

RUST & MOTH

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The Wine-Dark Sea

—*in memoriam Kevin McGrath*

I know you would want me to write this.
I know you would say
we must leave one life
like the Greek ships burning in the harbor.
I know that we are more
than how we're torn.

But all I have
are these rains, these strangers,
and none of them is you
or your music.

You saved my life.
You saved it twenty winters.

And you, just you, my teacher,
you sat beside that wreck I was,
that child,
and laid a hand of patience
on my shoulder,
and whispered,
You are in it now, the new life.
Step in wholly. Love it. Burn the oars.

For the Student Who Said Grammar Doesn't Matter When People Are Dying

What can kill is unclarity.

The misplaced modifier, for instance:

Having no hope, the wind didn't move him.

Did the wind have no hope?

Clearly the writer meant,

Having no hope, he wasn't moved by the wind.

But someone no doubt had told the writer

about the passive voice, to avoid it

at all costs, like passion,

and the writer, feeling with a chill

how costly life can be

when we are passive (the lover's last knock

unanswered at the door),

opted for this construction.

Having no hope, the wind didn't move him.

The difference

is between mystery and confusion,

between the wind's stillness and a soul

that won't be opened.

And why not? Why can't

the wind hope?

I don't know. I just know

it matters. Everything matters. What is erasing

what. Who is bombing whom.

It took me all day to misunderstand correctly:

Forgetting their children, the conquerors

destroyed them.

Snorkeling, 2024

The reefs, excruciated into ossuaries
are speckless—immaculately dead. A tangle
of stark, white neurons blanched
quiet, into the worst kind
of peace. What fish remain
swim lethargic, wayward
paths, like a calligraphy bleeding off
the page. Is this the price of witness?
An epic, stoney corpse glares an apathy
out of her assassin's accomplice.

Inside Chemical Corridor

I knew I had a rendezvous due with this stretch
when I saw the luminous smokestacks,
the fire-dazzled girders, the peroxide flames
of the refineries and smelt the ethylene.

By day, I hitched. Branches from perished oaks
yearned for me. I internalised the depletion,
memorised the last hurricane's path,
its cavalry charge and carnage.

All those poleaxed power lines, flattened shacks,
wrenched licence plates from States over the Gulf:
Campeche, Yucatan, Tabasco.
How did that happen? I couldn't answer.

Whose side was I on? That, I didn't dare.
I slept among oil absorbent booms, curled
like gorged tapeworms by the spillways.
Nights were endowed with a malignant glow.

The hulks of totaled trucks marked the highway,
countryfolk with carts foraged for haulage parts.
The mesquite was razored by the deathless heat,
shrubland reduced to a matchbox's striking strip.

It was beyond late: my gums were receding,
my teeth were gnashing, I could hear
the malice in the machinery, the methane
emissions affected a cutaneous prickling.

I was meant to hasten here. When I came around,
the realtor was mid-spiel, robotic, citing college
sports, roadhouses, riverboat craps and blackjack;
the verdancy, it's incredible, obscene, he said,

but the trees are decimated, the coast is sinking.

Meditations on Emptiness

Drought drains the lake like a tapped keg,
reveals the rusted bicycle frame, a pair of soleless
Nikes, an hypocrisy of spent shotgun shells littered
in the weepy muck. A policeman fishes out
someone's right thumb with an oversized net.
From their watchtowers, the fish crows are
a jangle of small black keys, flush with knowledge,
happy to unlock the lake's mysteries for a trade
in seed, breadcrumbs, shiny trinkets if only
we'd grow wings. I tried that once. Flying.
Soared right off the edge of life until I tired
of my own weightlessness, became friends again
with grounded things. The lake stuns with its ability
to be empty of itself and still captivate, exposed
banks like a lover's curved hip she's finally deemed
you worthy of gazing upon. I've given up wanting
to be full, take cues now from the wildlife,
everything in flawless symbiosis—osprey keeping
watch from a tall pine, dark mud making record
of every boot-print, rain like a best friend
who covers the lake back up, no questions asked,
then disappears without needing thanks.

Paper Birch

You come to nature and see
yourself.

In likenesses, say:
bones and books and dresses,
cream-sheath, pearl-shine sheeted
so-and-so of the woods.

Can you see us without
the pen in your hand?

The way we love a long winter,
our trunks swathed white
as defense against
too much light.

The way something can still burn
in the coldest season.

Yes. We.

How narrow our shoots
how pure the stand,
rarely alone
we raise from summer ash
in call and response.

A clarity of birches. An overland.

Lifted

(like a veil?)

as quickly as your childhood.

Field Notes from Cooley Landing

—for Poetess Kalamu Chaché, East Palo Alto Poet Laureate

On Puichon land, between open water
and shoreline, the tidal marshes are coming
back—by every measure a miracle
since time and settler had reworked it
into a brownfield, a dump site where things go
for burning. What breathes now, between marsh
and mudflat, are forage and shelter—
saltbush, gumplant, shimmery saltgrass.
On any map, you can hardly see
what the red lines had done to us, what had been
buried in concrete now lies with the wetlands.

The salt marsh harvest mouse, button-eyed

and a little bigger than my thumb,

is a mischief in a patch of pickleweed.

Five Seconds of Dead-Air on the Fifth of July

“not too

Many words, please, in the muddy shallows the

Frogs are singing.”

—April, *Mary Oliver*

Gleeful morning deejays grackling in full
throat for the Monday commute, special post-

Independence Day edition, beseech
their caffeinated listeners to dish

the dirt from a sun-dripped July weekend.
Callers are cajoled between songs cranked up

to eleven, *Boom Boom Pow* and Katy
Perry, to broadcast at full warp speed—

three words only—their cascading scarlet
shimmers, hot summer kisses, blankets sand

baked, and mad midnight fandangos. The sound
bites are dutifully breviloquent:

“Beach, beer, babes,” draws one, to the hosts’ delight,
while a sultry “hotdogs and buns” prompts an

on-air coffee-and-cream spit-take. “My friends
barbecued” beams another, with no hint

of irony. In sing-song tones, smooth hip
shooters keep firing away, until

up against the hour, time allows for one
last splurge. "Let's end with a bang," the sunrise

crew crescendos. Except this next voice jars,
all bronchial and strained, echoes of old

Anne Ramsey in *Throw Momma from the Train*.
Croaking it lurches onto the airwaves,

slow raspy jog, because there is real pride
in the force of this: "I. Got. Pollywogs."

The five seconds of silence that follow
ripple through the morning commute, derailed

dead-air oblivion, midsummer raves
breached by pond-squatting amphibians.

The Poet Struggles with the Lyric I

I was. A succulent once for Halloween.
2 dozen green balloons fastened to my mustard-
colored turtleneck. My pot: a terra-cotta
miniskirt. Knit brown tights my dark roots. Black
boots. *Talk to me* in all caps scrawled on a Post-
it note pinned to my chest. None of this ever
happened. None of it. I was home on the couch
in my Walmart pajama bottoms eating half
a bag of Baby Ruths. The other half
I gave to 3 teenagers dressed up as 3
teenagers who rang the bell at 9 PM. But, wait,
where is my husband? Am I single now?
And childless? I swung a plastic watering can
by its thick curved handle at my hips, my phone
and my ID and a stick of medicated Blistex
clattering around in its dark well as I walked
the streets of Cleveland. Or someplace else I've never
been. Tiny haloed ghosts scuttled across
manicured front lawns, flashing in and out
of the night's soft shadows. I can still see them—
though I'm tripping now on the unravelling
hem of Snow White's yellow satin gown
and falling behind. Or I've traded my feathered
fairy wings for my brother's silver spray-painted
dryer-vent robot arms and now we are both
confused and confusing. Or I am standing
stiff-shouldered at the bottom of the driveway,

waiting with the other weary parents.
Or maybe I'm the old raccoon slipping
down, unseen, behind the rusted sewer
grate at the curb. Or the darkest house
in the neighborhood. The blank stare
of its cold windows. An absence of light.

Seven Haikus On Seven Top Tips To Improve Your Mental Wellbeing

—after the NHS website

1. *Reframe unhelpful thoughts*

I tear the edges
of my teenage photo then I
hang the empty frame.

2. *Be in the present*

The cardboard box is just
the right size. I hide within it
and wait to be opened.

3. *Get good sleep*

On every page
I write Zs
until dawn.

4. *Connect with others*

Elastic band in hand,
I stretch it out, ready to fling
at anyone with an open eye.

5. *Live a healthy life*

health health health
health wealth health
health health health

6. *Do something for yourself*

This list has been impetus
not for significance
but for selfishness.

7. *Write a letter to future you*

Dear FutureMe, PastMe failed. PresentMe
tried to future-proof itself so you might exist
in a third place we are all striving to reach.

Crossing Myself

You could call it a noose.
Or an abacus, restrung, a rosary
circumscribing a pulse—*my* wrist (not his,
not slashed, this time). I want numbers:
twelve beads, one for each hour. No,

don't ask the time of death. Was it
starless—my nephew pacing the bridge,
the insidious voice of rapids, wave after wave,
and later his sodden husk, drifting
ashore? No one talks about

undertow of the soul, the failure
to save—thrice: a nephew, an uncle,
my former student. And I'm back
mouthing words, over
the truest bead: *I wasn't enough.*

You could tell me to look back, nothing
to erase the vision, a trio of towheaded boys
with dazzler grins, happy-go-lucky
as tumbleweeds. Mine, for a time,
like the beads, one following another.

How does one come clean,
not saying the one thing, the bead
a small world forever
crossing your scarred palm,
all our names already there.

The Widower's Daughter

*"Let us not burthen our remembrance with
A heaviness that's gone."
—The Tempest, William Shakespeare*

That it was an island is little matter.
At the seventh of seven villages, at the top
of the mountain, we stopped to see the caretaker

who spoke some English and lived a short walk
from the house where we'd spend the night.
We found him on his stoop, whittling a stick.

When he saw us, he disappeared inside
and returned smiling, with iced cans of beer.
We sat, and he told us the news, bit by bit,

between sips. At some point he called
through the door and his daughter brought
shallow bowls and spoons. Of the color

of her hair or eyes, the shape of her hands,
I remember nothing. I remember her soup.
White beans. Pinch of sea salt. Nothing more.

The Prince in Cinderella

Long before you became, you already were,
It didn't matter what you wore.
Yet the queer salesman in a Thom McAn's
knelt and held your heel
like you were just any girl in the world
when he caught you
in the wrong aisle. You weren't even seven,
your feet still small, ballet pumps
at odds with your khakis
and Y chromosome, like mixing linens
and wool a verse below not letting an ox
and ass plow together. Yet he slipped
a pink shoe on, then the other, made you
understand the difference
between pity and reverence,
how only the last one fit as you stood
and gloriously crossed the floor.

[I come from a clothesline of shirts]

I come from a clothesline of shirts
not my size, I accessorize
with a skeleton key, complementary
colors that clash, red Corvair, green
Cadillac. I come from Wild Turkey mouth
to mouth, rake of poker chips, *a flush*
don't beat a full house. I come from smoke
choked, stiff petticoats, rasp of ballet
slippers skimming the floor. I come from
spooned out of the jar, *please knock, bell*
is broken. When I close my eyes, I see
a velvet drape with pleats that hold their shape
parting the red shouldered sky. Watch
it billow, given breath, watch me sway.

Secret Language

I used to take my brother to the zoo on Sundays,
stand on the narrow footpath in the Scripps Aviary,

my head turned up to thick-billed parrots and blue-bellied
rollers as they scavenged for nests and sang for love,

while he'd sit in his wheelchair, skinny arms tense
with excitement, his voice mixed with the rush

of river, that flood of music like blood.
His bellow of belonging never understood

by passersby, but the birds listened,
talked back, even, and in that wild place,

I could almost touch his language—
metallic and alive.

Asexuality: When the Louvre Cleans Winged Victory

Her absence is a stagnant landing, a stairway
going nowhere, without her strained effort
to take just one more step against that eternity
of stone cut wind carving her into heavy folds.

Struck cold, stuck in this startling void, I panic.
You can't stand with me against the current
as the crowd rises and breaks around the thrust
of her thigh, parting—

Without her, how can I explain how I understand
ravishment to you? I turn back to beg, *wait
with me*. I need to say, *anticipate the return
of the body*. But you have already moved ahead.

And after, outside a café, we slice baguettes, deep
grooves filled with plump roma tomatoes, split
over a sharp roquefort. You lap down the line
of seeded juice on your wrist and steal glances

at a French apple tart, pressing me for dessert,
for time to drag, weighted, perpetual. Wet
drapes spill from the awning overhead. March
rain curtains off the street, glazing our view.

Later, in heavy satisfaction and out of our heads,
you will drag me drench through the downpour,
striding heedlessly, hands clasped tight together,
against the wind, with you already boldly ahead

of me in understanding that the body was never
most important—only the joy filling this street.

Chronic

My mother used to pinch me when she thought I lied.
And after a while, the purples were blues, the blues yellows,

the yellows greens, and eventually, my skin was just skin.
I never lied, but sometimes, to satisfy her need to find fault,

I'd say I did. She was a brilliant woman who thought
everyone was talking in gibberish, while she spoke in tongues.

I stopped trying; she never learned how to listen.
She'd invite her friends over for dinner, indulge them,

and leave the leftovers for me. She'd bring out her best wine,
hand me an empty glass, and give a small toast,

to what or for whom exactly, I never knew. I was the daughter
she didn't want but eventually had. No one ever laughed;

I sometimes wished they did. Some days, she called me heaven-sent,
her long-lost lover, her sad maid, her lonely bastard.

There are days when she'll refuse to bathe, and I'll have to coax
her into the tub with something sweet to eat. She had a penchant

for cinnamon basil, peppermint, pineapple sage. She'll see
how long she can hold her breath underwater; I'll frantically pull

her up and she'll scream that I wanted her dead.
Sometimes, I'll dress her and she'll say her clothes

make her itch and her arms are falling off,
and I'll find her making dinner in the kitchen naked.

I go through the bins, check the bottles, read the labels,
make sure she's not poisoning us all. I know she doesn't mean

to do half the things she does. But sometimes,
I wonder, *is loving her hating myself?*

A Mother

“Abortions will not let you forget.

You remember the children you got that you did not get . . .”

—the mother, Gwendolyn Brooks

The doctor thinks she doesn't want to be a mother.

He wants her guilt, his surgery a confessional.

She thinks he would like to see her suffer

and only when he believes he has crushed her

does he send her form to another professional.

The doctor thinks she doesn't want to be a mother.

She doesn't try to convince him—why bother,

he sees the choice as objectionable, quasi-criminal.

She thinks he would like to see her suffer.

She says nothing to her children or their father,

whispers to friends who are non-judgmental.

The doctor thinks she doesn't want to be a mother,

not asking if there is money or time or love for another.

Her husband won't understand, is not capable.

She thinks he would like to see her suffer.

The white pills take two days to work. It is over,

the blood passed, the relief and pain unequivocal.

The doctor thinks she doesn't want to be a mother.

She thinks he would like to see her suffer.

With Mom Again

They call her “sweetie,” “miss,” and “dear.”

They mean well. She just rolls her eyes
and half smiles, wryly, as she tries
to find some bits of humor here

amidst indignity and pain.

At ease, she claims satirically
she’s here for anthropology—
to study this bizarre terrain

*and its inhabitants, and how
this system functions to create
a temporary social state—*
the pain returns, she stops for now.

Sometimes, a doctor will appear
from just behind the curtain wall,
and smile-talk. She can’t hear it all,
so I repeat things till she’s clear.

And when they enter with the tray,
and peel the gown they dressed her in,
attending to her weeping skin,
I’ll be the one who looks away.

A Place for Mom Keeps Emailing Me

Where do I put her now
that I am married,
that my father is dead?

I could nestle her among
the pots of pink geraniums she loves,
stick a popsicle stick labeled *Mom* next to her shoes.

When she's hungry, I could put her in the bowl
among the bananas and Granny Smith apples.

When she paces the house
in the middle of the night, when she says

your father is at the window again,

I could sit her on the sill, cover her
with curtains.

I could keep her
in the closet next to her favorite coat,
snuggle her inside its brown fur collar.

I'll take down drinking glasses from the cupboard
when she's thirsty, let her sip from each one.

When she says

who are you?

I can slip her into the mirror,
wipe the toothpaste smudges,
trace my nose, my lips, my chin.

I can press my hands to the glass.

Zenith

A black and white tv was always sputtering
through those early decades. My father,

twisting knobs to keep the picture
from its nervous twitch. Images reduced

to grainy shadow when the telescoped
antenna failed, despite a tinfoil flag.

Households gathered by those modest
screens, cautioned by all mothers if we

sat too close (we sat too close), we would
ruin our eyes. We watched all night

until an after-hours signal pierced our blurred
insomnia. I miss the soft glow sustaining

even after turning off the set, a glimpse,
through ruined eyes, of the afterlife.

Gargoyle

Perched on the cathedral ledge,
little sentinel hunched in stone, sky gray
as weather, all alone out there.

Snow falling past him, so many
tiny hands drifting from heaven's canopy,
numbed breath of centuries

His sunken eyes peer into
the half-light of stricken trees, footpaths
along the slate-still river. Wary.

holding vigil, he watches dawn
burn swarming demons into crusty rinds.
Morning slowly lights her rose window.

Euphemism

how brown flight has always meant
to be beaten. come. come dirt. come soldier.
come Jesus, feet tattered, name worn
in so many throats that have never needed to learn
to sing beneath the clouds. *come home*,
my mother tells me, but here I stand
above horizon. here, my heart is a thing
beating and unbeaten. here, I am
blackbird flying without wings.
Mother, when have we ever reached for the sky
and not missed? how does one fly
without first falling from the cliff?
here, on the last rung between myself
and my holiness, my vertebral bruising
paints wings and the concrete does not dry
and the sun does not set and dawn is not a thing
to be broken. here, the clouds too
are barefoot and singing.
here too, this body is all between a girl and her wings.

Juarez Nightclub, Fifteen

Fluorescent lights erupt overhead.
The dance floor, disburdened of its crowd.
My tongue snakes the mouth of a man
twice my age whose name I do not know.
The bouncer. Expat American, California-slick.
I retract my hand from his slacks.
He zips, a paranoid tornado. *Shit*, he whispers.
Fake license stashed in my bra boasts a lie: 18.
Legal enough. My wet still glistening on his fingers.
It is 2:03 a.m. The unlit street echoes footsteps,
a swarm of men not yet ready to end their night.
Nameless yanks me from their carnivorous hands,
pulls me toward the back alley. Onward.
Miles. On foot. Through dust and feral dogs.
I do not yet have the word *abduction*.
Only *shame*. And, somewhere deep, *survive*.

Self Portrait In Jesus Year

When I was 26, I slept with a man who felt much older than me. He told me it was his Jesus year—33—age of crucifixion. Of rebirth. Lying on his bed listening to *Tangled Up In Blue*, I thought I was special because I was doing wrong. Imagine it, stigmata. All the gore with none of the hammer and nails. All I can wonder now is, how will I fill all this time? Still, I can't smell Irish Spring bar soap without thinking of him. How a look on the stairwell in the English Department was enough for me. How *You're really talented* had me running miles through the rain. Eventually, I learned to drive. Learned to fold clean washing. Learned to write like a heart attack. Like a fit. Like a hangnail. Like grinding teeth. Like a hummingbird. Like an arterial bleed. A studio apartment does not make you grown. A secret can feel like a cocoon, but it is a damp studio apartment on its best day. In my Jesus year, I am so much older than I once was. We must live, I have decided, like we are chewing on tin foil. Live like we are pulling strands of mango flesh from a pit. Sticky hands. A kind of stigmata. Eating stonefruit like this is honest. To exist is embarrassing. Today, I bought a shirt that says NUESTRA LUCHA ES POR LA VIDA,

which means, I think, that fighting just for *meaning* is no longer enough. Which means, I think, none of that matters. *She was never crazy, was she?* He will never tell me now, but he could. He could peel back time like the waxy skin it is and say he is sorry for what he did. I am. Everywhere I look, there are horrors. More than anything, now, that means, I think, we need some kind of a second coming. Writing, maybe, should be more like yogurt than a heart attack. It should be absolutely fucking teeming with life.

Down to Earth

“I am God. I am God. I am God”
came from the back of the small blue bus,
for a while a monotone repetition,
a simple assertion. Then variations, stresses
on different words and sudden pauses
“*I am God. I am God. I am...God.*”
Sometimes it was mesmerizing, almost
soothing, but usually it was annoying
like the rosary or chanting or bad jazz. God

rode my bus to the drop-in center, looked
like D.H. Lawrence, looked like me. He was
about my age. One afternoon, dropping him
home at the Stratford rooming house with its dirt
yard and torn screens, he crossed in front of the bus
and stepped into the street without looking.
A passing cab knocked him down. *Oh my God!*
I jumped out to help, afraid of what I might see,
how hurt he'd be, but he was all right.
“Clipped my goddamn knee,” he cursed.

The closest I've come to God was God
sitting in the street, rubbing his knee—
nothing broken, nothing bleeding—and me
crouched beside him, my arm across his back as if
we were twins, or teammates on a team that never wins.

When the Poem Ends

You hit the back-alley bar, find it empty.

You like it here—broken jukebox,
string lights, the history of rings on every table.

You could be almost anyone—

stepfather, ex-girlfriend, narrator
concealing an I. No matter. The readers

loved the mystery of you, the shadow of you.

Anything more would've been too much.
You don't know the sound of your voice,

the color of your eyes, what you've lost,

what happens next. But tonight
is yours. That disco ball of moon

in the smudged window, yours.

The bartender puts down the dishrag, asks
your drink. You open your mouth to speak.

Joseph Fasano is a poet, novelist, and teacher. His nine books include *The Last Song of the World* (BOA Editions, 2024), *The Swallows of Lunetto* (Maudlin House, 2024), and *Fugue for Other Hands* (Cider Press Review, 2013). His writing has been widely translated and anthologized, recently in *The Forward Book of Poetry* (Faber and Faber, 2022). His book *The Magic Words* helps people of all ages unlock their creativity.

Courtney Hitson teaches English at the College of the Florida Keys. She has work forthcoming in *Canary*, *Neologism*, and *Allium*. Outside of writing, she enjoys drawing, freestyle unicycling, and philosophy. Courtney and her husband Tom (also a poet) reside in Key West, Florida with their two cats.

Samuel Prince's debut collection *Uterior Atmospheres* was published in 2020 by Live Canon. His poems have been published in *Moss Puppy Magazine*, *pioneertown*, *Red Door*, *Thimble Literary Magazine*, and *Willawaw Journal*. He lives in Norfolk, United Kingdom.

Ashley Steineger is a holistic psychologist and author of *The Poetry Therapy Workbook* (2023). Her poetry has appeared in *The Night Heron Barks*, *Palette Poetry*, *Apricity Press*, and *The Lumiere Review*. She lives in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she enjoys forest bathing and untranslatable words.

Jennifer K. Sweeney is the author of four poetry collections, most recently, *Foxlogic*, *Fireweed*. A collaborative chapbook, *Dear Question*, with L.I. Henley, is forthcoming from *Glass Lyre Press*. Awards include the James Laughlin Award, a Pushcart Prize, the Terrain Poetry Prize, and the Backwaters Poetry Prize. She teaches at University of Redlands.

Aileen Cassineto is a 2021 Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow. Her work has appeared in *American Poets*, *Anthropocene*, *Poetry*, *poets.org*, and *West Trestle Review*, among others. In 2023, she co-edited the anthology *Dear Human at the Edge of Time: Poems on Climate Change in the United States*.

Eric Brown is Executive Director of the Maine Irish Heritage Center. His work has previously appeared or is forthcoming in *Enchanted Living*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Mississippi Review* (first prize, Hamlet issue), *Carmina Magazine*, *The Galway Review*, *Constellations*, *Star*Line*, and *The Frogmore Papers* (shortlisted 2023 Frogmore Poetry Prize).

Susan Barry-Schulz is a first generation Estonian-American who grew up just outside of Buffalo, New York. Her work has appeared in *SWIMM*, *Shooter Literary Magazine*, *Bending Genres*, *Gone Lawn*, *West Trestle Review*, *Stone Canoe*, *Heron Tree*, *The Westchester Review*, and in many other print and online journals and anthologies.

Luigi Coppola—poet, teacher, avid rum-and-coke drinker. Selected for Southbank Centre’s New Poets Collective 23/24, Poetry Archive World-view winner’s list, Bridport Prize shortlist, Ledbury and National Poetry Competition longlist, he also has a debut collection from Broken Sleep Books due 2025. The poem “Seven Haikus On Seven Top Tips To Improve Your Mental Wellbeing” has been set to music and is available on Spotify and other outlets under his band name The Only Emperor.

Laurie Klein is the author of *House of 49 Doors: Entries in a Life* and *Where the Sky Opens* (both from Poeima/Cascade). She lives in a cedar rancher with 43 doors.

Kurt Olsson has published two poetry collections, *Burning Down Disneyland* (Gunpowder Press) and *What Kills What Kills Us* (Silverfish Review Press). His third collection, *The Unnumbered Anniversaries*, is due out in 2025 from Fernwood Press. Olsson's poems have appeared in many journals, including *Poetry*, *The New Republic*, and *The Southern Review*.

David Moolten's last book *Primitive Mood* won the T. S. Eliot Prize (Truman State University Press, 2009). His chapbook *The Moirologist* won last year's Poetry International Winter Chapbook Competition and is forthcoming. He lives in Philadelphia.

Karen Hildebrand is the author of *Crossing Pleasure Avenue* (Indolent Books, 2018). Her writing on dance appears in *Fjord Review* and *The Brooklyn Rail*. She holds an MFA from the Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. Originally from Colorado, she lives in Brooklyn.

Sonya Schneider is a Northwest poet and playwright with San Diego roots. Her poetry can be found or is forthcoming in *Potomac Review*, *Catamaran Literary Reader*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Naugatuck Literary Review*, and *SWIMM Every Day*, among others. She holds diplomas from Stanford University and Pacific University's MFA in Poetry.

Beth McKinney spends her time watching documentaries about space and sharks. Mysteries of the universe inspire her poetry; however, the epic shark poem remains elusive. She received her PhD from Texas Tech. Her poetry has appeared in such places as *Rattle*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Minnesota Review*, and *Basalt*.

Sam Szanto lives in Durham, United Kingdom. Her poetry pamphlet *This Was Your Mother* was published by Dreich Press in 2024. *Splashing Pink* (with Annie Cowell) was published by Hedgehog Press and was a Poetry Book Society Pamphlet Choice. Sam won the Charroux Poetry Prize and the First Writer Poetry Prize.

Andrea Maxine Recto is an emerging poet living in Manila. Her work has appeared in *One Art: a journal of poetry*, *the Santa Clara Review*, and the *Red Eft Review*, with more forthcoming in the *Long River Review* and elsewhere.

David Rosenthal is a public school teacher in Berkeley, California. He has contributed to *Rattle*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *HAD*, *Cosmic Daffodil*, *Teachers & Writers Magazine*, and others. He's been a Nemerov Sonnet Award Finalist and Pushcart Nominee. He's the author of *The Wild Geography of Misplaced Things* (White Violet Press).

Amanda Auchter is the author of *The Wishing Tomb*, winner of the PEN Center USA Literary Award for Poetry and the Perugia Press Book Award, and *The Glass Crib*, winner of the Zone 3 Press First Book Award for Poetry. She holds an MFA from Bennington College and lives in Houston, Texas.

Meredith Davies Hadaway is the author of four poetry collections, most recently *Small Craft Warning*, a collaborative volume with artist Marcy Dunn Ramsey. Her previous collection *At the Narrows* was winner of the Delmarva Book Prize. She is the Sophie Kerr Poet-in-Residence at Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland.

Ron Stottlemeyer lives in Helena, Montana. After a long career as a professor/scholar in colleges and universities across the country, he has returned to his love of writing poetry. He's interested in amateur astronomy and cooking international foods.

Matthew Murrey is the author of *Bulletproof* (Jacar Press, 2019) and the forthcoming collection *Little Joy* (Cornerstone Press, 2026). Recent poems can be found in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *ballast*, and elsewhere. He was a public school librarian for 21 years and lives in Urbana, Illinois with his partner.

Ela Kini is a student based in New York. Her work appears in *Palette Poetry*, *Cargoes*, and elsewhere. She loves lattes and poems and walks that lead nowhere.

Lotte Mitchell Reford is usually a poet but is currently working on nonfiction about sickness, language learning, loneliness, and starving medieval saints. Lotte holds an MFA from Virginia Tech and lives in Mexico City. Their writing has been published in—amongst other places—*Copper Nickel*, *Spam*, *Poetry Bus*, and *Hobart Pulp*. Their first pamphlet was published in 2021 by Broken Sleep Books. Lotte won *CRAFT*'s 2023 nonfiction prize and was nominated for a Pushcart for the same.

Jeanann Verlee is the author of *prey*, *Said the Manic to the Muse* and award-winning *Racing Hummingbirds*. She has received an NEA Poetry Fellowship, the Third Coast Poetry Prize, and the Sandy Crimmins National Prize. Her work appears in *Academy of American Poets*, *Adroit*, and *BuzzFeed*, among others.

Sarah Burke lives in Pittsburgh and is the author of *Blueprints* (2018 Cider Press Review Editors' Prize). Her poems have received the Indiana Review Poetry Prize, the James Wright Poetry Prize from Mid-American Review, and the Lynda Hull Memorial Poetry Prize from Swamp Pink.

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