

# RUST & MOTH

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## **search history**

oceans glowing blue. chocolate allergy.  
what does dementia feel like. number of  
lethal injections that have been botched. where is the  
middle ground between exploding inside and sleeping all day.  
how do I get there. is porcelain cold. why did they put  
missing kids on milk cartons. sense of impending doom  
before death. how do I start liking my body. list of  
human disease case fatality rates. blister agent.  
blood agent. nerve agent. lithium toxicity. can you  
overdose on tylenol. guy who got hit by particle accelerator.  
how to not have clammy hands. popular boy names 1970s.  
undefinable synonym. paranoid synonym. waco siege.  
do you capitalize heaven and hell. is there  
salt in riverbeds. can google tell you how many  
tabs you have open. libraries with the most books.  
fading kitten syndrome. squeeze theorem calculus. can you  
overdose on sertraline. what's the prayer called  
when you touch your head and your chest and your shoulders.  
which hand do you use for the sign of the cross. how to  
format tv episode scripts. script writing software.  
writer's block help. too anxious to drive  
what do I do. how many bodies on mount everest.  
lonely hearts club meaning. ozymandias breaking bad. do things  
get better. when. how soon is soon. how to slow dance.  
can I die from a taser. contamination ocd. can you get a knot  
in your muscle or is that a myth. how to tell  
if a lump is cancer. how to fall in love. heart attack vs  
panic attack. how to break a fever. behavior-altering  
parasite wikipedia. can prescription drugs be carried  
on a plane. how to fall in love with myself.

## **An Only Child Poem**

You don't expect the man on the bus  
speaking booming business English  
to switch to soft, excellent French  
halfway through his phone call  
inviting someone to his birthday piss-up  
on Saturday—one moment laughing about  
the old falling-down juice and grilled meats,  
and the next talking thoughtfully  
about the years settling over him like heavy snow,  
covering up the shallow footprints  
he has been able to leave on the earth.  
Why the change? And why French?  
And why on the bus? You imagine a random  
francophone stepson or an old family friend  
or someone joining the call from the Paris office,  
but no, no, these are embarrassing ideas,  
lacking explanatory power and as obviously wrong  
as drinking hot coffee through a straw  
when you realise what the actual answer must be,



which is that he is speaking to his mother,  
speaking the language he learned to speak  
for his mother's sake all those years ago,  
yes, his dear mother who wanted the world  
for him to be big and full of boulevard views  
and difficult philosophy and methodical cooking  
and paintings of women on swings,  
his saintly mother who would pack  
his cornichon sandwiches when she got home late  
from work so they'd have a night in the fridge  
and she could get exactly six minutes more sleep  
in the morning before she would see her boy off  
to the school bus to his elite, expensive academy,  
her boy, her trésor, her chouchou, her little biquet.

## **The House on the Hill**

In the blatant silence, I hear it:  
snow landing silently as assassins  
on the lawn, a family of mice fretting in the attic.  
Articles of the woman who used to live here  
still hang together in closets, arms swaying  
against arms, pastel blouses beside stained trousers,  
woolen nightgowns, Lycra stockings with runs;  
uniforms of the elderly. The musty time capsules  
of lotion bottles, night cream, wrinkle cream,  
half empty, dried up on the vanity. In every drawer  
are amulets for Mary and letters to Jesus,  
her longtime pen pal who would finally answer.  
In the corner, a plastic commode, her diapers,  
the mothballs, antiseptics and gauze.  
This is how the pious live: in careful measures.  
Six eyes of the last three Popes stare out  
from cracked frames, having watched over this house  
for ages. I pillage the cupboards, try on her shoes,  
blow away dust several lifetimes in the making.  
To the night, I am anonymous, a little crawler  
like the lady beetles crowded together in window sills.

Another shell of life, greedy for heat.  
I feel, in this house, like defying nature,  
staying upright while the gold moon grows bone  
white over the treeline, ears trained to the preying  
of predators, real or imagined, the dark lives  
that move across every knoll, a forest of secrets  
whispered between drafty jambs,  
the house groaning in reply, as though beaten  
by gravity to submit: *What are you if not occupied?*  
There is a cadence to the way things fall,  
an orchestra of twigs, wind, joists of the body  
creaking. The cold dwellings of my hands  
find pockets to keep company in, visiting the rooms  
like a third-shift nurse, turning knobs, touching  
the mirrors. To the bowels of the house, I leave  
my coat, my name. In every closet, another life  
I can wear until my hair is white, albums of faces  
I will learn, borrow their pale expressions.  
The many pieces of me move slowly,  
settling into themselves like a barn on the horizon  
held together with nails and prayer.

## **Mouth**

The last time I ever snapped the cap off a bottle of whiskey  
I smelled your breath the night you kissed me on the mouth.

I tried to apologize for never being the son you needed,  
for all those nights my fist swung at your swollen jaw.

We never meant to drink. We fell into reminiscing at the kitchen table.  
Once you forgave me, you pulled your secret whiskey to your lips.

Each shot made the next one easier. We passed the plastic bottle  
back and forth, sharing what you gave me: shots, sips, and spit.

My hands were so sweaty I couldn't open the fireball nip we found  
in the back of our tea cabinet. I pried it open with my crooked teeth.

I wish I could remember what happened after. I've always thought of that night  
as a return to the thirst you gave me, a return to our need. A burning throat.

I never got the chance to explain my rage. I never got to tell you  
it was your daughter who was swinging her fists in your face.

Three months later I held your yellowed hand. I delivered my birth  
name into your ear. The last thing I saw was you opening your mouth.

## **The Red Thread**

She handed me this ball of red thread  
as if I were to knit him a girdle,  
a bloody shawl to wrap around  
the muscled column that holds his Taurian head.  
Thread. A woman's gift. I rarely think  
of women in their place, enclosed and separate,  
patiently weaving and dyeing  
while men, wrapped in their rich labors  
put our shoulders to the work of war.  
We kill the monsters we create by  
crossing our pride with the wrath of spiteful gods.  
Meanwhile the women are waiting, waiting  
for our return. Let them wait.

This world is a challenge, I am ready,  
shield buckled to my wrist, knives at the ready,  
sharpened and ready to sing.  
I work my way to the heart of the maze  
and slay the beast beating at its center.  
To slay a beast, you become one.  
But first, this girl, with her soft skin  
and whispered, urgent instructions.  
I listen, nod, trail the red thread  
behind me, a track of blood,  
a long unspooled viscera  
that will bring me back to betray her.

## **The Kansas River is a Sickle**

I remember in the Summertime  
when the river respired orange  
in the remained gloaming, as if  
a long shadow of candysweet.  
Sand islands tiny and  
fleeting—

A hot trickle of  
molasses.

And when the steam fissured its  
face and set it spinning in an  
increasingly incendiary midmorning—

As if all would suddenly  
stop and revolve the other  
direction—

I sat longfaced in a moving car,  
wondering why I hadn't gotten  
a job as the pavement rolled  
contracting and elapsing beneath.

The Summer holds weight.  
Wheat bleat, crystalized amid a  
sloped ray.

    There are some  
        stalks hanging—  
as if pain, held like a murmur,  
laps the metalsurfaced waters  
And swims.

## **Bellow**

Behold the deepest well  
within yourself. Some place  
you thought only despair

resides. It must be, isn't it,  
for nothing has emerged  
out of it for days and days,

not even an echo to tell you  
something yet stirs. Then  
a moth lands on your wrist

one day. Fragile animal,  
its wings a wisp of all that  
you do not understand.

How are you the one left  
alive, how can the morning  
be relentless, how does one

put on the skin of who you are  
supposed to be. How do you  
continue to carry a body riddled

with haws. You know then  
the sound you make. From  
your belly to your throat.



There. So it flies off, sweet  
visitor, dear traitor, its task  
finally settled. What you have

been you cannot remain.  
And what you owe this  
world you cannot name.

## Ways of Walking

—to *Chucha*

Teach me of the life profane,  
to wedge my nose in every hedge  
and rumple pruned perfection  
till it's wavy at the edges.  
Teach me not to fear what drips,  
what oozes, pools and gathers grit,  
what lives in lower places  
and lurks around the bend.  
Show me how to trick the yoke,  
keep it brimming with suspense—  
now slack, now tense—an argument  
against the natural order.  
To know a street within my skin,  
its length, its heat, its arteries,  
its odors and its undulations,  
risks and green and revelations,  
whirr of birds and near-collisions,  
to thrill towards it with my tips  
full-force is something I desire.  
Lead the way then and perhaps  
lit by your living lunatic maps,  
mine will unfurl or catch fire.

## **Accidental Ghosts**

Shadows burned on sidewalks.

Smell of sweat in chambray. Prints left on a headboard.

Less beer in the fridge, no milk, and this dead leaf  
tracked in. The cat let out, a whiff of weed  
and scent of someone else, once in my bed.

I thought I coined this turn of phrase  
for what we leave behind. Choose instead  
fluke phantoms, or coincidental wraiths.  
Random unplanned apparitions. Humans  
in the abstract, mist on film.

Who can tell when ghosts eclipse us,  
where our memories cease to take up space.  
Begin to seep through walls and unchain time.

Blast shadow stains the front stoop. Decomp  
paints the carpet. Echoes plague the wood floors,  
too-small closets. The presence of an absence,  
in my haunted head. Poltergeists and moths  
bump in the night.

## Eavesdropping

Back home from work, I hear  
the couple next door fighting.  
Yell and scream scratching  
the weak wall separating us;  
a chalkboard. Night wipes a duster  
over the scribbles of daylight.  
Rain has lashed at the street's  
memories of sweat. Over dinner,  
a sob makes its way to me like smoke  
from a distant chimney: the afterword  
of every flame. This year, I've only sobbed  
twice – behind two separate toilet doors.  
Someone had said, *if you feel like crying  
in the middle of the street, try to hold it  
till home*. I'm not sure it's healthy, but  
when I tried it, I forgot to cry at all.  
There must be a place in the body for all  
the weeping we forget, an organ digesting  
grief, churning it again and again until  
what remains is resilience. Later at night,  
when I'm off to bed, all I hear is giggles  
and the occasional kiss. I open the window.  
The moon stretches inward like an old friend.

## Albergue

Here is a deep hunger to marshal thoughts  
into words into neat stanzas. I want to host  
my words in cottages, or hostels scattered  
across the white.

*Albergue* is Spanish  
for a house you find, dusted and sweating,  
at 2pm or 3pm—earlier if you left  
the last one before dawn, crossed  
the Meseta in the morning cool, and passed  
today's spring flowers, distant peaks  
and open sky, to reach a €10 bed  
and a new stranger on the other bunk.

May my words find a brief home  
like that, trekking over page's plateau  
between these built stanzas.

And a chance to kick off dust-white boots,  
eye up the wandering metaphor sprawled  
on the next bed, and ask: *How far are you  
going, then? And what are you running from?*

## **Planet Utah**

Mountains glint  
like bunched-up tinfoil—  
a backdrop of rut and ridgy snow.

Foreground is you on a salt beach so white  
it hurts my eyes, a black hoodie framing  
your bearded face.

Our boots crunch an evaporated lake  
cradled in the palm of a range  
swathed in haze, heat rising

from the grains that used to be water  
for families to soak in, across the highway  
from an open-pit mine.

First day out west, we climbed Ensign Peak  
and hailed the view of summits drizzled  
with cold, but I couldn't help

fast-forwarding, picturing the melt  
to brown, inoculating myself  
against future heartbreak.

Back at the capitol building, girls with rosy  
skin and white dresses gather on a hill  
among cherry blossoms

and I take a mental snapshot—  
a delicate exercise, holding the present  
in my hands like a soap bubble.

## Strong Tea

I chose Ireland in winter because it was wet,  
following the siren song of saturation—my love

for a summer deluge or tepid spring showers  
or even a cold downpour in fall, moisture

that found the cave dwellings in your skin  
and settled there, making your hair do a jig

and softening the intake of breath.

Such rain affinity, I assumed, was a trickle-down trait

from Galway forebears that would let me bond  
with the island as soon as I stepped off the plane

and into the mist, but it took months to shift  
from spilled out to stirred in. Then I belonged

to the drops that dampened rooftop and sweater.

The part left behind when I returned home

is pattering down the road in the drizzle  
to tumble into a café with students

who played mandolin and penny whistle after class  
and let me stick to them like a stray cat



as we drank pot upon pot of breakfast tea  
brewed the way I still do it decades later: letting leaves

sink and infuse hot water, telling a few jokes,  
then pouring the umber liquid through a strainer.

The scene grows stronger as it steeps—rain darkening  
the street, elbows, wet wool, bursts of laughter.

## My Mother's Art

She looks through her old sketch pads, studies  
of faces, mountains, dried flowers.  
She asks me to bring colored pencils.

We sharpen three dozen,  
sort them by hue,  
arrange them in a row of glass jars  
on a sturdy white table.

Most days, she practices  
walking. Three times up and down the hallway,  
her aide by her side, reminding her  
to lift her left leg,  
keep her walker close.

The slowness  
of moving under water.

She has to stop, catch her breath.  
*One down, two to go*, the aide says.  
*Do you need another rest break?*

Four years like this.  
Hours swallowed  
by the gravity of her body.

The sun slants through her large windows,  
lights up the jars of colored pencils,  
the white table, the blank pages.

## **Alone in the House**

And then comes the day when more  
pours out—wave upon wave.

You hadn't known what you held  
inside, thought you had already learned  
all the shapes of your grief.

But now: you at the kitchen table,  
the light bill, the doctors' bills, your cold  
cup of tea,

                    and suddenly  
you are gasping,  
wailing, folding yourself over  
your folded arms.

Your animal sound  
wrenches you back. The dog  
stands in the doorway, alert eyes  
fixed on you. He holds himself perfectly still.

## **Blood Orange**

The semi-mortal sky licks  
crimson off the kitchen walls,  
all the purples at the center

of a tootsie roll pop kind of night  
& other patient liminalities.  
The only way to eat a blood orange

is to wait—opening its own abject-fleshed  
deliciousness; how human  
it looks inside, sticky & desperate.

A glare off the dull end  
of a knife, halos onto photos  
of two uncanny lovers slouching

into one another, then these  
filthy dishes, neglected excavations,  
then curtains like ghosts in endless

ascension, then mid-thought about  
how people in the Middle ages believe  
that this seeping citrus symbolizes

new beginnings & Resurrection  
is a new sex position we are trying  
tonight. The trick to it is—

we must look like phantoms  
to each other through the steam  
of leftover lo mein. I google how

long it takes for the ruptured blood  
orange pooling between us  
to cure me

of my indigestion.

## **Choose Your Own Adventure**

Poems aren't puzzles. Disagree  
if you want & if you do  
see line nineteen where  
you'll find my mom, drunk again  
the night she pitched a log  
through our kitchen window, scaring  
the shit out of five-year-old me  
& my dad, who'd locked her out  
& took the phone off the hook after  
finding her belligerent in the breezeway.  
Let's say it was June. Let's say  
the lilacs were in bloom. Let's say  
something was cracked  
deep inside her, dark-deep,  
something about the bitter winters  
of her girlhood, the battered bedroom  
where her older brother slid in unbidden  
beside her, so she lurched outside,  
skulked to the back where she kept  
bottles in the woodpile, where darkness  
put that log in her arms. If you want  
an answer here, see line one.

If you believe in beauty, see line twelve.  
If you think she regretted smashing  
that window or anything else,  
I'm sure of it & I wish she hadn't  
lost herself to fury, I wish  
I could give her June lilacs  
& poems like puzzles that solve  
themselves, but she's dead,  
my dad too & questions ring  
unanswered in the echo of lines ten  
& sixteen, in the click of the door's  
thick lock & the shard-crash  
of glass, in the echo of this story  
& all the rest, my choice  
to write them, her choice  
to live them, choices  
we never thought we'd make.

## **The Grief Performer**

I am on a stage but I already know I haven't won. I can tell from the judges' faces that my performance has been underwhelming. They wanted more wailing, more darkness. Maybe I should have tied a black scarf to my head. I sit there, wanting to understand why I'm here. When they finally announce their winner, she is a mother whose daughter has been killed in a mass shooting. I don't blame the judges; I would have picked her, too. She stands, dazed as if she has no idea what she's doing here. They hand her a trophy and she drops it. I wonder if the weight is too heavy. Or if the weight even registers in her despair. The judges don't look too concerned. They prop the trophy on the podium and push her towards the microphone. She stares at the mic, as if trying to decipher what it is, what it does. After an extended silence a male judge steps up, side hugs her, and speaks into the mic: "She's too bereft with grief! This is exactly why we chose her!" Everyone starts to give a standing ovation then holds up their phones to record videos of the unmoving mother. I stand, too. I don't know what to do with my hands. Someone gives me champagne and I start to sip it, forgetting that I don't drink. Another judge approaches me, smiles apologetically and says, "I'm really sorry. I was rooting for you."



## **Fishkill Creek**

You go to it as to a lover,  
cleaving an onrush of waters  
quickened by ice from the mountains  
while out on its banks it is summer.

From its torrent you stagger out gleaming,  
drenched for a season of drying,  
and all day drip with its leavings,  
wind licking you down to your salt.

Wet with the memory of bathing,  
you blister your feet on the roadway,  
wrapped in your skin like a parchment  
seared by the ink of one name.

## Orejana

—a calf that wanders away from its mother  
before being branded.

Read that again, I say, and you sigh,  
wrap your left hand behind your head,

raise the book in your right. You're  
the oldest man I've ever touched now,

though my eye still traces the path  
the muscles forge along your arm.

We're reading a history, how my ancestors  
lost the ranchos—disrupting their dust

as if they hadn't just settled into the past,  
as if their bodies didn't soften as they aged

and learned to forget. This is the chapter  
that follows the drought—

rodeos again being arranged, debts  
finally paid, though you and I know

every acre will be lost. Our fingers trace  
names left behind on graves,

we speak them aloud as if lowing  
will lead us back to the herd.

## Remember

yesterday, the woods under an overcast sky—  
bare oaks, dead grass. The sensation you were  
inside a sepia-tinted photo. Remember  
the single swatch of green, unfallen leaves  
on the invasive buckthorn bush. The only blue,  
a jay screeching from a high branch.

Remember how your dad said there weren't  
as many birds now as there used to be.  
*Ah*, you thought then, *it's just that he can't*  
*hear them any more*. But now you wonder

if he was right. In the stacks of paintings  
he left behind, there are blue jays,  
meadowlarks and waxwings.  
When you brought pictures to brighten  
his drab room, it was the birds he wanted.  
After he died, you saw a waxwing,  
just one, elegant among late-summer leaves.

Remember the woods yesterday, sparrows  
beside the path (or warblers—something brown  
and little). When you circled back  
to where you entered, your tracks were gone,  
snow-dusted. Fresh deer prints  
crossed the trail.

## The Enemy

is worse than we imagine worse than anything if we know anything about the enemy the enemy is worse than anything we know the enemy is the cause or the root cause the root of the root of the cause the enemy's friends aren't even the enemies of our friends the enemy's not even friends with our enemies when the enemy is friendly the enemy is a liar or filthy liar the enemy is full of shit to be honest the enemy doesn't have a truthful bone in his body you can't even trust the enemy *to be the enemy* rooting around in the roots when the enemy is the cause at the same time the enemy is the effect the enemy is the sum total the enemy's friends aren't anybody's friends the enemy's enemy is even worse than the enemy

## **The first step in portrait restoration is to remove natural varnish**

People do that sometimes:  
They yellow. They crack.  
Spread out over every subtle color,  
stick to your wings.

Imagine time like the man with a cotton swab.  
peel fossil resin back, find primary oil.  
Underneath the overpaint  
shadowed firmament all orange and gold.

Bad cases get a scalpel;  
for the worst he uses hands,  
rub solvent until even  
fingerprints vanish.

There is only the true of you  
revealing yourself,  
hand raised in praise again;  
fire reborn in a dead eye.

Under blacklight there can be no pentimento  
only an empty studio, quiet dark  
some space to tell  
these stories of our scars.

## **Wheatfield with Crows**

I have been failing for years  
to write a poem about dying.  
This isn't true. I'm still lying  
about suicides. I haven't  
said anything.

Omissions  
are blessings that catch up  
to you eventually. Van Gogh  
painted fields of wheat and  
a dead end path just weeks  
before shooting himself, a  
dark sky and loneliness. I  
am evading your question.  
The wheat bending like hair  
combed softly, the clouds  
heavy with color, the depth  
of his brush, clumped and  
swirling as if saying none  
of this was real. My brother  
cried when I told him that  
our Uncle Adam was found  
in his childhood  
home. I refused to  
look into the casket  
at his twin brother's funeral  
twenty years ago. I did not  
want to see his body  
embalmed, or his skin  
tinged blue, ominous.

A dark sky is only real if  
you are looking for it. I can't  
say whether it was from  
asphyxiation or chemicals  
but Adam found Marc and  
held him for ten years  
then followed him. When  
Van Gogh painted the field,  
did he, as I like to imagine,  
see only the wheat and sky,  
before the crows startled  
by something, rose up  
filling the air like thought  
before flying away, yes  
even the crows, away  
from him.

## **Heron Dusk**

After day's serrated gash of altercation  
has made its stab-inflected rant; after time wasted  
in a digital ague, lost in punch-drunk argument  
with toxic heads, I must go out walking.

I plant my angst near where the heron lands, folds its wings,  
then stands in stillness. It waits beside the ripples of the pond.  
Here: exhaled light makes rushes quiver. There: an insect  
shiver on its surface: mute and yet midge music.

Dusk unfolds along the water. I pause,  
hearing everything but sorrow: frog hopped  
burp-song, calls of cardinal, keening hawk,  
antiphony of intermittent cricket and cicada.

Inside my chest, a door opens.  
By this pond-sheened curve of trees and sunset  
cloud, I hush. I let quietude creep closer; a wild thing nosing  
at my heart. It turns three times before it settles into breath.

Today, I've been a broken bell, a bark-stripped branch,  
a shell mislaid from sand. Oh, Heron, lift my spirit.  
Make me reverberation. Flow my breath to forest,  
a spiral shaping song. For what is prayer

but longing given wings?



## Obit Postscript

The good news is, his tinnitus  
lived on. When that day came,  
it hovered above his urn and

the white lilies his sister brought to  
the funeral—like an invisible bee.  
Visitors in their woeful clothes

huddled by the claret drapes and heard  
nothing. But it was there. Unflinching,  
standing watch. The only part of him

death left unchanged. But did he ever  
actually listen to it? Did he hear how  
it labored in his inmost parts, his

self's self? Notice how it stayed up  
late to hiss in his ear when the day's  
grating noise was gone? Yet when

his snoring finally ceased, it still whispered  
in its strange wordless tongue, steadfast as  
a mother's love, content to have him, at last.

## **Doom Scrolling**

My brain froths in its bone pot,  
roiling with doomsday thoughts—  
hurtling asteroid, boiling ocean,  
galloping plague—disasters coming  
at me from all sides. The future  
is a snare tightening, or at least  
that's what my brain says, fizzing  
like an alka-seltzer in a glass of  
chardonnay as I lie on the couch,  
running out the clock and making  
poor nutritional choices because  
why the hell not. The cat lounges  
on the couch's wide arm and cleans  
and cleans himself. Once he's done,  
he tucks his face under his tail  
and sleeps. I basically do the same,  
except for the cleaning part. Sleep  
is the most interesting place I go.  
At least when I'm dreaming I can  
leave my house without panicking  
as the same horror film plays on  
every screen, news cycle spinning  
like a roulette wheel or the barrel  
of a gun, the future a lethal lottery  
ticket my brain can't stop scratching,  
even though it knows it can't win.

## Eventide at the Lake House That Used to Be My Father's

Patrolling, two green darners stitch the air.  
I shouldn't be here, but he loved this dock:  
as blackbirds trill, a water strider drifts  
beneath, then scrabbles toward coins of light  
let slip by willows. Bubbles flute up in threes;  
I peer but cannot pierce the glassy tint.  
A turtle, perhaps, feasting on what's fallen.  
Again the strider basks, pushed by the current—  
Dad warned me about those, how tidal jets  
have swept strong swimmers deep, like when I turned  
our fish-tank pump on golden shiners mouthing  
at the schedule feeder, *Drop a nugget!*  
Come 6 p.m., some other current ruffles  
my phone: *Work*. I remain. The sky goes dark.

## Dust Jacket

we pulled an insanity of self-sown burdock  
to make room for something easier to love  
in the overlapping thresholds  
of the backyard

not sure if our work will get done in time  
and if *in time* is about the future or the past  
when I make my tea, hibiscus, mint,  
what kind of sane am I longing for

the brain around my brain  
increasingly haywire  
making it harder to love an old place  
or pick up the newer signals

yet, in my rewilding  
no anarchy

## **On Waking to Find it Still Here**

I've only just woken and look  
out the back window: a wind-swept  
plastic bag I saw yesterday  
in front of the house in dying  
sunlight breathing icy spirits  
in and out of its possession

if the flow of things had taken  
it away while I slept I'd have  
forgotten it altogether

slightly unnatural faded  
yellow unmistakable in  
the rigid drifts of snow it is  
silently presenting me with  
evidence of things that I did

not commit

to memory

## North Fork Cabin

From a deck chair, I scan the low  
meadow for wolves, sip Riesling,  
clap together my hiking boots

and wait for dust to settle.  
Like sentries, Engelmann  
Spruce guard the driveway.

A drawing of an owl  
hangs from the cabin's log wall  
next to propane lanterns and

a rug with an eagle's span.  
*Jim Bridger, A Mountain Man*  
rests on a coffee table.

The tick of squirrel claws  
rattles along the tin roof  
like the sound of loosened beads.

A brush of pine boughs sweeps  
the window pane. Wasps buzz.  
I can see how with grace

a mule deer lifts his fine head,  
inquisitive, from within  
a lodge pole pine's deep shadow.

And I am nothing, a small speck  
who lives among the high peaks  
listening for the bugles of elk.

## **Krilliad**

In waters colder than the Aegean,  
a cloud of krill swells into an army.  
Their antenna are slender spears;  
translucent shells slot into armour,  
glowing like faint temple fires.

The whale rises, an unbound titan,  
and the krill are captive, caught  
in a divine tide. They are gleaming  
ships, sailing towards baleen plates  
that seem taller than the walls of Troy.

No horses or heroes necessary,  
and no turning back. The swarm  
is swallowed without ceremony,  
sieved through fingernail gates,  
into the belly of the underworld.

Yet, one is clever. Spared by spontaneous  
moulting, he drops like a star and leaves  
a decoy self to the darkness. Ready for  
an odyssey, he swims upwards: sunlight  
glistens on the surface like Ithaca.

## About the Contributors

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**Ava O'Connor** is a poet from San Diego and an undergraduate literature student at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her work has been published in *Chinquapin Literary Magazine*, *Matchbox Magazine*, and *Nightcap Zine*.

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**Robin Arble** is a poet from western Massachusetts. Her poems have appeared in *Midway Journal*, *Poetry Online*, and *Quarter After Eight*, among others. They are a poetry reader for *Beaver Magazine* and *The Massachusetts Review*. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in literature and creative writing from Hampshire College.

**J. Greenberg** resides in Western Massachusetts and reads for the *South Florida Poetry Journal*. Her work has received the Joe Bolton Poetry Award and appears in various publications, including *Literary Mama*, *SWWIM Every Day*, and *O Miami*.

**Karen G. Berry** is a poet, essayist and novelist who works and writes in Portland, Oregon. She has poetry published in many journals, including *Fireweed*, *SubPrimal*, *Panorama*, *Seek It*, *Prairie Poetry*, and the late, great *Goblin Market*.

**Benjamin Patterson** is a 16-year-old high school student from Lawrence, Kansas. He's received several Scholastic Writing awards, and his poems have been published in or will appear in *Ballast*, *Wilderness House*, and *The Pedestal Magazine*.



**T. De Los Reyes** is a Filipino poet and author of *And Yet Held* (Bull City Press). Her poems have previously appeared or are forthcoming in *Room, Salt Hill Journal*, *RHINO*, and *Narrative*, among others. She is founder of *Read A Little Poetry*. She lives and writes in Manila, Philippines.

**Anushka Sen** grew up in Kolkata, India and teaches English literature at Loyola University, Chicago. She is compelled by literary engagements with animals, living spaces, and movement. Her poems have appeared in *Eunoia Review*, *The Dalhousie Review*, and *Vayavya*. She has received fellowships for translators from *ALTA* and *Bread Loaf*.

**Wren Donovan** lives in Tennessee. She studied at Millsaps College, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and the University of Southern Mississippi. When not writing, Wren reads history books and Tarot cards and fairy tales. Her poetry can be found in *Orca*, *Poetry South*, *Cumberland River Review*, *The Shore*, *Fahmidan*, and elsewhere.

**Debmalya Bandyopadhyay** is a writer and mathematician based in Birmingham, United Kingdom. His poems, translations, and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *Ghost City Review*, *LEON Literary Review*, *Couplet Poetry*, *Ballast*, *Propel*, and *Anthropocene Poetry*, among other literary journals. He has been nominated for Best of the Net and was a finalist for *SweetLit's* 2024 Poetry Prize. He can often be found in parks confabulating with local birds.

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**Sarah Carleton** writes poetry, edits fiction, plays the banjo, and knits obsessively in Tampa, Florida. Her poems have appeared in numerous publications, including *Nimrod*, *Tar River Poetry*, *SWWIM Every Day*, *ONE ART*, and *Valparaiso*. Her first collection, *Notes from the Girl Cave*, was published in 2020 by Kelsay Books.

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**Mike Bove** is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *EYE* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2023). He serves as a 2024 Writer-in-Residence at Acadia National Park and is Associate Editor for *Hole in the Head Review*. Mike lives with his family in Portland, Maine, where he was born and raised.

**S.M. Badawi** is an Arab-American poet and teacher whose work has been published in *Diode Poetry Journal*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Cream City Review*, and many other journals. Her poetry has been featured in *Poetry Daily* and has been nominated for Best of the Net, the Nina Riggs Poetry Award, and the Pushcart Prize. She is a *Tin House* workshop alumna and has received fellowships and awards from Summer Literary Seminars and Florida Atlantic University. She lives in the Pacific Northwest, where she teaches writing.

**Joshua Coben** is the author of two poetry collections, *Maker of Shadows* (Texas Review Press, 2010), winner of the X. J. Kennedy Poetry Prize, and *Night Chaser* (David Robert Books, 2020), a finalist for the Vassar Miller Prize, the New American Poetry Prize, and the Donald Justice Poetry Prize. He works as a school librarian in Massachusetts.

**Alison Hurwitz** is a former cellist and dancer who finds music in language. A double 2023 Best of the Net Nominee, she is the host of the monthly online reading Well-Versed Words. Alison's work is upcoming in *Sky Island Journal*, *South Dakota Review*, and *Thimble Magazine*.

**Jared Beloff** is the author of *Who Will Cradle Your Head* (ELJ Editions, 2023). He is the co-editor of *Poetry of Queens 2* (Poets of Queens, 2024). His work can be found at *AGNI*, *Baltimore Review*, and *Image Journal*.

**Melody Wilson** is a Pushcart nominated poet whose poems appear in *Verse-Daily*, *West Trade Review*, *Crab Creek Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Water-shed*, and elsewhere. She is pursuing her MFA at Pacific University.

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**Ken Hines**, sometime poet. One-time ad agency writer. Part-time college English teacher. Full-time husband, dad, grandpa, gadfly. Poems in *Rust & Moth*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Dunes Review*, and others. Essays in *Philosophy Now* and *Barrelhouse*. Recent Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee.

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**Julie Choffel's** poems can be found in *Conduit*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Posit*, *Orion*, *New American Writing*, and elsewhere. She is the author of two full-length collections, *The Hello Delay* (Fordham) and *Dear Wallace* (The Backwaters / Univ. of Nebraska Press). Julie teaches creative writing at the University of Connecticut in Hartford.

**Matthew King** used to teach philosophy at York University in Toronto; he now lives in what Al Purdy called “the country north of Belleville,” where he tries to grow things, counts birds, takes pictures of flowers with bugs on them, and walks a rope bridge between the neighbouring mountaintops of philosophy and poetry.

**Geraldine Connolly**, born and raised in Pennsylvania, has published four poetry collections including *Province of Fire* and *Aileron*. Her work appears in *Poetry*, *Gettysburg Review*, and *The Georgia Review*. She has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Breadloaf Writers Conference and Cafritz Foundation. She lives in Tucson, Arizona.

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