

# Rust + Moth

*Summer 2021*

Edited by Josiah Spence,  
Suncerae Smith, and Michael Young.

© 2021 Rust and Moth  
ISBN: 978-1-716-30742-3

## In This Issue

**6**

Elisabeth Adwin Edwards

+ *Every Drunk I've Known Has Had A Big Mouth  
And By Big I Mean*

**8**

Sarah Bridgins

+ *On Saturn, It Rains Diamonds*

**10**

Ellen Austin-Li

+ *Portrait in Green*

**11**

Lane Fields

+ *Matins*

**12**

Doug Bolling

+ *Rearward*

**13**

James Diaz

+ *Go On, I'm Right Behind Ya*

**14**

Beverly Hennessy Summa

+ *The Velvet Night is the Warm Hand of Your Captor*

**16**

Raphael Jenkins

+ *Ode to Detroit*

- 18** Maud Welch  
+ *Elegy*
- 20** Hannah Senicar  
+ *the plainsman*
- 21** Ron Stottlemeyer  
+ *Rising*
- 22** Katie Li  
+ *My First Language*
- 23** Christianne Goodwin  
+ *The Exhibit*
- 24** Joan Kwon Glass  
+ *Gold*
- 26** Monica Cure  
+ *In Front of Golia Monastery*
- 27** Meg McCarney  
+ *pathos*

- 28** Nathaniel Buckingham  
+ *Salt and Static*
- 29** Anthony Immergluck  
+ *The Metaphor Game*
- 30** Samyuktha Iyer  
+ *Inheritance*
- 33** Katie Gleason  
+ *Untitled*
- 34** Yvanna Vien Tica  
+ *Years Later, I Confront Unopened Balikbayan Boxes*
- 36** Judy Kaber  
+ *When Snakes Had Legs*
- 37** Heidi Seaborn  
+ *Once I drove off a cliff & came back as a ghost*
- 38** Rosa Canales  
+ *Mushroom Hunting*
- 40** Bill Siegel  
+ *Full Lunar Eclipse and Sea Shell*

- 42** Dani Putney  
+ *Kimchi*
- 43** Keshe Chow  
+ *my grandmother was an alchemist*
- 44** Keshe Chow  
+ *To dissect a dumpling*
- 46** Rita Feinstein  
+ *Rupture*
- 48** Rebekah M. Devine  
+ *To the Cicada at 1669 Broad St, Bloomfield NJ*
- 50** Sarah Yang  
+ *Prelude (1995)*
- 52** Michael Quinn  
+ *Ophelia*
- 54** About the Authors

## **Every Drunk I've Known Has Had A Big Mouth And By Big I Mean**

a mouth that could hold a sky  
full of rain/ like that of a child  
with his head cocked back/ one slacked  
in pain/ that cannot speak its shames  
aloud/ only howl/ mouth  
prised open/ a-raw-egg-poured-down-its-throat  
this'll make you grow into a man mouth/  
yolked & choked/ dried-vomit-in-its-corners mouth  
that grins to quell the gag/ smacked mouth lapidified  
to set jaw/ mouth that fellates  
the neck of the raw milk's bottle/ pops  
the can's top with its teeth/ mouth  
that bites its cheek till it sores/ poor mouth/  
mouth pursed to whistle/ that with its tongue  
seeks the mouths it kisses for what  
it cannot name/ mouth caught in a lie/  
with a lie that catches  
in the dark/ at the back/ a take  
that back mouth/ ver-mouth &  
mouthfeel/ mouth with a reek/ mouth-  
wash/ teeth sharp & white as a wolf's/ a mouth-  
full/ loud mouth/ mouth to command  
a room/ mouth that goes BOOM!/ could swallow  
its own young/ its own words/ mouth  
with a tied-up tongue/ one that tears the flesh  
from the bone/ declares not done/ mouth  
permanently widened by grief's invisible vise/

a cave/ crevasse/ into which you could fall &  
never be heard from again/ a don't tell me  
I've had enough mouth/ badmouth breathing through the mouth/  
that at the bar/ when asked/ answers I have no children/  
mouth with no one to drive it home/ mouth  
as big as the O in no/ in alone/ as big  
as the O in disown/ O/ O/ O/ my father's mouth

## **On Saturn, It Rains Diamonds**

I am not traumatized enough  
to be okay with this,  
or at least not traumatized in a way  
that would be useful.  
My one advantage  
is that most of my loved ones  
are already dead so I don't  
have to worry about them.

We've been broken by crisis before.  
Our first date was a funeral  
Our third date was a funeral  
Our tenth date was a funeral  
until there was no one left to grieve  
and we collapsed under the weight  
of all those bodies.

Now, eight years later  
the world is ending  
and the joke's on us.  
After almost a decade of  
negotiating terms, demanding space,  
we have never spent  
so much time together.  
We find our own ways of coping.  
I drink too much wine,  
make a 5 hour bolognese  
you write porn and order us  
presents off of Ebay,  
cans of Funfetti frosting,  
a box of 10,000 Magic cards.

You stay up all night  
but come to bed with me  
watch TV until I fall asleep,  
a documentary about the planets  
that won't distract me, keep me up.  
I don't know how many nights  
I've slept in this bed  
alone and will again,  
but for now I drift off  
with your hand on my back  
listening to a voice describe Saturn  
where lightning storms transform  
carbon into diamonds that fall like rain,  
an incomprehensibly beautiful place  
that no one has ever been.

## **Portrait in Green**

I've kept this green scrap of construction  
paper, the edges frayed after a lifetime.  
My portrait, drawn with a child's tool.  
Into an aging woman wearing dirty sweats  
in the hallway of a psychiatric ward, I turned—  
me, a nurse in training. She grabbed my arm.  
Silent, pointed. She chose  
the evergreen crayon. Without lifting it  
from the page, the woman scribbled  
in this remarkable likeness,  
my impression in green, the lines vanishing  
between genius & insanity.

Between genius & insanity,  
my impression in green. The lines vanishing  
in this remarkable likeness  
from the page. The woman scribbled  
the evergreen crayon without lifting it,  
silent, pointed. She chose  
me, a nurse in training. She grabbed my arm  
in the hallway of a psychiatric ward. I turned  
into an aging woman wearing dirty sweats,  
my portrait drawn with a child's tool.  
Paper, the edges frayed after a lifetime—  
I've kept this green scrap of construction.

## **Matins**

Insistent day seeks my attention, asks  
me to notice with sun & song. A bird

alights on a branch. I wish I were that small.  
Chemical grief sits at all my junctions

& waits to strike. Each hour unwinds with slow  
-moving nonpotential. The deep of joy

seems so removed from times I know should be  
suffused with love. Still—even with the world's

sad undoing, this place is where I find  
& know all life's pleasures. How's that for love?

With every thought, a blue vortex of sounds  
that catalogue & crescendo in me:

the white-crested waves; the shimmer of wind  
through unnamed trees; the starling, the starling—

## Rearward

*"I must go out— the greenery is dense  
with memories, they follow me with their gaze."*

—Memories Look at Me, *Tomas Tranströmer*

Mirrorings everywhere. The fragile self  
waking to past times  
too long forgotten.

Who sees. Who is seen.  
How is it this green meadow  
knows more of me  
than I, self-appointed cogito  
of the stars, all boundaries  
of the known & unknown.

And you even you dear Anna.  
Are we the lovers who thought  
to break free of our early years  
and become bearers of  
an untainted future  
as though time  
might forgive.

## **Go On, I'm Right Behind Ya**

Jack can't remember  
last time Shelley laughed so hard

as the wind took up the tools  
from the shed line and slung them down into the yard

the straight murmuring of winter borne  
how a thing is always more than the thing it is

now it's the river you're lookin' for  
but fail to find

when God gets mentioned  
everyone's eye is on the door

the trailer rocks all night from the force of the wind  
in the dark, proximity is the only thing that matters

you put out your hands,  
feel for something solid

there's always what's missing  
and there's always what you make of that.

## **The Velvet Night is the Warm Hand of Your Captor**

—*after We Rise on Sun Beams and Fall in the Night by Allen Ginsberg*

Getting out of bed, you trip over  
a mislaid martini glass,  
then throw the curtains open  
onto the motel's empty parking lot.

The asphalt shimmers like a hot frying pan  
under the late morning sky,  
while a pair of sunbathers lay like marble statues  
on cheap, plastic lounge chairs next to the pool.

With your fingers massaging the temples  
that complain of yesterday's bad decisions,  
you stand like a washed-up & forgotten deity  
in a beam of golden light.

You think you hear the low, rolling song  
of a train moving in the distance,  
but it is only wishful thinking.

The day is already backing away  
into the naked wilderness.  
Like the wisp of a dream,  
it gets lost in the slow, imperceptible slip  
of a life in decline.

It's difficult to escape  
the many dull mirrors that flank your room.  
Arrested by your own  
self-accusatory expressions,  
you realize you're surrounded from all sides.

Your face rises like a dust cloud  
in every corner,  
so you steal the car keys from a man  
who is sleeping off Friday night  
in the next room.

Driving into the deep vasculature of the desert,  
into the bruised sunset, you feel  
the vibrations of a thousand birds  
beating anxious wings  
beneath your flesh.  
For a moment you aren't going back,

but the velvet night falls  
across your shoulders  
like the warm hand of your captor—  
it calls you home.

You turn back because there is  
no other way.

## Ode to Detroit

I could have called this, *ode to home* or *ode to Motown*,  
but both have a warmth in their belly I ain't never held.

This ain't no ode to my momma's house or Berry Gordy  
anyway, this is to the city that scarred my face enough

to be pretty in an ugly world. A city where each homicide  
over the last forty years played out to the tune of a classic

r&b cut, cuz we prefer our murders with beats you can  
bop to. A city where one night, that same summer

da homie got all six foot five inches of bark stomped out  
his face walking home alone from a school dance, I

wandered the hood trying to find myself, landing on  
the corner of *where u from!* and *who u wit!*—alone,

unsure of any acceptable answers, considering running  
though the certainty of two truths: one, the rhythmic

thump thump of feet flying through the hood smells  
the same as blood in the water; two, the sharks on these

corners always got room in they stomachs for whatever  
you value less than your life that day. I thank god

my low hanging head and modestly priced apparel rendered  
me invisible, as stories of boys wearing Jays and Buffs

nearly always end in a list of bullet points or shrapnels  
of teeth and a fresh limp. None of which could my mamma

afford, even with the discount she received for housekeeping  
at the hospital and the pay from her side hustles and the

manna she kept tucked under her tongue. I should consider  
the possibility none of this was an accident. What if

momma, in her owlish wisdom, knew the jilted blocks  
her son wandered—to smother the whispers in him

and find a smile he could steal for himself to wear.  
Maybe she knew, if he happened upon one, he'd

make it home alive if he wore humility  
instead of fly. And so, maybe this title ought be:

*Ode to the empty pockets that made my mamma broke enough to keep her son  
alive in a city that will kill for your retros and for your smile*

## Elegy

I was eight when rocks became crooked  
and sand became grit, when the moon  
lost a man and the river lost its way—

pocketing you into our land. Why you  
weren't deposited across the bay where  
the grown fishermen stand, with fallow

mouths and seen it all eyes—you in black,  
you in blue, you were half the age I now  
am, still new to the terrors and the errors

all children make. I asked why your face  
bobbed with the tide, how your shoe  
had anchored you. I didn't know words

like *suicide* or *overdose*—to me  
you were just a boy in the water,  
where you shouldn't be. It was fear

in my mother's face and my brother's hand  
pulling me close that harbored,  
and my grandfather, when he came with a crew

to take you—he saw enough in war to say  
you were clean, in a detached,  
matter-of-fact, bizarre sort of way, now he too

lies six feet below, perhaps you already  
know—the next day, when the river  
returned, we dropped flowers into the shallow

and a snowbird landed in your stead. I still  
go to that bank, where driftwood comes  
to rest and I whisper into that brittle grain,

you are enough—

and when the train rumbles through, I imagine  
you are on it, on your way past the steel  
bridge, past the barbed rocks, past the wide-

eyed child and careless moon that lost you—  
on to some quiet place  
where snowbirds fly too—

## **the plainsman**

once the alleyway scuffles have  
subsided and the garbage trucks  
have gulped their bitter dregs  
i slip from dreams into my place  
amid cinderblocks and pines on  
a one-way street headed north.

when i turn up the thermostat  
the pipes make sounds like ghosts  
placing plates into a microwave.  
i tilt my mug to my mouth and  
muster a toast to their appetites.

in the halls some movers are  
hauling a piano. their remarks  
are intermittent, interspersed with  
dissonant staccatos. they grunt.

when the landlord calls he speaks  
a syntax of buildings: the complex  
she used to live before moving here,  
the palliative care wing at the  
second of the city's two hospitals.  
the funeral home down the street  
where, he says, they held a modest  
service.

again i wonder at the weight we must bear.  
how our ceilings are each other's floors.

## Rising

All afternoon, the sea curled up  
around the bay, purring drowsy swells.  
Gulls skimmed by in a blur.

Awake in the dark now,  
it paws the sleeping arm of the shore,  
playing absent-mindedly.

Up on the bluff, partyers  
mingle behind glass walls of condos.  
Bright music blares.

Far north, mountainous shards  
of a continent plunge into arctic blue water,  
bobble like ice cubes in a drink.

## My First Language

There are eighty-five thousand words in  
my mother tongue. I choke  
on every single one, my throat  
clamping around the barrel of a gun  
loaded with the names and places I had

shed like a second skin, slick tongue  
slipping over the stolen sounds of  
sacrifices that were never my own, but

I can't bear to swallow. I curse  
these coarse, guttural noises that  
bubble in my mouth but never reach  
their boiling point, longing for

the cold specificity of English, wherein we  
always differentiate between subject and  
object, the doers and the done.

*China sent us the virus, they say.*  
*China is trying to kill*  
*us, they tell*  
me. And I believe it, letting it seep  
into my bones, branding it across  
my forehead, feeling it trickle off  
my chin in never-ending streams,  
hearing it ring in my ears, over, and  
over, and over, and over, and

## **The Exhibit**

Somewhere on the interstate,  
the sky busts out a Rothko,  
a deep red-orange, the wash  
tinted blue by the windshield.

So you roll down the window,  
lean out into the late light,  
tail a rusted-out pickup  
'til you hit the rumble strip.

Above you, the pigment deepens;  
the sky cycles through canvases and the  
glowing route signs are museum captions,  
every flyby town with a Rothko to its name.

You zip through galleries  
named for passing billboards.  
Who knew Cracker Barrel  
was a patron of the arts?

And as you gun it  
into the heart of No. 6,  
“Do You Know JESUS?”  
rises out of the trees.

## Gold

This week scientists created something  
resembling a human embryo.  
They try to alchemize life as though it is a precious metal.

By Tuesday eight people are shot dead  
outside Atlanta, six of them Asian.  
My first thought is *why did the killer do it?*  
My second thought is *I hope*  
*they pronounce their names correctly on television.*

Three of the victims worked at Gold Spa.  
Someone throws back a beer, makes a joke  
about massage parlors and happy endings.  
How many times has a man said to me  
*I've always had a thing for Asian women.*

I want to pretend this isn't about race,  
that the women who are shot to death  
don't look like me, my mother, my daughter.  
I try to ignore the fact that the killer  
looks like my high school boyfriend.

When people are killed we always want answers,  
as though murder should somehow make sense.  
But Spacetime doesn't account for who we lose  
or how, or why.  
All of the gold we will know has already fallen  
to Earth on the backs of dead stars.

This week, scientists work tirelessly, hoping  
for a breakthrough, try to understand what they're missing  
when it comes to making human beings.  
They ask, *how does a cell become human?*

They ask, *what goes wrong?*

## **In Front of Golia Monastery**

As I wait to jaywalk,  
the tram inches by—a line  
of senior citizens bundled  
in acrylic sweaters look  
through me in the eye.  
From behind glass, one  
after another, they make  
the sign of the cross—I  
am no icon. I say  
a prayer, offering  
what absolution I can.

## pathos

we keep saying goodnight and rolling down hills instead  
of applying tourniquets to bedtime wounds, waking  
up at the bottom just to shake the trees clean of peaches  
again come morning, ignoring the primal aches in our bellies.

we're not just eating, we're suckling—  
all of the pathos nature has to give us.

we know we're just one loose brassiere strap  
away from being orphaned again, howling  
at the feet of our mother, begging to be captured  
by that taut embrace and shielded from all evil.

what happened to betting on injured dogs and weaking  
horses? i'm tired of hero-takes-all, little guy walks  
home alone. i want trophies on the shelves of corner store  
clerks, the newly sober, battered women and terrible poets.

i'm tired of saharan tear ducts and remarkably straight  
spines, spotless skin free of cracks from a lover's whip. give  
me your tired, your poor, your scoliosis-riddled  
and medicated. i want them to teach me how to sing.

i'm tired of letting it simmer in the small  
intestine and rot me out. i'm projecting what little  
honesty i can still muster towards the heavens—  
no more chewing and swallowing.

## Salt and Static

To be a body bent beneath a hand,  
to contort the soft parts of myself  
around the prongs of a hard fork, that  
    blood-trident that wants to spear me  
away from the screen, pull me up from calm  
    ocean static and the wet shield of innocence,  
yank me drenched and screaming onto dry land,  
    finger and push that wave of heat  
into my heart for the first time, those gnashing teeth  
    that tongue a name into me, that force me  
to have a name, to be named, to realize all things are  
    thinged and that my worth is measured  
in tentacles, in the thrust of appendages  
and machinery that I never wanted and  
never wanted to know; to be eight-limbed and  
    thrashing, to be taught that revelations are singed on the skin  
    in pulses of dark-ink, in night-time motion, under  
the guise of protector, under the knife thrust  
    of a reckless chef as he cuts away my pieces,  
as he presses my meat beneath a hot spatula,  
as he serves me, contorted and seared, to a future of bodies,  
a room of naked, a scorched church, a car-shaped bed, mouths  
    unclenched and eager to pop me in  
  
even if I don't fit.

## **The Metaphor Game**

In the MRI machine,  
I play the metaphor game  
that whispered me some courage  
through the many dooms of childhood.

I am a loaded torpedo in a submarine. No –  
I am a treasure in a shipwrecked hull. No –  
I am a moray eel in a cavern of coral. No.

I am a deep-water creature. I am hideous  
but unwitnessed. Immortal-esque. It is my  
bioluminescence that populates these x-rays.

In this metal clack, in this backless gown  
with its new layers of nudity, I remember  
my favorite part of the nightmare: when

you know one thing signifies another thing,  
and you don't know how you know, but  
you know. It's impossible to explain.

I am the Christ of the Abyss. No – I am  
a Fresnel lens revolving in a lighthouse. No –  
I am a bubble, widening, rising to the surface.

## Inheritance

my grandmother *this pile of bones*  
*rising off the pyre like the death throes of*  
*a soldier*  
left in her will all the  
antiques she guarded all her life *with her life*  
to my aunt—  
on her deathbed she summoned the  
sons and daughters haunting the old house  
*where the zamindar once brought her home*  
*a new bride*  
and told them she wanted the bed  
with the brass head-stead and the ceiling  
mirrors to be burnt  
along with her, and the rest—

the thirteenth century relics of cobwebbed teak  
sweet-smelling, camphor-scented *grief-scented*  
drawers with jewels hidden among  
velvet moths and silk spiders  
shining in the moonlight—  
her daughter must take them away  
from this house *where the zamindar coughed blood*  
*into the shoulder of his last wife;*  
the aunt in question pawned the bronze idols  
of Gods before the pyre  
was cold  
sold the gold  
and melted the silver into bowls for brahmins

the men were upset, naturally—

the will said nothing about the house  
or the orchard of oranges that never  
took to flower *after the baby was drowned* and  
they squabbled over some  
square inches while ma and I *partners-in-crime*  
sneaked off into the cold bedroom  
to lie in the bed one last time  
and stare into the mirrors on the ceiling—  
where dead women lay naked and bruised like silences  
curled into commas around each other  
*as though going to bed after a long day*  
and their whispers *so loud, for whispers*  
were grateful but  
ma held me tight suddenly and hurled a silver spittoon  
at the mirrors *with a crash the heavens opened*  
and, drenched in glass rain, we set fire  
to the bed not  
caring when the curtains caught or  
the oakwood doors with european trimmings  
dissolved *spectres flying past them*

the men were furious, naturally—

house gone, everything of value, gone;

my aunt, my mother and I alone know which antiques  
my grandmother had guarded *from us*,  
secrets, like statues and griefs  
passed down *from daughter*  
*to daughter*  
until they are burnt

until there is nothing left  
to inherit.

## Untitled

It is midnight  
when I crawl out of bed, my body  
a tub of vanishing light. My stomach  
unclenches her frightened fingers  
one by one, those waking spiders  
hunting for home. A foxhole will do. I open  
the silver vault: a yellow bulb out of blackness  
illuminates every silence.  
I select a bowl of pre-cut fruit  
sticky juice clinging to my skin as  
my teeth are born: those desperate soldiers. Every hive  
of sugar on my tongue  
turns to stone. I swallow the silt  
of an empty river. *I've got  
to stop doing this* I think. *Eating acid  
and waiting  
for it to turn sweet.*

## Years Later, I Confront Unopened Balikbayan Boxes

I came to Illinois the same way I left the Philippines: bony suitcases thundering the passage rite like ancestral drums, not that I know exactly who my ancestors are.

If your life was a movie what music would haunt you like a history, a wound, a ghost. Filipinos don't trace the age of trees

like Americans do, too aware of their fragility, how easily they can be uprooted in a hurricane like a doll thrust into the *Balikbayan* box.

I have nightmares about the ocean or the realization that an island is just land drunk on water. My father once told me

it's enough to know that the Spaniards, the diasporic Chinese or whoever found the Philippines' palm trees attractive were likely a part

of my ancestry. Sometimes I wonder how many Filipino women kissed their foreign lips in hopes of a prelude to an easier existence, and how many were

forsaken. To this day, I have a fear of islands. We haven't finished unpacking even years after we had our last taste of Oishi crackers at the Ninoy Aquino

International Airport. In the dusty recluse  
of our *Balibayan* boxes, I am still finding shards  
of wrecked picture frames and doll faces, forfeited

like a wave's sheepish regurgitation  
of flotsam, the creased arrows wrinkling  
the boxes' last admonition: *Handle with care.*

## **When Snakes Had Legs**

Before my mother birthed me in a hospital in Queens,  
I lay thin as the eucharist inside her, my skin

frogged night that would soon emerge. Long ago  
snakes had hind legs, large jugal bones that let them

open wide mouths. Before my mother held me,  
I peered through watery depths, defined my world

as kick, as swallow, as inexact flesh. No one knows  
why the serpent lost his legs. It's a mystery

like bats that greasepaint night sky, erupt  
from caves to track what we can't see. Before

my mother cradled me in the parrot-green room,  
in the crank-up bed, I lived in the cellar of her body,

watched my fists like small spiders lift to my mouth.  
Once snakes had hind legs. In Argentina, their bodies lie

preserved, slim, but not yet limbless. They must have  
moved with chests rammed against earth, rows

of bones flexing over the hard deal of ground, gliding  
ever closer to what the world became.

## Once I drove off a cliff & came back as a ghost

Someday I'll love that woman for her hip  
sway of hair graying the sky when there's not enough clouds.

I hear she lives like the moon: opaque by day, glowing at night.  
That she wears bee stings into the universe of online chats  
& flamenco red lipstick in the shower.

If I open my diary to a blank page, I find her there buttonholing  
a stranger for a crab cake recipe or to crochet a tree sweater.

Or she's in my kitchen, perched on one leg, a flamingo  
wearing an evening gown & drinking a martini. She's pink & lustrous  
& aging into this cultural moment like a tv star on late night cable.

& now, I find myself falling for her silk stockings, the fabric of her lies.  
How she loses lovers like pennies down the gutter.

Still, I count on her even as she whippets beyond the frame.  
You could say she's my better half, a carafe of wine in.  
You could say we're mirror objects—appearing dangerously close.

But what I mean to say is that after all this time, I find myself  
illusivive as morning with a hangover. The mirror fogged

with the exhaust of my jet engine. Even when stasis is held  
dear like robins' eggs or a grandmother's diamond broach.  
Even idled, I find the chair I sit in emptied, the locks picked.

## **Mushroom Hunting**

I flash the outline of a mushroom  
On my wrist—the inside, dark pen ink

Over light blue veins, and you ask me,  
Nervously—as if you are scared of being seen

When it is your eyes hunting with  
The first glint of early morning light—

If it is real, if I would really plant  
A mushroom on my skin, as if

It is something you never thought of  
Past pick and grill and sauté,

And I lie and say yes because I want  
You to turn over my arm to trace

The darkest lines in this forest, those  
Hidden under a log's bulging belly,

Your hands reaching past spring's  
Purples and yellows to find my dark shell,

Smooth top, and curved edges  
With just enough room for your hips

Next to every sunrise. I want  
your eyes to pluck me from the shade,

Carry me home in a wicker basket,  
And brush the dirt from my body,

My filled in lines, I am open on  
A cutting board, your fingers, slowly,

Savor each speckled constellation  
As if you never before felt the stars

And their dark underbellies, pale skin  
And every last vein of hidden ink.

## **Full Lunar Eclipse and Sea Shell**

When I hold this shell to the light  
it's the same color as the moon  
on the night of its eclipse,  
smoky orange the meat of a salmon  
or young trout caught leaping  
against the black sky

That night we walked together  
to find an emptiness  
between pockets of glowing streetlights,  
a space we could fill with just ourselves  
and our wonder,  
a space where we could stand a quarter million miles tall  
and touch that softly glowing rock

The dog followed us, expectant, alert  
wondering why we came out if not to walk,  
if not to explore the earth and all it holds close  
to itself, within reach of an attentive nose

But our heads were turned up, our eyes  
the openings through which the world  
would speak to us

Later, I turn the shell around between my fingers;  
On the inside it shines like some precious gem  
or glazed pottery.  
When I hold it close to my nose  
I can almost smell dirt, earth, some long-ago life  
that once crawled deep in an undersea canyon.  
With it cupped over my ear, I listen  
for the tides, its ocean birthplace

But what I hear instead is the earth's shadows  
gliding across the heavens to fill  
the valleys and craters of the moon

Now it's the night after the eclipse, the sky  
is much lower, clouds hang barely above treetops  
and I watch the dog's joy  
as he shows me his world,  
one rediscovery after another.

## Kimchi

Nothing gives me more hope  
than spicy cabbage—

with a bowl of steaming  
wheat noodles in front of me,  
I can finally be—

my Filipina mother didn't eat  
ramen growing up, or like  
kimchi, but my picture of Asia  
was painted in America—

as an American, I can choose  
from curated Eastern symbols—  
Ghibli, kung fu, & K-pop—  
I learn from the weaboos  
& down-low fetishists—

I'm the most Filipinx version  
of myself with white friends  
in a Japanese-style ramen shop—  
Filipinx, not Filipino,  
not because of my non-binary  
identity but because x marks me  
as Anglo, barely yellow—

& the truth—I don't become  
anything by eating kimchi,  
no metamorphosis,  
my face still a question—

## **my grandmother was an alchemist**

her tree root hands, kneading, teasing  
threads of dough, 'til they're guitar-string  
fine. plucked quavers, plucked eyebrows

plucked ducks, hung-up and headless  
singing empty notes, through empty necks  
they're red, they're red, they're red, they're red

and so am i. she spins a web with sparse  
precision, symphonies stretched between  
able fingers. then she hangs them up to dry

those knuckles have kneaded and shaped  
for years; prodding family across borders  
like tree-root tendrils, searching, searching

always searching, for sunlight and wet,  
life-giving rain; the better-fucking-education  
while grandmother perches, stretching her dough

waiting for recoil, when it all comes together  
supple and soft, and springy to touch. waiting, waiting  
to feed the hordes that still

remain    so far  
                  from home

## To dissect a dumpling

— *content warning: miscarriage*

firstly, it comes floating in an  
amniotic soup  
you've heard the broth  
is made of blood, but  
    you're too afraid to ask

—ladle it out carefully, they tell you  
Your precious progeny, or it will break  
though the truth is it's you that is  
    falling  
    apart

it glistens on the plate, naked and wet  
Pale, and pocked with finger marks  
Scrape off the caul with the tip of  
your knife  
Incise the skin gently,  
avoiding the center

it was meant to be easy  
you're young, and he's healthy  
you never wanted anything like  
you want this

you can taste it

Nobody talks about the  
dumplings you wasted  
the ones that were misshapen  
that leaked out in the bath

when you dissect a dumpling  
you'll find flesh inside,  
made from unspoken cells of  
all your dead daughters

and it will hurt your teeth  
and you'll bleed in the toilet  
but next month you'll roll over  
and you will  
    do it  
    again.

## Rupture

I am in the bathroom pissing gin.  
The bathroom is stainless steel  
like the abs of a smut model.  
The gin is free because my dog  
is friends with the bartender's dog.  
The evening is endless because  
after the bar is 14th Avenue, and  
in the lavender dusk, I am weightless  
and in the build-your-own-falafel joint,  
I am bottomless. I am breathless  
with pain as the nightshades  
excoriate my intestinal abscess  
but in lieu of health insurance,  
denial will do splendidly.  
When my husband fucks me,  
I am not thinking *rupture*.  
When I fall asleep, I am  
not thinking *propofol*.  
I am not thinking *that's how*  
*Michael Jackson died*.  
I'm not thinking *dying* at all,  
but dying is thinking about me,  
which is more than the doctors  
will do. To the doctors, I will be  
*Female, 26*. I will be *Room 420*—  
blaze it. Except not, because  
blazing it makes me puke.  
Get the paper towels, husband.

Get me another gin and tonic,  
because I'm not ready to leave  
this bar. Because this is the last night  
I'll know what it's like to live  
without holes.

## **To the Cicada at 1669 Broad St, Bloomfield NJ**

Your thin echoes  
clutched the bark like a soft

animal loving what it loves,  
so quiet, so still, my startled

eyes marveled you didn't blink  
or buzz when I rubbed the split

of your back. You were empty,  
a grandfather clock gutted

of gears. How did you keep  
ticking & why could I hear

no ticks? I gathered ghosts of you  
into a wicker basket. I tore

a handful of legs (I'm sorry)—  
they stuck to the oak & I pulled

too quick for your delicate past.  
When at last I spotted you,

the molted you, the ticking  
& tymbaling you, I doubted

your silver belly & the green  
of your glass wings. You crawled

up my hushed palm, the heft  
of your abdomen a frenzied

mouth crying against my un-  
belief. I fingered the drum

of your side & you flinched,  
flailed up & back, dazed the air

with the surge of your body,  
fevered thrum of your years.

## Prelude (1995)

Just for tonight, I correct the crooked  
spine of the scenery outside my room  
window, its skyscrapers' lighted windows  
stacked into rows of glowing vertebrae.  
The sight straightens, no longer the black boat  
tenderly sawing the Hudson River:  
a bow sailing across the chest of its  
cello to perform an invisible  
symphony. Like all instruments, I am  
prepared to speak. The city's reflection  
remains half bitten in the water, but  
it's the peeking Twin Towers, the infant  
skyline's gray teething, that give it away.  
The city offers its best iteration of intimacy

in the L train stroking every station's  
stomach as it passes through, but I am  
here this far away because I want love  
only when it listens to itself. When  
my parents were near perfect rhymes of each  
other. Love, in that I bear to listen.

The record needle of the Empire  
State Building traces the grooves of the sky,  
plays me the place where I am still not my  
parents' favorite verb, yet to be the stone  
skipping through every potential mother's  
womb to land in my mother's. Where they have  
not begun sleeping in different bedrooms.  
Love—a study in tense. In when love is.

I spot my mother and father strolling  
towards each other. *Do you know Papa and  
I lived in the city at the same time?*  
Her eyes flit towards his. Minor chord. Her gaze  
greasy with his. *Of course, we hadn't met  
yet.* They pass by each other. Lined up like  
lyrics. I love their love the way I love  
them here—unfinished, these young, soft strangers.  
*Crazy how the world will be right where you  
leave it.* I love their love the way they left  
it. I love them the way I will last leave  
them—two strangers. Two separate teardrops  
streaking down two sleek cheeks of one city  
then reconciling, pooling at the chin.

## Ophelia

In my mind, the spring we shared never stops.  
The branches outside detonate into bouquets.  
Your duvet turns green with kneestains and sweat.  
We hold hands. Brighton divorces winter.  
Everything is so bright it makes you grit  
your teeth. You wake up sweating on the couch  
and almost throw up in the bookstore. I  
hold your head in the park.

Of course you'd go  
home soon. Pollen glittered our eyes.  
In the note left in my book, the letters shook  
the same as our hands when we traded shells,  
held them up in the breeze, deciding, Yes,  
this one's for you, to press over your ear until  
its lone tide swells—crests, silences.



## About the Authors

---

**Elisabeth Adwin Edwards'** poems have appeared in *A-Minor Magazine*, *SWWIM*, *Menacing Hedge*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *River Heron*, and elsewhere. Her work has been nominated for Best of the Net and a Pushcart Prize. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and daughter.

**Sarah Bridgins'** poetry collection *Death & Exes* is the recipient of the 2018 Sexton Poetry Prize and is forthcoming from Eyewear Books. Her work has appeared in *Tin House*, *BuzzFeed*, *Bustle*, *Sink Review*, *Epiphany*, *Joyland*, and *Big Lucks*, among other journals. She is the co-founder of the Ditmas Lit reading series in Brooklyn.

**Ellen Austin-Li** is a poet published in *Artemis*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, *Writers Tribe Review*, *The Maine Review*, *The New Verse News*, *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *Masque & Spectacle*, *Green Briar Review*, *Panoply*, *Anti-Heroine Chic*, and other places. Her first chapbook, *Firefly*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2019, and her second chapbook, *Lockdown: Scenes From Early in the Pandemic*, is forthcoming in 2021. A recipient of the Martin B. Bernstein Fellowship in Poetry, she is an MFA in Poetry candidate at the Solstice Low-Residency MFA Program. Ellen lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, with her husband and two sons.

**Lane Fields** is a queer, trans poet living in Boston and a student of the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. Lane's poetry is forthcoming or has appeared in places such as *Hobart*, *Yemassee*, and Tupelo Press's *30/30 Project*.

**Doug Bolling's** poems have appeared in *Posit*, *Water-Stone Review*, *Juked*, *Blueline*, *About Place Journal*, *vita brevis*, *Poetry Pacific*, and *The Missing Slate* (with interview), among others. He has received Pushcart and Best of the Net nominations and several awards, including the Mathiasen award from the University of Arizona's Humanities publication.

**James Diaz** is the author of *This Someone I Call Stranger* (Indolent Books, 2018) and *All Things Beautiful Are Bent* (Alien Buddha Press, 2021,) as well as the founding Editor of *Anti-Heroic Chic*. Their work has appeared most recently in *Cobra Milk Mag*, *Bear Creek Gazette*, *Negative Capability Press*, *Line Rider Press*, and *Resurrection Mag*.

**Beverly Hennessy Summa's** poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Chiron Review*, *Buddhist Poetry Review*, *Trailer Park Quarterly*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *Hobo Camp Review*, and others. She has a BA in English and is a Pushcart nominee. Beverly is the owner of a music school and store that she operates with her husband. She lives in South Salem, New York with her family.

**Raphael Jenkins** prefers to go by Ralph, as he feels it suits him better and he's heard every Ninja Turtle joke ever uttered. He, like Issa Rae, is rooting for everybody Black. His work has been featured on his mama's fridge, his close friends' inboxes, and elsewhere.

**Maud Welch** holds a BA in English Literature from Bates College and is a graduate of the Columbia Publishing Course. She resides in her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky.

**Hannah Senicar** is a settler and a poet on Treaty 4 land. She resides in Regina, Saskatchewan, where she is pursuing an MA in Creative Writing. Her work has appeared in *CV2*, *Prairie Fire*, and *untethered magazine*.

**Ron Stottlemeyer** lives with his wife Joan in Helena, Montana. Along with writing poetry, he enjoys cooking Chinese, Italian, and Middle Eastern food, amateur astronomy, and taking daily walks with Teddy, his Australian Shepherd/Collie cross. He is currently thinking about which poems he'll include in a book-length manuscript.

**Katie Li** is a poet and journalist from Seattle who edits at *Kalopsia Literary Journal*. When she's not reading and writing, she loves to dance and waste money on boba.

**Christianne Goodwin** is a future poetry MFA candidate at Boston University. She lives in Budapest where she is a university lecturer and humanities teacher. Her poems have been published in *Panel Magazine* and *The Quad*. She is originally from Detroit, Michigan.

**Joan Kwon Glass**, author of *How to Make Pancakes For a Dead Boy* (Harbor Editions, 2022,) was a finalist for the 2021 Subnivean Award, a finalist for the 2021 Lumiere Review Writing Contest, and serves as Poet Laureate (2021-2025) for the city of Milford, Connecticut. She is a biracial Korean-American, a teacher, and a mother.

**Monica Cure** is a Romanian-American writer based in Bucharest. She's a two-time Fulbright grantee and the author of *Picturing the Postcard: A New Media Crisis at the Turn of the Century* (University of Minnesota Press). Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Plume*, *Black Bough Poetry*, and *Little Stone*.

**Meg McCarney** is a part-time student, full-time poet and friend at Lesley University studying Creative Writing. Her work has been published/is forthcoming in *Commonthought*, *Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*, *Plum Recruit*, *Apricity Press*, and *Oddball Magazine*. She adores Jeopardy reruns, corgi puppies, and baking oatmeal raisin cookies.

**Nathaniel Buckingham** is a student and writer from Arizona. His work has been published in *Red Rock Review*, *Sixfold*, and *Exposition Review*, among others. He is the co-founder of *Ember Chasm Review* and a reader at *CARVE*.

**Anthony Immergluck** is a poet, publishing professional, critic, and musician, with an MFA in Poetry from NYU-Paris. Originally from Chicago, he now lives and works out of Madison, Wisconsin. Some of his recent poems appear or are forthcoming in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *TriQuarterly*, *Nimrod*, *Narrative*, *Tahoma Review*, *Harpur Palate*, and others.

**Samyuktha Iyer** was born and raised in India and is pursuing her undergraduate studies in English Literature. She writes about the world she sees, the ways of the people she has lived with, and of questions she struggles with herself, both in verse and in prose.

**Katie Gleason** is a graduate of Portland State University and is a mental health therapist, an avid runner, and a student of The Writers Studio. She lives in the desert of Arizona with her partner and two greyhounds.

**Yvanna Vien Tica** is a Filipina writer who grew up in Manila and near Chicago. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Hobart*, *DIALOGIST*, and *Shenandoah*, among others. In her spare time, she can be found enjoying nature and thanking God for another day.

**Judy Kaber** is a retired elementary school teacher, as well as the author of three chapbooks: *Renaming the Seasons*, *In Sleep We Are All the Same*, and *A Pandemic Alphabet*. Her poems have appeared in *Rust and Moth*, *deceMBER*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and many other publications.

**Heidi Seaborn** is author of 2020 PANK Book Award winner *An Insomniac's Slumber Party with Marilyn Monroe*, *Give a Girl Chaos*, and Comstock Chapbook 2020 prize winning *Bite Marks*. Recent work in *American Poetry Journal*, *Beloit*, *Copper Nickel*, *Cortland Review*, *Missouri Review*, and *The Slow-down*. Heidi is Executive Editor of *The Adroit Journal*.

**Rosa Canales** is a recent graduate of Denison University. Her work has previously appeared in *Kissing Dynamite Poetry*, *Lammergeier*, *The Sigma Tau Delta Review*, and others.

**Bill Siegel** writes about fishing (as a child), jazz (as an adult), and the best of all possible planets (where we live). He has published in *Blue Mesa*, *Brilliant Corners*, and *Indigenous Pop: Native American Music from Jazz to Hip Hop*, as well as the anthology, *Beyond Lament* (NorthWestern Press).

**Dani Putney** is a queer, non-binary, mixed-race Filipinx, and neurodivergent writer. Their debut full-length poetry collection is *Salamat sa Intersectionality* (Okay Donkey Press, May 2021). Their poetry appears in journals such as *Camas*, *Cosmonauts Avenue*, *The Racket*, and *Rappahannock Review*, among others. Their body is made of Nevada sand.

**Keshe Chow** is a Chinese-Australian veterinarian who lives with three humans and two cats. She is the 2020 winner of the Perito Prize, and her work features or is forthcoming in *Maudlin House*, *Analogies and Allegories Literary Magazine*, *Cross & Crow Keys*, and *Wrongdoing Magazine*.

**Rita Feinstein** is the author of the poetry chapbook *Life on Dodge* (Brain Mill Press, 2018). Her stories and poems have appeared in *Permafrost*, *Grist*, and *Willow Springs*, among other publications, and have been nominated for Best of the Net and Best New Poets. She is a graduate of Oregon State University's MFA program.

**Rebekah M. Devine** is a white, queer (spec) writer residing in Reno, Nevada. She holds an MLitt in Theology, Imagination, and the Arts, and an MA in Biblical Exegesis. She is an MFA student in Creative Writing at Mississippi University for Women.

**Sarah Yang** is a Japanese-Korean-American writer in New Jersey. Her poetry has been awarded by the National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, the Poetry Society of the United Kingdom, and National Poetry Quarterly. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Barren Magazine*, *wildness*, *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, *Whale Road Review*, and *Yes, Poetry*.

**Michael Quinn** is a poet born in Philadelphia.

Cover and layout by Josiah Spence.

All content © Rust and Moth 2021.

Rights to individual poems revert to the authors  
after first publication of the issue.

ISSN # 1942-5848

[rustandmoth.com](http://rustandmoth.com)