

The background is a complex collage. It features a young raven with a white throat patch, a desert landscape with a rocky horizon, and large, vibrant green leaves. The elements are layered and semi-transparent, creating a rich, textured visual.

# Young Ravens Literary Review

Summer 2017

Issue 6



# YOUNG RAVENS LITERARY REVIEW

SUMMER 2017

ISSUE 6

EDITORIAL STAFF

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Cover art: Collage of “Prayers Past,” by Christine Stoddard

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# INTRODUCTION

## *Prayers for the Planet*

In times of disaster, the ancients gathered around fires and altars to propitiate the gods for relief. Perhaps these quixotic forces could be appeased with animal sacrifices or promises of fidelity. Today ecologies worldwide are shifting drastically in the wake of the Anthropocene. Ocean temperatures rise, sending icy mammoths crashing into the sea. Plastic chokes remote beaches. Species of all kinds are endangered, the casualties of a crisis of mass extinction.

In a time of environmental degradation and societal unrest, the artists and poets of Young Ravens gather around proverbial creative fires to send up prayers for this irreplaceable planet.

A silver river runs through all these works, and it is this: even the most mundane experience with nature opens the observer to an encounter with the magical, the numinous, the eternal. The gulls of Jenn Powers's "Salt Water" and Ahrend Torrey's "Recognizing Eternity" preside over this issue, inviting readers to embark on this sparkling expanse and soak in nature's glories. Other artists explore the nature of our relationships with each other. In "The Universe is Yours," Vivian Wagner thanks Emily for reminding her how to be grounded in the present and appreciate the shining now.

Shadows also twine through our existence, though—from the sudden loss of a loved one, the casual killing of other terrestrial beings, or the desecration of sacred spaces, to the question of whether more awaits us beyond this life. If so, what sort of resurrection do we hope for, the soil-deep nourishment of earth recycling death into life, or the divine promise of peace and celestial mansions for the soul? We wonder together, wandering in ink and image towards a new understanding of our world.

Perhaps these prayers will not stop the steady destruction. Yet, perhaps they will create the world anew, imbue readers with the knowledge that the earth is too precious to lose, that in losing the earth each is in danger of losing oneself.

# SALT WATER

*Jenn Powers*



# RECOGNIZING ETERNITY

*Ahrend Torrey*

I can't remember anything good or bad about my life.  
All that I know are these gulls floating above me,  
and this bag of old bread, and Jonathan throwing his arms  
like prayers to the sky. What more is there to know  
other than this? What more really matters?  
But this moment—this moment containing enough desire  
for all of us, and enough liberty. “*These gulls!*” I say to myself,  
“*These gulls!*” Oh how they glide—Oh how they dip  
so close to me. Oh how they hover with their open mouths  
so I look in and recognize this eternity.

# BOURÉE WITH GOLDFINCH

*Felicia Mitchell*

In the morning,  
I threw sunflower seeds  
onto the porch  
and left them there,  
temperature dropping,  
as I did my chores.  
Sweeping, dusting,  
washing—it was all a dance,  
the dance I do at home  
alone with chores.  
As cold as it was,  
I took compost outside too.  
It was for the earth or crows,  
whichever took it first,  
and also for me,  
a reason to stand at a bare beech  
that towered over me  
and look up, praying.  
Later, dusting piano keys,  
I began touching them,  
one and then the other,

until I sat down with a bourée  
Bach wrote for his children.  
It was simple and sweet,  
and it made a goldfinch pause  
just outside the window  
as I played a dance  
even birds can dance to.  
The goldfinch stayed  
until I started a minuet,  
a faster tempo lifting its wings,  
and then I got up to vacuum.

# DARK MATTER

*Brandon Marlon*

We, tesserae in the cosmic mosaic,  
stew in our uneasiness, existentially  
discomfited by fractional knowledge.  
Unsatisfied with partial insight  
amounting to no more than  
a sandbar, we crave the beach;  
the tip of the iceberg cannot satisfy  
those who would grasp the glacier.

Our senses and instruments probe  
the stelliferous vault in a valiant quest  
to reduce the abstruse, all for naught.  
Strivings come to nothing once  
we glimpse beyond the cloak  
at particles caliginous and lurking,  
their qualia and quanta evading perception,  
eluding our understanding.

We stagger at the sheer illogic of it all,  
groping for trenchant tools with which  
to identify the invisible scaffolding

neither admitting nor emitting but deflecting  
light, to detect filaments and lineaments  
of a stable, tenfold mass substance  
hitherto withheld yet ever-present,  
the fabric and sinew of the universe.

Sedate elders of wisdom and sobriety  
presume our efforts are in vain.  
Yet human antipathy to the unknown  
is innate and motivates our ventures:  
we simply know no other way  
but to infer from the implied,  
and dare not abstain from attempts  
to manifest the latent in our midst.

# PAINING THE EASTERN SIERRAS

*Natalie Luehr*



# OFFERINGS

*Sarah Rehfeldt*

It doesn't have to be much.  
It hardly needs to be spoken,  
a word—

Even  
an ordinary,  
somewhat rounded,  
small,  
imperfect pebble  
pulled from broken fragments of shell and drift,  
once polished,  
placed inside the center of your palm  
and held out to the sky,  
will let the sunlight sparkle through it.

What little it takes.

# VIOLET GREEN SWALLOWS

*Terri Glass*

Over Mount Burdell,  
they flit, soar and dive  
through a deep blue sky—  
a glimpse of white belly  
and dark green back  
weaving among buckeye  
in blossom and old live oak.  
Skimming the sky,  
dipping over my head,  
may they anoint me  
with levity  
as I ascend the hill,  
so my feet endure  
jutting rocks and sudden dips  
in the trail.

May their spirit fill  
the troubled world  
with joy—  
visible angels not bound  
by gravity or darkness.

Arrows of pure  
freedom and play,  
they dart about  
catching insects,  
currents of wind,  
aerial circus acrobats.  
Nimble, swift, I want  
that gift to fly  
among cumulus clouds,  
and the blue  
of blue-eyed grass sky.  
I want everyone to feel  
even for a moment—  
the grace  
of a violet green swallow.

# THE INVISIBLE PRESENT

*Christina Lovin*

*Destruction is more likely to occur . . .  
in the secrecy of the invisible present.*

John J. Magnuson

We arrive only to begin leaving. Our oaths  
to this earth slide into the past like light  
from long-dead stars, even as they are spoken  
into being. We cannot comprehend  
this current moment, for once we see  
that it has come to be the moment's gone  
and we are rushed into the future.

So let this young Douglas fir stand here  
for hope. Let its three-foot stump, forty years  
hence, represent greed; the bark and shattered  
limbs scattered around the clear-cut site  
remind those to come that wastefulness is sin.

This battered old snag, low to the ground  
but still honest in its lovely decay, can stand  
for the righteousness of men; for all men,  
no matter their hollowed souls,  
remain upright in their own eyes.

Consider the roads through the forest  
as necessity: the damage they create—  
nagging doubt. The child dead from  
the slide of rock and mud can embody  
good intentions—undeniable, immeasurable.

Felled logs along the forest floor will be  
our recompense and resurrection: they flourish  
even in their deaths. Mosses and lichen  
are small cities of industry, forging chains  
to haul the green world back from the brink.

May this current hour show itself  
until its fleeting fire goes out; the future  
hold what we had hoped for the present;  
the past again be filled with forests.  
Let the invisible present be illuminated  
by the strong light of truth held up  
by those who seek the answer to the one  
question of the woodland owl: *Who? Who?*

# SEED POD WINTER TREE BLACK LOCUST

*Kelly DuMar*



# WHY THE WORLD IS SO BLUE

*Joan White*

There is no blue sky. Or ocean. No blue  
morpho butterfly.

Just a creature colluding with light.

Not even bluejays.

Hold a feather up to the sun—  
the blue disappears.

In this world there are no perfect circles.

At their circumference lies impermanence—  
particles, cells, atoms in constant motion.

Centrifugal force causes a bulge  
at the Earth's equator. Saturn's moons.  
Certainly, the orb drawn on a blackboard  
falls short. NASA's quartz gyroscopic rotors,  
the most precise man-made spheres ever,  
less than three ten-millionths of an inch from ideal.

In this world we seek permanence.

Our disappointment like the blue water  
rippling outward from a pebble tossed in a lake—  
almost perfect.

# UNSEEN

*Peggy Turnbull*

Help us to understand  
that we share the land  
with a red fox who trots  
on railroad tracks  
and turns back  
to check for threats,  
a thick bottle-brush tail  
straight behind him.

We are not alone.  
Two white-tailed deer  
disappear into a small field.  
Their bodies blend  
into April's gold-green grass.

I watch from the viaduct.  
Hundreds of vehicles pass  
nearby, the drivers unaware  
of the wild surprises in the city.

How can they know you  
if they only see cement,  
chrome, and the stoic faces  
of their neighbors?

# INTRODUCTIONS

*Nate Maxson*

When I was seven years old my friend Travis who lived across the street took me into his garage to show me the deer his father had killed on a hunt which was hanging upside down, blood dripping out into a drain

I was fascinated, it was my first real death

I reached over and touched the cool, stiff fur,

It swung slightly as if in a breeze

I felt the protrusion of its antlers, one of which was mere inches from the concrete floor

Travis explained to me, with great enthusiasm, how he and his father would strip the hide after the blood was drained and keep the horns and have venison steaks and jerky

My father has never killed anything and at the moment I felt almost shameful because of it

A line of warped scripture that I didn't know how I knew came to me

“Forgive us you animal for we know exactly what we do”

That still comes to me sometimes

Even as my memories yellow like newspaper in some places and coalesce around certain bright spots

I still have this, odd bloody gem: the buck hanged like the hanged man on a tarot card

For months I dreamed it swinging from the sky

Forgive us

We know

What kind of prayer would “let me live in this world” be anyway?

# GENESIS

*Vivian Wagner*

Down the road from my childhood home,  
an apple orchard rowed itself in the sand  
between mountains, drinking what water  
it could from underground reserves.

The trees were old and twisted,  
producing still, but barely, the branches  
beginning to rot and fall apart,  
ants lining up and down the bark.

Apple trees don't live forever.

They know this going in.

They just keep flinging fruit  
into the universe, hoping  
some of it  
falls.

# AMMA AND THE AZALEAS

*Tushar Jain*

it was a fussy little girl, with  
pimpled cheeks and a daisy in  
wavy black hair, who, clawing  
back her bangs, scrawled a  
corn seed in the middle of  
Kachauri Amma's wall

with time, the seed flaked,  
turned pale and sickly, and  
some day in June, when island  
rains peppered Amma's walls  
and seepage ravaged the  
masonry, it burst open

come July, a red azalea  
clambered up the seed—sprung  
with petals, tendrils, a whorl of  
leaves, and a sturdy stalk

on a September day,  
Amma, feeding panting, mangy

strays—groundnut and wedges of  
overripe mango, pinched back a  
wafer of grey hair, and frowning,  
noticed the mural—beaming  
azaleas on gruff limestone

Amma blinked, and squinting  
her blurry eyes, gingerly, she  
knelt; blended in with the fug of  
the moldering wall, vermin, and  
graffiti etched in orange chalk,  
she, surprised, smelt perfume

since then, the flowers bloom  
there, and Kachauri Amma patrols  
the wall, spying the passersby,  
roaring at the urchins, pelting  
busted marbles at drunks unzipping  
to pee, but at midnight, in the  
pale wash of moonlight, with  
crickets warbling in the drains,  
and the crow of soap-water in  
the runnels, Amma eases into  
sleep, her head tired, aslant,  
breathing in the azaleas.

# WE PRONOUNCED IT “CRICK”

*Gordon Kippola*

We kids caught several tiny types of fish,  
calling them made-up names, baiting hooks  
with dug-up worms and grubs we also didn't honor  
with even the due diligence of a library book search.

Thank you, we should have chanted, before each sacrifice.

We praise you, *Lumbricus terrestris*, even as barbs pierce  
your flesh. Your journey ends, our invertebrate brother,  
that the tribe may be fed. Death was our contribution

to the ecosystem. I planted the creatures I'd caught  
into creek bank holes, reading that Indians used  
fish as fertilizer. This sang, nobly, to my 1/64th  
(more or less) Cherokee and/or Blackfoot blood.

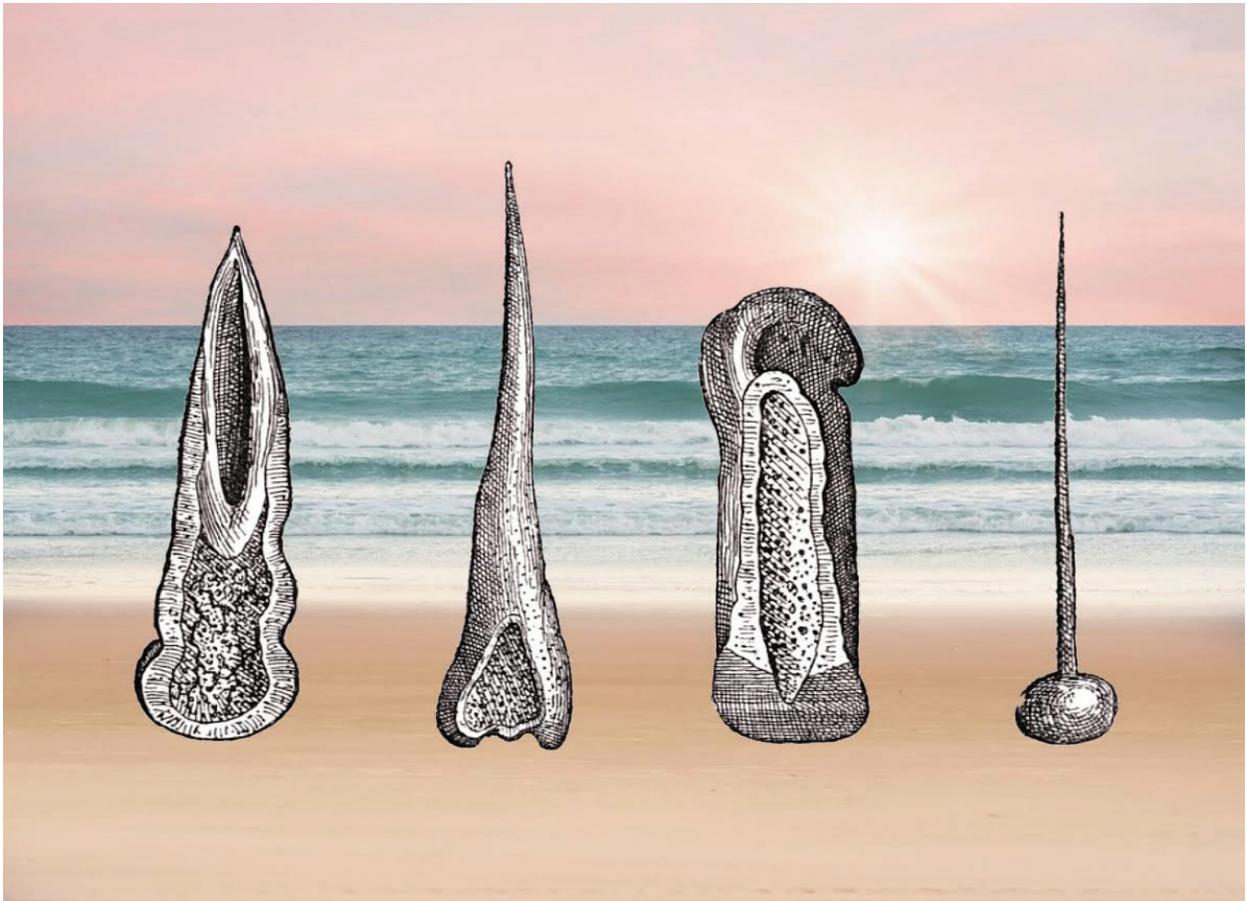
Salmon spawned and then relinquished  
their battered bodies, leaving slow-motion  
time-lapse records of decay. I drank deep

from swifter currents of our backyard life-cycle:  
revitalizing, delicious, purer than what's poured  
from present day plastic. Or I swallowed cold cancer.

We built a raft with heavy boards and nails,  
learning too late it wouldn't lift our bodies  
above the snowpack runoff waters.

# FOUR PINK TOOLS

*Ashley Parker Owens*



# A PRAYER FOR ONE SMALL RESURRECTION

*Randel McCraw Helms*

Once, just once, I assisted resurrection.  
A friend presented me a fine bluefish,  
Sea-wet and fat with recent feeding in the bay.  
I took it to the shore, to scale and clean.

Grimly slitting the distended belly,  
I let fall a final meal, a mass of tiny fry,  
All chewed and dead. Save one. It squirmed alive  
On the sand, yearning for its home, a yard away.

When does earth swerve for us, to yield such a chance?  
I scooped a fist of grit and staring eyes,  
And flung it hard seaward, with a quick, small plea  
That here, one time, was natural death defeated:

Let it unfurl, like silver leaves, to flash  
And swim again toward life, to grow, and breed.

# CLIMBING TIAN TI MOUNTAIN

*Marianne Peel*

The Chinese believe that showing all at once,  
revealing all in a swoop of sensation,  
is simply obscene.

Instead, breath by breath,  
a new sight at each curve, each turn.  
Always more to reveal.

One rung  
from the top of the mountain,  
incense burns.

I feel it curl around my face,  
beneath my fingernails,  
into the pores of my mountain climbing skin.

I have ascended to the temple,  
knowing that the top of a mountain  
is the only soulful place for worship.

An intermittent gong.  
Apples and peaches on the offering table.  
Marigolds along the path.

A phoenix carved into the sky  
Coexisting with the dragon.  
There is no yearning here, no hesitancy.

Just the permeating incense  
and feeling my rightful place  
in the family of all beings . . .

# BOND CREEK

*Natalie Luehr*



# EVENING REVERIE

*Felicia Mitchell*

Across the road,  
across from my house,  
children are playing  
with twilight, holding out their hands  
to see if fireflies will fall into them  
like shooting stars.

Their dog, tethered, barks  
until they set him free  
and still he barks, a sentinel,  
circling the children,

Night is falling on this road,  
and there are bears in the world,  
and also coyotes and pedophiles,  
but these children fear nothing.  
Their laughter is fairy dust  
that wafts across the street  
and makes me smile  
in the face of this evening's news,  
the wrens who lost their eggs to a bear,  
and the fact that night will fall  
just surely as fireflies lift up their lights  
into the night sky.

# WHERE YOUR CHILDHOOD LIVED

*Lindsey S. Frantz*

If you stand in a place  
where your childhood lived  
you may feel lost.

Where once was a tree  
now is a stump  
and the yard feels so much smaller.

At the back of the field  
there's a stream where  
a snake nearly bit your hand.

You wonder—  
is it still there? Are you?  
Pick mint and catch mud and crawdads.  
Run 'til sweat stings your eyes  
and grass cuts your legs.  
Drink water and eat apples and be  
everyone you aren't. Everyone, be.

Now,  
sit and stand and grow up.  
Feel the yard shrink around you  
and wait  
for morning  
to come.

# WHITE OUT

*Mark Bonica*

the wind blows the powdered snow  
from about the season-worn graves  
of the Puritan dead.

the white squalls cross the asphalt in my headlights  
like ghosts—

ghosts rushing about on their knees.

they leave trails of snow  
where the road would have drawn blood:

sin still enrages them

even as I pass through their prayers  
on into darkness.

# A GRAVEYARD

*Ricky Ray*

A walk that was weary until the clearing came into view. Not the eerie quiet one might expect, but the dead quiet of a birdbath attended by no birds, ants excavating a skull under a windless sky. Flowers, dead too, except for the wild ones—among them a mixture of the living and dying.

Bouquets, and single roses, bunches of hyacinth and phlox, marigolds and coxcomb. Something else unnamed and poisonous. Broken liquor bottles and beer cans. Someone has been here, someone has left these tokens of affection, or derision, someone may be watching—from which side of the divide? If a divide, if.

A graveyard, because there are stones, fallen, heads on a platter, and something underneath—the width of a baby, asleep at the breast, the width of a man, his hands done with touch. Stones cut and engraved, topped by arcs that resemble the trajectories of lives—over and across, into the waters, like dropped dreams.

The faces of stones shorn of details,  
except to say: *multitudes lie here—  
time and weather have  
erased the meaning of who.*

Someone cared, someone stood these stones upright to testify to the breaking of hearts over the burying of bodies. Someone who died, away from here, who couldn't watch the stones fall, or right the fallen stones, which testify to the falling of the bodies around those hearts too.

And here, in the thud of footsteps, as in the tapping of an invisible finger on the skull—a thud heard now though it hasn't been heard for years—a whisper, that you too will fall, and everyone you know, and all the houses you have lived in, and these woods, this planet, this galaxy, and then, who knows.

Maybe what started it all will see to its end, might even then remain, might stir, might be so restless in its thirst for being, for movement, that it sings from the stone, the dust, the last disappearing speck, and sends it all reverberating again.

# BEGETTING

*Vivian Wagner*

All the sketches we make,  
the water droplets we draw,  
the poems we write, the  
songs we sing, the x-rays  
we engender: all these  
become kin, a family  
stretching tendril roots  
into a soil of loss and decay,  
finding nourishment in  
molecules that form and  
reform, from pies into men,  
violets into waves, eggs into cats.  
This white hot flash of making  
is a series of questions,  
a stream of jokes,  
a roar of beleaguered creation,  
a growing insistence on yes, and  
still yes, and yes, yet  
again, until even a zero  
has possibility, a bubble  
in the universe's fizz.

# MILKWEED BIRD

*Kelly DuMar*



# THE PURE LAND

*Ed Krizek*

Termites, we make shelters,  
of craving and desire  
not sand and wood.  
Instead of saliva  
we hold them together  
with lust for the measureable.  
Roll the stone up the hill.  
*Amitabha!* I want to go to the land of bliss.

An oppressed woman wishes to be free.  
A poor man wishes for wealth.  
A rich man wishes for love.  
*Amitabha!* There is a place  
where trees grant wishes  
and sunlit sky holds rare and beautiful birds.  
Fruit from the trees is sweet.  
No one goes hungry.

We are caught  
in an endless cycle.  
Youth leads to old age, health punctuates disease,  
birth results in death. *Amitabha!*  
There is a place where suffering ceases  
and all are awakened.  
Soft light glows around contented faces.  
Everyone is a Bodhisattva.

# FRIENDS BY THE WAY

*Edilson Ferreira*

There is always a balance in life,  
between the heavens and earth,  
God and humans,  
the sacred and profane.

Many times by such hit-and-miss borders,  
designed through the seen and the unseen,  
we cannot discover the source  
of our happiness and misfortunes,  
our joy and sorrows.

Always unable to manage life's seasons,  
we enjoy some halcyonian ones blended  
with others so disturbing.

There are tragedies on the ground floor,  
made by incautious people, not prevented  
by incautious guardian angels,  
being healed by the Almighty, many times  
by our own human brothers, some of them  
the most unthinkable ones.

We follow fighting everyday vicissitudes,  
joining hands with all of our friends,  
the visible and the hidden ones,  
none of them must we ever dismiss.

# MEDITATION IN YU GARDENS, SHANGHAI

*Marianne Peel*

The Chinese, masters of curiosity,  
show the head of the dragon, but not the tail.

Here the four elements of a Chinese Garden  
surround you, envelop you, in one tender alcove at a time.

Greenery, rocks, architecture, and water  
flowing in a yin yang harmony, balancing space and time.

I slow down here, move my feet deliberately,  
grace my Western self through this sacred space.

I keep my voice whisper close, not wanting to startle.  
Even the limestone rocks seem to breathe.

One tiger lily on this canvas.  
A small fire between earth and sky.

Two mandarin ducks mated for life  
move among the carp.

Plants, rocks, and water  
lick the scenery beyond this space.

One sculpture invites me to massage my eyes.  
Lures me to see her in the silence.

There is a woman hidden within this rock,  
and she is turning away from me.

She offers her hand,  
luring me back into Yu Gardens.

There is no hurry here, ever,  
and I take her hand and seek

one more tiger lily,  
one more fire for my eyes.

# WATER IN MY EYES

*Jenn Powers*



# EARTHLY PARADISE

*Anne Whitehouse*

*... in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,  
I cried to dream again.*

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, III, ii, 140–43

A waterfall for every day of the year  
and the water so clean I could drink  
from everywhere I saw it flowing.  
Mountains and ravines, a tangle  
of vegetation, blue and green.

Night and day the surf beat  
against the rocky shores,  
and the forest was full of sounds—  
leaves rustling and the sweet song  
of the mountain nightingale,  
an elusive bird nesting  
in the hollow trunks of trees.

In the lowlands, near the river,  
grapefruit hung from the trees

like golden suns,  
and a young woman,  
her skirt hiked above her knees,  
bare-breasted, stood in the shallow river  
where it ran over rocks,  
washing her clothes.

It could have been a scene  
that perhaps never existed,  
a dream of someone's life.

Into that life came a storm  
that took everything away.  
The woman I'd seen placidly washing  
her clothes in a green dream  
lost the blue house on the hillside  
built by her husband—  
all they had worked and strived for  
washed away in the mudslide  
after the hurricane,  
when two months of rain  
fell in a single day.

# IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE THERE ARE MANY ROOMS

*Cat Dixon*

*for the 30-year-old widow with the one-year-old son*

Lord, I want to send a card, a letter of condolence  
to my acquaintance,  
but I don't know what to write. I scratch a few words on paper, then  
cross them out.

There are no words except yours. You  
promised that her husband is going to a home  
with you. Lost on the water, he had been spear-fishing.  
Lost, he never came back up.

Please make his room a boat with a glass bottom,  
and the carpet, water, so clear, so clean that when he looks  
down, he sees her and their son. He will need  
an anchor made of stars; his view will never change.

I know he will be fine in your house.

But Lord, I worry about her and the baby.  
Can you make them a room here, too?  
An invisible room surrounding them:

at home, at the memorial, at the burial.  
Then, let it expand and spread to cover  
them as they wade into their lives.  
Let it be made of grace and love.  
Let me help construct their room in some way.

# DIRT

*Christina Lovin*

A clean word: dirt. In the end, cover me  
with earth, or let me loose as ash into the air,  
returning to the soil as debris, useful  
once more, as all things are when returned  
to elements: carbon, nitrogen, hydrogen.  
Plumb my body, if you must, lay me out  
against the ridge if there be any hope in it  
for man. Use me, maker of the forest.  
Use me as beauty, as necessity, as soil  
beneath the Douglas Fir, the ancient yew,  
the hemlock and spruce. Prepare me at last  
for my resurrection high in the canopy  
two hundred feet above this holy ground:  
washed clean, my arms fully open to the sun.

# WOUNDS

*Barbara Brooks*

Fallen needles cover the ground  
until the harvester begins to slash  
through high grade pines.

Its dripping oil stains a rainbow  
in the puddles as it bunks the dead  
for the log loader. Tires slice  
the red clay that runs like blood.

Logging trucks chew up the entrance,  
leaving a ragged wound. Rumbling  
to the sawmill, they drag red  
down the highway.

Finally, silence is the only noise  
that falls. The dried ruts of darkened  
blood are scattered in what is left.  
Spring, little blue stem begins to scab  
over wounds, softens the landscape  
followed by thin pines reaching for the sky  
like skin healing over the cut.

# BLUE FLOWER

*Ashley Parker Owens*



# CHIASMUS/KHIASMOS

*William Doreski*

You ask if *chiasmus* occurs  
in Aristotle, but this Latin  
mutilation of Greek *khiasmos*  
wouldn't happen for centuries

until exegetes unraveled  
the New Testament for clues.  
Actual chiasmi, or crossings,  
mar the snow in my yard where

wild turkeys strut and gambol  
with their heavy Y-shaped tracks.  
Such insolent rhetoric shames  
the ordinary social usage

on which I expend myself  
at the coffee shop, where strangers  
mumble into their smartphones  
and ignore the newspapers heaped

on the shelf by the stainless urns.  
I get discursive when alone  
drinking coffee among strangers,  
my notebook flopping like a flounder.

So I try to converse in colors  
bright enough to attract attention;  
but digital sighs and groans  
stifle my attempt to be friendly.

So much for manners developed  
in small-town Connecticut  
where winter features bobsleds  
and Homeric snowball fights.  
It always comes back to the Greeks,  
or maybe the ancient Hebrews  
before Babylonia destroyed  
the first Temple and stole the Torah

to ponder in limestone palaces  
of which little trace remains.  
But crossings occur daily  
in nature and culture, and Greek

and Jewish history overlap  
as texts murmur and converse  
and language begets language  
and the turkeys gobble and flap

inadequate wings in protest:  
inscribing the snow so firmly  
the gods on their clouds can read it  
without squinting or straining their gaze.

# THE ANGEL AND I

*John Grey*

Angels were strictly for childhood.  
They guarded me when I was at my most vulnerable.  
Or guided me when I wasn't content with being dumb.  
Even in the bedroom dark, something glittered behind my eyelid.  
Or it sang saintly in my tiny ear.

I walked to school singing songs to Uriel.  
And called on Michael to protect me from the bullies,  
I had my own password into the dominions—  
it was help me, somebody, anybody.

Angels expired eventually.  
Or they retreated into old masterpieces.  
They rose above the shoulders of old men with beards.  
Their beatific faces protected the past,  
the dead, the artist's commission.  
When I look up these days, I see mostly pigeons.

Even the devout I know  
reckon on their ascension  
as being more esoteric

than an angel grabbing their hand  
and lifting them skyward.  
They've factored in centuries of scientific discoveries.  
Galileo brought angels down to Earth.  
Einstein clipped their wings.

I call you "angel" often  
but not in any religious sense.  
You don't appear to me in a golden glow.  
Your crown's not orbited by a halo.  
You're at the store now buying groceries.  
They offer a ten percent discount  
for benevolent celestial beings.

# OUR LORD'S GRACE

*Edilson Ferreira*

My accountant says that for each credit  
there must be mandatorily one debit,  
and next to the assets it must be shown  
its corresponding liabilities.

Economists say there is no such thing  
as a free lunch and to each profit fatally  
will correspond an equal loss.

So have been moved the heavy wheels  
that carry our chariot through the ages.

But we know that our Creator's accounts  
do not close like this.

All of us are His lovely sons and His grace  
covers and heals all days of our earthly life,  
without any of our known limitations,  
without our proper acknowledgment  
and regardless of our faith or merit.

We are His sons and His is this world,  
ours the grace of so unquestioning love.

# NOCTURNAL REFUGEES

*Edilson Ferreira*

*After Nighthawks by Edward Hopper*

Night that brings with itself lack of love,  
hesitation on living, even fear, as escaping  
and fleeing from world's demands.

Night passing far away from others not long ago,  
paraphrased by so many poets always praising,  
since ancient times, beauty of mutual warmth  
and human complicity.

People hidden in a furtive safety of a dull bar,  
unable to come out of their shells and share  
some good news, perhaps hidden desires or  
love secrets, yet distrust and uncertainties.

Yet unable to reach that souls' communion,  
entire and unique humans' purpose,  
fearful to break supposed barriers,  
walls and fences that separate us.

Where the firmness of our ancestors, never afraid  
to penetrate dangers of dark and haunted nights?

Where the joy and smiles, where the words that had spoken  
their dreams and drawn their desires?

Words and desires that built the world they bequeathed us  
which we are about to lose, deaf and dumb for its beauties.  
Unhappy and disinterested, we will transfer to our sons  
only aridity and dryness, our aloofness and our despair.

# DESECRATION

*Anne Whitehouse*

I placed it like a reminder  
in the corner of my computer screen;  
all day I kept coming back to it:  
the web cam a mile underwater  
recording clouds and plumes of filth  
expelled from the bowels of the earth,  
convulsive, unstoppable,  
polluting the soft, blue-green waters  
and pure white sands  
of the warm, salt sea,  
its rich, teeming, varied life—  
dolphins playing at dawn,  
stealthy, sinuous sharks,  
fish the colors of the rainbow,  
vibrant corals and seaweeds,  
mollusks and crustaceans,  
the most magnificent birds  
and intricate shells—  
fouled and mired in the earth's shit.

The very substance of our greed  
come back to contaminate the world,  
until the last fires of internal combustion  
are quenched.

# SNOWY PEAKS

*Natalie Luehr*



# LETTER TO A BUDDHIST MONK'S MOTHER

*Ed Krizek*

The days go by  
quickly here. Up  
at 3 AM for prayers  
and meditation. At 5:30 AM we eat  
breakfast of hot porridge,  
and tsampa which is barley powder.  
We mix the tsampa with yak butter  
which offers a cheesy flavor.  
There is no food after noon.  
The days are spent in study.  
We memorize the Sutras  
as well as other Buddhist texts.  
Later in the day we debate the merits of these  
teachings with a partner.  
My hair has been shaved off.  
We do this as a sign of our commitment  
to the *sangha*, which is our word for community.  
To you this may seem a harsh  
and stark life. It is true I sleep  
on a wooden plank  
with a four-inch straw mattress. But,

there is a calm beauty  
in the absence of distraction.  
In times of stillness I can see  
the small birds that fly free outside the temple.  
I hear their songs as I do my working meditation.  
Before I came here I considered  
what it would be like to leave  
my soft bed, my corvette, the parties with friends,  
and you. Sometimes I miss  
everything!  
Still, this is the path I have chosen  
I must sweep the stones  
out of the way  
before I walk forward.

# THE UNIVERSE IS YOURS

*Vivian Wagner*

Emily, you help me understand it's fine for me to sit in my room, alone, watching the robins out my window. This is everything: sunlight glinting off hemlock needles, trucks roaring like fast-moving tyrannosaurus rexes burning their own residue, mourning doves saying a quiet, insistent prayer. You help me see that there's nowhere else to go, that this desk and moment and tree and road are the entirety. You calm me into that understanding. You move my pencil across the only paper in the world.

# EAST BLUE

*Christina Lovin*

I am afraid, I admit. There are reports of mountain lions in these woods. I am mortal, like the deer and the squirrel, but I come prepared: large stick in my hand, a knife from the kitchen in my pocket. A quick study, I stop and turn as I have read, to act as prey would: wary and watchful. But this quiet dell is softly green as any open meadow: a blanket of moss covering everything, living and lost. Soon I am at peace here like the sodden forms reclining in this gloomy glade. Around me the apparatus of measurement (researcher's trash, I'm told) is evident on the veiled mounds of sawn logs: white pipes, blue flags, screens, and gauges. Recent scrapings show bare tree flesh where scientists have peeled off layers of the dead bark to calculate, investigate, and adjudicate the aggregate decay. How long does it take five-hundred-year-old wood to return to dirt?

And what is it about this place of natural decomposition that brings to mind what lies beneath the ground? My mother dead nearly ten years now, her mother more than sixty, grandfather one hundred years gone this spring:

should I not take comfort in their usefulness since death?  
We like to measure life in years like growth rings  
on a tree: my daughters, thirty-six and thirty-eight,  
grown and married, their children twenty, seventeen,  
twelve and nine, soon. (Where has the time gone? Why am I old?)  
Is the lasting value of one's life actually death: how  
we return to soil, even housed and sealed? We do return,  
certain as the sun rises and sets. Dust to dust, just  
as these geriatric giants do. Slowly, slowly. Listen.  
The forest's music is sweet: a balance of life and afterlife:  
the slow insinuation of moisture and sigh of nitrogen,  
the jaws of the beetle working, their frass dropping to the sod.

*Listen.* Your body is already falling away. As you arrive,  
you are beginning to leave, cell by cell. Be joyful, then,  
my friend. For at your end, your body's final uses  
are no more, no less, than those of these boles reclining  
supine and prone across the forest floor: food, shelter,  
fertilizer, and nurturing soil. For all I've been in life,  
to all to whom I've been anything, I say: I will turn  
my back to the forest without dread. Let the lion come.  
May the deer and vole and squirrel find safety today.  
I sheath the jagged fear. I lay my walking stick aside  
to decompose. If you believe in resurrection, believe  
in this salient truth, as well: our bodies have uses

to this earth, more than to any heaven you can imagine,  
none more lovely than the many rooms of this jade mansion.  
If I never rise, better to remember me here: earthbound  
in my demise, a mound beneath some shroud  
of moss, as much a part of earth.

# LOBSTER TAILS

*Ashley Parker Owens*



# FALLING AWAY

*Mark Bonica*

It is late fall in the world.

We dangle our legs off the dock above a river somewhere.

The water is doing its moving/not moving thing  
of being here and on its way elsewhere.

Everything but the river and the dock begins to fade away:  
first the things behind us become like smoke  
because we are not holding them in place with our gaze,  
then the trees on the far bank become hazy,  
and even as they drift downriver like vapor  
we look skyward and see that the blue has dissolved  
leaving a starry blackness.

We are now flowing through the universe,  
powered by the river's gentle current.

You lay back, feeling the wood through your t-shirt  
against your shoulder blades,  
and you begin to count the stars.

I look down river to where we have been—  
it seems impossible to look up river  
as that would be to know something before it happened,  
which of course  
is not possible.

# THE BECKONING

*Michael Keshigian*

Upon a summer's eve when the lawn  
was not yet drenched with dew  
and still radiant from the day's warmth,  
when the tips of white pines  
rose skyward like long fingers  
to tickle the underside of stars  
as the evening air vibrated  
to a cricket ostinato,  
he laid atop the grass  
in a contemplative manner,  
arms and legs extended,  
and marveled at the infinite distance  
above him with its clustered collection  
of variously illuminated rocks and stones,  
wondering what will become of him  
once his time in this dimension ended,  
where he might find himself,  
what form he might take, and in fact,  
would he be aware to bear witness.  
His thoughts transcended  
and for an instant he became one

with the mass about him  
and believed he heard  
his name whispered in the harmony about,  
a single concordant breath, faint and distant,  
like a dried autumn leaf  
brushed by a wandering snowflake  
as though it belonged,  
not to him or his parents  
who bestowed it upon him,  
nor to this place on earth,  
but to the vast emptiness  
and unanswered question  
from which we all appeared.

# CENTERING

*Maureen Solomon*

Like a zinnia in late summer,  
sunset streaks sky orange and purple  
raucous flare of petals holding it all  
in a simple nod of brilliance,  
I simmer down into self and then  
into a forgetting of that self just  
faint sound of evening birds  
a fragrance of autumn coming  
breath whispering in reverence for  
evening's green sky.

Like the woods in winter  
whose grave hush muffles sleeping squirrels  
while trees drawing dark from the sky  
mantle themselves all in velvet snow—  
silence radiates around me in circles  
my footsteps are invisible  
only seeing is left  
for one on winter's path.

And as the waterfall rushing, rises  
falls, summons lone goose, stray crow,  
singing its way through ice,  
incredible multitudes converging  
at the heart of its ceaseless flow,  
there where I used to be  
flying overhead wings tipped  
to my own heart, now  
within the endless hum of desire  
is someone who hears a simple melody.

# PLANTED IN MY BACKYARD

*Cat Dixon*

*For Trent*

My dearest friend planted the seed years ago. The soil was rocky, the thorns of the rosebush threatening, yet he insisted he plant it *here*—claimed it was the most opportune spot. How could I have known that this tree would grow 12 feet, would overtake the rosebush, would shade my head in the summer—outside reading Mayakowsky—and would prevent the neighbor’s loose branch hanging over my yard from crushing my back porch? I didn’t know. He did. Not like a fortune teller with tricks. Not like a prince with a magic mirror foreseeing my demise, no, like an experienced farmer who plants everywhere during a drought, a famine, with a hope something will take.

# MANTRA

*Kersten Christianson*

Praise the spruce cone  
spring-stretching its scales.

Praise the kingfisher,  
beak-blitzing the silent estuary.

Praise the beard lichen,  
sway-draping from the high branch.

Praise Fleetwood Mac  
grind-crooning a pace for my joyful step.

Praise the great blue heron,  
fish-stalking the tidal zone.

Praise the wild gust,  
nudge-hinting of rain.

Praise pollinating spruce cones  
wind-twisting across mountains.

Praise warmed, limber legs,  
wander-following a wild path.

# I WILL NOT MOURN YOU

*Jennifer Liston*

when old man Siberian tiger no longer strolls through spruce forests;  
when the song of the whistling thrush echoes only in legend;  
when folklore whispers of the mythical bluefin tuna;  
when you have scraped and filleted my mountainous flesh;  
when you have sunk and hollowed brittle my bones;  
when you have drunk me dry and  
you who remain wage war  
over my dusty clefts;  
when birth is rare  
and your future  
funnels  
towards  
a  
thin  
possibility;  
when I no longer  
support your life  
because I fight  
for  
mine.

# MAUI MORNINGS

*Shawna Sommerstad*



# ILMATAR

*Ashley Parker Owens*

Sky had a daughter  
seeking a resting place

her name was Ilmatar

she descended to the waters  
swam & floated for 700 years  
until she noticed a bird  
searching for a place to rest

she bent her leg  
raised her knee  
& gestured towards the bird  
offering a place to land

it soared toward her  
grabbed her knee  
and went to sleep

the bird laid six gold eggs  
& one of iron

during incubation her knee grew warm  
and at the burn she jerked  
and dislodged the eggs  
which fell  
& burst in the waters

land was formed from  
shattered eggshells

sky formed from  
the whites & turned  
into moon & stars  
the yolk became sun

she spent another hundred years  
floating in the waters  
admiring her broken eggs  
until she could not resist  
her urge to create

and rising, she walked  
her footprints filling pools for fish

& by pointing  
she created contours in the land.

# THE BURNING QUESTION

*Brandon Marlon*

On the heralded day, overdue if not ordained,  
when electric currents buried deep within  
our planet's kinetic core of molten iron  
cease generating the geomagnetic field  
shielding life from hazardous space weather  
and radiation, when the internal dynamo  
animated by a south-north feedback loop  
attenuates to the point that it spontaneously  
flips poles and reverses direction,  
when Earth's defenses fail, dooming it  
to resemble Mars in its terrible barrenness,  
will our heirs be prepared and endure?

Even at this very moment, as the South Atlantic  
magnetic anomaly brews beneath our feet,  
shifting flux in patches, subtly hinting at that  
eventual and eventful hour when  
magnetism no longer deflects charged particles  
from the solar wind in a dipole structure,  
instead diverting radiation toward low latitudes  
where most mortals dwell in blissful ignorance,

there remains cause not merely for concern  
but for hope in civilization's ability to cope.

Perhaps by then cancer will have been cured,  
and humankind's scions will routinely witness  
auroras shimmering across night skies  
the world over, a poignant testimony  
to survival despite inescapable cataclysm.

# TEMPLE OF DARKNESS

*Claire Blotter*

We wait in the temple of darkness  
our minds strained from too much thinking  
We wait in a gyre of water and smooth leaves  
listen to redwood and birch breathe,  
subtle songs of cricket and bird  
We stay so still we can hear  
a stream sleep in its bed even  
when there is no water—  
the voice of rain yearning  
to fall mist gathering  
to bloom into drops  
A whisper so quiet  
we're unsure if it comes  
from inside or outside us  
We wait for the faintest prayer  
absorb it till we can move  
forward straight from  
the heart

# DURING THAT LAST MINUTE

*Zev Torres*

During that last minute  
When there are  
No minutes left  
And all that remains are seconds  
A fleet of seconds  
A flock of seconds  
Unbound  
No longer held together by a  
Longer segment of time  
No longer part of a  
Temporal arc or of a  
Larger destiny  
Chaotic seconds  
Each one existing only for itself  
Which taken together would not  
Total sixty  
Ticking away  
One after another  
One by one  
Scattering  
Absorbed by forever

Until there remains  
Only one—  
Still  
Sufficient time  
Ample time  
An abundance of time  
To resist the inevitable  
With brazen wonder

# PRAYERS PAST

*Christine Stoddard*



## CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

### CLAIRE BLOTTER

Claire's poetry has been published in *Rattle*, *Barnwood*, *Gargoyle*, *Canary*, *HOW(ever)*, and *The California Quarterly* among other publications. Her poetry awards include two Marin Arts Council Grants, First Place in the San Francisco Bay Guardian Poetry Contest, First Place American Academy of Poets Graduate Award, and Second Place in the Browning Monologue Contest at San Francisco State University, where she later taught in the creative writing and women studies departments. She has published three chapbooks, including *Moment in the Moment House*, from Finishing Line Press. She has represented San Francisco in National Poetry Slams in Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco.

### MARK BONICA

Mark Bonica was a soldier once, and young, but neither of these anymore. Instead, he teaches at the University of New Hampshire, where he enjoys helping launch young people on their own grand adventures. His poetry and fiction have appeared in the *Loch Raven Review*, *Words Dance*, *Oak Bend Review*, *Vagabondage*, and others.

### BARBARA BROOKS

Barbara Brooks, author of chapbooks *The Catbird Sang* and *A Shell to Return to the Sea*, is a member of Poet Fools. Her work has been accepted in *Avalon Literary Review*, *Chagrin River Review*, *The Found-*

*ling Review, Blue Lake Review, Third Wednesday, Peregrine, Tar River Poetry*, among others.

## KERSTEN CHRISTIANSON

Kersten Christianson is a raven-watching, moon-gazing Alaskan. When not exploring the summer lands and dark winter of the Yukon Territory, she resides in Sitka, Alaska, with her husband and photographer, Bruce Christianson, and daughter Rie. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing (Poetry) through the University of Alaska Anchorage in 2016. Kersten's recent work has appeared in *Cirque, Tidal Echoes*, and *Sheila-Na-Gig*. Her poetry collection titled *Something Yet to Be Named*, by Aldrich Press, along with a chapbook titled *What Caught Raven's Eye*, by Petroglyph Press, are forthcoming in 2017. Kersten co-edits the quarterly journal *Alaska Women Speak*. She blogs at [KERSTENCHRISTIANSON.COM](http://KERSTENCHRISTIANSON.COM).

## CAT DIXON

Cat Dixon is the author of *Eva* and *Too Heavy to Carry* (Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2016, 2014) and *Our End Has Brought the Spring* (Finishing Line Press, 2015). She is the managing editor of The Backwaters Press, a nonprofit press in Omaha. She is the editor of *Watching the Perseids: The Backwaters Press Twentieth Anniversary Anthology* (BWP, 2017). She teaches creative writing at the University of Nebraska.

## WILLIAM DORESKI

William Doreski's most recent book of poetry is *The Suburbs of Atlantis* (2013). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in many journals.

## KELLY DUMAR

Kelly DuMar is a poet, playwright, and workshop facilitator from Boston. She's the author of two poetry chapbooks: *All These Cures* (Lit House Press) and *Tree of the Apple* (Two of Cups Press). Kelly founded and produces the Our Voices Festival of Women Playwrights at Wellesley College, now in its eleventh year. She's on the board and faculty of The International Women's Writing Guild. You can follow her daily nature photo and creative writing blog at [KELLYDUMAR.COM](http://KELLYDUMAR.COM).

## EDILSON FERREIRA

Mr. Ferreira, 73, is a Brazilian poet who writes in English rather than Portuguese. He has been published in venues like *Right Hand Pointing*, *The Lake*, *Spirit Fire Review*, *The Provo Canyon*, *Red Wolf Journal*, *Whispers*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Synesthesia*, *Algebra of Owls*, and some others. Ferreira lives in a small town, Formiga (MG), with wife, three sons and a granddaughter and is trying to publish his first poetry book by 2017. He began to write at age 67 after retirement as a bank manager. He was recently nominated for The Pushcart Prize for his poem "Eating Pain."

## LINDSEY S. FRANTZ

Lindsey S. Frantz lives in the sleepy, art-rich town of Berea, Kentucky with her husband, toddler son, dog, and cats. She works for Eastern Kentucky University as the MFA Specialist for their creative writing program, Bluegrass Writers Studio. She is also the managing editor of the literary journal *Jelly Bucket* and a yoga teacher. Her work has previously appeared in *Paradigm*, *Aurora Literary Arts Journal*, Main Street Rag's *Villains Anthology*, *Kentucky Her Story 2012*, *Ruminate*

*Magazine*, and *Emerge Literary Journal*. In her spare time, Lindsey knits, crochets, doodles, and sings silly songs to her son.

## TERRI GLASS

Terri Glass is poet and writer of the natural world. She is a long-time teacher with California Poets in the Schools. Some of her work has appeared in *About Place*, *Young Raven's Literary Review*, *San Diego Poetry Annual*, *Fourth River*, *Adventum*, and *California Quarterly*. Terri is the author of three books of poetry, the most recent being a chapbook of haiku, *Birds, Bees, Trees, Love, Hee Hee*, from Finishing Line Press. TERRIGLASS.COM.

## JOHN GREY

John Grey is an Australian poet and a U.S. resident. Recently he has been published in *New Plains Review*, *Stillwater Review*, and *Big Muddy Review*, with work upcoming in *Louisiana Review*, *Columbia College Literary Review*, and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

## RANDEL McCRAW HELMS

Randel McCraw Helms retired from Arizona State University's English Department in 2007. Making poems is his lifelong vocation.

## TUSHAR JAIN

Tushar Jain is an Indian poet, playwright, and author. He was the winner of the Srinivas Rayaprol Poetry Prize, 2012, and a winner of the Poetry with Prakriti Prize, 2013. Subsequently, he won the RL Poetry Award, 2014. He was a winner of the DWL Short Story Contest 2014 for his short story "A humiliating day for [Dr.] Balachander." He won the Toto Funds the Arts Award for Creative Writing, 2016.

His work has been published in myriad international journals such as *Antiserious*, *thenervousbreakdown*, *raedleafpoetry*, *papercuts*, and elsewhere.

## MICHAEL KESHIGIAN

Michael Keshigian's twelfth poetry collection, *Into the Light* was released in April 2017 by Flutter Press. Published in numerous national and international journals, he is a six-time Pushcart Prize and two-time Best Of The Net nominee. His poetry cycle, *Lunar Images*, set for clarinet, piano, narrator, was premiered at Del Mar College in Texas. Subsequent performances occurred in Boston (Berklee College) and Moletto, Italy. *Winter Moon*, a poem set for soprano and piano, premiered in Boston. MICHAELKESHIGIAN.COM.

## GORDON KIPPOLA

Following a career as a U.S. Army musician, Gordon Kippola earned an MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Tampa. His poetry has appeared (or is forthcoming) in *Stoneboat Literary Journal*, *Third Wednesday Magazine*, *The Courtship of Winds*, *Southeast Missouri State University Press*, *Literary Juice*, and other splendid, discerning journals.

## ED KRIZEK

Ed Krizek was born in New York City and now runs a sales and marketing business in Swarthmore, PA, a suburb of Philadelphia. He holds a BA and MS from University of Pennsylvania, and an MBA and MPH from Columbia University. He is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County; has published over seventy articles, poems, and short stories in various publications; and has won

prizes in several poetry and short story competitions. See more of his work at [EDKRIZEKWRITING.COM](http://EDKRIZEKWRITING.COM).

## JENNIFER LISTON

Jennifer Liston is originally from Galway in Ireland and now lives in Adelaide, South Australia. She is an electronic engineer but has swapped numbers for letters. She has written three poetry collections, and her poems have been published in journals and anthologies, including *The Found Poetry Review*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, *Transnational Literature*, and *Best Australian Poems*. She has performed her poems at numerous Irish and Australian poetry events and on radio in Ireland and Australia. She holds an MA and a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Adelaide.

## CHRISTINA LOVIN

A native midwesterner, Christina Lovin was born in Galesburg, Illinois, the hometown of Swedish poet Carl Sandburg, but has lived and worked in states as varied as Indiana, Ohio, Maine, and North Carolina. She now makes her home in Central Kentucky, where she lives with three rescue dogs in a town reminiscent of Mayberry RFD. After having several careers, including minister's wife, retail shop owner, and VISTA volunteer, she received an MFA in Creative Writing from New England College in 2004. She began teaching college-level writing courses that fall, and is currently a Senior Lecturer in the English & Theatre Department at Eastern Kentucky University. Lovin's writing has appeared in over one hundred different literary journals (most recently *New Millennium*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, and *Contrapasso*) and anthologies (*Ghost Fishing*, *The Doll Collection*, and *Intimacy: An Anthology*), as well as five volumes of poetry (*Echo*, *A Stirring in*

*the Dark, Flesh, Little Fires, and What We Burned for Warmth*). She is the recipient of numerous poetry awards, writing residencies, fellowships, and grants, most notably the Al Smith Fellowship from Kentucky Arts Council, Kentucky Foundation for Women, and Elizabeth George Foundation Grant.

## NATALIE LUEHR

Natalie Luehr is a landscape painter and loves to explore. She currently works in the fraud prevention software industry, helping to stop bad guys. She lives in Montana, which is her favorite place ever.

## BRANDON MARLON

Brandon Marlon is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. He received his BA in Drama & English from the University of Toronto and his MA in English from the University of Victoria. His poetry was awarded the Harry Hoyt Lacey Prize in Poetry (Fall 2015), and his writing has been published in more than 160 publications in 23 countries. Find more of his work at [BRANDONMARLON.COM](http://BRANDONMARLON.COM).

## NATE MAXSON

Nate Maxson is a writer and performance artist. The author of several collections of poetry, he lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

## FELICIA MITCHELL

Felicia Mitchell, a native of South Carolina, has made her home in rural southwestern Virginia since 1987. She teaches English and creative writing at Emory & Henry College. Her recent poetry collection is *Waltzing with Horses* (Press 53). [FELICIAMITCHELL.NET](http://FELICIAMITCHELL.NET).

## ASHLEY PARKER OWENS

Ashley Parker Owens is a writer and poet living in Richmond, Kentucky. She is unmarried with one boyfriend, one daughter, three cats, and two MFAs.

## MARIANNE PEEL

Marianne Peel is a poet and a flute-playing vocalist, learning to play ukulele, who is raising four daughters. She shares her life with her partner, Scott, whom she met in Istanbul while studying in Turkey. Marianne taught teachers in Guizhou Province, China, for three summers, and she also toured several provinces in China with the Valpraiso Symphony, playing both flute and piccolo, in January of 2016. Recently, Marianne was invited to participate in Marge Piercy's Juried Intensive Poetry Workshop in June 2016. This fall, she journeyed to Georgia O'Keefe's Ghost Ranch in New Mexico, where she took part in an amazing Narrative Poetry Writing Seminar. Marianne also received Fulbright-Hays Awards to Nepal and Turkey. She taught English at middle and high school for 32 years. She is now retired, doing Field Instructor work at Michigan State University. In addition, Marianne has been published in *Muddy River Review*; *Silver Birch Press*; *Persephone's Daughters*; *Encodings: A Feminist Literary Journal*; *Write to Heal*; *Writing for Our Lives: Our Bodies—Hurts, Hungers, Healing*; *Mother Voices*; *Metropolitan Woman Magazine*; *Ophelia's Mom*; *Jellyfish Whispers*; *Remembered Arts Journal*; *Gravel*, among others.

## JENN POWERS

Jenn Powers is a writer and photographer from New England. She is currently writing a CNF memoir and her most recent work is pub-

lished or forthcoming in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Jabberwock Review*, *The Pinch*, *Gulf Stream Lit Mag*, and *Raven Chronicles*, among others. Please visit [WWW.JENNPOWERS.COM](http://WWW.JENNPOWERS.COM).

## RICKY RAY

Ricky Ray was born in Florida and educated at Columbia University. His recent work can be found in *The American Scholar* (blog), *Matador Review*, *Fugue*, *Lodestone*, *Sixfold*, and *Chorus: A Literary Mixtape*. His awards include the Ron McFarland Poetry Prize and Kattexic's Cormac McCarthy prize. He lives in Manhattan with his wife, three cats, and a dog; the bed is frequently overcrowded.

## SARAH REHFELDT

Sarah Rehfeldt lives with her family in western Washington, where she is a writer, artist, and photographer. Her publication credits include *Appalachia*; *Blueline*; *Written River*; *Weber—The Contemporary West*; and *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize in poetry. Sarah is the author of *Somewhere South of Pegasus*, a collection of image poems. It can be purchased through her photography web pages at [WWW.PBASE.COM/CANDANCESKI](http://WWW.PBASE.COM/CANDANCESKI).

## MAUREEN SOLOMON

Maureen Solomon lives in the New England countryside, a place where poems almost write themselves. She is also an artist and loves to grow flowers and cook good food for her family and friends.

## SHAWNA SOMMERSTAD

Shawna Sommerstad is an official arts crazy individual. She has nota-

ble university training and experience in classical singing, psychology, a certificate in Human Resources (University of Calgary, 2011) and a certificate in the Liberal Arts (University of Regina, 2017). She resides in Edmonton, Canada, with her husband, Kris, and their two little boys, Alex and Nicholas. When not chasing her family, she can be found on her blog, *The Stumbling Domestic*, and welcomes visitors and comments. [WWW.SHAWNASOMMERSTAD.WEEBLY.COM](http://WWW.SHAWNASOMMERSTAD.WEEBLY.COM).

## CHRISTINE STODDARD

Christine Stoddard is a Salvadoran-Scottish-American writer and artist who lives in Brooklyn. Her visuals have appeared in the New York Transit Museum, the Ground Zero Hurricane Katrina Museum, the Poe Museum, and beyond. In 2014, *Folio Magazine* named her one of the top 20 media visionaries in their twenties for founding the culture magazine, *Quail Bell*. She is also a Puffin Foundation grantee, Artbridge winner, and Library of Virginia REMIX artist.

## ZEV TORRES

Zev Torres is a writer and spoken word performer whose work has appeared in numerous print and on-line publications including Mad Gleam Press' *POSTvote*, *The New Blue*, *The Remembered Arts*, *Lakeview International Journal of Arts and Literature*, *Literary Orphans*, and *Clackamas Literary Review*. His poetry was also included in the spring 2016 Poetry Leaves exhibition in Waterford, Michigan. Since 2008 Zev has hosted Make Music New York's annual Spoken Word Extravaganza, and in 2010 he founded the Skewered Syntax Poetry Crawls.

## AHREND TORREY

Ahrend Torrey is a poet and painter. He is a creative writing graduate

from Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. When he is not writing or teaching English in New Orleans, he enjoys the simple things in life, like walking around Bayou St. John with his partner, Jonathan, and their two rat terriers, Dichter and Dova.

## PEGGY TURNBULL

Peggy Turnbull lives and writes in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, where she was born and where her parents and sisters still live. She is a retired librarian who spent most of her career in West Virginia. Read her work in *Rat's Ass Review*, *New Verse News*, and forthcoming in *Snapdragon and Verse-Virtual*. She is a member of the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets.

## VIVIAN WAGNER

Vivian Wagner lives, writes, and teaches in New Concord, Ohio. She's the author of a memoir, *Fiddle: One Woman, Four Strings, and 8,000 Miles of Music* (Citadel-Kensington), and a poetry collection, *The Village* (Kelsay Books). Visit her website at [WWW.VIVIANWAGNER.NET](http://WWW.VIVIANWAGNER.NET).

## JOAN WHITE

Joan White lives in Vermont, where she raises funds for a nonprofit that supports people in poverty. Her work has appeared in *Cider Press Review*, *Journal of American Poetry*, *Forage*, NPR's *On Being* blog, among others.

## ANNE WHITEHOUSE

Anne Whitehouse is the author of six poetry collections, most recently *Meteor Shower* (Dos Madres Press, 2016). She has also written a novel, *Fall Love*, which was just published in Spanish translation as

*Amigos y amantes* by Compton Press. Recent honors include 2016 Songs of Eretz Poetry Prize, 2016 Common Good Books' Poems of Gratitude Contest, 2016 RhymeOn! Poetry Prize, 2016 F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum Poetry Prize. Her story, "Abby," was just published in *Unbroken Circle: Stories of Cultural Diversity*, and her story, "Minnie Lee's Funeral," is published in *The Avenue*.