



Rust + Moth

Spring 2022

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

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ISBN: 978-1-716-30742-3

In This Issue

- 8** Tiel Aisha Ansari
+ *Circadian Arrhythmia*
- 9** Susan Cossette
+ *Your Eye Like a Strange Balloon Mounts
Toward Infinity*
- 10** David Donna
+ *Who Can Deny*
- 11** David Donna
+ *For Breakfast*
- 12** Konstantinos Patrinos
+ *All relatives gathered in the small village church
near the lake, acting like pro-*
- 14** Sher Ting
+ *Ah Ma*
- 16** Ayrton Lopez
+ *Open Letter to Doxorubicin**

- 18** Maggie Greaves
+ *Outer Space Is the Suburbs*
- 20** Mary Francesca Fontana
+ *Deep South*
- 22** Merna Dyer Skinner
+ *Breakfast With My Father*
- 23** Lea Page
+ *Domestic*
- 24** Diana Whitney
+ *Pastoral With Hooters Decal*
- 25** Cameron Morse
+ *Abandon*
- 26** Leah Claire Kaminski
+ *Flung girl*
- 27** Regina Cassese
+ *November*

- 28** Mia Bell
+ *Window View*
- 29** Theodore Eisenberg
+ *Kneading*
- 30** Melissa Anne
+ *the moon is the ultimate dead girl*
- 32** Brendan Bense
+ *Grief*
- 33** Angeline Schellenberg
+ *After Romance*
- 34** Natalie Marino
+ *Dialogues with Grief*
- 35** Rachel Marie Patterson
+ *Florence*

- 36** Elizabeth Pierson
+ I ran from depression to the other side of the world
- 37** Mo Fowler
+ Car Dark with Roses
- 38** Brenda Edgar
+ The Funeral
- 40** Matthew J. Andrews
+ Imagine Jesus Lives a Long Life
- 41** Kimberly Ann Priest
+ after My Father Tells Me He Loves the 23rd Psalm
- 42** Amy Williams
+ Elegy for My Half-Finished Quilt
- 44** Ernest O. Ògúnyemí
+ Shrub, Blackbirds, Silence

- 45** Lucia Owen
+ *The Gardener's Prayer*
- 46** William Doreski
+ *To the Late Scholar*
- 48** Theresa Burns
+ *Design*
- 49** John L. Stanizzi
+ *Trumpet Creeper*
- 50** Emily Franklin
+ *Morning at the End of the Lost Year*
- 51** Michael Quinn
+ *HEARTREACTOR.*
- 52** About the Authors
+ .

Circadian Arrhythmia

The leaves are down. We have not seen the snow.
Time is a looped tape of light and dark.

Days of rain fade seamless into night:
grey dawn, sunless midday, blue dusk.

Sunset is marked only by the sudden blink
of streetlights, dawn by the electric buzz

of alarm clocks. I wake in the dark, adrift—
what time is it? Should I get up?

Time is a stone that turns but doesn't roll.
Time is a run-on sentence with no punctuation.

I tear a page off the calendar,
poppies blooming in a field in France.

Shreds of scarlet paper fly from my hands
into dawn sky.

Your Eye Like a Strange Balloon Mounts Toward Infinity

Poem

—after Odilon Redon's lithograph "Your Eye Like a Strange
Balloon Mounts Toward Infinity"

Monster of perfectibility and infinite progress,
spirit ascends from the dark swamp's dead matter
rises through mist, intent on the divine.

Your mother's heart recoils into a strange vacuum,
coiled in a dusty crawl space behind the chipped porch lattice,
in the attic strewn with leftover debris of memory.

Lifted, until the fringed green eye pierces the sacred canopy.
The mossy skull is all that remains, hung on gossamer threads.
You will never love the earth again.

Who Can Deny

Poem *golden shovel on Geoffrey Hill's "Ovid in the Third Reich"*

We're cornered here together. I
have both legs in your lap; you have
my heart to hold, and all the rest. What we've learned
of love can't fill even this one
small room. Here's the thing:

If either of us starts singing, history will not
hear. It won't tell what we sought to
say, nor found, won't register the look
you give me as the passenger jet goes down.

Foot Breakfast

Perches a peach
perched sidesaddle on the kitchen sink's lip, leaning
as if posed for a photo, wrist tilted
back, palm out, cradling the fruit
so as to channel its nectar
neatly to the basin. Watch: he cranes
his head for another generous bite; neck tensed, briefly
sucks at the sun-syrup entrails
then, chewing, untwists again.

With one dangled foot, he's been kicking the cabinet
closed and closed and closed,
beating uneven time.
Clean plates recline in rising light,
their bright blank faces angled
up to him.

Presently, he regards
the exposed pit, the last
scraps of pulp left to its blood-red grip.
Later perhaps an intimate fling
with a toothpick; now,
he rinses his fingers
of the thin gold dripping along them.

All relatives gathered in the small village church near the lake, acting like pro-

fessional mourners, silicon teardrops
glued to their eyelids, glued to their cheekbones,
in front of their feet
a puddle of glue.

The cicadas in the pines were silent that Mediterranean July
morning, when the well-fed priest shuffled through
the Templon sweating, mumbling
into a chipped microphone, com-

forting the living, patting the faithful,
chewing some prayers, wine belly rumbling,
offertory box,
free candy for all. Before

the service, my aunt pushed everyone aside
to snatch a front row seat, dragging a slimy trail
of lamentations, as her mother-in-law,
my grandmother, was lying there, her left breast

missing, first tribute to cancer.
Guts still dissolving, cotton-stuffed nostrils,
sexton with a stick
pulling mud off his shoe.

Title

Poem

And then, they all shifted their eyes at once outside
the window, squinted towards the lake where
its glittering water started rippling and Jesus
crawled out looking like a shipwreck, all

soaked through and goose-bumped, panting
while limping away to somewhere.

Aunt kept lamenting,
eyes swung back—
who stole from the box?

No one said a word.

The priest munched altar bread,
and the bugs, silent,
jumped off the trees.

Ah Ma

What is distance
but the aubade

of an ocean—: a body—:
a mother tongue?

I watched you unclench
your jaw, dragging morphemes

across the ocean,
to teach me the difference

between ná and nà.

How I recoiled from
each inflection like

the barrel
of a gun,

where each word
was crushed

like a blossom
in my hand.

Title

When you shuddered
each diphthong,

watching your only grandchild
drift cordless from the motherland.

At the epicenter
of your chest,

Failure—:
the size of
a gunshot wound.

Open Letter to Doxorubicin*

Let's play one last game of hopscotch.
It'll be fair because I'll get out of
my wheelchair and balance
on one leg.

Our playing field will be thirteen
of these floor tiles you've
made me memorize.
And I'll do it with my eyes closed.

But you'll still sneer through,
your presence in the room lighting a
chthonic crimson behind my eyelids.

If you win,
then wrap a fist around a heated knife.
And with this smoking mirror,
pry railroad tracks of stitches and
mottled scar tissue off my chest.

And with the other hand,
squeeze silent my pulse.

But if I win,
bring me your severed scalps.
Seven spent IV bags of bloody refuse,
plastic curdled and sun-hardened
in these harsh fluorescent lights.

Title

Both that I can hang them in the doorway
when a smile of spilled wine or
a silent ruby on a banded finger
beckons you back.
When red is the color of the night.

*Drug used in chemotherapy, often for the treatment of leukemia and lymphoma. Due to its vibrant color and debilitating side effects, it is commonly known as “red devil” or “red death.”

Outer Space Is the Suburbs

If Jeff Bezos's mushroom-topped rocket
dipped into the foyer of space
just as you got an Amazon package
of reusable Saran Wrap
delivered to your doorstep
in a subdivision on Pinecrest Drive,
that's because the suburbs
and outer space are the same.

We invented them in the 1950s.
Rocketry was exciting: we blew up families
in the desert, plastic grinning ones
in model kitchens. Sputnik blinked
as we sent up the Jetsons, a nuclear
family that lived in a bubble above the weather.
Life expectancy swelled. We invented trash.

In the '80s, E.T., a botanist
from a foreign planet, landed
on a hill above a suburb
in a hot air balloon. He lifted
baby pine trees by the roots.
When he died, he was resurrected
secularly, like a flower.

Title

~~Now~~ at the end of the world, I drive
my silver Toyota on gridlocked highways.
I'd ride my bike, but my city
is a jungle of suburbs.
Once, when I hit every light,
an elderly golden retriever on a leash
beat my car the two blocks to dinner,
a fusion restaurant in a strip mall
with plants plump and Jurassic
as Saturn's 82 moons.

Deep South

This latitude's a knife skinning bone bare.
Heavy with ducks these clouds weigh down a sky
you can't help wearing like a hat. See there, my home-
ward road spools red to the horizon.
Alongside, lowslung alligators trawl their hunger
sleeplessly through water dull as lead.

I knew these prone green lands might lead
your hill-bent heart into despair.
Mountains have a way of quieting your hunger
where their stone teeth bite off the sky,
where hardened hands of pine reign in the horizon
till it's touchable and funnel you toward home.

I know. But height has never been my home.
The marsh, the crawfish pond, the lead
we empty from my cousin's gun at the horizon:
absent this weft my resume's threadbare.
Like a desert plant meditating on sky
I've gone dormant with the denial of my hunger.

But here the air seeps humid green and hunger
is the echo that comes back from voices hollering *home*.
You want a leap to land you closer to the sky,
want water to stop spilling. These distances are lead
weights swinging from your heart: you cannot bear
to plumb the well. A woman sets her eyes on

Title

Her pelicans whose far-off wings suture the horizon
in a way that calms an incessant, never-mentioned hunger,
and suddenly you are afraid. Her bright, bare,
almost indecent longing for a home
she hardly remembers. Yet swears she could lead
you to blindfolded, or looking only at the sky.

There I go again. Third person, holding forth on sky.
Look, love, that's tomorrow on the horizon.
Hammered by rain the day's gold dulls to lead
leaving only the prerequisites for joy, which are hunger
and our hands. I told you no one would be home.
Way out where the power lines converge, see how bare

currents lead the sun through a drawn-down sky
like some autumnal bear whose den is the horizon?
That line of light at dusk, that hunger is my home.

Breakfast With My Father

Poem standing on a cliff above a roiling sea—
my father, from behind the morning paper,
relayed his distressing dream while I crunched Wheaties.
You and your mother were drowning—
I held the spoon aloft, dripping milk.
I knew I could only save one of you.
Who did you choose? I asked.
Your mother.

I wondered if he'd shared the dream with her—
told her he'd chosen me.

Years after, my father, who couldn't swim,
ventured too far into the Atlantic—caught
in a rip tide, his flailing cries triggered
summer camp skills: swim with the current,
roll him onto his back, hook the crook
of elbow under chin—half his heft,
I freighted 200 pounds of panic to shore.
Later, he told my mother I tried to kill him.

Domestic

The Great American Home Deserts

Cookbook earns its keep, she says.

She texts a picture of it and Gourmet

Today, another thick tome, both

wedged between bureau and chair.

It'll do, we think. At least for tonight.

Her ex-boyfriend has made copies of
her keys. I am 2000 miles away.

I used to say: *you deserve kindness
and respect. Trust yourself.* I also said:
*you are a sunbeam, a lightning bolt.
You are the wind and the tide.*

Now, over the phone, I help her
barricade the door. I am dead calm.

Pastoral With Hooters Decal

They're haying in October—
mild days of milkweed and fermentation
apples rotting in the grass
mushrooms veiled in the leaves.
Windrows of hay lie waiting
to be baled and that big green tractor
parked overnight at the crest of the field
on a berth of smashed acorn caps
dares you to pass. You can't
slink away from the gaze, the fake owl
tracking you as you walk
between the ledgerrock and the hay
SHOW ME YOUR HOOTERS shouted
in orange font, two nipple-eyes
staring from the John Deere cab
like a manifesto, like a bird of prey
like they want to see yours
now, here, in the open air
and the razed grasses, beneath
the great oak and mottled leaves
the old crows and mad squirrels.
Come on already don't be a prude
strip off your fleece and tee
and unclasp the girls.
Show the goddamn world
what you were born to do.

Abandon

Pigeons roost in the eaves
of the abandoned station.
You remember abandon, what life
was like before children, the wreck
before recklessness. The quiet
of pigeons roosting precedes any
footstep, any arrival of the Amtrack.
You remember life before arrival,
before the schedule, the “routine.”
Now hours crowd the platform.
You have to rise in the dark
tunnel with one lamp on, one headlamp,
to reach the abandoned station
while your roosting pigeons dream
in bedrooms of becoming doves.
That’s the thing about abandon,
the slumber of the platform, form
before content: It’s always ready
to throw itself away: Poised
and ready to jump in front of the train.

Flueg girl

Poem *after* the painting "Christina's World", by Andrew Wyeth

Last summer I walked on
someone else's ground.

I strode tall, grown. Shin-deep
in crickets and shirring grasses,
meadow high on a mountain
and the sun so bright.

When I was small, and the world
was flat and hot and the house was gray

with death, I would crouch at the edge
of the yard and the forest,
bundle myself in warm skin and chlorophyll,
ears open for the end:
there is a particular rhythm to the
silence at the end of rage.

The ferns and rough St. Augustine
grass that was so good for whistling
still flexed, unsafe. Tremors
flicking the green. She
looks thrown. Our worlds
sharp and bright, and always that track,
always the threat of someone
coming back.

November

Post-written. I crawl up these stairs like a drunk, salted
green edges slamming the juts in hips

and knees. There is always something to binge
here; I choose verbs or intoxicants. Sobriety

is still present like some kind of chastity belt, glimmering
at any date I try to go on. My doctor asks questions.

“I don’t know. I’m really bad.” She doesn’t want to hear
the song that plays on repeat or read that poem shaking

post-written. I don’t know what to give her
but this body that I toss to anyone who will touch.

The tights are dirty and so is the turtleneck, gripping
some cloth I fold myself up in place. Protecting

my abdomen. I call my mother. *Is your nose stuffy?*
“No mom, I’m just a little sad.” I turn the lights off.

Window View

Poem

The drizzle dripping of rain
down the rusted iron steps
of the fire escape. The wet-painted red
brick of the building next door,
the damp, empty courtyard between
considered an NYC green-
space. Its plants overwatered,
rain rivering down a table's edge.

I have propped a chair under my door handle
and am settled with my back flush
against the cool glass.

2.

I lay stomach down
on the blue of my bed, volume
turned low on my laptop
as I struggle to hear over
the tin-thunk of rain
on the next-door roof.

The light through the curtains
gauzy and low, the warm glow
of the laptop inviting, the gold
knob of the door lock turned
all the way to the right.

Kneading

Pock down your cookie
jar from its high shelf
to touch—then wash over.
Glass thick and green
as your eyeglasses. I fish
a solitary penny from
your tidal pool, pocket it
against my leg. I rub that
cent to make a wish in its
copper hold; sort warmth
from the swim of silvery
change. That your recipe
might live one life longer.

A cold quarter speaks
in lieu. I wish it you,
on your kitchen range,
ferrying sweet-works to
your table, where I wait
behind ventriloquist glass,
words white with milk.
I fold into oilcloth design,
as a loon into aqua-marine,
or a swallow into azure.
A green-eyed child
into a tome of ghost
tablespoons and pinches.

the moon is the ultimate dead girl

We talk about the stars and the dead like they are one and the same
but I know that the dead don't sparkle. Why would they?
Bones don't shine in the ground.
I've never seen a cemetery
that glowed like a carnival, rows of tombstones lit up
like Satan's personal catwalk.

In the sky the stars are dazzling pearls, the whitest teeth sharp like fangs,
sugared asteroids burning fuel
and laughing at us for it. I get it. I would laugh at me too,
still stuck down here trying to discover what's next after what's next
after what's next. And it gets really funny when you figure out
you actually never know. You take one look in the mirror and realize
Oh, shit.
It's me.
I'm the punchline.

Before today I had two sisters. One had pistols for hands
and they had a name for her and how she didn't talk she just
fired, left hand going right and right hand going left
and by the time she was done so were the negotiations.
To her I really was the punchline:
too small, two hands
that are just hands, too likely
to be dispersed than
to bloody a room
in two seconds.

Title

Beh look me dead in the eye

and say *shit, yeah*.

It's you.

You're the joke.

I know the dead aren't disco balls. I have
seen them, the bodies sprawled in boxes,
husks not having to ask what's next
after what's next after what's next.

They've already found it. They've left the
rooms of their lives dark and are sauntering off
into the grand lit hallway of whatever is next.

Joke's on them,
my sister always said,
except I never quite understood
how any of this was supposed to be funny.

The moon is the ultimate dead girl:
a goddess of a skeleton, hips dusted
with celestial ash, the gaps in her skull
not ditches but beckoning caverns,
pockets full of secrets aglow in the dark.
No one would ever laugh at her
when her one job
is to help you see at night, at least a little.
She was the only one who held my hand
growing up.

Grief

You wake to find that you are tired
of everything you love.
The starlings sing

but not sweet enough.
Feverfew and lavender
crowd your window boxes

unplucked. You begin
to erase the poem
you sit in, wring

its words for purpose.
Even grief is so delicate
to the touch: it will melt

on your tongue as snow.

~~Winter~~ Romance

~~Call~~ entering love a *falling*,
a bungee jump off a bridge in Whistler,
heart between your teeth.
Think *walk in the park*. Somewhere
someone falls again and walks away.
Say staying in love is a *marathon*,
a musical movement up Kilimanjaro,
lungs tight as almonds. An armless
salmon fights its way upstream.
But call our love a stationary thing
draped in afghans, a sign above us
reading *you are here*.

Dialogues with Grief

~~Read~~ bottle of Chateau Margaux
on my shelf with other precious

things I leave unopened. You
watch me get drunk

on eight millimeter movies at night
until we are both blank as walls.

My shadow mimes me. Maybe
forgiveness is found

in someone else's house. I
try to keep my attic chest closed

like a jar of winter cherries. You
say *open a window* I say *I don't know*

how to swallow the sun. You
say *love is a dying rose*.

Tolerance

On Pennsylvania, the grass by the highway snaps
in the wind. Driving west, one exit from my childhood
home, where radio towers and pyramids of road
salt should be familiar, my mind goes blank.
This morning, my mother seemed better: scarlet
color in her face and neck, posture renewed.
She tied the strings at the back of her napkin-paper
gown and asked a nurse for breakfast. I drove
back to her house, elated, and took a shower.
Mom who gave us permanents in the bathtub,
who fed us scalding bulbs of garlic from the pan.
Mom in her perfectly-pressed suits, who decorated
her kitchen with seventy porcelain cows.
I was toweling off when she called, her voice so weak
it snapped. *I'm afraid*, she said over and over.
She was gone before I got back, the space
around her heart filled to bursting with blood.
Someday I will die, and my own daughter will not
be able to find her way home in the dark.

Tida from depression to the other side of the world

Boein follows, of course, that
motherfucker; we are in a bus through the mountains and
the trees are spread out like velvet
hands but I am in the hollow
places of my head; there is no place
to curl up and remain there never
was, I dreamed the skin curled off
my fingers and pacified me, ripping off—blood
regurgitating narcissism, I could not say
what is outside, what travel commercial
what fervid suffering the road hitting—hitting—
girls standing at small jungle stops, the currency fucking
me over the mouth—now so many
people stare the bus rubs into my back
a sad cat dragging me across
mountains, the ocean trapped bubbling
into green / green / green, I cannot find
what has not been or
never was, we sit by the gate watching
last year I showered under duress, water-
boarding; the hostel cat followed me up
the road to the bus stop, curling around
saying—don't go

Dark with Roses

The petals of the roses swell
like blown glass, languorous and plump,

an easy gush beneath my tires
down the driveway. At eighteen

I thought I could leave home. I hadn't yet
met the parts of myself

I keep as an unmarked grave:
the dish of grandpa's gold

rings on the dresser, a pot of yellowing
English ivy stained in rings up the terracotta

walls from overwatering at one house
and then the next, my uncle's brass cartridge

lighter, the rosary wrapped around
my passport, copper beads leaving

indents in the leather from the press
of my sweaty palms—letting them live

in me even as I leave town,
all hard metal muffled
by petals

The Funeral

Another day looms:
my fingers weave

this shimmering, barbed
and clinking shroud
from your fragile and ever-
shifting cloisonné patterns;
every night I unweave it.

Daily my throat utters
a dirge made of your
craquelure lines, each
a hair's breadth.
Every night I unsing it.

With too many eyes,
I can see all your deaths;
I pick one with room
enough for me in it.
When that sacred day comes,

I will finish my work. I will wail
the funeral song
from down in the mossy
shreds of my heart.
I will lie down with you
in the deep gut of the Earth.

Title

The shroud, embroidered
with tiny tight black
stitches, like the ones I use
to close the mouths
of my wounds,

is big enough for both of us.
Now it is my turn.

Imagine Jesus Lives a Long Life

He keeps his feet planted on the ground
and his eyes out of the sky so he can see
clearly the details of his work: the nails
held lightly in the fingers as the hammer falls.

He avoids crowds, spending much of his time
alone in his shop, sanding and carving. *God
is not the clouds*, he tells the pilgrims
who sometimes seek him out, *he is*

*in every swirling grain of cedar, every speck
of sawdust, every splinter under the skin.
Every hand is a priest, every work an offering.*
The devil visits often as the years amass,

watching with pity as his eyesight fades,
as his fingers wilt and curl inwards,
as death spreads slowly through his veins.
I can heal you, the devil says, hand extended,

face flushed of malice, *I can make you young.*
But Jesus only smiles and shakes his head:
*Give a man enough time, old friend,
and he can learn to endure almost anything.*

How My Father Tells Me He Loves the 23rd Psalm

Consider the list of things I've held against him,
circling my finger around the ridge of a glass I don't drink from. *Your mother
is in the hospital again*, he says; he's signing
the papers for *no resuscitation*.

I listen to him cry over the phone about the woman who,
for years, he complained never took his advice.
And, of course, I think of all the times
he never took advice. The world is full of hypocrites. I know;

I keep telling myself I have no religion, but really,
I do. Mom, I say, will go *home* as though it's the most beautiful gift
he could give: to let her.
I want to shepherd him kindly, even if an afterlife proves to be

an illusion, not also admitting I need to believe
there's a place my mother will go.
My father weeps softly over the phone, gently prodding offenses away—
leading me in paths of righteousness.

Elegy for My Half-Finished Quilt

What I know is this: To produce
an Eleanor Burns Quilt, you need steady
hands, machines. I remember white
tables, stacks of fabric like filo dough & girls
with their quiet feet. I don't remember
if I wore a dress, or how long I was there
or why she left me in a fabric store.
Ten-dollar babysitter, girl-maker, I don't
know if I'm twisting things. I know

I had a *plain face*, two missing teeth.
Dad was listening to Pat Robertson
on the radio and I was crushing on Boy
George. I was crushing on Jane
who was so tall. We played tag and her tan
legs dangled from a tree. What hunger. What cut

grass beneath my feet. I ran my fingers
along rows of wound spools called "orchid," "lilac,"
"tusk." Dirt under my nails when I gripped
the squares, eyes focused on the needle
as I shackled the quilt top to its backing.
Stock for a hope chest and I could already
smell that cedar trunk, envision it brimming:

Author

Title

Christmas china, white linens, silver
filigree. They said it was about choosing:
*How many children do you want? Do you want
boys or girls? Do you want to be loved?*
Vision of my body taken, taking in.
Hemmed with a neat and even finish.
The way hot irons smooth out
the ugliest creases.

Shade, Blackbirds, Silence

By a dream of fresh compasses, I sang
by the coat-changing river—yellow, then

blue, and then red. I don't even remember
what I sang to or about. I am tempted

to say the deer of daylight, but it must have been
God, only God—the fat shrub at the center of

the garden. The garden come alive.
I emptied my pockets of all the summers I had,

and I washed out the filth on my tongue. Then
my mother appeared. I did not touch her.

I asked her what she sold in the market
of heaven; but her mouth was sealed—

a locket—fastened to nothing. I haven't stopped
wondering why the arrow came. Why the blackbirds

never really returned. And my mother,
even in a dream, would never speak to me.

The Gardener's Prayer

To keep her plants alive when she is gone
when someone else sees what she's done
and wants to turn her lifework under,
take out the native ferns and honeysuckle,
the thick-trunked rhododendrons that she's fed
and winter-covered for so long they pay in blooms
big as softballs pink and red, and beds of daffodils
that fill her dreams with more than yellow
trumpeting the light of spring and lilies
blooming one a day from stems that bloom
till fall, Friend,
 spread her ashes by the spoonful
 under everything she ever planted
 on this steep and acid oak and hemlock hillside

And let them sweeten what they feed
and root as one in long and silent sentience
until their lives subside together
transformed
into the ground.

To the Late Scholar

Stripped of wind and flowers, you stare
into the winter dusk with hands
dangling and your planisphere
depleted of its final goddess.
You never thought this would happen.
You didn't believe that your death
would cancel magazine subscriptions
and wreak potholes deeper than your grave.
I tried to warn you that a mink
could kill every chicken in your coop,
that driving without watching the road
could wreck the most expensive auto.
The wind you wore to our wedding
has dropped, leaving the air as still
as cooling lava. The flowers
you grew in memory of childhood
droop frost-bitten and discouraged.
You wanted to explain the war
by parsing the home front in chapter
after chapter of wrought iron prose.
But you parked the car in Cambridge
and never found it again, your notes
in a laptop locked in the trunk.
Later, with your flesh uneasy
on your bones, you reported
the absence of songbirds and claimed
electromagnetic waves had killed
all insects, starving their predators.

Title

Nothing you say will re-gather
the wind about your shivering self
or renew last summer's flowers.
I want to wrap you in wool and down,
but that would remind you how naked
you've felt for years, the unwritten
part of you absorbing the light
while the rest of you swims away
in a sullen underground river.

Design

I don't believe in all
the same thing
but in repetition, yes,

surely, yes. A shaky faith
in the rule of three:

trinity, a flowering
shrub here, and here,
and there. Then

against the glowback
of the familiar, the odd
answer appears—

a single daffodil
or hyacinth's nub, middle
of midweek.

And in between—

I don't believe

I don't believe
—evergreen.

Trumpet Creeper

Poetry some odd years ago
my mother took a sprig
of trumpet creeper
from the old plant
in my great grandmother's backyard,

and now, all these years later,
she brings a piece to us,
swaddled in wet newspaper,
and tells us it will grow and climb
and produce beautiful horn-shaped flowers.

But it hasn't.

The vine is green and lush,
but there are no flowers
and it doesn't climb;
it crawls along the ground,
away from the trellis,
and out to where the sun rises and sets
on the wild countryside.

Maybe next year, my mother suggests.
Maybe next year it will scale the trellis,
bring out its trumpets,
and as if it had been doing it forever,
fill the air with silent orange music.

Mending at the End of the Lost Year

Mending at the end
of the lost year I tuck my legs
under my dog's body and

he snores onto my thigh
drooling the way my children
did when they slept between

my neck and shoulder, relaxed
into rest enough that their bodies
felt like breath rather than complex

arrangements of organs, blood, bone,
brain cells adapting and learning with growth
being its own kind of loss and now

with my dog I listen to his breath
which is anything but graceful as outside
someone is trying to kill the deer

grazing on old pears slumped under
their tree. The shots punctuate the new cold
light and we beasts inside feel

safe despite the gunshots and the geese
arrowing from field to sky, gentle as anything.
I hold my dog's face and his loose jowls

and understand: all safety is temporary—
all breath is grace.

HEARTREACTOR.

Recall dire situation, telling you again
of a sheet disturbed by the wrinkle of our bodies,
and nights of locked stalls and a cunning touch
rough and sudden, the storm before the porch
in New Orleans, in New Jersey, our mouths
blooming into one another, our laughter like pollen.
Now you know a boy stood on a jade coast
looking across the short sea, begging to be pressed
into like a thumb consorting with the cheek
of a peach about to be bitten. I had to know
what dark structure in my heart you could collapse.
There's a new story now. One of a dark canal lapping
at its boundaries, bodies lost in the park looking
for a pub where faces might still towards one another,
floorboards sharp against bare feet, a kindling streetlight
outside a window carved to frame passing phantoms,
dark blue eyelids open, irises like clocks counting
seconds before two pinkies hook,
a hand with touch so soft it
seems to speak,
and at dawn
a sky to send us home.

About the Authors

Sufi warrior poet **Tiel Aisha Ansari** has been featured by *Measure*, *Windfall*, and *Everyman's Library*. Her collections include *Knocking from Inside*, *High-Voltage Lines*, *Country Well-Known as an Old Nightmare's Stable*, *The Day of My First Driving Lesson*, and *Dervish Lions*. She hosts *Wider Window Poetry* on KBOO Community Radio.

Susan Cossette lives and writes in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A two-time Pushcart Prize nominee and the author of *Peggy Sue Messed Up*, her work has appeared in *Rust and Moth*, *Vita Brevis*, *ONE ART*, *Anti-Heroic Chic*, *Loch Raven Review*, *As it Ought to Be*, *The Amethyst Review*, and in the anthologies *Tuesdays at Curley's* and *After the Equinox*.

David Donna's poems have appeared in *The Rupture*, *The Shore*, *Radar Poetry*, *Ibbetson Street*, and elsewhere. They live in eastern Massachusetts, where they write code and poetry by turns.

Konstantinos Patrinos is an aspiring writer based in Berlin, Germany. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *California Quarterly*, *Paris Lit Up*, *Door Is A Jar*, *Open Minds Quarterly*, *Tiny Spoon*, and others. When he's not writing poetry, he enjoys getting punched in the face during kickboxing classes. He's a high school teacher of political science and philosophy.

Originally from a sunny island in Southeast Asia, **Sher Ting** is a Singaporean-Chinese residing in Australia. She is a 2021 Writeability Fellow with Writers Victoria and a 2021 Pushcart and Best of The Net nominee with work in *Eunoia Review*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *The Citron Review*, and *Kissing Dynamite*.

Ayrton Lopez is a Mexican-Ecuadorian writer who lives and works in the Bay Area. He was formerly the host of *The Red Wheelbarrow*, a spoken word poetry program on KZSU 90.1 FM. His poems have appeared in *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Rogue Agent*, *Leland Quarterly*, and other publications.

Maggie Greaves' poems and essays have appeared in *Connotation Press*, *Dunes Review*, *Contemporary Literature*, *Literary Matters*, *Avidly*, and elsewhere. Her academic book on contemporary poetry and space exploration is forthcoming from Oxford University Press. She teaches at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York.

Mary Francesca Fontana was born in South Louisiana but now lives in Seattle, Washington, where she works as a research scientist. She has two young children who can beat her in UNO most of the time.

Merna Dyer Skinner's poetry appears in *The Baltimore Review*, *Quartet*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Sulphur Surrealist Jungle*, among other journals, and in three anthologies. Her chapbook *A Brief History of Two Aprons* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2016. Merna has lived in six US states and has traveled to five continents.

Lea Page's work has appeared in *The Rumpus*, *The Pinch*, *Stonecoast Journal*, *Sycamore Review*, *Pithead Chapel* (nominated for Best of the Net), *High Desert Journal*, *riverSedge*, and *Slipstream*. She is also the author of *Parenting in the Here and Now* (Floris Books, 2015). She lives in rural Montana with her husband and a small circus of domesticated animals.

Diana Whitney writes across the genres with a focus on feminism, motherhood, and sexuality. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Glamour*, and many more. Her first book *WANTING IT* won the Rubery Book Award, and her poetry anthology for teen girls became a bestseller.

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

Leah Claire Kaminski is the author of three chapbooks: *Differential diagnosis from the Santa Anas* (Harbor Editions, 2023), *Root* (Milk and Cake Press, 2022), and *Peninsular Scar* (Dancing Girl Press). Her poems appear or will soon in *Bennington Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Rumpus*, *ZYZZYVA*, and elsewhere.

Regina Cassese is a queer writer from Michigan. You can find her work in places such as the literary journal *Fledge*, as well as Interlochen Arts Academy's literary journals *The Red Wheelbarrow* and *The Interlochen Review*. She eats peanut butter when she's sad and falls asleep wherever she goes.

Mia Bell is an Ithaca, New York poet who is trying to hike her way through the Finger Lakes. She has poetry published in *The Shore*, *Autofocus*, and *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*. She is also forthcoming in *Stone Canoe*. When she's not writing, she loves a good cup of coffee.

Theodore Eisenberg is married, with four children. He retired from the practice of labor law in 2014 to write. While managing the firm, he learned something of how the world works out its practicalities. He also credits aging as a mentor. When words seem too restrictive, he paints.

Melissa Anne lives in the DC metro area and works in international education. Her poetry and fiction have been published in *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *Junoesq*, *FreezeRay Poetry*, *The Adroit Journal*, and the Scholastic Writing Award anthology *What We Remember, What We Forget*.

Brendan Bense is a Pennsylvania native with a degree in Creative Writing and Religious Studies from American University in DC. His work can be found in *Columbia Journal*, *The Crab Orchard Review*, and *Pres 53*. Before joining the MFA cohort at the University of California Irvine, he worked as a writer and editor in New York and Philadelphia.

Angeline Schellenberg authored the Manitoba Book Award-winning *Tell Them It Was Mozart* (Brick, 2016), the KOBZAR Book Award-nominated *Fields of Light and Stone* (UAP, 2020), and four chapbooks. Her micro-fiction appeared recently in *Fewer Than 500*, *Café Lit*, and *The Drabble*. She hosts Winnipeg's Speaking Crow reading series.

Natalie Marino is poet and physician. Her work appears in *Bitter Oleander*, *EcoTheo Review*, *Kissing Dynamite Poetry*, *Leon Literary Review*, *Midway Journal*, *Moria Online*, *Oyez Review*, *Shelia-Na-Gig* online, and elsewhere. She was named a finalist in *Sweet Lit's* 2021 poetry contest. Her micro-chapbook *Attachment Theory* was published by Ghost City Press in June 2021. She lives in California.

Rachel Marie Patterson is the co-founder and editor of *Radar Poetry*. She holds an MFA from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Her poems appear in *Cimarron Review*, *Harpur Palate*, *The Journal*, *Thrush*, *Smartish Pace*, and others. She won an American Academy of Poets Prize and was a Special Mention for the Pushcart Prize. Her full-length collection is forthcoming in 2022.

Elizabeth Pierson is a poet from the rural American West. She has been published in several online magazines, including *One Hand Clapping* and *Neuro Logical*, and she maintains a website where she has been self-publishing her poetry since her first year of university.

Mo Fowler is an MFA candidate at the University of California Irvine and the author of *Sit Wild*, published by Finishing Line Press. Their writing can be found in *Not Very Quiet*, *Motley Mag*, and *Zone 3 Magazine*.

Brenda Edgar is an art history professor and emerging poet from Louisville, Kentucky. Her work has recently appeared in *The Shore*, *What are Birds?*, and the *Tusculum Review*. It will also be featured in 2022 issues of the *Blue Mountain Review*, *The Main Street Rag*, and *Better Than Starbucks*.

Matthew J. Andrews is a private investigator and writer from California. He is the author of *I Close My Eyes* and *I Almost Remember*, and his poetry has appeared in *Orange Blossom Review*, *Pithead Chapel*, and *EcoTheo Review*, among others.

Kimberly Ann Priest is the author of *Slaughter the One Bird* and chapbooks *The Optimist Shelters in Place*, *Parrot Flower*, and *Still Life*. She is an associate poetry editor for the *Nimrod International Journal of Prose and Poetry* and assistant professor at Michigan State University.

Amy Williams is an educator and writer based in New Delhi. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Shore*, *Redivider*, *Contrary Magazine*, and *Sweet Tree Review*. She was a participant in the 2021 *Kenyon Review* Writers Workshop for poetry and is working on her first chapbook.

Ernest O. Ògúnymí is a writer, literary journalist, and editor from Nigeria. His work has appeared/ is forthcoming in *AGNI*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Bath Mag*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Joyland*, *Tinderbox*, *the minnesota review*, *SAND*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *Down River Road*, *the Dark*, *20.35 Africa*, *Mooncalves: An Anthology of Weird Fiction*, and elsewhere. He was a staff writer at *Open Country Mag*. He currently studies for a BA in History and International Studies at Lagos State University.

Lucia Owen moved to western Maine fifty-one years ago to teach high school English and has lived there ever since. At almost 80 she considers herself an emerging poet because she began writing and submitting in 2019. Her work has appeared in a number of anthologies.

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. His most recent book of poetry is *Mist in Their Eyes* (2021). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.

Theresa Burns' debut collection of poems *Design* will be published by Terrapin books in 2022. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Prairie Schooner*, *New Ohio Review*, *The Cortland Review*, *Plume*, *SWWIM*, and elsewhere. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee and author of the chapbook *Two Train Town*.

John L. Stanizzi's full-length collections are *Ecstasy Among Ghosts*, *Sleepwalking*, *Dance Against the Wall*, *After the Bell*, *Hallelujah Time!*, *High Tide—Ebb Tide*, *Chants*, *Four Bits*, *Sundowning*, *POND*, and *The Tree That Lights The Way Home*. He appears widely in Italy, and his non-fiction has been featured widely in the USA.

Emily Franklin's debut poetry collection *Tell Me How You Got Here* was published by Terrapin Books in 2021. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Guernica*, *New Ohio Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Blackbird*, and *The Rumpus*, among other places, as well as read aloud on National Public Radio.

Michael Quinn is a writer born in Philadelphia. His work has appeared in *Carve Magazine* and *Chiron Review*. He lives in Brooklyn.

Cover and layout by Josiah Spence.

Cover image taken from *Kraaiende haan naar links*, anonymous, 1688 - 1698, courtesy of the Amsterdam Rijks Museum.

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ISSN # 1942-5848

rustandmoth.com