

The Orchards Poetry Journal

Summer 2025



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For submissions visit our website at:
orchardspoetry.com



Inspired by the small plot of apple trees near Cambridge, England,
where writers have gathered for years with their books and pens,
we welcome you to pull up a chair and enjoy poetry in the orchard.

Linda McCauley Freeman
A Great Poem Is a Campfire

we return to,
seeking its light, holding

our fragile fingers over flames,
feeling heat, using a stick

found deep in the woods
and stripped bare

we stretch over the fire
till what we pierce

bursts into burning
and we bite into the brown shell,

sink our teeth into the creamy center.



The Grantchester Award Winners

1st Place Prize \$50.00

Claire Archer-Adderholt, “Soon/Blue” (page 64)

2nd Place Prize \$30.00

Joanne Merriam, “Sealed in Nectar” (page 119)

Pushcart Nominations

1. Logan Lee, “Open to the sky, the sunlight blinds us” (page 62)
2. Ben Egerton, “46” (page 144)
3. Estill Pollock, “Pavane for Lost Companions” (page 165)

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Featured Poet

MARILYN L. TAYLOR

First-Place Winner of the 2024 Women's Contest



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Tell us about your writing career.

I became a writer by trade after I finished college in 1964, but I was certainly not “a poet” at that time. Nobody was, I thought—except maybe the Beats and Sylvia Plath. I called myself a copywriter and started out writing for the Sears Roebuck catalog in Chicago.

After spending an instructive year with that jumbo publication, I was hired by the Chicago Tribune to write promotion and publicity pieces for them. I genuinely loved it. I remained there until 1970, when I married a Milwaukee attorney named Allen Taylor and moved to Milwaukee, where I lived for the next 40 years. In 1975, we had a child, Reed Taylor, who grew up to become my hero along with his wonderful wife Jessica and their two boys, Max and Finn.

So when did you become “a poet”?

Outside of birthday greetings and a few off-color limericks, I’d never written a poem in my life. Then my son Reed entered 1st grade, and I decided to attend grad school at U. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee to study linguistics. Unwittingly, I signed up for a weird-sounding course called “Literary Stylistics,” and my world took a preposterous U-turn. We were asked to look at poems as structures—taking them apart, putting them back together, not worrying about what they don’t express on the literal level, assuming that a reasonably careful, sensitive reader will be able to discern what’s meant.

Through the course, I began to realize that nothing wrecks the experience of reading a poem faster than sitting around arguing about what the poet is “trying to say.” That’s not the poem! It may have been the idea behind the poem, but I quickly learned that poems are not *ideas*; they’re *words*. And it’s how those words are put together that turn random insights into poetry.



Summer 2025

So, with lightning speed, I switched majors and lurched toward a Ph.D. in English instead. The rest is history—mine, at least. My life began to consist of writing poems, teaching other folks approaches to writing them, and reading them to audiences in WI and beyond.

And eventually, you were appointed Poet Laureate?

Yes! I wound up being appointed Poet Laureate of Milwaukee and, later, of Wisconsin—honors for which I will be forever grateful.

What was that like?

Every community has its own process, but the selection committee is likely to be staffed by experienced poets who are looking for a poet who is not only skilled, but who also feels comfortable in front of audiences that have gathered for the sole purpose of hearing them read. Finalists will probably be asked to “audition” by performing a short reading and participating in an in-person interview. In my experience, the process was informal, the interviewers friendly, and the experience genuinely rewarding.

Tell us more about your teaching and publishing experience.

I taught at UW-Milwaukee for 15 years and published 7 books of poetry (my latest and probably last in December 2021):

Outside the Frame: New and Selected Poems (Kelsay Books, 2021)

Step on a Crack (Kelsay Books, 2016)

Going Wrong (Parallel Press, 2009)

The Seven Very Liberal Arts (Aralia Press, 2006)

Subject to Change (David Robert Books, 2004)

Exit Only (Anamnesis Press, 2001)

Shadows Like These (Wm Caxton Ltd., 1994)



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Poems, essays, and columns of mine have appeared in many other publications. Check out my website to find out which ones, if you're interested—www.mltpoet.com.

When my husband passed away in 2012, I moved to Madison, Wisconsin, and eventually married David Scheler, a kind and perceptive man, hilariously funny, also a fine poet. I'm still writing, and have recently taught regularly at Lawrence University's Bjorklunden Seminar Center in Door County, Wisconsin, Poetry by the Sea in Connecticut, and, irregularly, elsewhere.

What is one of your favorite poetry techniques to teach?

I'll often start with a simple form like a golden shovel. The student poet chooses an 8–16-word quote from a poem by somebody else. Ideally, the quote should be able to stand alone, preferably as a complete sentence. Keeping the words in order, the participant writes the borrowed line vertically down the *right-hand* side of the page, then writes the golden shovel poem by filling in the lines. The results of this exercise are often amazingly polished and effective.

I might then suggest the students isolate a personal memory—with a caveat: it must be something that happened at least one year ago, preferably more. Why? Because the passage of time allows us to recall the experience with more objectivity, less unfiltered emotion. The delay can work wonders. As poet Andrew Hudgins put it:

I'm always astonished at how falsely I remember things, astonished at how plastic memory is. And even when I know a memory is incorrect, part of my brain cleaves to the imagined memory, and I hold two images in my head, two memories—and the false one is almost always more vivid and more emotionally significant to me than the actual one.

Keeping this insight in mind might open countless doors.



Summer 2025

Marilyn L. Taylor

On Realizing, Late in Life, That My Mother Was Jewish

Methuselah something. Something something Ezekiel.

—Albert Goldbarth

So that explains it, I say to myself.
And for one split second, I confront
the mirror like a Gestapo operative—
narrow-eyed, looking for the telltale hint,

the giveaway (lips? the eyebrow calibration?)—
something visible that could account
for this—a lucid, simple explication
of my life story and its denouement.

It seems the script that I was handed
long ago, with all its blue-eyed implications,
can now be seen as something less than candid—
a laundry list of whoppers and omissions.

It's time for something else to float
back in from theology's deep end: the strains,
perhaps, of *A-don o-lam*, drowning out
the peals of *Jesus the Conqueror Reigns*,

inundating the lily and the rose,
stifling the saints (whose dogged piety
never did come close, God knows,
to cause even a ripple of anxiety).



Summer 2025

I'm only waiting for the revelation
on its way this minute, probably—
the grand prelude to my divine conversion,
backlit with ritual and pageantry.

But nothing happens. Not a thing. No song,
no shofar, no compelling Shabbat call
to prayer—no signal that your heart belongs
to David rather than your old familiar, Paul.

Where does a faithless virgin go from here,
after being compromised by two
competing testimonies to thin air—
when both of them are absolutely true?

First place in the 2024 Women's Poetry Contest



Summer 2025

Marilyn L. Taylor

Subject to Change

A reflection on my students

They are so beautiful, and so very young;
they seem almost to glitter with perfection,
these creatures that I briefly move among.

I never get to stay with them for long,
but even so, I view them with affection:
they are so beautiful, and so very young.

Poised or clumsy, placid or high-strung,
they're expert in the art of introspection,
these creatures that I briefly move among—

And if their words don't quite trip off the tongue
consistently, with just the right inflection,
they remain beautiful. And very young.

Still, I have to tell myself it's wrong
to think of them as anything but fiction,
these creatures that I briefly move among—

Because, like me, they're traveling headlong
in that familiar, vertical direction
that coarsens beautiful, blackmails young,
and turns to phantoms those I move among.

Previously published in Poetry (August 2002)



Summer 2025

Marilyn L. Taylor

The Coming of Age

A sonnet

Last summer, I grew old. It was gradual
and damned implausible, I thought. Why mention
something so subjective—and so fragile?
Why give it any serious attention?
Just a quaver of the brain, I thought.
A gathering of neurons that were sick
and tired of catering to an overwrought
mob of memories on a pogo stick.
I'm talking arms and legs here. And sensations
sometimes called *Reflections. Dreams. Desires.*
Know what I mean? No useless speculations,
flimsy euphemisms, qualifiers.
But I'm not worried! Just a bit perplexed
about what's pretty likely coming next.



Summer 2025

Marilyn L. Taylor

Poem for a 75th Birthday

to Allen Marcus Taylor (1926–2012)

Love of my life, it's nearly evening
and here you still are, slow-dancing
in your garden, folding and unfolding
like an enormous grasshopper in the waning
sun. Somehow you've turned our rectangle
of clammy clay into Southern California,
where lilacs and morning-glories mingle
with larkspur, ladyfern, and zinnia—
all of them a little drunk on thundershowers
and the broth of newly fallen flowers.

I can't get over how the brightest blooms
seem to come reaching for your hand,
weaving their way across the loom
of your fingers, bending
toward the trellis of your body.
They sway on their skinny stems
like a gang of super-models
making fabulous displays of their dumb
and utter gratitude, as if they knew
they'd be birdseed if it weren't for you.



Summer 2025

And yet they haven't got the slightest clue
about the future; they behave as if
you'll be there for them always, as if you
were the sun itself, brilliant enough
to keep them in the pink, or gold, or green
forever. Understandable, I decide
as I look at you out there—as I lean
in your direction, absolutely satisfied
that summer afternoon is all
there is, and night will never fall.

Previously published in Poetry (June 1999)



Summer 2025

Marilyn L. Taylor

The Day After I Die

they will find the cure
for whatever got me,
and a unified theory
of physics will be announced
by a consortium
from M.I.T.

Following the funeral,
Earth will be contacted by
intelligent beings from
the Farquhar galaxy—
immediately after which
Tesla will announce a car
that can run forever
on table scraps.

Within the week,
Abbott Labs will introduce
an age-reversing cream
on the very heels of
a morning-after diet pill
that tastes exactly
like a Cadbury's Easter Egg.



Summer 2025

Finally,
the woman they hire to clean
and fumigate my house
will come across a sheaf
of my old poems (tucked
optimistically inside a catalogue
from Forever 21

and turn them over to
her Thursday client, Billy Collins,
who (ignoring an infinitesimal twinge
of envy) will gallantly take charge
and see to everything—
including, of course,
any immortality.

Previously published in Verse-Virtual



Summer 2025

Catherine Chandler

What You Kept

A mildewed trunk defending old receipts,
a cookie tin,
carpets, mismatched pillowcases, sheets.
Easy enough, as are the Mason jars—
stuff for the trash or the recycling bin,
the church bazaars.
I toss aside what's always needed me—
that plaque from John Paul's Holy Jubilee,
those Norman Rockwell mugs, the Kinkadee prints . . .

From underneath
a roll of batting and a bolt of chintz
I pull a faded ribbon-festooned box.
Inside, my fairy-stolen baby teeth
and first-shorn locks
acknowledge, in an elegant goodbye,
that I was once the apple of your eye.

Second place in the 2024 Women's Poetry Contest



Summer 2025

Joanna Hoffman

Ghazal for the Living

Can you believe cancer starts as a cell misfiring, stray bullet to
start a war?

The tumor is a red moon rising, swollen crater at the heart of war.

The highest frequency of grief is blameless, insomnia and a broken
wail,

The best you can do is bear witness, learn to make art from war.

Heaven is a field of ghosts who never stopped loving you,
They rush forward as a tide to catch what's strewn apart from war.

Wash the sigh from the voicemail, hang the wince by the door
You can dodge the draft but you'll never outsmart the war.

Forever my mother's voice calling, *Joanna*,
where are you sweetheart? With you, at war.

Honorable mention in the 2024 Women's Poetry Contest



Summer 2025

Erika Takacs

I want to die like the woman who asked her
two best friends to sleep over

as she lay still but smiling, concave
in the sheets. They snuggled for hours
beside her in fuzzy pajamas, painted
each other's fingernails fire-engine red,
fake-swooned over the leather-spice scent
of old crushes. They spread a table on the bed,
placed slivers of steak on her swollen tongue,
poured her a thimbleful of red wine, stayed
until silence. I do not want to end this life
like my mother—adrift, undone, emptied
of all that had shined in her, last breath spent
saying *I'm sorry for being such a burden*.
Some days I would die just
to tell her she was only ever beautiful.

Honorable mention in the 2024 Women's Poetry Contest



Summer 2025

Nishi Chawla

March: The In-Between

March walks in on brittle bones.
The trees, indecisive, hold their bare arms aloft,
not yet convinced by the hush of warmth
crawling beneath the frozen ribs of earth.
Somewhere, a river forgets its ice,
splinters it off in slow abandonment,
sending jagged memory downstream.
The fields exhale in patches,
the sun lingers longest, frost withdraws,
the shadow still leans, the cold clings.
Clouds move, hands rearranging sky,
pulling blue from the folds of winter's coat,
the wind, unfinished in its work,
still carries the scent of distance.
The birds return in increments,
not in triumph but in careful measure,
testing the air like a child pressing toes
into uncertain water.
At night, the thaw retreats,
a temporary surrender to the past.
come morning, the earth shifts again,
an unseen hinge creaking toward bloom.
March, the doorway no one lingers in,
unfinished sentence before the verb,
the tide before it fully turns,
a waiting place where nothing stays
but everything changes.



Summer 2025

Helene Williams

Gentle Whispers

Mayapples gather
To decide who will bloom first
Underground networks
They whisper amongst themselves
Trusting the call of the woods.



Summer 2025

Margaret Taylor-Ulizio

Might

If I were to walk
through the door
of Spring without knocking,
the white petals, so light and soft,
streaming from their trees
might convince me
I entered Winter
by mistake.

And if Summer
opened itself to me
after I knocked so lightly
to enter,
the warm air
surrounding me so close
might convince me
Fall was not waiting
right behind the door.



Summer 2025

Patricia Nelson

The Serpent Questions Adam and Eve

i.

Is this not what you wanted?
To see that other garden
built by chance and weather?

Enter now its chastened space
where change is honored
and decay.

Where days pour through
the seasons and your wandering.
Where everything is falling.

The sand you walk upon is yours, for now.
It holds the moving noise of water
and edges you will stand upon.

ii.

Let's say there's a tide in this, an actual arrival
or just a music lapping at some shoreline.
An Eden you still hear.

Is your sin clearer now?
Does your story not appear
more sad and beautiful from here?



Summer 2025

Nicole Dufalla

On Dohány Street in Spring

Metal leaves whisper names caught
by sun[light], silent veins pump
silver blood through weeping

trees. Serins fill puddles, songs erase
memories of stale tongue, tastes
the [will] of dry mouths. Blades

of grass [rise] between, coiled shoots
gorged and green, drink smothered
scorched earth. Warm breezes thawing

winter frost melt unyielding
voices lost [from] sun to darkest
night. Melodic laughter, chatter,

steps clatter, cold bricks cross,
dampen strings of time and loss,
drown scents of char and [ash].



Summer 2025

Rachel Beachy

The First Trimester

Tell me something
good and true
like how
a group of hummingbirds
is called a shimmer
or charm
and fragile wings
are meant to fly
tell me again
how the tiniest hearts
go on beating.



Summer 2025

Gordan Struić
Before Words

I bent down
to touch
the first crocus—
skin-thin,
braver than me.

The stream
spoke in sips,
not words.

Trees waited
the way they do—
still,
listening.

I didn't ask
how to return.
I just sat
and breathed

until even breath
felt too loud.



Summer 2025

Peter W. Yaremko

Hearts Do More Than Beat

Safari guides know to pause periodically to hold a hand on their heart and wait for their soul to catch up.

Because hearts do more than beat. Sainly Brendan circuited the virgin seas in quest of the celestial city only to discover it within.

And I? I've sought the space, the place, the lane, like a student out to master his instrument, and stumbled upon the novel in the humdrum of the day.

Like bread. That most common food. But chosen as corpus. So now all that's left for me to learn is to place hand on heart. And wait.



Summer 2025

Stuart Mark Anderson

Potato Sprouts

I must go slowly down the cellar steps,
since they are steep and thin;
my lamp shows cobwebs,
and concrete flakes like slate.

Every spring, in our cellar,
potato sprouts go up in the darkness
because it is time to go up,
and because one darkness is much like another.

From open bins against the walls,
in dense masses, leaning together,
they stream up and up from empty bags of skin,
and splash against the ceiling, balked of light,

pale and shining in the beam of my lamp;
their shadows hide behind them as I move
and frame their strange white,
the color of eyeless things.

They are doomed and somehow magnificent,
these mothers blindly striving toward a birth
that cannot be. There is tragedy beyond the human,
and also beyond the animal.

The hope of light has lured away their strength
and now I am come here with my pail
to ferry them from their brief life below the ground
to their graves above.



Summer 2025

Melissa A. Chappell

Turtle Life

Flash of lightning in my window tonight—
the backwaters are stilled and suffering
an Easter sorrow. My quickened
thoughts retreat into a shell, fractured
and final. Memory unfurls like thunder,
soft, a turtle in a swaddled box,
struggling to die well. Touch the cool,
cracked stone. The dregs of life pool
and stir beneath. Lifting this tender
word, my beggarly eyes meet his—
a flash of knowing at the river's edge,
light finally beckoning light.



Summer 2025

Shamik Banerjee

Rocky

I picture you beside a burbling rill
or resting by a tree, in heaven's field.
Your final hours with us often shrill
inside me during sleep. I try to shield
my spirit with the thought: "You left for good,
unshackled from the sore that flagged your form."
Upon the pie safe where you slept or stood,
the printed eiderdown that kept you warm,
still have a few strands of your mackerel fur.
Though winter's passed and new blooms deck our lawn,
these walls repeat your hug-requesting purr,
and when Ma calls your siblings every dawn,
she fills three bowls with herring chunks reheated,
then realizes just two bowls are needed.



Summer 2025

Mairin Caitriona Landis

Spring is cruel, they wrote

The geese fly north, then seeing Pittsburgh storms,
fly south again. Decided silently
their roosts can wait until the water's warm.
Well, spring is cruel, they cackle knowingly.

The wind which scrapes the face; the rain, its sound;
its whispered siren songs that swallow streets.
Those brave first crocus wish they'd shrink back down
into the earth. The butterfly retreats

into the chrysalis where it was formed,
their shelter back into the dreary night.
The geese recall the lilacs, not the worms.
They preen their feathers as they take their flight.

The wind is cold; the whip, the nip, the bite.
The spring is cruel. And yet, the sky is bright.



Summer 2025

Luke Fegenbush

Awakening on a Rainy Morning

Shiftshod fall slip from where
we can't reach or see

Imagine a pocket
within itself
invisible
except from within

Wonder at
living treebark wet with rain

Or at
the sound of blinking

Wonder at the bare fact
of being

at the raw cotton
of the day's
unspun thought



Summer 2025

Isabel Chenot

April Dawn

I had been sitting quiet where
spiders had graphed the gleam and mass
of morning, and had slung their snare

over the vague shape of a chair.
Slow as Chopin's *adagios*
my mind can still distinctly hear

the steps of shadows while they pass.
And it still quavers on mind's mirror
as softly as my breath on glass

how dawn, whose feet are gossamer,
printed five toes on dew-burred grass.



Summer 2025

Paul Willis

Stopping by a Stone on a Spring Morning

Emerald moss and green-gray lichen
hold this boulder in their arms;
oak and poison oak and mugwort
add their interleaving charms;
willow, sycamore, and laurel
lend their light across the stream;
mist and fog come dropping slowly—
falling, falling like a dream.

Why I've stopped is hard to fathom,
but this stone calls out to me.
Could a rock in its apparel
give a walker greater glee?
Can a boulder clothed in beauty
cleanse the mind from what appalls?
On this morning I am witness:
moss and lichen, mist that falls.



Summer 2025

Terri McCord

Early Spring Takes Hold

The tree's shadows
 on the slope
of hill
 still in the style
of a William Morris
stained glass,
the single black
crow an arrow
that shoots across
an illustrated, civil scene,
away from the machinations
of who owns what, and what
will buy, depreciation, and how much
can be added
to raise the price, and boring deep
for the rights
to it all.

The crow's caw sounds
like a dog's bark
letletlet
as it circles again
this living history,
the white noise of bees
in the background.



Summer 2025

Patrick Pfister

Waking

The sun cracks the horizon,
igniting the blue-green Med.

A breath of majestic air;
a fragrance of honest bread.

A conference of cooing doves
and chittering street parrots
as church bells greet dawn light.

Security guards head for home.
Throaty motorcycle hum echoes
off Modernist building facades,
the stone smooth and lambent.

Same soft glow on sleepy faces
as moms and dads hurry along
toddlers dragging ragged teddies.
Tearful hugs at the nursery door.

Executives on the go sip espresso.
Bike messengers, spokes flashing.
A janitor's mop smacks floor tiles,
the marble liquid and bright.

The birth of unadorned day.
All things, all beings weave
into miracle. Nonstop.



Summer 2025

Philip Byrne

Botanical Notes

Sumptuous, open-air perfumery,
pollen-dusted stamens, petals, pistils.

Show-off time. Be conspicuous.

Is your nature more hearsay
than amen?

Pollinators swarm
with make-believe kisses.

Notes of you as flavor:
mint, thyme, rosemary.

There's an insinuation of you
at the back of my throat.

In my chest, the air's a flirtation.

Is this happiness a fleeting note?



Summer 2025

Robert Lowes

Fanatics

Mockingbird

You rip through songs from other birds,
hopping up and down in self-delight.
Can I capture your rapture in words?
I lack the strength to sing all night.

Hoopster

Your lone ball echoes in a lone game,
swishing the net, banging the rim.
You sweat for hours to sharpen your aim
against a made-up team in the gym.

Tulip

You stand up straight in chilly March
for a head-start in the backyard garden.
There is no arguing with this torch,
as hot and pure as sex in Eden.



Summer 2025

Daniel Lusk

Sermon of the Wolf

Where is the woman who can live one year
as a human and the next as a bird?
Where is the woman today
who has suckled a bear?

In old Ireland, Fergne the physician
could tell from a man's face
what the illness was.
Just as he could tell from the smoke
that came from a house
how many were sick inside.

Boys and girls, we thought
we were the wolves' children.
That licking each other's faces
was food for our desires.
No one warned us not to go
into the fields of corn.
The corn would keep our secrets.

Who will tell us to be quiet among the ignorant?
To cover our heads lest we faint from the truth.

Should we not ask such things?
We know that night is 11,400 miles wide.
Without bears or bats or fire,
what is there to worship?

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Summer 2025

Cathy Socarras Ferrell

When I call my sister just to say *Hi*, she knows

after Paige Lewis

what I really mean is I have somehow floated away

from my own body again. She knows
how to tie a strong knot.

She takes a piece of pink yarn from the old craft box,
reaches through the phone,

ties a loop around my ankle. She pulls,
tugs, pulls again until

we are close to soft green hills.
We lie back and stare into

the wide blue above, where I once drifted,
sad about everything, and nothing.



Summer 2025

Benjamin Rozonoyer

Clouds

Be wary of us, house-thatcher;
etch us flinchingly, Escher:

for our roll has become sky-fill,
and the hillocks to us are ilk.

Like millet, sliding in mill,
we pour rain from a tight-scaled measure.

Some seamstress, who sewed a quilt
in patches she fancies azure,

having acquired stilts,
now perambulates with leisure

in vestures of mottled silk . . .
The hillocks to us are ilk.



Summer 2025

Emily Tee

Summer, Loosely

Spring is verging on summer
I want to lose myself in its greens
pale bursts darkening toward ripeness
the buds now unfurled and fluttering like flags
like faces stroked by the palm of welcome sunlight
blossoms burgeoning, reaching from the shrubs and roses
and the peonies—giant, unstructured—are losing their heads

We spot a pigeon on a branch
sitting on a sparse collection of twigs
she hunkers, we wonder if it could be a nest
there's so much looseness there but it feels loved
much like road verges and the beds beside the pathways
overspilling with abundance and the rush for more living
like the seasons, cramming everything in while there's still time



Summer 2025

Nancy Manning

At Hammonasset Beach

Wind whips my face this March morning. Clouds
discolor the sky. Sand stretches for miles east,

west—footprinted but unlittered, empty of guests.
Years ago in July, lovers held hands, ran into

the embrace of Long Island Sound, kissed.
Children sifted sand, filled buckets, built castles.

Teenagers threw Frisbees, blasted radios, feasted on
sandwiches, foil wrapped. How the ocean lured us

with words. *Let my cool waters soothe you.*
I stood, dove in, didn't leave till sunset. A friend

several towels away, also left, both of us too shy
to say hello as waves washed away our steps.

Today the distant sun reminds me summer is months
away, and you are on another shore, a world away.



Summer 2025

Alfred Fournier

Rush Hour in Paradise

The maintenance man's golf cart
crawls into the intersection
where a California gull picks at a snail
as we pull up to the stop sign.
A little girl crosses on a scooter,
her dad with dog on leash trailing behind.
It's been a good visit, with the breeze
bending the palms and the tide
pulling in and out unnoticed
while we sat in conference chairs inside.
I don't know what we accomplished,
but on my beach walk this morning
a long-billed curlew unhurriedly
poked the sand along the tideline
while a raft of cormorants gossiped in the bay.
The wind here could take your breath away,
spirit it to some rarified plane
where strategic plans and priority setting
go to die. We're heading out soon,
across the bridge and into city traffic.
Lone commuters, eyes clouded
with checklists of work tasks
try to ward away sorrow
as we merge onto the freeway.
We'll push right through,
over mountains, across desert flats
and dunes to the city in the sand,
and the rush of whatever comes next.



Summer 2025

Lew Forester

Dreaming Paradise Away

Palm trees make poor umbrellas
as rain streams from mango leaves,
oleander blooms fall to pavement.

A storm can make you feel
like you've had a good cry,
with everything washed clean.

And how deep the dreams
I lie in as waves gloss the shore.
I dream flesh defeating frailty,
while loved ones fade
in the cancer cold we flew from.
I dream my young body, growing

improbably tall until above a crowd
that speaks a language I'm slow
to learn. A boy wondering how far
he can swim out into this life
with the undertow of fear beneath him.
Dreaming, deeply dreaming

on feather pillows in a five-star hotel
while on the ragged point a lighthouse
winks its warning and ice caps melt
in this bonfire we make of earth.
No, I won't take a picture with the green
iguana. I see myself in its yellow eyes.



Summer 2025

Jennifer Lagier

Naked Ladies

Each August, lilies resurrect.
Solo or *en masse*, naked ladies emerge,
perform an end-of-summer, erotic ballet.

Deceptively hardy, they thrive
when neglected, disregard frost,
shun overwatering, revel in drought.

Pink strumpets cavort along estuary,
define graveyard boundary,
fringe winding trail.

They naturalize wherever they please,
congregate like a troupe of brash chorus girls
within weed-overgrown vacant lots.

I admire their in-your-face tenacity,
audacious trumpet flower blooms,
spunky, sinewy stalks.



Summer 2025

Charles Merritt

Common Anatomies of the Open Waters

'cross an open water
the memoriam is collected
yet, somehow, the reward
all strewn about, the squirrel
perched on a lamppost
sweat bubbling in the hollow
moon, white rows of body
that old, misremembered misfortune.

that young maiden there
her dust all flown around
her frowning eyes, she won't
be long, not in the dawn
you say, she'll be the stone
you find in the lowly mountain
the same one that will
lull the butterflies into sleep there
at the road, or at the theater stage
or, if you're lucky, at your coin-crowned
crypt, in the dawn, or
maybe the dusk, too,
if the timing's right.



Summer 2025

Logan Lee

Open to the sky, the sunlight blinds us

A single boat pressing itself against the perpetual summer haze & America stretching its arms over the sea to the next man's chest. Endless waves of grass pass through my limbs, pushing me toward the violent ocean. *Tell me something, Lord*, the televangelist cries over relentless gunfire & I walk headfirst into the static. Beside me, the mountains burn under the ceaseless radiation. Storms blacken azure and palm trees glide through the wind. Guitar strings silencing a bloodred sky. We almost noticed the temperature this year but were distracted by visions of grandeur. I keep my eyes wide open but only until the horizon. While the world burns, the ocean tide swells, wrapping us in its salty hands.



Summer 2025

Maura H. Harrison

Obedient to the Point of Fruit

Obedience—constraining claim that checks
The apple's plucking—hangs with heavy forms
And gravity around our naked necks.
It offers grace, but we mistake its norms.
We fight with callithump and shivaree.
We bang *con brio*, obstinately keen
To celebrate and mock authority—
To pick the *gravitatem* while it's green.

Can yoke be light? Can bounds of willful hush
Allow for melody and fruitful favor?
Within the yield lies life's vitality:
Surrendering bloom, the ordering bee-like brush,
The sun-fed swelling fruit. Follow and savor
The sight, abundance in the apple tree.



Summer 2025

Claire Archer-Adderholt

Soon/Blue

You were not my soon, my own—
but you caught me deftly as glass
catches light.

We were blue;
turning pillows, making beds—
like all things, bitterblue with swampcolor.

If I could, lucidsick, I'd catch
the steam that floats up from coffee cups, and trap
it in a tumbler for you, fill a mason jar with laughter—

and if you asked for the world
on a swing, I'd push you,
no hurt or reckoning.

Through an hourglass:
our minuses spin in spirals,
a perfect fractal, an ease.

Your knuckles once twined around
my fingertips, urgent and steady,
the astral physics of it all.

A sparkler waving through air in summer heat:
you are a wave softly turning to foam,
and I regret I cannot keep you.



Summer 2025

Ben Egerton

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*excerpt from & When We Get There
Will We Have Been There Forever?*

tūi & blackbird use the loose gutter
above my back door for their morning bath

they're not good sharers every time they rinse
they squabble & send a flutter through the

house & the tiniest shower of sudgy
spray onto the deck at least that's what I

assume happens all I know is when I
wake & let the dog out to pee I see

iridescent liquid confetti'd on
concrete the rational explanation

is my maintenance behaviour just past
dawn made brittle in the night my promise

to you shatters to a light paradiddle
& lies in wet imperfect circles



Summer 2025

Rebecca Surmont

Building Blocks

after William Carlos Williams

I was thinking aloud so
you wouldn't listen too much,

thinking about what depends
on a word or a thought—what we've built upon.

You know, sounds can drown a good phrase, a
line that strikes a matchhead, red

as a hydrant, ready to blow, or a wheel
breaking in the road. My words carry a barrow

of bricks—sometimes rough, dim, flat, or glazed.
As I was thinking, I thought of you with

that flimsy hat in the garden just before the rain
washed away the heat and filled our mouths with water

leaving us laughing, nervous, beside
our young selves, our words loose as the

stone and dirt we made into our home, white
fenced and fragrant. Our words now peck like angry chickens.



Summer 2025

Renee Emerson

The House We Still Live In

A house in the mouth
of the woods like a kitten
hanging from its mother's jaws.

A good return on investment,
this house without a fence.

We toured it twice
peering into each room
to run our hands over, smooth

the emptiness. You loved
that house. I hated

how it clutched the belly
of the mountain, the swift
descent to a dead-end street.

The first week a bird drowned
in the rain barrel. We found
most keys unlocked nothing.

A gray fox ate at the backstep;
an animal so small and bright eyed
we thought we might keep it.

We can't always keep what we want,
but we didn't know that then,
and I had signed my name beside yours.



Summer 2025

John Dorroh

Plain Geometry

Take a circle from a piece of paper
and cut it anywhere along the line.

Stretch it straight like magic all the way
to India, to exotic places scattered
along your path.

Wish for it to have airholes for breathing
underwater, lungs for wandering

through a jelly jungle of serpents
that kiss like rock stars, finding
a heart

that is never satisfied.

Pick up the string that you dropped
in Greece, and pull it taut like clinched
lips at a funeral.

Take it to the topless beach, buy it
a cocktail of its choice, try to pry
apart its grip upon your wrist.

There's so much more to circles and lines,
strings that act like untethered cowboys.

If I'm able to place my circle back onto the paper,
I might be able to live without knowing
the whole truth.



Summer 2025

R. Johnson

Her Version

Don't try to tell me where you've been;
We know each other far too well.
I can taste her on your skin.

Sadly, with a knowing grin,
I can recognize the spell
That draws you where I know you've been.

Silence is the lesser sin,
Solitude the deeper well.
Though I taste her on your skin,

I have other webs to spin,
We have other tales to tell.
Should it matter where you've been?

It's a game she cannot win.
You and I are bonded still,
as I taste her on your skin.

Let the solemn dance begin,
Ring the incantatory bell.
I bear your brand upon my skin;
Just don't tell me where you've been.



Summer 2025

Logan Lee

together; alone

as hot, oppressive summer lays its hands on us again
lounging behind the headlights of your rented dodge charger,
we lie somewhere, halfway between desire and loss.
asleep in the backseat, my thoughts are fogged by a
haze of radio static. I imagine, once again, a single garlic clove
on the kitchen stovetop, sizzling through a dark and endless
twilight. flies amble their way to electric nets, filling the night
with an acrid scent. meanwhile, my hand steadies itself
into a hook, clawing toward love.



Summer 2025

Jake Burdoin

Stuffed Animals Are Contemporary

My arms wrapped around you, or another, or another, or another.
Smothered by this fleeting feeling under the sheets. Always
replaceable, since the first fetish. Stuffing, wrapped in felt, in
the form of a rabbit.

The refuge found, there in my bed. A comfort, until fur matted
and color faded. Just another high-school sweetheart
for the scrapbook.

Is that you, lover?

Will you grow old with me

or just old?

I'll hold you close until we know. Stonewalled by your words.
The sweet language and sharp jokes, evolving since you first
spoke. Matured instead of curdled, like my anger which no
longer simmers just glimmers as it trickles down the rocks.

The field we played in weathered and boarded up, we no longer
pour cups of the strong stuff just sip down simple company.
Eyes fixed ahead, away from the dead and dropouts, who still
pout and snort. Under that same aluminum roof, under that
hardened worn down sun, held their ground in tainted sand.
A cult of another's.



Summer 2025

Sister Lou Ella Hickman

the painting *edge of a wheat field with poppies*

van gogh, 1887

today
the wind
whispered its way through ripening gold
where you and i lie
surrendered and dreaming
today
the cloud patched sky . . .
the greening sweetness
embraces blood-red poppies
while the saplings whisper their secrets . . .
we leave
waking to our own path



Summer 2025

Anita Pinatti

Colors for Vincent

Blood running down his shirt
 raised a mass of crows into flight
the black cloak of melancholy unleashing
 part of himself to let it roam.

He painted his dreams and saw
 the birth of many . . . Tau Ceti
a nearby star that resembles our sun
 supporting life elsewhere.

He felt a lengthening of time in fields
 of flowing wheat as if
he might remain there unclaimed
 conjuring up a life for them beyond
his own in yellow stained with tea.

Enter his nights without sleep
 the blue-black cover of sky
whirl in the wonder of them
 a silent map of stars.



Summer 2025

Aria Shum

Ending Song

after Ivi Hua / after Richard Siken / after C.G.

Here is a memory: we're driving on the interstate, windows down, hearts opened. Headed god-knows-where and hoping this road will lead someplace closer. The horizon is so far away, the singularity so unassuming, that we believe a happy ending is no ending at all. The body recognizes loss before the mind does. It writes poems and consoles the mirror, tells itself the same story over and over. It holds onto meaning the way the bird toe-holds a branch, the way the city loves the night. And what of it? This is what all poems are: a collection of letters piled at the doorstep of a house where no one lives anymore. As quietly as it comes, it will leave. We will forget naivety, the stranger's song, and return to the din of less important things. Someday, I will no longer write poems out of sadness. The mind does not hold on. In the indifference, I will stumble upon a corner, and for a moment, remember something beautiful.



Summer 2025

Carole Giangrande

Total Eclipse

With the sun, we have this in common:
we are no longer young. Our earth, dust.
Yet even our golden coin of warmth,

of radiance, vast with space for a million
earths, having filled our eyes, our hands
with precious light, will die—along with us,

who've lived in the grace of our midlife star
billions of years before it blackens
into the mystery from which it was born.

Did you see the eclipse? Wild, how the sun
plunged humankind into a memory of itself:
frozen death of the world as it was
before the earth began—

Did you try to capture the sky-bird of darkness,
black, moon-swallowed, swollen light, flash
of silver breath unspeakable? And were you pained,

bedazzled by joy, bright revelation, momentary
shock of ecstasy? Did you grieve its loss
like prophets, stunned, struck dumb

by impossible visions? Did your words
dissolve? Did your photos darken as mine did,
even as you were beguiled by light,
even as you were blessed?



Summer 2025

Susan Shea

Incoming

Solitary sunflower facing us
when we arrive
at our new property
murmuring extravagance
height of a season
prepared to come and go
for us and for the snake
beneath it looking at it
through closed eyelids
as snakes do
seeing some are endowed
with tall standing and with seeds
in the thousands like family
speaking the same language
through shell and kernel
self-sowers sun worshippers
primed to share skin-soft petals
on a steady trade wind



Summer 2025

Nancy Dillingham
Summer Étude

Tommy toes multiply
split open in their ripeness

Crook-necked squash
curl like tiny kittens

Cucumbers hide
in viny darkness

Zinnias and marigolds
glow by the paling

Lithe, lean bodies
always in motion
reach for the sky

Frogs holler at dusk
and lightning bugs

set the world on fire



Summer 2025

Andrew Calis

After Two Dreams About Crocodiles, I Learn They Are Endangered

I leave the world for this: nightmarescapes
in Florida Everglades; bark-rough logs and

yellowed trees; their vines a weave of tangled snakes
stubbled green, and weed-footed roots

and teeth one that looked like a log strikes
toward my right leg and

the horrifyingly slow-motion, to try to run—
between the two dreams, this was the milder one.

I would have killed it. But it was a dream

and I am still myself in dreams.

Eight seasons pass between
their meals sometimes. Their patience



Summer 2025

is a storm. Still they wait. Eyes that do not blink
as ours. Split in two, skin-shielded,

their world is black and
murk; or they search through the vibrations

of the marsh: they see the coming changes
and, like us, they are looking out

for threats, attacking what might be
tomorrow's death. Unsafe, they do not

wait in hope. They do not see their food
as manna, falling invisibly from the sky.



Summer 2025

Christine Yurick

Epiphany

There are ten male cardinals
in the magnolia, lipstick red.
The herons are back in the rookery.
All around us the trees are dead or dying.
Behind my house there is a field so vast
and beautiful it would make you cry.
The horses roam and graze. They are retired,
you see, and so they eat all day.
It is not always this way.
There is a farm I drive by where there is
a small shed where they keep two horses.
They cannot walk.
They cannot roll over in the warm sun and fresh grass.
The clouds throw shadows on the far hill.
The winter feels like it will never end, until it does
with the crocus flowers glowing purple.
When it starts to warm again your thoughts turn hazy
and you live in a mess of past-present. You walk by the horses
on the hill and drive by the horses in the shed
and the sun hits you and suddenly you understand.



Summer 2025

Sharon Tracey

Dry Spells

First I notice the fountains. Mouths of fish
open and hollow. A nymph with grapes,
her tipped and empty urn. Poseidon without
his sea. I miss the water's song,
the trickle that focuses
a wandering mind.

Next, a row of six cisterns
on a distant sun-glint edifice.
A creek bed with blanched limbs.

Inside a church, cool refuge.
Giant scalloped baptismal
inside ancient double doors.
Fingers dipped for holy water. Shell
bone-dry.

There's still time
to drop a euro in the coin box,
light a candle and pray.



Summer 2025

Zoé Mahfouz

Five Nights at B&Bs

Where is the front door?
Google Maps is not helping.
No welcome party.

Remove your sneakers,
Drag your bags through the garage.
Don't breathe in plain sight.

What brings you here, ma'am?
Do you know people around?
What job do you do?

Do not touch the walls.
Do not go to the West Wing.
Do not upset them.

Antique dolls, room three.
Blood-curdling eyes following.
I swear she switched seats.

Midnight, WiFi gone.
Sudden alarm blasting off
Bacon has been burned.



Summer 2025

Owner checking in.
Taking showers in our room,
The dolls moved again.

No lock on the doors.
The dolls bled on my bedsheets
Prefer cash or card?



Summer 2025

Natalie Schreyer

Zest

Found tampered,
an unnerving replica
of the house
like stacked cartons of bloated clouds
sculpted
by unforeseen storms
that dosed the childhood window
with crawling memories:
hanging from trees by a wedged toe,
shouts shielded by the overpowering rush
of falling leaves,
bracing themselves
for the next footprint
to forge their ghost shape in the ground.

The orchard beneath those rooms
recaptured,
dreams of ripe oranges
and their unaccountable mist.



Summer 2025

Roxanne Doty

Blood Sisters

for Jamie

I looked for you in liminal spaces
county islands a strip club
in the shadows of an interstate
wondering where you ended up
after the topless gig
in a dive bar on Jericho Turnpike
all those years ago
I imagine you smiling
in that subtle way sweat
glistening on your hairline
descending to your neck
and chest you were almost
beautiful in that place of stale desire
where we spoke of men
and love and philosophies
of nude dancing over the din
of jukebox music
and I finally realized
you would not follow me
to the desert land
you held out your wrist
and reached for mine
a glint of jagged glass
thin ribbons of blood on gravel
blood sisters you said



Summer 2025

Erin Akins

Love Moves on the Sidewalk

I learn to drive at seventeen,
and that is when my world
unfolds away from you. First,
into streets, then into parking
lots and apartment buildings
in cities we will never share.

Before are the sidewalks.
They are how we measure
our young lives, carved into
pseudo-squares with meandering
concrete borders. The streets
are forbidden asphalt rivers
that we sometimes test
with our bicycles. Still,

45th street is the edge of everything.
We can see the world falling away
at the boundary, like water
past a steep ridge. This is the world
we are wandering when
your hand finds my shoulder
one morning in June.



Summer 2025

We are thirteen years old.
We know nothing and we still
believe in everything.

We talk about small troubles
because our voices haven't
put the bigger ones to words yet.
You tell me, for the first time,
as daylight breaks over the tops
of houses, that I am your best friend.
The words are wrapped in sunlight.
They bathe the sidewalk.



Summer 2025

Adele Kenny

As If That Place

after Landscape: Garden Path by Marie Bracquemond

As if that place were a language no longer spoken,
details remembered like glyphs on a limestone wall—

a long indelible then. And one season (between spring
and summer), written in the half-time of who we were—

before the burden of seeing changed us. Mistakable
us—no thought to the hands our fingers made or who

we would become—what we lacked in our lives, we
lacked in ourselves. But here, from this vantage

(“then” too far away to be redeemed), there is still
the brightness (and order) that memory claims—

lanes of bloodroot and blue star, the sun’s deep
light scratched into stones.



Summer 2025

Benson Bobrick

Wishbone

That we might know the symmetry of fate,
and what the Almighty Architect requires
in recognition of our humble state,
he gave this emblematic bone its shape—
its Gothic-arch-like niche and spire
 as recess to the heart's desire,
but for one fatal weakness in its make:
each end belies whichever end we take,
the long equalities of our mistakes
make up the long and short of our desires,
 whichever way our wishes break.



Summer 2025

Duane Anderson

Night Travel

A semi and its trailer
lie turned over on their sides
next to the highway.
It is helpless

like the carp caught
by the fisherman
and tossed aside
to die.

So alone,
its headlights no longer
stare ahead.
All is empty.



Summer 2025

Bill Prindle

A Non-Pharmaceutical Prescription

for these ailments of the public soul
might be found in the mouth

of a river that runs underground.
Perhaps the whole notion of opposition

requires nothing more than the poise
of baobab roots or county-size mycelia.

Maybe I should apologize not to
raving narcissists but to those still

whispering their erased stories beneath
my feet. It could be that strength

in the days to come will flow from
faculties too subtle to be muzzled,

wielding invisible, graceful wands
that infuse the raging tide with light.



Summer 2025

Carol Barrett

Flicker

Two flickers drift to lower limbs close
to the water, then flutter to the bank.
Swooning grasses receive them. Branches

bounce back to their perfect place
in the sun. What do birds find here beyond
hunger's call? The cool bath of shade,

quick massage of wings, rendezvous
when the day releases its last reluctant
light, the company of imagination . . .

We all contend with duty. But the rain
does come, dampening our brows,
and skittering lizards, nudging thistles, all

who inhabit this world. We center
ourselves again and again as the wind
calls our names, plays with us, then

vanishes into the future. Take note
of these spirited flickers, polka dot chests,
pointed tails proudly bobbing. Wizards



Summer 2025

of strategy, thriving in urban woodlots,
what have they to teach us? For Hopi,
the flicker guards the direction south.

Its powers can defy fire. We must study
the desert, beetles in dry grass, salamanders
in shallows. We must look to our children's

dreams braided like this stream. Let us resist
the dark film of excess clogging eddies
and lungs. Let us speak kindly to pine and oak,

eagle and badger, granite and jasper, Eskimo
and astronaut, four-star general and foot soldier.
Let us find our way, lucky flicker in the lead.



Summer 2025

Michael Blaine

Ant Lions

In the late afternoon light, I lure my three children to the garden's edge, gathering them around the small funnels pressed into sandy loam. For now, they are captivated, their attention as fragile as a moth's wingbeat. With careful hands, we drop our offerings into the conical pits, watching each ant struggle up the slope, tiny feet pressing against the crumbling sand. Every time, the same descent—an inevitable slip, a quiet surrender to gravity's pull. And we cheer for the ant lions.

I should tell them about bad people, how they appear beautiful, inviting—until. But not yet. Not now. I will not pull the heavens down today. Their shooting stars still streak unbroken across the night; they do not yet know the weight of meteors striking earth.

Innocence, I will take that later.



Summer 2025

Ed Ruzicka

For My Grandchildren in May

for Henry and Sam Marak

Disheveled, fluffy/soft
as all-get-out, a fledgling
is learning to flit and wobble
hither-tither across our patio.

The wren family lives in an open
plastic container where I keep
hand-held clippers on an étagère
your mother left behind at the old house
after we broke our family in half, shuffled on.

This wren couple comes back every year
and startles me when I reach in to get a clipper
that they have covered in grass and twigs
packed down, made soft and homey.
It is almost like having cashmere
on your hand when a bird's wings
brush skin, except that it happens
lightening quick.

Anyway, tell Henry and Sam
that a fledgling is learning to fly
on the patio where they once started
to stand, toddle, gambol, dash.
Tell them to come and witness,
as I do myself, how miracles abound.



Summer 2025

Jacqueline Jules

Act III of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*

At the end of my days,
if I'm allowed to go back,
against the better judgement
of other dead souls looking
down from the top of the hill,
what would I choose?

The rainy afternoon with my toddler
snuggling under a fuzzy blanket,
on that ratty green couch
in the small apartment we had
before there was money for a house.

The sunset from a deck chair
on a cruise to Bermuda.

Or this quiet morning, eating crunchy cereal
on my patio, a breeze blowing through my hair.

Wilder's Emily chose her 12th birthday,
then turned to the audience to exalt
hot baths, coffee, sunflowers, dawn,
and clocks ticking with all the wonder
we don't take the time to see.



Summer 2025

Siobhan Farrell

Advice to a Friend

Today

do nothing

be a river
or a teacup

don't trim any whiskers
abandon your shoes

fill up
on what's left on the page

belly up to the big one,
you know, the one

that love handed you, the one
that painted your door



Summer 2025

James Fleet Underwood

Aubade

Drink this coffee cold
after runny eggs burnt toast
on sofa alone watch world

outside inch closer to window
nearer to abstract patterns forming
in steam like hastily drawn pictures

of people I used to know
their names styling spaces
between features rhythmic spilling

cream swirls acrobatic swoop
into sky blue slushy stream
fly tight and dive beyond fringe

I catch my blinking view
put down my cup pick up shoes
and lock the door behind.



Summer 2025

Marie Burdett

White Oak Falls

I love to see a rushing river
to hear its sound like shaking branches,
like chiming in the summer wind,
like horses stomping and shaking their manes,

to follow the course, up, up,
through the press of humid woods,
and over rocky stubble, trouble
found in the ascent,

and at last, to discover its climax,
thunderously fundamental,
roaring in a chorus of baptismal chants
for the fallen that rise up from the falls
—or thus it might in wetter years.

Now I trace the lines of drought.
I know my way—and then I doubt it.
The river flows, then disappears.
I cannot rise without it.



Summer 2025

Madison Hoff

god of my yard

Dewdrops anoint ants in blush-colored cathedrals
Mist moving to meet gentle June's breath
The sun hardly rising as birds practice hymns
Sometimes the trees crackle in tonic chords

My father once said church was a place of peace:
Stuffy air and human ego made mosaics depict
A white man pleading with the rest to just be good?
I never bought it

More convincing in my acre are the bumblebees
Sharing petals like prayers in pollen
Rabbits eating my planted crops; the birds in bath and
Only I, in witness



Summer 2025

Sandi Stromberg

On Being Found Out

My freshman philosophy class
and an Oxford don on loan to the college

introduced me to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.
Appointed as the student to clarify

Nietzsche's idea of the Superman,
I stumbled through arguments

that tumbled, like mismatched clothes
in a dryer. Nothing to catch or understand.

And when another student asked me
a question, I froze—

that childhood dream when I found myself naked,
nothing to clothe my ignorance.

I don't know, I said.

The shock of loud clapping made us all turn
toward the professor,

who proclaimed with astonishing glee,
The first honest statement in this class.



Summer 2025

Poppy Higgins
Sermons

a found poem

God/and/I.
Somehow, the two managed to peacefully coexist, long enough
for father to gain two wives.

God had connived and manipulated.
I / had other issues,
and everyone knew it.

It was okay to let a particular person
cut across my path
so that I would learn
pain and suffering.

I don't know about you, but
I'd be tempted to
witness pain in someone else,
but it often comes at the price of something we love.

God was deeply involved in / my / exile.
The problem is / God is determined to
take from our tight little fists anything we hold onto
when no one's watching.

God has forgotten you! God has abandoned you!
But / I will be with you always.
Exiled and alone,
everything familiar gets stripped away.



Summer 2025

Aaron Nydegger

Evoking Red for Mary

Imagination is a faculty that those who lack knowledge need to fall back on.

—Frank Jackson

No poet that ever lived or lives,
Nothing I can ever write,
No string of endless adjectives,
Will make the page be aught but black and white.

A page explains that God once spoke:
“Let there be light,” and there was light.
The rest of us, at best, evoke,
The dusks, the dawns, a starry night.

Although, what if I wrote or said:
Apple, lipstick, firetruck, blood?
Would blinded eyes still see the red
Or would once-dormant roses bud?



Summer 2025

Kathy O'Fallon

Last Request Lest I Forget: *No Cemetery*

*Photographer Dave Woodman took a picture of
the scene which inspired this poem.*

To rest beneath a rise and fall of land
unblemished, a shore where rivers rush but half
the season now; below a wedge of meadow,
of blue-eyed grass and boughs of willow—
green blanket, shade. Where families come to laze,
and kids can bathe in mud, where couples hold
each other's hands, and shy girls write in journals.
Where bugs and beasts not yet extinct, beneath
a stack of stones, can feast upon my bones,
to seed again someday. In summer's storms
or blistering sun, rebellions yet to come,
erect no mausoleum, gate of steel,
or place of worship. Isn't earth enough,
unfenced, to keep this meager spirit near?

Previously published in Soul Poetry, Prose & Arts Magazine (2025).



Summer 2025

Russell Rowland

Cross-Purposes

As the transmission downshifted to go uphill,
a black bear lumbered
across the road ahead, enlivening my day.

Its purposes that time of year
must have been on the far side, cross to mine;
urgent enough to run a risk.

High summer brings its cyclical urgencies
to hardwood lives,
when scents of attraction steal in on a breeze.

I once went outdoors after phosphorescence,
when one unshaded window
in the dark neighborhood gave me pause.

Not to assure a place
in a jar, in a little boy's hand, do fireflies ignite
the love-gardens of midsummer night.



Summer 2025

D.R. James

Walking the beach, we show our ignorance
about stars, constellations

before mentioning the dead ones
mixed in,
the snuffed ones,
how they've guided the race, we figure,
since long before the faintest flicker
of a first-hand myth;
but dead, even then,
and now, this side of infinitude,
this side, let's say, of
Gilgamesh, how
the discerning words
of the long gone
still illumine our forever
primitive way.



Summer 2025

Darlene Bester

The Cry of the Moon

The sparkle that cascaded
from the tree branches,
rested in a withdrawn
lake below. Karma tip-
toed across the night.
The sky remained undusted
and vulnerable. Nervous
energy moved the subtle
reflections in the lake-
shifting this way and that.
I just remember the cry
of the moon—the bridge
to destiny. Vegetation
became only visible tips
in the night—sleeping
butterflies in a dream.
I stalked the ascending
bridge. Then, I heard
the cry. It all ended
in a blur of fairy lights,
and fallen moon crests
limpid in the quivering night.



Summer 2025

Eric Potter

Unbidden

From the yard waste pile
 behind the garage
 two hydrangea blossoms

lift their improbable petals
 like gifts arriving
 on an unmarked morning

like those evening drives
 through the countryside
 windows open

to the aroma of vegetation
 subtle undertones
 of damp earth.

A velvet-antlered buck,
 rabbits in the road dust,
 red fox skulking in a ditch.

The way everything appears
 unbidden as the grass
 in the field, the morning

sun with its slant truth
 transmuting the dew
 into diamonds.



Summer 2025

Celeste McMaster

Moving

for Ellen

Today I planted flowers in a garden
soon no longer mine.

Hyacinth __ Daffodil __ Hyacinth
Tulip __ Tulip __ Tulip

What purple might fill in the gaps?
What white, what shade of blue?
Next spring I won't be here
to see those green steeples
rising through hard ground,
the blooms dressing for Sunday:
the daffodils' frilly yellow collars,
the tear-shaped tulips
in pink-wrapped shawls,
or hyacinths' choristers
gathered for one bright song.
Will congregations multiply,
or will rows of dirt be empty?

But what a sweet surprise
for a stranger—to see a perennial
planted by another hand. *Thank you,*
we want to say, to the soul who sowed.
Aren't we always planting
flowers for others to find?



Summer 2025

Paul Buchheit
Garden

I've breathed the dewy earth a thousand dawns,
beside the milky trellises adorned
with yellow roses, freshly scented lawns,
the chirpy wheedling of a thrush
inviting me to the gardenscape.

I savor hints of lilac and clematis:
a finch alights, all fidgety and flirty,
but he's gone in practiced whispers.
Then a raucous call, a jealous jay
announcing that the space belongs to him.

The morning protocol resumes,
as callers tunefully embrace my quiet presence.
A yellow flash, the whistly greeting
of a warbler, shrill, falsetto,
the choruses of doves that coo and mourn
to spell the songbirds, and the fledgling plum,
in burgundy or brown or fiery red,
bequeathed by season's hymn.

At the edge of the garden
goldenrods assemble in a tryst
with bluebells, and the meadowlarks enthrall
their audience with cheery melodies.



Summer 2025

Along the bubbly stream, staccato flows
of glitter gurgle through the fallen trees,
and cattails mobilize in stoic rows
like darkened fingers of a phantom-like
creation first ascending from the womb.

Battlefields of sparrows spread among
the glisten-dizzied leafy shields of poplar.

Pixie pin-prick kisses spray my cheeks,
an airy breath of balsam yields a teasing hint of citrus,
spritely foragers make chatty pleas
for privacy to scratch and prod and poke,
their puckish wonders striking
a chord of passion in the rare perfume
of dampened earth as a ruby radiance
paints coral fingers on the horizon.



Summer 2025

Christel Maass

Gardening Neighbors

She fancied herself a gardener, pampering
her roses and struggling exotics, watering
with a pesticide spray at the end of her hose,
until cancer claimed her time.

Late last season, when she saw me
enjoying a restful evening on my patio,
she finally acknowledged how lovely
my low-maintenance natives looked, and admired
the beautiful butterflies they attracted
to my side of the lot line.



Summer 2025

Sarah Banks

Pantoum for a Weed

My mother called them nutgrass—
the spiky lime-green shoots
that split the loam in late July.
She'd pinch the blades and pull

the spiky lime green shoots
to clear the bed. After the rain,
she'd pinch the stalks and pull
the bigger tufts of lime green fans

to clear the bed. After the rain,
taproots blossomed
beneath the bigger tufts of lime green fans.
With roots too deep to clear, they'd sprout again.

Taproots blossom
beneath the weeds that crack my bed.
With roots too deep to clear, they sprout again,
spark golden florets from their stems.

The perennial weeds that crack my bed
split the loam in late July,
flame golden florets from their stems.
My mother called them nutgrass.



Summer 2025

Sarah Wolfe

Afternoon Tea with Anne Hathaway

I know a place. Take a left off Main, then part the evergreens to find the hidden little white gate. Follow the little gray steppingstone path. Bluejays will escort you to the tea party. Sighing winds bring you summer notes of creamy gardenias as chattering white rabbits announce your arrival. Foggy meadows of dreaming purple poppies guide you to me. A doily-clad table dressed in pink China teacups. Stacks of saucers and yellowed, well-loved books. Sit down on fat ivory cushions. Feast on fresh strawberry scones and my berried buttermilk biscuits. Sip Earl Grey, and please do spill the tea. After all, I've been dying to meet you since I was sixteen. As a fellow woman of the word, I can read between the lines. Think I didn't notice the signature of such an inventive, feminine mind? Who enchanted your heart at the height of that one dizzy summer? Or was it all a fever dream, where you left this world for another? Here, have another tea sandwich—cream cheese and cucumber. At the midnight hour on the twelfth night, did you think that loving a woman might feel more right? When we say your name, scholars say *don't make much ado about nothing*. But woman to woman, you're really quite something. Do you curse his name? Or were you in on it, knowing it was the only way to critical acclaim? I've long sat contemplating gender's relation to fame. History written by victors is seldom kind. But when I summon the greats, the spirit of Anne Hathaway always has a seat in the secret garden of my mind.



Summer 2025

Leslie Schultz

Fresnel Lens Dream

for Virginia Woolf

If no man is an island, then how can
a woman maroon herself outside the flow?
Our composition is of salt ocean,
all shifting currents, tides, and undertow.

Life swims in us, shelters in mystery,
nourished by iron blood and shell-white bone,
by all those storylines we weave and carry,
mend and amend, until they are our own.

Yet how I long to climb a lighthouse stair
and claim a place above the tops of trees.
Find a storm-lashed rock. A sturdy tower.
Just sunlight and moonlight and salt-rinsed air.
Only one flame to tend in strict degrees.
To focus. Polish. To flash out with power.



Summer 2025

Beate Sigriddaughter

Morning

Because dreams simply don't translate, she needs to sketch reality again. A man in a long-haired T-shirt, his eyes on the river, longing. The hiss of the bus stopping on asphalt. A hummingbird pale-bellied with a long, curved beak. By the lake a girl feeds goslings milling around her feet. The girl's own shoulder blades look like beginnings of wings; she is radiant like caged light. There is a lot of light now. Look, how it embraces and protects the darkness.

She feels like Sleeping Beauty. Still waking up. Stammering. Huh? Where am I? And the answer echoes back: Still in chaos. Still dreaming of love. Still learning to be real among the thorns and the winds of the world. She is hungry for herself. No longer asleep behind some rosebush waiting for some kiss. She already loves this day. Blue morning glories on a grey coyote fence, that sort of thing.



Summer 2025

Lucy Sage

Myakka River State Park

Bald eaglets soar. Boars run
from humans closing in
as their piglets squeal.
Skimmers stand together, stilts stand
tall. White pelicans
congregate where limpkins hang.
And the great blue heron struts all alone.

Egrets flutter.
Deer dash across the fields.
Gators sun themselves at a decent distance.

Sabal palms and oaks surround
acres of grasslands.
The climax, the Northern Harriers,
blue backs with white underbellies,
circle with utmost grace.

*Mind you, anything you identify
from more than 150 yards is just a guess.*



Summer 2025

Ranjani Neriya
Eveninger

it is the cornsilk hour

a rolling fender somewhere
jumpstarts a sickle of light
up a wall calendared by hulk weed,
crashes through window-glass,
and is sucked into the green grain
of a jar on the mantelpiece

a leaf wanders in
from a fable of woods
earthy with charm, and
I set a place for it on page 90
of a storyline falling apart,
its binding glue in smithereens

the sky speeds one way
a tilt of birds flies the other
with cinders of sunset
stashed in breath of wings
like ancient gold.



Summer 2025

Joanne Merriam

Sealed in Nectar

1.

Commit to making friends with thunder.
Be lazy before the busy commerce of weather.

The light a scaffolding of windows
drifting down like the pulled wings of moths.

Full sun and dandelions on the backroads.
You smell beautiful and dusty.

The wind takes me into a rain-softened world.
It's a skill to remain lost here.

2.

You say I can trust you and then you laugh.
Your laughter like fairground ribbons.

The awkwardness in your mouth scrapes across mine.
Lie rusty-eyed in bed, skin smelling like a pawn shop.

Your fingers butterfly wings on my thighs.
The chrysalis splits. I will not fear.

Mouths sealed in nectar, silence lies dormant on my tongue.
Vicious circles by any other name still spin as sweet.

Previously published in The Glaze from Breaking (Stride, 2005).



Summer 2025

Stephen Reilly

What Lies in the Night

Bright and barren as neon, his smile flickers
like a snake's tongue tasting the air of her desires.

Laughter. Vibrant beats. The silk slippers of another drink.



Summer 2025

Daniel Edward Moore

Mildly Apologetic

Forgive us
if we didn't give you
enough reasons to return,

but the pillows
dented by acolyte knees
made servicing god a pleasure.

Never again
will bags of feathers hold
these sleepy heads.

The snake lamps
slithering art-deco style
on the nightstands by our bed

are proof that
Eden's apples love the glory
of a woman's teeth,

are proof that fruit
consumed without
the weakness of restraint

means there'll be
no moral laws
falling from the tree.



Summer 2025

Pamela Brothers Denyes

How Long Were You Awake?

After dinner and a little more wine, we made love,
then talked and laughed for another two hours.

I gave you a toothbrush that could live at my house,
and we tried to sleep. With too much to think about

after this first time, my brain chattered on, insanely
reviewing minutiae from all our past dates. Worse, I

could feel you beside me, burning with your own feelings,
questions, pondering closed and opening paths, perhaps.

Finally your breathing evened and your so-warm body
let go of our new adventure, of all that this might mean.

I think I dozed after another half hour, but lightly,
like a new mother, unsure of baby's all-night sounds.



Summer 2025

Kerrigan Azme

After the Summer Solstice

I lit a torch and placed it outside. The same torch I blew out that night. The night I grabbed your wrist and yanked you down the hall, opened the door and shoved you into the dark. The night after we lived through the longest day. The night I couldn't bear to watch your shadow grow bigger, your figure smaller in the distance. I led my heart's funeral procession with nails in my shoes, but the loss still didn't sting like the passion of love. I lit a torch and placed it outside in hopes you'll see it, wherever you are. I'll be different this time. I promise.



Summer 2025

Neil Azevedo

Powerless to Undo That Yes

there is an unnamed disquiet permeating everything
that informs my being asleep it prevents me

from ever sleeping more than two hours as a time
a tiny white spider scurries across the side of the chair

I am not startled I have grown used to them because
it is not his love that changes it is mine I know myself

in as much as I know I cannot let him go I let him go
and I begin to sit through the pale gray of a blurry-

kinetic night in which I cannot forget how I spit friable
fragments of my tooth and saliva full of tin-tasting blood

into my dirty palm or the unusual pain of this
untiring expulsion or my wish that I did not dream



Summer 2025

Carol Coven Grannick

Journey

a metaphor dice form poem

Control is a midnight mirage
There in the moonlit misty
Ripples of sly invitation—
It seems water waits ahead

Relief from a desert drive
Offering something that isn't,
The gleaming a deceitful demon's
Begging for belief that disappears

Disbelieve this false god of glimmer
Lying there in your way, and roads ahead
Leaving unwavering moonlight
Guiding you through darkness.



Summer 2025

DB Jonas

The Visitor

on Number 14, 1951 by Jackson Pollock

What presence lingers just outside the dark?
It is the smile, the wolf, the drowsing crocodile,
the wary nostril jerked awake, the anxious ear
on high alert, the noxious reek of musk and molt,
the bugling stags, their steaming backs at dawn,
the brazen limb, the burning leaf, the steady
gaze of stalk-eyed flies, the way these nebulosities
appear when you've just turned your back, the way
a star shines brightly only at the ragged edge of sight,
the way these tangled images consolidate to come
and sit beside the bed, within the breathing night,
the edgeless sleep, the weed-choked throat of dread.



Summer 2025

Joan Hofmann

Secrets

Still and hidden, the fox waits in his hole,
The hunter lurks behind his blind,

A drone streaks the sky—
All searching for signs

Scanning for something amiss.
Silent and imminent,

The squirrel secrets his acorns
In shady wells, under leaf litter.

Nearby, mushrooms rise overnight
Unexpected, purples with yellow nipples

Orangey-reds, edges chomped
Displaying white innards

As when I learned the truth
So much in plain sight

As a fox leaps from a hole,
With stealth and cunning

A flick of tail barely flashed
Shrugged off, *What was that?*



Summer 2025

When the punchline landed,
I was looking the other way.

I try to say I saw it coming.
I didn't. Not really. Not in the least.

Like moonlight reveals a silhouette
On the horizon, all's exposed now.



Summer 2025

don farrell
natural wonder

thought
you taught yourself
to not remember but learned
shame, so transformative, reroutes the mind.
even if injuries are revisited to make certain
they're real like the discarded
schwinn tossed in the woods for twenty years,
bent in half by a man that bruised you
there, out of sight. a brain hell-bent
to forget, will remain
disfigured, grows around
that forgotten part like a tree
grows around a bicycle,
lifting that thrown-away-thing
way into the air
where a child can
neither reach nor ignore it.



Summer 2025

Paul Burgess

A Rock Bridge Defaced

Between the cliffs within this ancient gorge,
Your hairy back of lichen, brush, and moss
Bestows a gift that only eons forge:
A glimpse of gaps and eras that you cross—

A world before the hands of humans made
The Earth a monstrous quarry, rig, and mine.
But cuts reveal you've also felt the blade
Of those who think they own each thing they sign.

The pelting rain and ice the wind has blown
Have worn away some gashes on your face,
And words that knives have carved to last in stone
Are smudges seasons' cycles will erase.

A human's span to you is but a flash,
And vandals' hands will soon be dust and ash.



Summer 2025

Oladosu Michael Emerald

I Survived & Still Don't Know How

Some days I think it's luck. Other days, I call it God. Most days, I don't call it anything. I just wake up, stare at the ceiling like it owes me an answer. My phone rings with more needs than names. The mirror doesn't lie; it shows a man stitched together by borrowed strength, cracked faith, soft rage. I've held my breath in traffic, in love, in rooms where men talk loud to hide the trembling in their mouths. I've learned to cry in private, to sweat out my grief, to make poems out of silence. People see me & say I look good, say I carry it well, but they don't see the weight, the nights I almost texted *goodbye*, the mornings I whispered, *just one more day*. I've been broke in every way a man can break: pocket, heart, spirit—but somehow I kept standing, maybe out of habit, maybe because the fall never felt like a choice. Love didn't save me. Music tried. God tried. I tried. & some days I still want to quit, to disappear into the quiet. But there's something in me that refuses. Something that says: *not yet. Not like this*. I survived. I did. & that should count for something. That should be holy.



Summer 2025

Joy E. S. Manning

Standing in Place

Oaks bed their backs, postured in curve,
muted by a cloak of mist,
arches strewn with shawls of moss
that cling like rags, hanging lifeless.

Some days it is enough to stand;
holding place and present pose,
clasping close the certain soil,
bearing weight of tattered clothes,

forgetting marks of progress
and haze's whispers muffling ears,
resting inside earth's still voice
and waiting for the fog to clear.

Living is a movement slow,
like lichens lacing trees with growth,
or the damp day's quiet dance
of arced and ancient oaks.



Summer 2025

Laura Denny

Surrender

I walk through trees,
bays, bigleaf maples,
and sycamores,
listening to the smooth
conversations of the leaves.

Then down to the crumbling,
clamorous sound of the river
rushing over stones
as it arrives
over and over again
tumbling its way home.

The persistence of the
shouting, humming sounds
moves me into a shimmering
place that yearns to know
the way the brief leaves
and the river bank knows
how to allow and let go.



Summer 2025

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

Seeing the Great Blue Heron from My Porch

—Boca Raton, Florida, 2025

I wish I could endlessly watch
the great blue heron—slate-
gray feathers blanketing his torso,
one jaunty black plume rippling
as he flies, his yellow white neck
stretched stiff in the wind.

He is there for me in early morning light,
in torrents of rain. A ghostly presence
at twilight. Here. Then gone.
Then back again.

I wish I could be that sure of my place
in the world. Sure that my world
isn't endlessly tilting to darkness.
I am starved for light.



Summer 2025

Malcolm Farley

Republic of Sleep

Last night, against my will, I voted for
the dream about wisteria again—hungry, leaf-lobed
fingers reaching for the doors and wrenching
window sashes from their tracks, torqued

tendrils twisting into vengeful, arm-thick
anacondas squeezing sleepers in their beds.
Now half awake, “All Things Considered” buzzing
on the radio—or are those uncompleted chores

that swarm inside the walls?—I see how Mark has vanished
from the bed and left a mummy shape inside the haunted
quilt, and Lola’s sleep-slack snout is so close by,
she seems a massive wolf with dragon

breath and fangs while, far below,
the yard guys start their angry whack and mow.



Summer 2025

Luke Fegenbush

The Audacity to Complain About the Coffee

The raw bitter edge
of what is and what is not
I am a boundary
marked out in air

It is the width of a dime
that stops my blood feeding
the impartial earth

It is arrogance
that I should breathe wind
without becoming it

I awake before the sun,
full of flame, begin
a mad battle
against entropy



Summer 2025

Steven Kent

Easy Doze It

I'm awake, yet my mind's on a nap.
Getting up in the morning's no longer a snap;
With the dog at my feet and the cat on my lap,
I am free to start planning a nap.

How I love a good late morning snooze,
And the afternoon's also quite nice if I choose.
I have *earned* this reward; I have paid many dues
For my shot at a second/third snooze.

Is it odd, this obsession with sleep?
Oh, I wonder at times if I'm getting in deep—
I've a house that needs cleaning, some clothes in a heap,
And yet here I am, dreaming of sleep.

I'll get busy right after I doze.
Yes, I'll sweep all the floors, put away all the clothes;
Heck, I might wash the car, get a haircut, who knows?
Now excuse me, I'm due for a doze.



Summer 2025

Richard Dinges, Jr.

The Spider

A spider crawls
alone between
glass pane and screen.
Pauses to scan
for prey are a patient
vigil, day by
day. Sun passes
between clouds gray
to capture this
narrow world.
In all my freedom,
I achieve no more
with my sit and watch
between daily
futile chores.



Summer 2025

Richard West

Poetic Stress

My day off was unstressed at first, until I began
to think about work, which made the day
an anapest—unstressed-unstressed-stressed.
I stress now because I know each part of tomorrow
will be a spondee—equally stressed—and it won't be
till I get home tomorrow night that I can reverse
the iambic—unstressed-stressed—pattern of life
in the comfort of my trochee-friendly—stressed-unstressed—
apartment. Unless, of course, I have one of those rare
amphibrach days where I manage to keep the stress down
to a reasonable unstressed–stressed–unstressed flow.
But at this point, I just want to turn in and sleep.
Hopefully to pyrrhic dreams—equally unstressed.



Summer 2025

Kelli Weldon

Second Moon

Scientists said Earth has gained
another moon, a small asteroid clinging
to Earth's orbit. I wonder if he copies
his brother's spin, his gleaming face
an echo, loved and known.

How Earth must carry with her such joy,
double the anxiety, how Earth must be
so tired. At night I look for both moons
through a telescope, tell myself I
definitely see them, remind myself
we all exist. What have I done to deserve
this beautiful news, bright in the dark?
I watch over them until my eyes grow weary,
let the Earth rest her head for once and sleep.



Summer 2025

Laurie Paternoster

The Old Bear

At times it is the low guttural echo of distant thunder rumbling
at others it whistles like a forgotten teakettle anxious to serve
most often steady and rhythmic, a predictable pattern of tones
reassuring me that the man beside me is here
not away fighting some far-flung unwinnable war
not assigned to earn a paycheck in a remote location
not passing time as my father did alone in some bar
not preferring late-night videos that scramble the mind
not staying awake so late the morning dawns too early
at times I am wakened once, twice sometimes a third
from the depths of my own restless slumber to hear
the low growl, the pulsating hiss, the vibrating old truck
it is those times when I fear I may never sleep again
I reach over quietly to still the sleeping bear
both of us comforted that we are still here



Summer 2025

Malia Padalino

Cross Roads

An unpaved road
split, a cross in the middle
of nowhere
to which I prayed,
though my faith was fading
into a fog that covered
the sky like a veil.

Alone I knelt debating
whether I should travel
with or against the wind
as the amber sun rose
then hid beneath the road,
a brazen thief
of gilded dreams I feared
to chase.

Again summer shifted to fall
but still, I didn't walk—
like an anchored ship I waited
for ideal currents,
a heavenly sign to decide my fate,
feet cringing
from stumbling
in worn shoes,
now rejoicing in the comfort of
stagnation.



Summer 2025

Assumed I'd be given direction
someday,
imagined I'd find myself
in a city with lights like stars
but each night a train wails
from afar and I wonder
where I might've went,
what I might've seen,
whom I might've been,
had I only gone
somewhere.



Summer 2025

Ben Egerton

46

*excerpt from & When We Get There
Will We Have Been There Forever?*

about a third of us is not-water
as a third of the earth is not on the

third day god created not-water for
water already *is* before day one

& still *is* at the end because on the
third day the body rose from not-water

—bone & ligament from iron & rock—
my internal eternity erodes

& renews that which is not-water in
me at my coastline of in/action stacks

arches caves views— assaulted by breakers
of ~~erosion~~ elation ~~attrition~~ attention ~~compression~~ compassion

what else is there but wait give thanks & walk
each other's clifftops for new water & not?



Summer 2025

David Ram

Broad Brook Basin

My dory drifts a shallow filled with clouds
and trees. No sights or sounds of hawks or crows
as now the brood of geese has gone for good.
A playful flight of visiting swallows

converts this cove into a water park.
Performing acrobatic dips and climbs,
the families circle in cheerful arcs
attached to invisible pendulums.

They glide above the surface or even
skim the surface, shaking dry of droplets
by surging in and out of shade and sun.
In what resonate like rhyming couplets,

they chatter, sing and murmur, all and each,
a liquid language far beyond my reach.



Summer 2025

Sarah E. N. Kohrs

Pulsatile Tinnitus

In the course of living,
I became the sea inside.
Clear salt slipping out

with the strain of sorrow.
Wrack line of wrinkles,
age spots, eczema, even.

A tsunami of emotion
that I notice too late to
calm the influx. While

the aftermath settles
into a rhythm of sloshing
unshakable from my head,

I expect to see something
like amniotic fluid or a
consumptive chroma covering

the pillow—one that will
fade to auburn stain over
time, when I am gone.



Summer 2025

Maybe someone will remember
that I once lived as certain
as a red river flowing

from Grif's glacier. The
white noise in the back-
ground, while I focus on

my forward sweep and
sculling brace to keep
on a course for living.

I as endangered as glaciers.
And no one wants to hear how
now they are becoming sea.



Summer 2025

Heather Brown Barrett

Witness

after John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn"

your mortal condition as Grecian urn:
rouged body, born of fire,
conflict of darkness and light;
an open mouth the distance
between silent cry and harbinger.
You dance, you hang
every secret and mistake like garland,
like vines of iron leaves
until despair rings your shoulders
as you drape an arm around friend or foe,
in brotherhood or backstab,
or bare talons like a beast, a bird
with wings outstretched.
Animal urges unchanged over millennia.
An angel viewed from different angle.
You quiver at the precipice
of a chasm so great it overwhelms.
Imagine! you are made to see
in your own feet of clay
the deep reflection of brethren.
Earthen urn, steady turn.
Your barefoot figure proclaims the truth:
there is still beauty in broken forms.



Summer 2025

Sherry Shahan

Waiting for the Band to Start

A daytime moon cups my asymmetrical spine.
Sequins needle bones strung together with shoelaces.

Veins bubble up for no reason, reminding me of baby
frogs mashed by a steamroller.

I'm a bouquet of puckered crepe-paper, enhancing
the palette of parties in any season.

Yesterday, I paid for my first-ever facial supine in a
spiritual trance beneath kerosene green mire.

Today, I write a love letter in erasable ink just in case
his letters are written in invisible ink.

We used to dance naked under the streetlamp.

Just in case I pour another glass of Gallo
wondering if it will be my last.

I've reached a certain age and will not raise my voice against it.

Odds are I never should have lasted this long.



Summer 2025

Libi Siporin

A Letter from a Friend to Odysseus in His Old Age

And after? Did you find peace?
The love you remembered?
What of the trail of lost comrades?
Or the clear dreams of a goddess
on her lonely island, yearning
just for you? And home?
Did no hour's monotonous rhythm
urge you to wonder how it might
have been to live forever through
passionate nights and languid days
by an azure sea, burst of the cool
juice of grapes in your mouth;
walks in the green forests,
birds chattering a song
so sweet it erased every betrayal,
including your own. Was coming
home a clean-cut, no-reprisal
backstep into the joy of home
and family, as if twenty years
had not passed, as if the sword
had not rested on your lips, as if
you had not been a man of blood?
Could you forget the sight of comrades
turned to pigs? Ignore the ghosts'
vengeful mutters in the shadows
of your hall? Was there no retribution?



Summer 2025

No wakeful nights? No knife-edged
desire for Kirke? No stifled tears
for friends snatched by Skylla?
Was it all only peace under the tree
on the marriage bed, new dreams,
like blankets obscuring what had been?
No challenge from your son?
No sense of loss over the dog,
the only one who truly knew you?
Did you become a raft floating
on the deep, restless, beautiful sea?
Could you forget that sea? The sea
that taught you all you knew?



Summer 2025

Stephanie Jones

Home

Spiders moving dust. Bottom
lip pressed
with a cooling cloth.
Littered pillow
lungs against bone and you're quilting
a smile. Everything in His
image.

I sit on a pile of
incomplete years. Words
absently cling to the
walls. Like peeling paint. Words
the couches never
hear.

Near you the tray I've lain
at an angle you
understand. You take sugar now.
A sweetness that
wants nothing in return.

Your eyes still clutter
with a washed
out moon. They water and my
heart balloons. I want
so much to fold



Summer 2025

you into me where you're
still warm.

From the parking lot
your window
glows
like so many others.

Stationary fireflies reveal
silhouettes. Rocking chairs
empty bed frames and dressers
without mirrors.

Artifacts of sleeping
questions
for no one to collect.



Summer 2025

Kimberly Thornton

Spill Acrostic

Smokey summer skies
Painted by wildfire. Birds drop
Icarus-like. People of Pompeii
Laid under ash for over 1,000 years. No angel
Looked that way. Do they look at all?



Summer 2025

Arvilla Fee

Afterthought

I heard you visited the cemetery yesterday.
How do I know?
Little birds still chatter beyond the blue.
Someone said you bowed your head
but didn't speak.
Typical. Not really your style.
How long had we existed in silence?
Silence that grew like wild kudzu,
smothering everything good
beneath its viny sprawl—
that's the way of grudges I suppose,
when no one cares to prune.
I'm okay, though.
No apology necessary.
No need to pick up shears.



Summer 2025

Tobey Hiller

Bell

for a friend

tolls. Again, a ringing
like wind glint on willows.
Behind me on the path
a presence walks.

I turn. No one there
but dusk's premonition
footfall of almost. Small
feet of years, collecting.

I think of dancing with her,
music in our bodies, easy
as life is bright, or blood real.
Now, her body holds ending's silence.

A shadow walks just behind me.
Green leaves clatter in sun.
Dawn marks us for dusk.
A sound, a note, of flesh ringing.



Summer 2025

Daniel Letz

Grocery Store

More than once, I've looped
these aisles. Always the one wheel
of my cart skidding sideways, barely
touching the ground. Always having
two hands to steer my goods from
right to left to right again.

Always looking for you, of course,
who frequented the coffee
and baked goods aisles,
I take my laps, round and round
like a fool. Just to see if today is the day
you've run out of your tub of Roasters

or brand of sourdough, which I have
long forgotten the name of. Hoping
to see you. Even if you are not here
perusing for necessities. Hoping to
see you looking for me
as I stand, perhaps, by the blueberries,

or patiently next to the apricots,
a honeybee hoping
the sweetness will draw you.



Summer 2025

Lora Butcher

The Widow

The day wears stripes of grief, roars like a tiger
whose fangs slant down to light my fear's dark fires.
I do know well that such a beast can't purr;
blasted with light, I'm still stuck in the mire
of torment dark and feint with failed hope.
I waste the weekend, flinch at noon. The wind
of active ways turns me to stone. I mope
and lean against awakening, to end
the progress asking me to move what hurts.
I will not go as if nothing was lost!
Sometimes, I think of good, but shock diverts
the action I would take, and then exhausts
the source. Yet none can build our dreams but me
who's left here knowing what they cannot be.



Summer 2025

Benjamin Shalva

Lines for Kenyon

*You turned still further inward, imperturbable
as a lion-gate, and lived on . . .*

—Jane Kenyon, “Lines for Akhmatova”

Sad for seven months;
then, grief, *like a crow*
(your words), pelted
by headlights, shocked
by pharmaceutical scree, released.

*There is nothing I can do, you wrote,
against your coming.* I wake
towards evening, the lot empty,
the air, past
the windshield, blue

and still. You're turned
to look at the camera, gazing
out from the cover, out past
my thumbs, your eyes like birch,
bruised, bright. You wrote:

*How I love the small, swiftly
beating heart . . .* The old car starts. I hold
your book in one hand
and steer with the other.



Summer 2025

Richard LeDue

Death Whispers

I have heard the death whisper
of open windows,
especially on sunny days
when most people want shadows
to hide in and crows sit comfortably
on telephone lines, as if they know
I have nothing left to say.

The sweat settling on my forehead
like an oversized blindfold
helping me look death in the eye
before a firing squad
that knows it can't miss
at making me dead,
while my boiling egg boils
into another metaphor,
instead of an entry in a food journal,
and my hunger hears me praying
to live long enough to die.



Summer 2025

George Freek

Midnight Theatrics

As a chilly night arrives,
leaves die on the trees,
unable to survive,
only blind crawling things
appear to be alive,
emerging from wherever they hide.
The moon is an empty shoe.
I drink wine. I drink for two.
A year ago, my wife
would drink with me.
but she's no longer here,
and I'll also soon be dust.
As if speaking for God,
the cosmos says I must.
Will I be afraid when
it's my turn to die?
Like an actor in a familiar play,
I'll put on my disguise,
and speak my lines
and no one will recognize
they're just the conventional lies.



Summer 2025

Benjamin Cannicott Shavitz

Hospital Ceiling

Each panel in the ceiling is the same
Except the new replacement that's still white.
What's newest is what's best, or so they claim,
But, somehow, I don't feel that that's quite right.
The brightness of the panel speaks to more
Puerility and ignorance and less
Experience with what has come before,
The people who have died here, the distress
Of loved ones, and the trade of peace and pain
Between the ones who leave and those who stay.
The panel hasn't learned that it's in vain
To fight against the fate of growing gray.
It's clearly still not trained enough in death
To show you how to brave my final breath.



Summer 2025

Amy Riddell

Liver Donor

You are the harvest,
the reaping and the sowing,

your brain death
a gestation in the drama

of another's life—
like my husband who answers

the pre-dawn phone call
to come quickly

for what you offer, your yield
of mercy, your submission

to the ceremony of scythes,
your naked body

a resurrection of seedlings
transplanted by gloved hands.

I don't know your name,
but I sanctify you,

vow holy oaths to your
blood-washed bounty.



Summer 2025

Dianna MacKinnon Henning

When I Am Dead and Shelved

in a dank grave, be my historian and write
of my life on earth, its apples and blossoms,
how any existence builds from blunders, the cryptic
sanctity of fault turned blessing, the detritus of sorrow,
so many burials, and one that hit hardest,
she whose confined hands I tried to pull apart
to cup my face, but no, she remained
ice-stiff—dear Ella—who raised me
from the dead when childhood horror
dragged the sleeping self of myself under
& into the world of demons no child knew existed,
but that, now, in retrospect, a small chapter
of this passage called growth upon the born
which may or may not take hold, one death making
all deaths possible, my own in New Hampshire,
where I waitressed at Crawford Notch,
my soul at the window looking back on my bedded self,
but no, I didn't die then, not until later, much later
when love so terribly blinding, so fierce,
burned me at the stake of desire, his hand
a branding iron, my body a disciple of affection
so radiant it became the heart as claimed,
still, through the years of absence, I sharpened
my longing to shapeshift into the future,
leaving me breathless at the door of all remembering.



Summer 2025

Estill Pollock

Pavane for Lost Companions

Time flies to memory and compromise.

Which did you invent—the driftwood edge
of ocean, the steady grain of footprints, her face
within a sea of faces.

A hoop at each lobe, at first glance
careless gold, a decoration, but within each circle
further echoes of circumference.

That was your impression, first and last.

Every face there, you realize now, was hers.

The beach
cut with her initials—everything so familiar.

Even at that distance
she recognized you, your waves and particles.

Touching her lips to your ear, she spoke
a dead language—the dead and their histories
were in her mouth.

The fault was not yours—a scrap of sun foundered on the horizon.

You remember the way the light tasted.

The surf, silver, shot through with cedar scents.



Summer 2025

Elizabeth R. McCarthy

Don't Burden the Barista

When asked at the coffee shop, *How are you doing?*

I paused and measured my response
as if placing my heart upon the ancient scale of truth.

And told him, *I'm good.*

Why burden the barista
with my story of sickness and sorrow
in a world going to hell and only caffeine to cope?

Leaving me to consider my untruth as he turned
to brew a double shot in his Italian espresso machine
that looked like a modern steampunk tool for time travel.

Will I be devoured by the Egyptian Goddess
in the *Book of the Dead* and cease to exist
when my heart sinks and the feather of truth rises?

I waited as frothing milk hissed under the magic wand
and watched his silent slow pour takes shape
before handing me my heart—floating in a cup.



Summer 2025

John Whitney Steele

A Passing Shadow

Like a spent whale stuck on a shoal,
synapses starting to dissolve,
worn, forlorn, losing control.
Fighting the tide, I'll soon devolve:
brain currents weak, obscured by plaque,
afraid I'm fading, losing track.

I sit and gaze into the emptiness
behind the images, the subliminal picture.
A passing shadow, a glimpse, a breathlessness
before the dazzling flight of a northern flicker
slows my glucocorticoid cascade,
shows me it's okay to be afraid

to rue the plight of aging hippocampus,
confront the fact that I will soon be gone.
Why not turn and face the empty canvas,
brushstroke after brushstroke, dabble on?
So what if I can't paint a bird in flight.
I'll mix and dab the colors, evoke the light.



Summer 2025

Claire Coenen

the nature of grief

leaf subsides to leaf.

—Robert Frost

then the garden sang in the key of roses.
now the petals tremble in equinox light
as dusk arrives with sharp, impersonal air.
i hear the fall of soft minor chords, the last
greens of oak sigh. nature, in her dark cloak, pulls
each life to ground. the parched leaf crunches under
my boot, the garden hums the impending dirge
of blossoms. i want to stop time. return to
innocence, but living means letting go of
this, of this, of every eden. wandering
in this dying field, memories warm and chill
my bones. the copper grass rustles, giving life
to wind. the sky exhales blues again. alone
i walk with shadows. sing silences of gold.

Biographies

Claire Archer-Adderholt is a poet, third-culture kid, and marketing manager who grew up in Papua New Guinea, lived in CA, CO, and now the American South. Her poems appear in *Amethyst Review*, *Calla Press*, and elsewhere.

Erin Akins is a writer and literature Ph.D. student living in Austin, TX. Her work appears in *South Florida Poetry Journal* and *Carolina Muse Literary Magazine*.

Duane Anderson lives in La Vista, NE and has poems in *Fine Lines*, *Cholla Needles*, and elsewhere, including his *On the Corner of Walk and Don't Walk*, *Conquer the Mountains*, *Family Portraits*, and *The Life of an Ordinary Man*.

Stuart Mark Anderson grew up on a small family farm, where his father read him the works of Coleridge as bedtime stories. Despite this, he teaches mathematics, physics, and engineering at the University of Washington. He was awarded the 2010 Thomas Merton Prize for poetry of the sacred.

Neil Azevedo's book, *Ocean*, came out from with Grove/Atlantic in 2005. His poems appear in *The Antioch Review*, *The New Criterion*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Western Humanities Review*, and *The Paris Review* (where he shared the Bernard F. Connors Prize for Poetry in 1998), among many other places.

Raised right outside Orlando, FL, **Kerrigan Azme** is a creative writing major at the University of Central Florida. She will be graduating this December.

Shamik Banerjee is a poet from Assam, India. His work appears in *Spelt*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Third Wednesday*, *California Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

Sarah Banks is a nurse in MS. Her poetry appears in *Gyroscope*, *Rust + Moth*, *Thimble*, and elsewhere. Her fiction's been nominated for a Pushcart and appears in *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *Bright Flash Literary Review*, and *Fiction on the Web*.

Carol Barrett has published three collections, most recently *Reading Wind*. Her creative nonfiction *Pansies* was a finalist for the Oregon Book Awards. An NEA Poetry Fellow, Carol has poems in venues in seven countries, including over 50 anthologies. She's taught students from kindergarten through doctoral candidates.

Heather Brown Barrett is an award-winning poet in southeastern VA. Her work appears in *Literary Mama*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Black Bough Poetry*, and elsewhere. She is the author of *Water in Every Room* (Kelsay Books, 2025).

Rachel Beachy is a poet from KY where she resides with her husband and two daughters. Her poems appear in *The Bluebird Word*, *Eunoia Review*, *HerWords*, *The RavensPerch*, *The Rising Phoenix Review*, and *Steam Ticket*.

Darlene Bester romanticizes the four changing seasons of MN. She will forever be a cat lover and be renewed by flowers. She has appeared in *Bella Grace Magazine* and *Door Is A Jar Literary Magazine*.

Michael Blaine is a Delmarva poet teaching English and Creative Writing at Delaware Technical Community College. He has English degrees from Ole Miss and Salisbury University. He is past Delaware fellowship recipient in the field of poetry. Blaine has two chapbooks—one that won the Dogfish Head Poetry Prize.

Benson Bobrick earned his doctorate in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University. His many books have been featured on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*, widely praised in academic and popular journals, and published in translation. He lives in VT.

Paul Buchheit is an author of books, poems, progressive essays, and scientific journal articles. His first book of poetry, *Sonnets of Love and Joy* (Kelsay Books, 2023), was named Book of the Year by the Illinois State Poetry Society.

Marie Burdett is a professional gardener and MFA student at U. of St. Thomas, Houston. Her work is featured in *Light* and *SAGE Magazine*. When not writing, she plays with her crazy Aussie, Muffin. Her Instagram is @marieburdettpoet.

Jake Burdoin is a gender-fluid author living in Chicago. Raised in Reno, NV, much of her work is influenced by its geography and people, though his recent move shifted the tone and imagery of her work. Their work appears in *Arrhythmia*.

Paul Burgess is the sole proprietor of a business in Lexington, KY that offers ESL, translation, and interpretation services. He speaks several languages fluently and has the same odd imagination in all of them. He has contributed work to *Blue Unicorn*, *New Verse News*, *Parody*, and other publications and projects.

Lora Butcher moderated a channel on Disqus called Poetry Park that had over 200,000 subscribers. She is published in *The Lyric*, *The Heartland Review*, and elsewhere, and won 2nd place in Indiana Poetry Society's Bright Star Award 2024.

Philip Byrne was born in Dublin and lives in Westchester, NY. A retired middle school teacher, he captures snippets of memory and observation in poems that finds sustenance, rejuvenation, and joy in language.

Andrew Calis is a Palestinian American living near Baltimore. His work appears in Poem-a-Day, *The Atlantic*, and elsewhere, and been nominated for/won awards including the Zócalo poetry prize and poets.org Treehouse Climate Action prize.

Catherine Chandler, American-born poet and Canadian snowbird, received the Richard Wilbur Award, Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, and Leslie Mellichamp Award. Her work, shortlisted for the Poets' Prize, appears widely. All are welcome aboard The Wonderful Boat (cathychandler.blogspot.com), her poetry blog.

Melissa A. Chappell is a poet in rural SC, where she's inspired by fields, forests, and wildflowers. An ordained Lutheran pastor, she also writes poetry influenced by her spirituality. She has a BA in Music Theory and a Master of Divinity.

Nishi Chawla authored ten plays, two novels, seven collections; directed four award-winning films, co-edited anthologies, and taught English for 40 years. Her plays have been staged Off-Broadway, and she's read at the Library of Congress.

Isabel Chenot has loved, memorized, and practiced poetry all her remembered life. Some of her poems are collected in *The Joseph Tree* (Wiseblood Books).

Claire Coenen is a poet, teacher, and social worker in Nashville, TN who now devotes her time to writing and to teaching writing, collage, and yoga. Her first collection is *The Beautiful Keeps Breathing* (Kelsey Books, 2024)

Laura Denny is a retired kindergarten teacher who lives in the CA Santa Cruz Mountains. Her poems appear in *Sunlight Press*, *Amethyst Review*, and elsewhere.

Pamela Brothers Denyes' award-winning poems appear in multiple journals and international anthologies. Her full-length collections, *The Right Mistakes* and *The Widow's Lovers* (Kelsay Books), are available wherever you buy books. Her chapbook, *As I Lay Dreaming*, is available on Amazon. Website: pbdenyes.com.

Nancy Dillingham is a sixth-generation Dillingham from Big Ivy in western NC. Her collection *Home* was nominated for a SIBA. Latest publications include *No Time Like the Present: A Memoir in Essays*, *Curves: Collected Stories*, and the chapbooks *Promise* and *Longing*. She lives in Asheville, NC.

Richard Dinges, Jr. works on his homestead beside a pond, surrounded by trees and grassland, with his wife, two dogs, two cats, and seventeen chickens. His words appear most recently in *Wilderness House*, *WINK*, and *Steam Ticket*.

John Dorroh has baked bread with Austrian monks and drunk their beer. His poems have been nominated for Best of the Net.

Roxanne Doty's novel was published by Regal House Press in 2022, her poetry collection *Hours of the Desert* by Kelsay Books in 2024. Her stories and poems appear in many journals, including *Third Wednesday* and *Gyroscope Review*.

Nicole Dufalla teaches engineering in VA where she enjoys writing and getting lost outside. Her work can be found in *Willows Wept Review*, *Passionfruit Review*, *Chautauqua Literary Journal*, and elsewhere online.

Ben Egerton's most recent collection is *The Seed Drill* (Kelsay Books, 2023). He teaches at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and he is an Associate Fellow at the Rivendell Center for Theology and the Arts at Yale, and a member of the Christian Poetics Initiative.

Oladosu Michael Emerald (@garricologist), author of *Every Little Thing That Moves* and Pioneer Fellow of the Muktar Aliyu Art Residency, won the Off the Limit Art Contest (2024), Spring Poetry Contest (2024), Garden Party Collective Neurodivergent Poetry Contest (2025), and Sine Qua Non Poetry Prize (2025).

Renee Emerson is the author of the poetry collections *Keeping Me Still* (Winter Goose Publishing), *Threshing Floor* (Jacar Press), and *Church Ladies* (Fernwood Press). She lives in the Midwest with her husband and children.

Malcolm Farley is a poet and cultural journalist. His poems appear in *The New Republic*, *Agni*, *The Harvard Review*, and elsewhere; his essays, in *The New York Times*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Boston Review*, and elsewhere.

Don Farrell lives in Cambridge, MN with 3 sons, 2 dogs, and other critters where land transitions from forest to prairie. He holds a monthly open mic at The ARC Retreat Center in Stanchfield, MN and a biweekly Zoom poetry critique group. He hopes to leave this planet without getting what he deserves.

Siobhan Farrell lives in Canada on the north shore of Lake Superior. Her writing appears in journals, anthologies, and *Catching the Moon* (Kelsay Books, 2024). She likes to infuse her writing with *wabi sabi*, a Japanese term which means finding the beauty of imperfection.

Arvilla Fee's poetry books, *The Human Side*, *This Is Life*, and *Mosaic: A Million Little Pieces*, are available on Amazon. Her life advice? Never travel without snacks. Visit her website and her new magazine: soulpoetry7.com.

Luke Fegenbush lives in Bellevue, KY with his wife and two dogs. His fiction and poetry appear in *Shale*, and he has written nonfiction for the Atlantic Publishing Group.

A granddaughter of Cuban immigrants, **Cathy Socarras Ferrell** finds inspiration in family story-telling, walking, and the Sandhill cranes in her yard. Her work appears in *Santa Clara Review*, *Compulsive Reader*, and elsewhere.

Lew Forester is a social worker, poet, and painter in Arvada, CO. Author of *Dialogues with Light* (Orchard Street Press, 2019) and *The Rooms Between* (Kelsay Books, 2024), Lew has poems published in *Atlanta Review*, *Sky Island Journal*, *Pinyon*, *The MacGuffin*, *Slipstream*, and elsewhere.

Alfred Fournier is the author of *A Summons on the Wind* (Kelsay Books, 2023) and *King of Beers* (Rinky Dink Press, 2025). He lives in Phoenix, AZ with his remarkable wife and daughter and two birdwatching cats.

George Freek's poem "Enigmatic Variations" was recently nominated for Best of the Net and his "Night Thoughts" for a Pushcart Prize.

Linda McCauley Freeman is the award-winning poet of *The Family Plot* (Backroom Window Press, 2022) and *The Marriage Manual* (BWPress, 2024). Her work is displayed at the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery. She has an MFA from Bennington and was a poet-in-residence at the Putnam Arts Council.

Carol Coven Grannick is a Midwest poet with suburban roots, a country girl's heart, and a passion for writing the tender journey through life. She has 100+ poems in literary magazines for children and adults. Her verse novel, *Reeni's Turn*, debuted from Regal House Publishing in 2020.

Canadian poet **Carole Giangrande** has poems in *Grain*, *Prairie Fire*, *Spiritus*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook, *The Frailty of Living Things*, is with Aeolus House. Her first full-length collection, *This May Be the Year*, will be published by Inanna.

Maura H. Harrison is a writer and artist from Fredericksburg, VA. Her works appear in *Ekstasis Magazine*; *The Windhover*; *THINK*; and others.

Dianna MacKinnon Henning taught through California Poets in the Schools and runs The Thompson Peak Writers' Workshop. She has many publications, including *Women in a Golden State*, 2025, and recently received her ninth Pushcart Prize nomination.

Sister Lou Ella Hickman, OVISS is a former teacher and librarian whose writings appear widely. Press 53 published her first book of poetry in 2015 entitled *she: robed and wordless* and her second, *Writing the Stars*.

Poppy Higgins recently completed her BA in Creative Writing. Her work has been published by Nowhere Girl Collective and *CardiffMet* and was commended in the Hive Young Writers competition. She is currently developing a collection of poetry and short stories. You can find her on Instagram @biblicalwithit.

Tobey Hiller published four books of poetry, a novel, and a story collection. Her most recent book of poems is *Crow Mind*. Her current poetry manuscript, *before anything is dust*, was a finalist in Catamaran's 2024 Poetry Book Contest.

Joanna Hoffman's book of poetry, *Running for Trap Doors* (Sibling Rivalry Press), was nominated for a Lambda Literary Award and featured in the American Library Association's list of recommended LGBT reading. In 2015, she was named a White House Champion of Change for LGBT advocacy through art.

Joan Hofmann, Professor Emerita at University of Saint Joseph, serves on the Executive Board of Riverwood Poetry and was the inaugural Poet Laureate of Canton, CT. Her poems appear in various anthologies and journals, and in three chapbooks: *Coming Back* (2014), *Alive* (2017), and *Alive, Too* (2019).

Madison Hoff lives in the NY Metro Area, works in the film industry, and is co-chair of Milkweed Poetry Workshop in the Hudson Valley region. She has two self-published books: *Molecularly Made* (2023) and *East Axis* (2025). Her work appears in *The Journal of NJ Poets*, *Cinematica*, and *US1 Worksheets*.

Catherine E. Hoysler's poetry appears in *Paterson Literary Review*, *Of Hartford in Many Lights: Celebrating Hartford's Buildings*, and elsewhere. She has published academic books, is Emerita Professor of English at the University of Saint Joseph, and was managing editor of *Victorian Studies Journal*.

D.R. James, retired from nearly 40 years of teaching college writing, literature, and peace studies, lives with his psychotherapist wife in the woods near Saugatuck, MI. His latest of ten collections is *Mobius Trip* (Dos Madres Press).

R. Johnson wrote poetry “for the drawer” for years while following an academic career with occasional forays into journalism. He is the author of *Uninvited Winter* (Alfred Gustave Press, 2018), and his “Quietus” (*Descant*, 133, 2006) won the National Magazine Awards Foundation Gold Award for Poetry.

DB Jonas is author of *Tarantula Season and Other Poems* (Finishing Line Press, 2023), *Flight Risk* (Kelsay Books, 2025), and *In Dubious Terrain* (forthcoming). Further examples of his work can be accessed at jonaspoeetry.com.

Stephanie Jones is a NY writer with bylines in *The New York Times*, *DownBeat*, *NPR: Music*, *JazzTimes*, and *The Detroit Free Press*. Her poems appear in *New Reader Magazine*, *Poetic Sun*, *50-Word Stories*, *Stone Poetry Quarterly*, and *Four Tulips* (forthcoming), and as a commission for Blue Note Records.

Jacqueline Jules is author of *Manna in the Morning* (Kelsay Books, 2021), *Itzhak Perlman's Broken String* (winner of the 2016 Helen Kay Chapbook Prize from Evening Street Press), and *Smoke at the Pentagon: Poems to Remember* (Bushel & Peck, 2023). Visit her at www.jacquelinejules.com.

Carriage House Poetry Series founding director, poetry editor of *Tiferet*, and Paterson Poetry Prize finalist **Adele Kenny** received a first place Ginsberg Poetry Award, NJ Arts Council fellowships, and Kean University's Distinguished Alumni Award. Her book is *Where Eternity Is Learned* (Welcome Rain Publishers, 2025).

Steven Kent's work appears in *Asses of Parnassus*, *The Lyric*, *Snakeskin*, and others. A Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee, he authored *I Tried (And Other Poems, Too)* (2023) and *Home at Last* (2025), published by Kelsay Books.

Sarah E. N. Kohrs has poetry in *Arboreal*, *Bluebird Word*, *Culinary Origami*, *Kitchen Quarterly Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Rattle*, and elsewhere. Her chapbook *Chameleon Sky* won Kingdoms in the Wild's 2022 Poetry Award. SENK lives in Shenandoah County, Virginia, kindling hope amidst asperity.

Jennifer Lagier lives near the stage where Bob Dylan performed at the Monterey Pop Festival. She edits the *Monterey Review*, helps publicize Monterey Bay Poetry Consortium readings. She has published twenty-three books, most recently *Postcards from Paradise* (Blue Light Press) and *Illuminations* (Kelsay Books).

Mairin Caitriona Landis is a poet in Pittsburgh, PA. She recently graduated from Duquesne University and works at Carnegie Mellon University. Before that, she drove an ice cream truck. She's published in *After Happy Hours* and elsewhere.

Richard LeDue lives in Norway House, Manitoba, Canada. He's been published online and in print and is the author of numerous books of poetry. His latest, *Another Another*, was released from Alien Buddha Press in May 2025.

Logan Lee is a poet from Honolulu, HI, whose poetry appears in *We the Gathered Heat: Asian American and Pacific Islander Poetry, Performance, and Spoken Word* from Haymarket Books.

Robert Lowes, a writer in St. Louis, MO, authored *Shocking the Dark* (Kelsay Books) and *An Honest Hunger* (Resource Publications). His poetry appears in *The Christian Century*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Modern Haiku*, and elsewhere.

Daniel Lusk is author of eight poetry collections and other books, most recently *Every Slow Thing* (Kelsay Books, 2022). His genre-bending essay "Bomb" (New Letters) was awarded a Pushcart Prize. Daniel is a native of the prairie Midwest and a former commentator for NPR on small press books.

Christel Maass frequently writes poems inspired by nature. Her poetry appears in *Bramble*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Third Wednesday*, and elsewhere. She lives in southeastern WI.

Zoé Mahfouz is an award-winning bilingual actress, screenwriter, content creator, and multi-genre writer whose work is featured in over sixty literary magazines and best-of anthologies worldwide.

Joy Manning is a former neonatal ICU nurse who volunteers at her local art and history museums. She is the mother of three adult children and resides with her husband in Lancaster, PA. You can find her on Instagram @joyesmanning or at *The Hidden Place*: joyschelzelmanning.substack.com.

Nancy Manning's MFA is from Southern Connecticut State. Her work appears most recently in anthologies from Orenaug Mountain Publishing and Woodhall Press. Her collections are *Amethyst Garden*, *The Unspoken of Our Days*, *What Glues Us Together*, and *Absence* (Kelsay Books, 2025).

Elizabeth R. McCarthy lives in VT and turned to poetry when the pandemic closed the world down. Her manuscript *Digging Potatoes* was shortlisted in VCFA May Day Mountain Chapbook Series in 2021, followed by chapbooks *Winter Vole* (FLP, 2022), *Hard Feelings* (FLP, 2024), and *Wild Silence* (Kelsay Books, 2024).

Terri McCord's latest collection is *The Beauts*. She is a four-time Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee as well. Work is forthcoming in *Chiron Review* and *Trampoline*. She loves language, nature, and photography.

Celeste McMaster has poetry and fiction in *Arkansas Review*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and elsewhere. She currently serves as Membership Director for the North Carolina Writers' Network.

Joanne Merriam lives in Nova Scotia. Her writing appears in her collection *The Glaze from Breaking* and in dozens of periodicals. She owns Upper Rubber Boot Books, known for the first English-language anthology of solarpunk, *Sunvault*. You can find her at joannemerriam.com.

Charles Merritt's is from Charleston, SC. His work appears in *The Pen* (U. of SC Beaufort's literary journal), SC Bards Poetry Anthology, and *Chiron Review*. His short story was a finalist at the 56th Annual New Millennium Writing Awards.

Daniel Edward Moore lives on Whidbey Island, WA. His work is forthcoming in *Xavier Review*, *The Meadow Journal*, *The Stillwater Review*, and elsewhere. His book, *Waxing the Dents*, is from Brick Road Poetry Press.

Patricia Nelson works with the Activist group of poets in Northern CA. Her new book, *Monster Monologues*, is due out from Fernwood Press in 2025.

Ranjani Neriya was born and raised in Mangalore, India and now resides in MI. Her poems, stories, and articles appear widely in India and the US. Kelsay Books published a collection of her poems, *The Flowering Word Tree*, in 2022.

Like William Carlos Williams, John Stone, and other poets he admires, **Aaron Nydegger** practices medicine full-time and poetry part-time in Layton, UT. His poetry appears in *The Asses of Parnassus*, *The Road Not Taken*, and elsewhere.

Kathy O'Fallon's poems appear in *Rattle*, *Mom Egg Review*, and *Slipstream*; three chapbooks; and the forthcoming book *Variations on a Theme of Love*. She is a clinical psychologist in Carlsbad, CA.

Malia Padalino is an emerging writer of poetry and creative nonfiction. Besides pursuing a writing career, she works in the higher education field. She enjoys walking in nature, playing the violin, and slowing down life to enjoy its beauty.

Laurie Paternoster lives in Ecuador, immersed in quaint culture and cleansing mountain air. Her poetry appears in *Roadrunner Review* and *Book of Matches*. Honored in two *Writer's Digest* competitions and The Writer's League of Texas, she was shortlisted in the 2025 Diann Blakely National Poetry Competition.

Patrick Pfister is author of *El Camino & Other Travel Poems* and director of two award-winning documentary films about poetry: *The Stone Circle* and *Poetry, New York*. His novels are published by Spuyten Duyvil Press, NY. He lives in Barcelona, Spain. Website: www.patrickpfister.com.

Anita Pinatti lives in the CT River Valley finding inspiration for poetry and photography at home and beyond. Her poetry appears in *Amethyst Review*, *Blue Heron Review*, and *SAGE Magazine*, which also includes her photography.

Estill Pollock's publications include *Constructing the Human* (Poetry Salzburg) and the book cycle *Relic Environments Trilogy* (Cinnamon Press). His more recent collections, *Entropy*, *Time Signatures*, *Ark*, *Heathen Anthems*, and *Alias*, are with Broadstone Books; his ebooks *And Then* and *Working Title* with Mudlark.

Eric Potter is professor of English at Grove City College where he teaches poetry and American literature. His poems appear in *32 Poems, Spiritus, Presence*; in two chapbooks; the full-length *Things Not Seen* (2015); and elsewhere.

Bill Prindle mines the seams between the human and nonhuman worlds. His 2025 collection is being published by Finishing Line Press. He's won poetry awards and studied with Lisa Russ Spahr, Neil Perry, and Gregory Orr.

David Ram retired from teaching community college and enjoys living with his wife in western MA, where he practices writing, rowing and grandparenting. His poems appear in *Amethyst Review, JAMA, Meat for Tea*, and more.

Stephen Reilly's poems appear in *Charon, Main Street Rag*, the anthology *Florida in Poetry: A History of the Imagination* (Pineapple Press, 1995), and elsewhere. Reilly retired after three decades as a staff writer for *Englewood Sun*.

Amy Riddell authored two collections: *Bullets in the Jewelry Box* (FutureCycle Press) and *Narcissistic Injury* (Pudding House Publications). A Pushcart nominee, Amy has poems in *The Inflectionist Review, Prairie Schooner*, and elsewhere.

Russell Rowland writes from NH's Lakes Region, where he has judged Poetry Out Loud competitions. His work appears in *Except for Love: New England Poets Inspired by Donald Hall* (Encircle Publications), *Covid Spring, Vol.2* (Hobblebush Books), and his latest book, *Magnificat* (Encircle Publications).

Benjamin Rozonoyer grew up in Boston in a family of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in and machine learning at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He currently lives with his wife and daughter in CO, cultivating poems and taking in local landscapes

Ed Ruzicka's third book of poems, *Squalls*, was released by Kelsay Books in 2024. His poems appear in *Atlanta Review, Chicago Literary Review, Rattle, Canary*, and elsewhere. Ed, who is also the president of the Poetry Society of Louisiana, lives with his wife, Renee, in Baton Rouge, LA.

Lucy Sage lived in the Philippines and Nigeria while her father worked for the United Nations. Her poems appear in *Underwood Press, The Closed Eye Open, Writing in a Woman's Voice*, and among others. She lives in Harrisburg, PA.

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt's poetry appears in *Kansas Quarterly*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, and elsewhere. Her poetry volumes include *We Speak in Tongues*; *She had this memory* (Edwin Mellen Press); and *Foraging for Light* (Finishing Line Press). Her poetry has been nominated for the Pushcart Press Prize.

Natalie Schreyer is a poet in Washington, D.C.

Leslie Schultz has six collections of poetry, most recently *Geranium Lake: Poems on Art and Art-Making* (Kelsay Books, 2025). She is a judge for the Maria W. Faust Sonnet Contest. Her poems can be found widely in journals and (one haiku) circling the Red Planet as part of NASA's MAVEN mission.

Sherry Shahan is a 76-year-old studying pole-dancing in a small CA beach town. She holds an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts and has been nominated for Pushcarts in Poetry and Short Fiction, and Best American Short Stories.

Benjamin Shalva's work appears in *Image*, *Tab*, *Washington Post*, and elsewhere. He is the author of *Spiritual Cross-Training* and *Ambition Addiction*, published by Grand Harbor Press. A rabbi and hospice chaplain, he lives in Baltimore.

Benjamin Cannicott Shavitz is a linguistics scholar in NYC and has published two collections and an anthology. His work has also been published in various journals. See www.kingsfieldendeavors.com/writing for links to his writing.

Susan Shea's poems appear in *Chiron Review*, *ONE ART*, and elsewhere. Recently, she was nominated for Best of the Net by *Cosmic Daffodil*, and three of her poems were nominated for a Pushcart Prize by *Umbrella Factory Magazine*.

Aria Shum is studying violin performance at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and enjoys long and aimless walks. Her work appears in *Eunoia Review*, *Ignatian Literary Magazine*, and more. Website: aria-shum.carrd.co.

Beate Sigriddaughter grew up in Nürnberg, Germany. She lives and writes in Silver City, NM (Land of Enchantment), where she has served as poet laureate. Recent books include poetry collections *Wild Flowers* (2022) and *Circus Dancer* (2025). Website: www.sigriddaughter.net.

Libi Siporin (aka Ona Siporin) has published seven books in various genres and won awards and grants. Her poems appear in journals including *The Sun*, *Indiana Writes*, and *Cimarron Review*.

John Whitney Steele is a psychologist, yoga teacher, hiker, assistant editor of *Think*, Pushcart Prize nominee, and graduate of an MFA program at Western Colorado University. His collections *The Stones Keep Watch* and *Shiva's Dance* were published by Kelsay Books in 2021 and 2022. John lives in Boulder, CO.

Sandi Stromberg has been nominated for a Pushcart four times and Best of Net twice. She's an editor at *The Ekphrastic Review* with poems in *Gyroscope Review*, *Panoply*, and *San Pedro River Review*, among others. Kelsay Books published her collection, *Frogs Don't Sing Red* (2023).

Gordan Struić is a Croatian poet whose work explores silence, memory, and the natural world. His poems appear in *Beyond Words*, *34th Parallel*, and elsewhere. He writes in Croatian and English, searching for stillness beneath language.

Rebecca Surmont lives in Minneapolis, MN. She has a love of corn fields, funk, and tiny things. Her work appears in *The Awakenings Review*, *Stone Poetry Quarterly*, *Crowstep Poetry Journal*, *Ekphrastic Review*, and elsewhere.

Erika Takacs is an Episcopal priest, teacher, musician, and poet in NC. Her writing appears in *Earth & Altar*, *Braided Way*, and elsewhere. Outside of work and family, her three great loves are the music of J.S. Bach, books, and baseball.

Margaret Taylor-Ulizio is a canon lawyer, part-time Religious Studies instructor, volunteer wildlife rehabilitator, and writer from NJ. Her poetry appears in *Merion West*, *San Antonio Review*, and *Amythyst Review*.

Emily Tee is from Northern Ireland and lives in the UK. Her poems and flash fiction appear online and in print. Twice nominated for Best Small Fiction, she judges a regular Ekphrastic Challenge for The Wee Sparrow Poetry Press.

Kimberly Thornton is a creature feature lover and bird-noticer. Find her poetry in *Carve Magazine*, *Etched Onyx Magazine*, *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, *Along the Shore: Strategies for Living with Grief* (an anthology), and elsewhere. She can be spotted in Arizona. Right now she's probably talking to someone about Buffy.

Sharon Tracey is author of three collections—*Land Marks* (Shanti Arts, 2022), *Chroma: Five Centuries of Women Artists* (Shanti Arts, 2020), and *What I Remember Most Is Everything* (All Caps Publishing, 2017). Her poems appear in *Crab Creek Review*, *Terrain*, and *Radar Poetry*. Website: sharontracey.com.

James Fleet Underwood grew up in the American Midwest and writes poems that explore the small mysteries of everyday life, with a quiet attention to landscapes, seasons, and the unexpected ways we find ourselves changed.

Kelli Weldon was born and raised in LA and now resides in TX. Her poetry appears in *Black Moon Magazine*, *Boats Against the Current*, *Duck Duck Mongoose Magazine*, and elsewhere. Instagram: @kelliwritespoems

Richard West was Regents' Professor of Classics in a large public university and has published numerous books, articles, and poems under his own name or various pen names. He now lives in the Desert Southwest, where he enjoys cooking and attempting to add flavor to his poems.

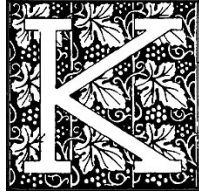
Helene Williams is a poet based in Lancaster, PA, whose work reflects a deep reverence for the beauty, complexity, and quiet resilience of the natural world. When she's not writing, she can often be found hiking with her dog, Jelly.

Paul Willis has published eight collections. The most recent are *Losing Streak* (Kelsay Books, 2024) and *Somewhere to Follow* (Slant Books, 2021). He is an emeritus professor of English at Westmont College and a former poet laureate of Santa Barbara, CA, where he lives with his wife, Sharon, near the old mission.

Sarah Wolfe's work appears in *Cathexis Northwest Press*, *Misfit Magazine*, *Synkroniciti*, and elsewhere. When she is not writing or giving Reiki sessions, she might be found around the east coast in parks, coffee shops, and yoga studios.

Peter W. Yaremko, a former journalist and owner of a corporate communications agency, has published four nonfiction books and a novel. He teaches patients to write poetry to manage the trauma of a cancer diagnosis and leads retreats exploring healing poetry.

Christine Yurick is the founding editor of *Think Journal*. Her chapbook *At the End of the Day and other poems* is available from Kelsay Books



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