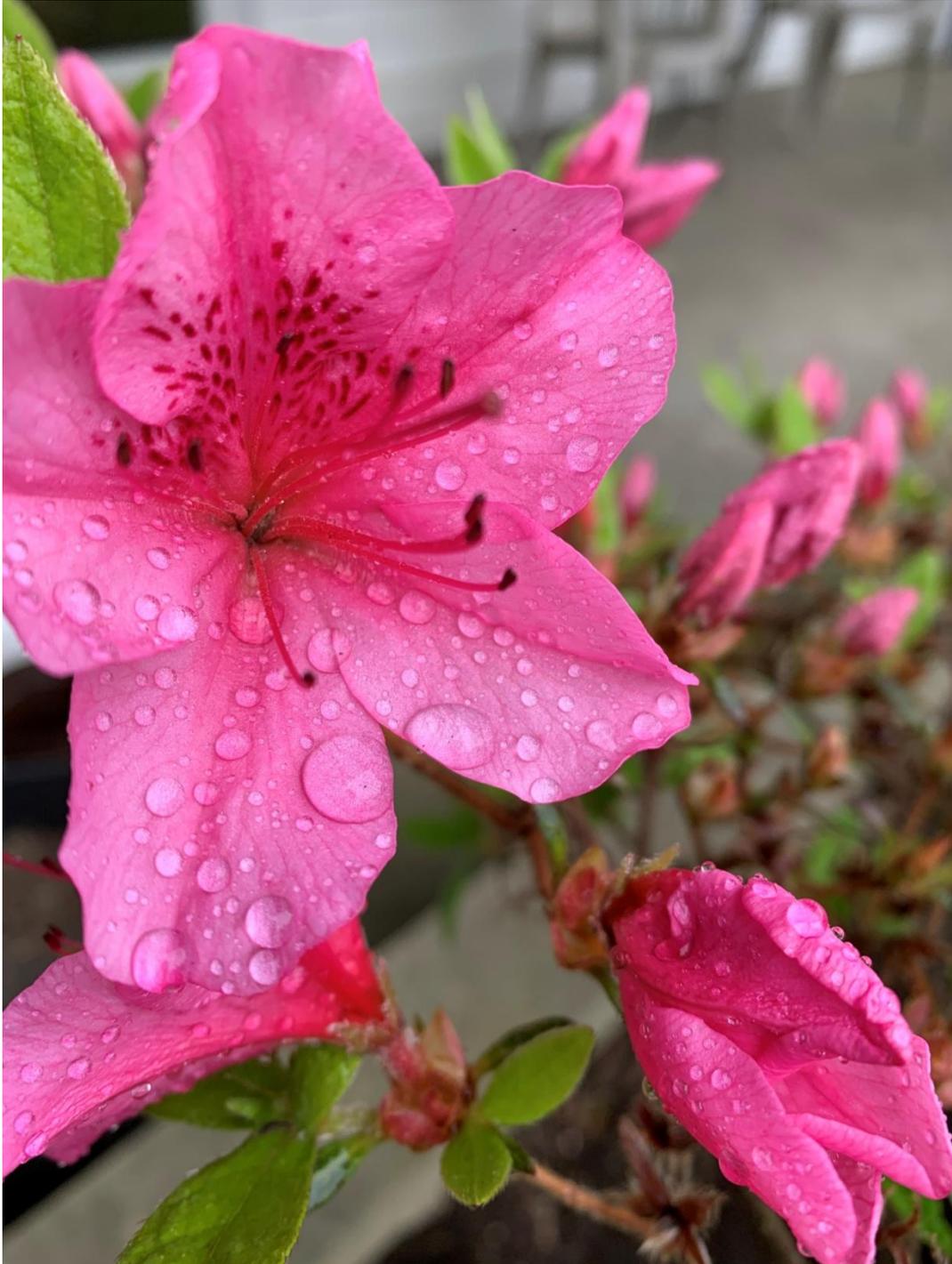
Notice yourself at the bottom of each fall.  
Hey there, say, I'm with you.  
See how it feels to touch your chest  
and listen to your breath.  
In which cupboard are you hushing your hopes?

See that closed off corridor  
within everyone  
you love  
to name each desire  
to see them elated.  
Here is the resolve  
to resurrect  
listening to the call.

There is a lion  
leaving messages  
for you on the wind.  
Listen, he says, to the sound of how you love  
and glide softly on that breeze.  
Humans, wake from your endless night.  
This is not my voice, but the one who calls to me in sleep.  
Wake up and hold the new born day,  
lift your head and look around at the air that holds you,  
forever in the embrace  
that knew your nuances  
before you knew your name.

*Robin Wright*

**Azalea Washed Clean**



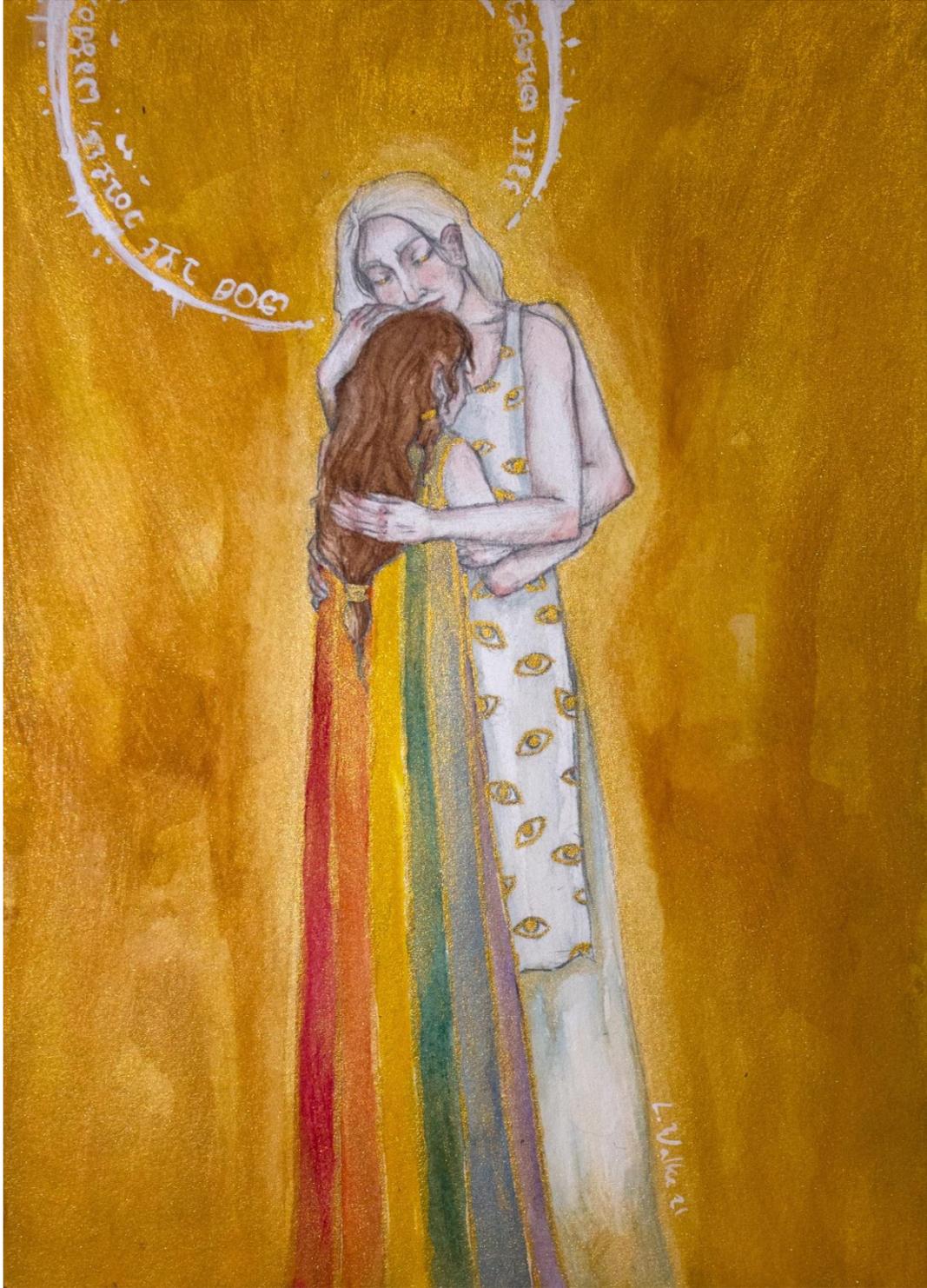
*Mark J. Mitchell*

**The Flowers of Eden**

The book's silent because Adam got caught  
by beasts. Their names swallowed all the short time  
the garden gave. He never looked around.  
Eve, pleased by blossoms, by smells God had wrought,  
played daily. She breathed petals, soft as sounds—  
whispers, "Tulip. Daisy. Magnolia. Lime."

*Lauren Walke*

**God the Mother – Hope**



*Aaron Hahn*

**Breathtaking Enigma—Oh, Spring**

The dance of cherry petals,  
Like most art,  
May never be known

As it should not be defined  
In a definite answer,

But in infinite asking,  
It may be softly  
Felt

Like drizzle—  
It may arrest you  
And vanish

## *Morgan Bazilian*

### **Glimpses**

Darkness grows  
and then dissipates  
because of the degrees  
of the ecliptic.

A moving number  
changing over time  
seemingly constant,  
but not at all so.

Like the solar storms  
and magnetic bursts  
creating the northern lights  
or pulses on my computer screen.

The darkness moves, too.  
more light each day  
each minute  
until it is entirely confident.

## *Christopher Clauss*

### **Warm Welcome Home**

This is the day when everything changes.  
The rhubarb has sprouted,  
the stems bright and red.  
The forsythia bloom  
golden and precocious.  
Soon they will be nothing  
but lanky green bushes.

The garden is planted,  
fingers crossed for another two weeks  
in the hope that we have seen the last of the frost.  
This is the day that we first breathe in  
the scent of freshly-cut grass,  
the day the neighbor  
walks the dog in shorts,  
the day it doesn't matter  
that we've left the front door open.

This is the day the mosquitoes start to swarm,  
the day the hose is left attached to the spigot.  
This is the day all the neighbors  
see each other over the fence  
raking the last remnants of winter  
from fresh green grass  
and nod.  
They notice the year's first dandelions  
beginning to speckle the lawn.  
Some yards are always more speckled.

This is the day we've been waiting for,  
not marked on any calendar.  
We move the sweaters and heavy coats  
to places hard to reach  
and take medication for allergies  
for the first time this year.  
So unnatural a response  
to so natural a change.  
This is how we welcome back the grass from the dead,  
with a grumble  
and a string trimmer.

*Randel McCraw Helms*

**Thirteen Ways of Looking at Her**  
**(For His Wife)**

Fingergrip on this cliff

Unexpected validation

Puzzles suddenly understood

Convection

Conduction

Radiation

Tall candles in the dark

Oil and wine and milk in a dry place

Sudden song

Blessing of bread softly spoken

Plenitude

Absolutely undeserved

Here

## *Judith Kelly Quaempts*

### **Alma**

She said, I won't say goodbye  
You've always known how I felt  
About you.

She looked so small, so frail,  
So fearful her control would shatter  
Like the bones in her hip.

Swallowing my anguish  
I covered both her hands with mine  
and stared at the wall beside her bed.

We didn't say I love you at the end  
some stupid rule we had that breaking  
down meant giving in.

I should have cried, and held her tight, said,  
I love you, over and over again.  
I stroked her hands to keep  
from crushing them with all we left unsaid

My grandmother came from a generation  
of women who drank hot tea if they fell ill,  
who scrubbed floors on their knees when  
life overwhelmed.

A photograph-she and her  
Husband on their porch.  
She leans against his side.  
Her face glows.

She nursed both parents through  
old age.

Her husband died. She sold  
Their home, lived in furnished  
Apartments, sold magazines  
door to door, clerked in  
department stores.

Little by little, she came into

Her own.

I see her in dreams. She wears a favorite suit.  
Bone-colored shoes with sensible heels match a handbag  
Draped over one arm. She smiles as though  
death is one more adventure, like the chartered bus  
she took to the Ice Capades one year  
or her first trip to Hawaii when she stared  
at the ocean below with a rosary clasped in her hands.

In old age she said her prayers  
like a child, eyes closed, lips  
shaping each word, as though  
God's hearing was as bad as her own.

*Page Turner*

**Protected**



*Made from found objects: bird's nest, doll legs, persimmon caps, fur, twigs, gold paint, white ink.*

## *Anne Whitehouse*

### **Bridge Over the Nosterkill**

I

The rippling waters of the stream  
are like a thought turning over and over,  
slipping out of grasp.

The sun is winking behind the white pine  
as I lie on the bridge,  
feeling its arch under my back,

watching the pattern of green leaves  
against blue sky, a faint scrim of cloud,  
and one soaring red-tailed hawk.

II

Out of the corner of my eye  
I see you standing on the bridge,  
singing the way you only  
sing to yourself  
when you are happy.

You don't like to be noticed  
so I listen without seeming to.  
May you go on singing  
in my heart forever.

*Lea Galanter*

**Annunciation**

—After *The Annunciation* by Maurice Denis

What I want to know is  
why an angel stands in your doorway  
bowing down in white satin  
hands aloft in your sparse, spare room

The smell of gardenias beyond the garden gate  
comes through the window on beams of sunlight  
too bright for heavenly beings

This angel appears, you tell me,  
with an important message hidden in her wings  
that only you can hear

I don't believe you  
the lone book open on your desk  
is your sole access to knowledge

## *Ursula O'Reilly*

### **Wings**

I knew a man who could fly.  
He was born that way.  
Kept his wings hidden  
Beneath his shirt.

He showed them to me.  
Long silken feathers,  
Glistening silver flecked with blue.  
Believe me, it's true.

He raised his head to the wind,  
Extended his wings  
And soared.  
Under the sun's sparkling eye.  
I do not lie.

## *Mark Hammerschick*

### **Eagle**

Gliding as if there was no weight  
a jumble of feathers  
wide as an F-15EX  
but much smoother on the heated updrafts  
along a lonely stretch of bald cypress  
at the edge of an Everglades hollow  
he hunts  
running silent running deep  
fathoms of feathers and flight  
trajectory depthless  
no sound only a blur downward  
seconds pass  
then the claws  
a flurry of dust and prize fighter moves  
as the raptor shears mice meat  
minced and splattered  
shattered and scattered  
I know the feeling  
listing taking on water  
bilge pumps a faded memory  
how the terror in your eyes  
grip this infinitely quiet moment  
faint breaths then the silence  
as the bird emerges from the field  
silent flight bright  
back towards the sun  
back into light  
where your breath is on its way  
ascending...

*Robin Wright*

**The Stirring Within**



## *Richard Levine*

### **Upon My Soul**

*with a line from Donald Culross Peattie*

It is the flowerlessness of winter,  
the birdlessness of it, that makes me feel

more than cold. The wind moans, and then,  
as if fearing that its own admission

of loneliness might make it appear weak,  
it howls and roars, rattles windows, finds the creak

in walls and trees, all to say this wilderness is wild  
and in winter dark and hollow.

This is what I say, too, missing the nod  
and soft consoling sigh of leaves. For all

my walking in winter's woods—following  
tracks to where they stop and scratch

for the cartography of songs and wings  
and mating and some wit of insect or green—

I am always longing to come upon my soul,  
which only shows me what a cane tapping

lets a blind man know of the world. Yet, with no song  
bird or flower to be found in the kingdom of cold,

where mud speaks of ice to bone  
and even tree-sap has withdrawn to root,

this candle glowing here on our table, where we sit to eat,  
tells one incontrovertible truth about what light may bring.

***Brendan Todt***

**The Myth of the Constancy of the Sky**

We assured our son before our other son was born that love was something you could never run out of and never spend up. The way we tell him, though we know it's not true, that the sun will never burn off or give up. He's not yet old enough to be learning that the universe itself is expanding, nor to ask *expanding into what?* He hasn't yet read that the sun is moving just as fast and blindly as the rest of us. It will be years before he and his friends giggle under the dimmed lights at the spermatogenesis cartoons. But he knows Mrs. Dayton's stomach keeps getting bigger and bigger and that one day it will stop. And out will come baby. And baby will be loved, the way he is loved, and the way he loves Mrs. Dayton and his mother and me. But I wonder if he wonders anymore about the little brother who wasn't. And what we've done with the love we said we'd be spending on him, but haven't.

*Paola Bidinelli*

**Beyond the Ego's Edge**



## *Greg Hill*

### **Plato's Number**

The old philosopher  
is sitting at a table  
in a casino somewhere  
playing an irrational game  
of poker—or maybe it's  
some variation of rummy.

The numbers on the cards  
are too small to read but  
there are a few earth and  
fire cards with single digits;  
several that have  
square and cube roots;  
an incomplete set  
of infinite decimals—  
Feigenbaum's and Apéry's constants;  
a product of seven perfect numbers;  
two jacks; and that king  
combing half a sword  
through his coif  
of well-conditioned hair.

I'm in the shower  
when a faint whiff  
of my old shampoo  
carries me to a memory  
almost totally erased.

It's not the smell of a soap  
or a lotion from youth. I'm  
in a room, a small room  
somewhere. I take  
a deeper breath but the scent  
is gone now, and the breath  
of memory with it.

How many rooms  
have I been in,  
places my mind  
will never return to,  
but burrowed something

so deeply inside me  
I can never recall them?

But they  
disappear into a small  
black hole, like the one  
hidden  
in Plato's billowing sleeve  
where he disposes of cards  
whose numbers  
no one dealing  
in memories  
will be able to retrieve.

## *Seth Ketchem*

### **Blacksmith's Quandary**

didn't say words;  
used them.  
took white light and caged stars—  
boxed them in.  
burned them out.  
used words to terraform  
and waged war on gleam.  
cried,

[  
Light was never meant to be seen, but spoken.  
Air was never meant to carry the burden, but the sky.  
Nothing is as bright as blindness.  
]

these words used,  
forged in iron,  
cast in bronze,  
shined only at night  
when the face of the sun was a stranger,  
and the taste of a fire, a memory.

*Edward Lee*

**As One (“Between Sleep and Dreams”)**



## *Morgan Bazilian*

### **Sun**

We are only passing through  
the days  
often hard to catch.

I try to stop  
and discern  
the clouds moving.

But lose focus quickly  
and spin  
with everyone else.

Remembering to stop again  
on a quiet road  
in a clearing.

Nothing extraordinary  
car tracks in the snow  
maybe a dog print.

Crows barking  
mud, plastic,  
an old leaf.

The things not celebrated  
are the best reminders  
of what is precious.

## *Nolo Secundo*

### **The Low-Hanging Sun**

I went to take out the trash,  
the good trash, glass and paper  
destined for re-incarnation  
and as I stepped outside,  
the air cool and pearly white,  
the low hanging sun smiles,  
throws a late afternoon warmth  
over my body, a blanket of silk.

For a moment I stopped to think,  
then thanked the low hanging sun  
for being there, the last defense  
against a cold deep unto death . . . .

In our immense Universe, wall-less,  
ever expanding, is mostly night,  
utter and fearsome darkness, all  
pitch-black and cold, a coldness  
beyond comprehension or life—  
so the light and heat of every  
myriad star is precious, precious . . . .

*Jamie Ortolano*

**Speckled**



## *Elizabeth McCarthy*

### **Carrying Seeds**

Weeds and wildflowers  
cry out on cold autumn days  
as their dried brittle bones  
are snapped underfoot.

Reminding us to step lightly  
and look closely at the seeds  
with feathers, and all the fallen  
beauty returned to the earth.

While tenacious brown burrs  
cling tight to life, as we  
carry on in rambles  
under the steel gray sky.

## *Cameron Morse*

### **Untiming**

Fall is not all  
at once. A leaf falls  
all of a sudden

between my daughter  
and me, blurred.

Individuality is the illusion  
of one me, for old  
times' sake.

The leaf is timely. I am  
always timing  
myself,

always anxious  
to get back home.

Time for her ...  
there is no meter.  
In the middle of our loop,

Omi might stop and head back  
the way we came.

At the dead end, pitch  
a tent. With her,  
the temptation is to stay,

lay down the walking stick,  
breathe in the pagoda.

*Edward Lee*

**Closer (“Our Fragile Glimpse”)**



## *Bruce McRae*

### **Addressing the Dark**

And now, the roaches' carbolic sparkle.  
A mouse in your drawers.  
The spider spinning her dreamy yarn.

Better a light to find you by,  
to see where they've hidden sleep,  
witness to the night-flower and black iris,  
our senses moving with little urgency  
in a mothy domain of muffled images—  
so we may lie with the nocturnal.

And as dark as you are  
there's room for yet more darkness,  
the insubstantial a spilled ink,  
a reservoir of human fears and sentiment,  
enough space for fumbling,  
some stumbling, a bit of bumbling too,  
enough depth to drop a shoe—  
but not enough time,  
never enough time  
for all other diffuse matters.

## *Greg Hill*

### **Pets for Poets**

In these poetry anthologies collected  
atop this glass table on my porch, I skim through  
the titles for the familiar. The sun dawdles  
behind the eastern hill, but trade winds  
have gently rolled me out of bed in search of poetry.

Amidst the predawn silence, I scan  
the printed lists of authors. With each familiar name,  
I picture the poet sliding  
open my screen door and sitting at an empty chair  
around my table. It isn't large, but they all fit,  
one by one, each poet finding a seat.

What surprise me are the first two animals to appear.  
Not because they are foreign to this tropical island  
but the sudden and simultaneous appearances  
of an eagle and a bear startle me,  
though not Galway Kinnell, who smiles meekly  
as the bear saunters up and curls by his feet,  
nor Alfred Lord Tennyson, when the eagle perches  
on the railing behind him. I barely notice  
the caterpillar inching along the table  
in front of Robert Graves, or the mole  
who blindly finds his way  
to Wyatt Prunty's pant cuffs.

Here, I realize, is where their poems come alive,  
the animal object of each poet's work  
waddling, crawling, swooping in  
around the table, around the open anthologies,  
pages, as if alive,  
flapping in the early breeze.

I look around and everyone is partnered up,  
poet and creature, two by two,  
I'm the odd one out  
(like the dodgeball draft  
in fifth grade gym),  
the one without an animal  
poem, a literary homage  
to some critter or another,

though Maya Angelou has stood up first  
and taken a walk down the beach,  
having let her caged bird fly.

Look, next to Maxine Kumin's bullet-pocked woodchucks,  
there is Richard Eberhart,  
petting his groundhog like it's a lapdog.  
And everyone is fawning over the two of them,  
the proud poet parent and the lucky little bastard,  
famous for being dead enough to catch the poet's eye,  
with his slowly blanching ribcage that no longer holds  
his cute little heart.

Robert Lowell sits over in the corner  
with his winsome and fragrant skunk.  
Delighting in the pair,  
the others don't even bother holding noses.  
How exquisitely Lowell has shined  
his light on that nocturnal beast  
and her surfeit of babies waddling behind her  
like a row of ducklings by the plastic lids.

Paul Muldoon is sharing his troubles  
with a hedgehog, but, as with Lowell,  
his eponymous varmint comes slowly to his poem,  
where Muldoon riffs first about a snail  
which gets to tag along with the hedgehog  
because of the secret they share. The hedgehog  
wins all the attention, though. Maybe his  
*hard-to-get* shtick, his reputation as a recluse,  
is the trick. Which I convince myself  
I understand.

I want a pet for my poetry,  
an endearing one I can claim for myself,  
like the bluebird for Charles Bukowski,  
who loves his little guy,  
all in all, though we might suspect  
his tendency to be abusive—  
that is, if Bukowski would ever  
let us see it.

I can't summon Blake's tiger,  
nor his lamb, not any of Stevens'  
thirteen blackbirds, the goose behind Du Fu,  
nor, of course, the albatross

slung around the shoulders of Coleridge.  
Anne Sexton, wary of these birds, keeps  
her little earthworm in her pocket.

Ogden Nash has dibs on the fecund turtle  
and the shy chipmunk. Roald Dahl has his pig,  
gorging on philosophy. And Elizabeth Bishop,  
with her fish and her armadillo, seems—  
as far as I can tell—happy enough, and not missing  
the curious moose that's ambled away again  
across the bramble north toward her home,  
the impenetrable woods. Life's like that.

The partners lead each other away,  
birds and fish and fowl and mammals and poets,  
off to the various corners of their respective notebooks.  
I am left alone, in a futile search for wildlife.

This yard, I know, is home to a mongoose.  
He rummages through the nets of shrubbery.  
Other days I have seen him, shadow and teeth,  
slip between the ginger thomas,  
his spoor of little paw tracks along  
the sandy ridge of the property line.

From the porch I scan the tufts of grass  
hoping for a glimpse of him, his low form  
darting behind fallen palm fronds.  
He is not there. I walk the steps down  
into the garden, around the cement corner  
of the house. I spot no tail ducking into a burrow. No,  
there will be nothing for me,  
no sublunary friend from the animal kingdom  
to impel me with poetic inspiration.

In this dreary cloud pocked dawn,  
even the creatures of the constellations  
have wandered off ahead of the morning.  
The sun, now in bloom over the crest of the hill,  
peers across the valley  
at abundant fauna, none of which  
is, at this moment, scurrying across my yard.

## *Anne Whitehouse*

### **Late Summer, Block Island**

The air gray, still, and parched.  
The rain, when it comes, is a sprinkle  
dripping silently on the ground.  
The mourning dove's call is backdrop

to the sea's suck and ripple  
that speaks of longing  
and sadness, buried hopes  
like lost wrecks off rocky shores.

From the marshes comes the trilling  
of red-winged blackbirds, in the thicket  
the cardinal's chirp, the meadow lark's whistle,  
chatter of a hawk chased by crows.

In the afternoon, sunlight behind  
banked clouds glints off a sea  
as pale as isinglass, reflecting back  
my memories as I write,

until the day when words will be  
all that are left of me,  
words and images  
and other people's memories.

Bury my body deep in the earth,  
but may my soul roam free  
in the shadows under the trees,  
in the dancing hearts of flowers,

the setting sun and the rising moon,  
the barred clouds and winds that move them,  
the waters where I love to swim,  
beloved haunts of my essential solitude.

*Jamie Ortolano*

**Someday**



## *Stephen Mead*

### **Wise, Wise Sea**

Here is deliverance, the width, the length, the depth—  
all of history in the ripples presently pulsing to our palms.

Sonar, gills, fins—the future is waving with its watery dialect.

Mother sea recover us with your stories & treasure troves  
re-found as the first spark of fire.

So flames shoot iridescent in cove pools, the azure warmth  
of spray on the face & hair bleached by salt.

There's where troubles settle still as sediments mica-burnished  
fossil-smooth, for there is no sorrow the ocean does not know  
how to relieve in its timeless pull & push.

The moon too goes about such stuff  
in the purple of the night shores form  
or as a Stonehenge stands mysterious with the power  
that existence flows at all.

*Lea Galanter*

**On Approaching 62**

She will never find that  
wealthy man to take care of her  
so she can spend her life as an artist  
discovering the depths of the sea  
like Jack Cousteau  
confessing despair and  
lack of perfection to her demons  
and soaking up enlightenment from her angels

She lives with choices made long ago  
gives up the dream  
sequesters herself in a blue house  
with silent cats  
instead of riding elephants in the circus

It's not the catastrophe it was at 42  
she can buy that leather jacket  
go to the Himalayas  
pick fall leaves  
and sit on the roof eating cupcakes

Old age is not for the useless  
it's for those with the crayons  
to build a bridge  
to the next world.

## *Mark Hammerschick*

### **Dinkinesh Rising from the Savanna**

Some say the world will end in fire  
some say it will end in ice  
either way it's going to end  
there is no doubt about that  
for in thinking about our future  
we think about our end  
millions of years mark those moments  
when time stops  
like on that Kenyan plain  
when *Australopithecus aferensis*  
Lucy  
first figured out that a sharp stone shaft  
cuts hide better than her  
gnarled nails  
at that point in our existence  
as a species  
the savanna shook  
jolted our brains into opportunity  
and as she took those steps  
on the staircase to infinity  
she knew that one day  
we would move beyond the grass  
beyond the rivers and mountains  
continent to continent  
world to world  
as we descend from dark matter  
moments before we land  
on the surface of Polaris  
light years beyond redemption  
returning to our origin  
how where we came from  
is where we return  
how in our search  
for our selves  
means going back  
to where we were spawned  
inside our mother's womb  
in that moist floating sea  
where the future  
is yet to be created...

## *Elizabeth McCarthy*

### **Wooden Fence**

Our fence slumps  
and leans,  
its white paint  
peeled, faded gray with mold.

Every eight feet a cedar post  
barely stands  
on its rotting foot.

Yet still, it loosely embraces  
our patch of grass and trees and home.

Where toddlers once ran wild  
to escape the confines of love  
and see what else might be  
beyond its invisible hold  
but were stopped short by the wooden board fence

that kept the nightmares out  
until it was time to open the gate  
and let them go.

## ***Bruce McRae***

### **The Dust Settles**

It's after midnight in the wherewithal.  
Stars are swarming the autumnal pitch,  
Ursa Minor foraging the last of summer's honeyjar,  
July an aftertaste, August in memoriam.

Either very early or very late,  
the pop-eyed optimist lies baffled by time's disregard.  
A village idiot suspended between otherwise and elsewhere,  
he's lightheaded, woozy with sleepless vertigo,  
bearing a message which is no message.  
And this is his unpoem, his grog-muddled hypothesis.  
A comic sketch about a shooting star in love with a cow.  
A skit concerning a man being drawn and quartered.  
If you listen very closely you can hear him murmuring afar.  
He's the one lip-synching in the celestial choir.  
That's him waving a stick under any number of noses,  
attempting to catch the Unknowable One's attention,  
oration's underlord thoroughly lost among the multitudes.

First light is crouching along the windowsill,  
our little laird fluttering his lids then nodding like a pup.  
Finally his dime is spent.  
There's only another word more in his exceptionally long story.

*Leslie Dianne*

## **The Concert**

The sunflowers  
sway to sounds  
I cannot hear.

There is silent music  
in their midst:

A lilt in the wind,  
a hum of butterflies,  
a drumroll of ants,  
marching to the  
beat of the earth,  
a choir of oak trees  
praising the moss,  
each flower a single  
multi petaled hymn  
of gentle promise  
to the sun.

This field is orchestra,  
this day a concert  
for the eyes:  
crescendoing,  
playing  
to be  
seen,

but  
never  
heard.

*Laura Erekson*

**Summer Sunflowers**



## *Contributor Biographies*

### **Luke Maguire Armstrong**

From an early age Luke Maguire Armstrong fell in love with words and his writing and unique perspective on life seasons from a life lived around the world. He is an award winning author of 7 books, including his most recent best-selling, *The Starlight Still Within Us*, and bases his life and travels from a Mayan village life where he works to enable the holistic education of 80 impoverished children through The Integral Heart Family education center. He lives on Lake Atitlan at the artist/writer retreat center/community he founded, Karuna Atitlan. Sometimes his joy is the cause of his smile, other times his smile causes his joy.

IG@LukeSpartacus

Fb: Author Luke Maguire Armstrong

### **Morgan Bazilian**

Morgan Bazilian is a poet and professor of statistical thermodynamics.

### **Paola Bidinielli**

A native of an archaic territory in central Italy, called "Land of Shepherds", Paola Bidinelli cultivated her passion for local traditional objects and raw materials. She graduated with a Master in Art Analysis and since 1990 a significant presence of her work is seen in international events, in publications, and in critical catalogs edited by scholars of art. Her process focuses on recovering, recycling, and redeeming the ordinary, mostly waste materials, both organic and synthetic, through which she investigates themes related to the perception of identity and time.

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### **Christopher Clauss**

Christopher Clauss (he/him) is an introvert, Ravenclaw, father, poet, photographer, and middle school science teacher in rural New Hampshire. His mother believes his poetry is "just wonderful." Both of his daughters declare that he is the "best daddy they have," and his pre-teen science students rave that he is "Fine, I guess. Whatever."

### **Leslie Dianne**

Leslie Dianne is a poet, novelist, screenwriter, playwright and performer whose work has been acclaimed internationally in places such as the Harrogate Fringe Festival in Great Britain, The International Arts Festival in Tuscany, Italy and at La Mama in New York City. Her stage plays have been produced in NYC at The American Theater of Actors, The Raw Space, The Puerto Rican Traveling Theater and The Lamb's Theater. She holds a BA in French Literature from CUNY and her poems have appeared in *Noctivant Press*, *The Wild Word*, *Trouvaille Review*, *Moida*, *Sparks of Calliope* and *The Elevation Review* and are forthcoming in *Whimsical Poet* and *Boston Accent Lit*. Her poetry was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

### **Laura Ereksen**

Laura was born in Oakland, California and currently lives and works in Salt Lake City, Utah. She received a BFA from Brigham Young University in Studio Art, as well as an MAT from George Mason University. Her work examines broad themes including time, nature, identity, and faith. Using objects (both manmade and organic) in her process, Laura's paintings are rich in detail and texture. Laura's work has been exhibited in Maryland, Virginia, Utah, New York City, and the Smithsonian in Washington D.C.

### **Lea Galanter**

Lea Galanter is a Seattle-area editor and writer with a background in history and theater. After writing plays for many years, she stumbled into the world of poetry and has never looked back. Her poetry has been published by *Really System*, *River and South*, *Panoply*, *LitFuse*, and appears in several anthologies. She ventures regularly into the spaces between words seeking secret messages.

### **Aaron Hahn**

Aaron Hahn, originally from South Korea, but based in New York City, is an emerging writer, painter, and award winning calligraphy artist who spent his early years in Mount Jiri, South Korea, studying calligraphy, Chinese classics, and philosophy. Currently, he is a master's student at Teachers College Columbia University. He has written several short stories, academic articles, a TOEFL writing book, and an SSAT book. One of his short stories will be published in the *Wilderness Horse Literary Review*. He has participated in several international academic conferences. He has had his artwork exhibited for Teachers College Columbia University, a piece will be published in the spring edition of *B'K*, and another will be published in *Arkana*. In the Spring of 2022, he will hold an exhibition at CICA Museum in Gimpo, South Korea with the theme of existentialism. He currently teaches reading and writing at a prep school.

### **Mark Hammerschick**

Mark writes poetry and fiction. He holds a BA in English from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and a BS and MBA. He began writing in grade school and has contributed a number of poems to literary journals over the years and has been published sporadically. He is a lifelong resident of the Chicago area and currently lives in a northern suburb near the shore of Lake Michigan and in Naples, Florida. His current work will be appearing in: *Calliope*, *Former People Journal*, *Sincerely Magazine*, *Mignolo Arts*, *Blue Lake Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *East on Central*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Griffel* and *The Rockvale Review*.

### **Randel McCraw Helms**

Randel McCraw Helms is retired from Arizona State University's English Department. His recent poems have appeared in such places as *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Dappled Things*, and *Blood & Bourbon*. His chapbook *Animal Prayers* was published in 2020, and his new collection of poems, *I Cry Love! Love! Love! Love! Happy, Happy Love!* will appear in late 2021.

## **Greg Hill**

Greg Hill is a poet and an adjunct professor of English in West Hartford, Connecticut. His work has appeared in *Pioneertown*, *Six Sentences*, *Instant Noodles*, *The Blasted Tree*, and elsewhere, and he earned an MFA in Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. In the free time afforded to a father of three young children, he composes experimental music for piano using cryptographic constraints. Twitter: @PrimeArepo. Website: <https://www.gregjhill.com>.

## **Seth Ketchem**

Seth Ketchem has a short story, "Machines of Machinations," published under *The Kenwood Publishing Group*. He is currently on academic leave from The Ohio State University due to the pandemic, one semester away from completing a degree in Astronomy & Astrophysics. Ketchem works for the Columbus Metropolitan Library, and when not busy shelving books, he has his nose stuck in them.

## **Edward Lee**

Edward Lee is an artist and writer from Ireland. His paintings and photography have been exhibited widely, while his poetry, short stories, non-fiction have been published in magazines in Ireland, England and America, including *The Stinging Fly*, *Skylight 47*, *Acumen and Smiths Knoll*. He is currently working on two photography collections: "Lying Down With The Dead" and "There Is A Beauty In Broken Things."

He also makes musical noise under the names Ayahuasca Collective, Orson Carroll, Lego Figures Fighting, and Pale Blond Boy. His blog/website can be found at <https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>

## **Richard Levine**

Richard Levine's *Now in Contest* is forthcoming from Fernwood Press. A retired NYC teacher, he is also the author of *Richard Levine: Selected Poems* (FutureCycle Press, 2019), *Contiguous States* (Finishing Line Press, 2018), and five chapbooks. An Advisory Editor of BigCityLit.com, he is the recipient of the 2021 Connecticut Poetry Society Award. His review "Poetry for a Pandemic," appeared in *American Book Review*, Nov-Dec 2020, and the review "The Spoils of War" is forthcoming. website: [richardlevine107.com](http://richardlevine107.com).

## **Elizabeth McCarthy**

Elizabeth lives in an old farmhouse in northern Vermont with her husband where they raised two children, several generations of free roaming hens, and made numerous attempts at keeping honey bees alive through cold winters. At age fifty, she went back to school earning a Master of Arts in Teaching then taught in Vermont public schools and at the Community College of Vermont before retiring in 2018. Elizabeth turned to poetry in March of 2020, when covid closed the world down and time became a windfall for writing and joining a weekly poetry group called the Lockdown Poets of Aberdeen, Scotland.

### **Bruce McRae**

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with poems published in hundreds of magazines such as Poetry, Rattle and the North American Review. His books are *The So-Called Sonnets* (Silenced Press); *An Unbecoming Fit Of Frenzy*; (Cawing Crow Press) and *Like As If* (Pski's Porch), *Hearsay* (The Poet's Haven).

### **Stephen Mead**

Stephen Mead is an Outsider multi-media artist and writer. Since the 1990s he's been grateful to many editors for publishing his work in print zines and eventually online. He is also grateful to have managed to keep various day jobs for Health Insurance. Currently he is resident artist/curator for The Chroma Museum, artistic renderings of LGBTQI historical figures, organizations and allies predominantly before Stonewall, [The Chroma Museum](#).

### **Mark J. Mitchell**

Mark J. Mitchell was born in Chicago and grew up in southern California. His latest poetry collection, *Roshi San Francisco*, was just published by Norfolk Publishing. *Starting from Tu Fu* was recently published by Encircle Publications. He is very fond of baseball, Louis Aragon, Miles Davis, Kafka and Dante. He lives in San Francisco with his wife, the activist and documentarian, Joan Juster where he made his marginal living pointing out pretty things. Now, like everyone else, he's unemployed. He has published 2 novels and three chapbooks and two full length collections so far. Titles on request.

A meager online presence can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/MarkJMitchellwriter/>  
A primitive web site now exists: <https://mark-j-mitchell.square.site/>  
He sometimes tweets @Mark J Mitchell\_Writer

### **Cameron Morse**

Cameron Morse is Senior Reviews editor at *Harbor Review* and the author of eight collections of poetry. His first collection, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best Book Award. His latest is *The Thing Is* (Briar Creek Press, 2021). He holds an MFA from the University of Kansas City—Missouri and lives in Independence, Missouri, with his wife Lili and (soon, three) children. For more information, check out his [Facebook page](#) or [website](#).

### **Ursula O'Reilly**

Ursula O'Reilly lives in County Cavan, Ireland. She enjoys writing poetry and short stories. Other interests include painting, and walking her Jack Russel terrier. Ursula had poetry and fiction published online and in a number of magazines including: *Lothlorien Poetry Journal Blog*, *Woman's Way* magazine, *Drumlin* magazine (Ireland), and by *Earlyworks Press*.

### **Jamie Ortolano**

Jamie Ortolano lives and works in Seoul, Korea. She is currently working on her doctorates at Sogang University. She mainly photographs landscapes during her travels.

### **Rob Piazza**

Rob Piazza recently completed his MFA in Creative Writing at Fairfield University. He teaches literature and composition at colleges and universities in Waterbury, Connecticut. His poems have appeared in *Mystic Blue Review*, *Halcyon Days*, *Society of Classical Poets*, *Haiku Journal*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Founder's Favourites*, *The Lyric*, *October Hill Magazine*, and *Neologism Poetry Journal*. He serves as Poet Laureate of Litchfield.

### **Judith Kelly Quaempts**

Judith Kelly Quaempts lives and write in a small, eastern Oregon city. Her work has been published in *Persimmon Tree's* west coast states poetry contest, *Buddhist Poetry Review*, and anthologies in the *Poeming Pigeon*.

### **Nolo Segundo**

Nolo Segundo, pe name of L.J. Carber, 74, in his 8th decade became a published poet in 56 literary journals and anthologies in the US, UK, Canada, Romania, and India; in 2020 a trade publisher released a book length collection, *The Enormity of Existence* and in 2021 a 2nd book, *Of Ether and Earth*. Both titles and much of his work reflect the awareness he's had for 50 years since having an NDE whilst almost drowning in a Vermont river: that he has-is-a consciousness that precedes birth and survives death—an endless being, a soul. A retired teacher, [America, Japan, Taiwan, Cambodia], he has been married 41 years to s smart and beautiful woman from Taiwan.

### **Brendan Todt**

Brendan Todt lives and teaches in Sioux City, Iowa. His poetry and short fiction can be found in print and online. Most recently, his work has been featured in *Pithead Chapel* and *The Ekphrastic Review*, where his poem “Because the Living May Be Worth Something, Too” was selected as a “Best of the Net” nominee.

### **Page Turner**

A native of Roanoke, Virginia, Page Turner collects items of deep personal meaning to painstakingly create delicate objects that honor the feminine along with the desires, experiences and roles of women. Her powerful assemblages include found objects such as fur, wood, shells, paper, and bone that firmly position her work culturally and geographically in the Appalachian region. Turner stitches these objects together with family heirlooms, antique fabric, and other personal objects, by hand, to create delicate sculptural pieces infused with a new feminist aesthetic and a soulful reverence for her heritage.

### **Lauren Walke**

Lauren got her BFA at Weber State University where she began her magpie collection of bones, feathers, and other found treasures before moving back to the older mountains of Appalachia. Inspired by lore and dreams, Lauren’s work is amplified and enhanced by her focus on daily rituals, seeking for moments of magic in life alongside her family, an unending consumption of books and music, and by tending the shrines of tiny treasures and plants around her house.

### **Anne Whitehouse**

Anne Whitehouse's poetry collections include [\*Blessings and Curses\*](#), [\*The Refrain\*](#), [\*Meteor Shower\*](#), and, most recently, [\*Outside from the Inside\*](#) (Dos Madres Press, 2020). Ethel Zine and Micro Press published [\*Surrealist Muse\*](#), her poem about Leonora Carrington, last year, and, recently, her poem, [\*Escaping Lee Miller\*](#), as hand-stitched chapbooks. She is also the author of a novel, *Fall Love*, and has been publishing essays about [\*Edgar Allan Poe\*](#).

### **Robin Wright**

Robin Wright lives in Southern Indiana. Her work has appeared in *Ariel Chart*, *Black Bough Poetry*, *Young Ravens Literary Review*, *Spank the Carp*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Rat's Ass Review*, *Bombfire*, *Sledgehammer*, *Sanctuary*, and others. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee, and her first chapbook, *Ready or Not*, was published by Finishing Line Press in October of 2020.