

RUST & MOTH

Winter 2025

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ISBN: 978-1-716-30742-3

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The Love of Someone Who Wants to Die

I've been thinking about scent and memory
and my second love, a wisp of boy, rail-thin,
sinewy with muscle, veins strung
under milk-pale skin and not much taller than me,
who left rooms thick with amber and bergamot,
camphor crushed fresh, his delicious dark curls
slick with coconut and shea butter and Moroccan oil.
Pressed close, he breathed me in like nitrous oxide
and floated away in helium ecstasy.

Our dorm was prison-like with its chipped cement walls
and red brick exterior, and together we laid naked
as dolls and lint-stuck in his thin bed, muted overcast light
falling over us from paint-shut windows
and illuminating the scars that laced his arms.
Sometimes I hated him for hating himself.
Sometimes I looked at him across a table of friends
when sun struck his curls and the skin pulled
over his jawbone was achingly beautiful,
like a silky white shark you want to reach out
and touch. I scratched words into his chest
with my fingernail and the red ghosts of them kept for hours.
He was always hungry, ate anything
and devoured most meals, always burning his tongue.
He brought me lemons cut in half and dusted with Tajín
and painted our nails with black gloss he stole from CVS,
the kind of boy who

pressed his wounds to make them hurt again,
kept an age-tattered goodbye note tucked in his wallet,
hid safety-net razor blades between copies
of old high school books: *Animal Farm*,
Catcher in the Rye, who scored an eight-ball
and wouldn't stop until it was gone
so I'd pass him on my way to an 11 am class
in the common room, red-eyed,
glued to detergent commercials.

Still, he'd have loved me at my most disgusting.
No performance. He liked the smell
of candles burned out, hoppy beers,
dirty socks, balsamic vinegar, black clove cigarettes,
gasoline, sauerkraut, pluff mud.

I've been thinking how
once, a friend and I lent skirts and crop tops
to our boyfriends so they could strut around downtown
holding hands as a kind of gender protest,
we'll show *them*, he said,
Southern heat quivering on the asphalt.
Years later, when I heard they'd kissed each other,
probably more, I felt no possession. I only imagined
their knife-flat bodies, knotted knuckles,
shoulder bones sleek as water snakes,
the minus-minus of them, double negative,
and marveled at the magic
of knowing what to do with a body.

How once,
he pressed ice in damp toilet paper to my face
during one of my startling winter nosebleeds.
We were vodka-hazed and unserious,
so when he pulled his hand back from the sticky mess
there was a beat before it gushed again and we laughed,
blood filling my teeth and dripping down my chin.

How he leaned over, kissed my open mouth hard
so blood splayed across his face like a hot stamp,
and licked his lips.

Why she makes bread

The ease and openness
in measuring teaspoons and half cups,
the science of sugar in yeast,
taupe milk water, rising into foam,
stirring hard with hand carved
red wooden spoons that fold and push.

The kneading, greasing the bowl,
rubbing olive oil into her palms
and backs of her hands
while his find the coffee pot,
mug, cream, doorknob,
but never the small
of her back or nape of her neck.

The wait and watching
something live bubbling, growing.
The punching, further kneading,
banging of cupboards, and throwing
of flour onto granite. Slapping
the soft fleshy round, shaping it
into something more full, round.
The smack and crack of egg white
whisked and brushed on for darkness.
The slashes cut diagonally,
for steam, the safe release of rage:
words she doesn't mean
said to the loaf with no ears.

Round Valley

Round Valley Reservoir

Hunterdon County, New Jersey

1960. Garden State. Two dams and then a flood.

Fears the water would run out. “Go west or go without.”

Sixteen houses. Fifty farms, demolished, moved, or sold.

Legend says you still see them—housetops when water’s low.

Nine years water pumped. The pipes could fit a pickup truck.

School and church were covered up. A man-made reservoir.

Twenty-six have drowned down there since 1971.

World’s most cursed, the lake is called. Some folks were never found.

Forty days and forty nights, rain poured down on the earth.

Noah saw the bow and dove, knew peace had had to hurt.

Blood Work

She tries distracting me, the nurse, *Don't look*,
And flicks the vein inside my elbow crease.
The needle slides in, mostly without pain,
And blood that coils in a plastic chain
Is like the fears I'm trying to release.
All day, they're flowing faintly in my soul,
So close to heart and brain that I mistook
Them for my life. The nurse says, *You're all done*.
Outside, the clouds are breaking for the sun
—pierced by light from tiny, pinprick holes.

at work, the new guy asks

you prefer she, right?

i want to say that it is not really a preference,
it just is. my life is not made up of preferences
but if it was, i would simply prefer to not be here.
i would prefer a cliffside, a Van Gogh landscape,
a menagerie of colors so bright that my eyes could
not focus, but mostly, i prefer to not see. if forced to,
i'd prefer to see the world through my eyes and through my eyes
i am six feet of stardust and Tennessee sunshine.
we heard how in Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, you could tell
the time through the stars but around here we mostly guess.
in the night humidity, we tell time by the cricket's chirp
and distant city lights—Marlboro smoke rising in place of us.

cradle this robin (close to your chest)

it's mid-March and the clouds
have just begun to divorce
so arduously you'd swear the
purpling sky was bruised by the
split. the sun is a needle through
chiffon air—catching on your corpse,
stiff and slack-beaked, sunken in
a halo of melting snow that sloughs
away like skin from a wound.
moments after water seeps into
fabric, the threads bloom with
a ripe breath of colour. if i close
my eyes, i can pretend the
rivulets of blood curlicuing your
red chest are nothing but stains
from the damp remnants of winter.
and when the hush thickens,
i'll move as though you might too—
in the palms of my hands,
dear herald of spring, is
the warmth of a season you
missed by a morning.

Alone On The ISS

From orbit, the sunset is an egg breaking
into a black pan.

I count countries, pockmarked in the dark
by city lights. Pick out
familiar coastlines
like profiles of relatives. My eyes
meet the mediterranean,
its sea a rorschach blot in which
I see wings. A crab. The inside
of a mouth.

To the west, my sister is sleeping
on a dark drifting speck. The clouds
over her are barely visible through
the black and blue
membrane which now, splits
as the sun spills over the other side
of the earth, piercing the black
with light.

Ghost Birds

—*Einojuhani Rautavaara, Cantus arcticus, Op. 61 (Concerto for Birds and Orchestra)*

Humans
calling like birds.

Humans in black gowns or tails with white shirts
who channel their breath through
flutes and oboes made with human hands,
who call like swans or larks in the bog.

The humans know
they are not birds.

The birds know, too.
Still they come
when the conductor raises
his white wand.

Flight Log: Hell's Waiting Room

People move like a giant centipede
gnawing off its own legs.
They fold into origami figures,
psychedelic paper planes
with wings already broken.

Astute zombies wait in line,
serenaded by safety instructions
from bored air stewards.
Gas masks located,
inner joy on hold.

The pilot wears the title
of on-call grim reaper.
Tiny plastic bottles
anaesthetise the panic,
while passports are clutched
like Willy Wonka's last ticket.

Friends made and lost
in hell's waiting room.
Funny how we arise only to descend,
a rotating cast of volunteers
for gravity's final joke.

Homemade Snow Globe

Crepuscular light will not reach this mini tree, pre-fab and birthed from a plastic bag. And the absence of fox or skunk, fawn or thrush or the lapidary wind or blade of river means a sedentary hush hunkers inside the glass. Slight bend in the tree where the waterline breaks and bubbles. It's a bright kind of sad and will not last. Like mall arcades and rubber palm trees, my cousin's bikinied selfies in Miami. Glitter in a Mason jar, water that makes it spin. My boys, like terrible angels, shake it and a bit seeps out, a watery pout. A world in our hands and what do we do? Rile it 'til all the beauty's torn loose.

Elegy as a Letter to My Dead

Who is to say there *isn't* a Post Office
in the Afterlife where Spirits
hang out, those who left things unsaid,
piles of mail stacking up.

Envelopes from the Living
addressed to the Dead,
envelopes from the Dead
addressed to the Living.

My first scrawl a rush of objections,
tucked in your long box, as you fell into the dark.
You sent back terrible days instead
of a reply: papery skies that fluttered grey

and flattened. Aloneness, a swirl of ink.
I sat wrapped in winter, in coffeeshops,
on sofas, subway cars that shrieked
as they barreled corners, hands clenched

on hand-rails, never touching.
How about an explanation?
You know, scratch that. Let's concede the abyss,
your exit final, a thing of ash,

irreversible. On to the next envelope then—
the one I'm sure a minor death-god licked shut;
it arrived stamp-less, stinking of dust.
I opened it and see you're now a mystic,

disinclined to speak plainly.
Do you miss me? What's it like being dead?
It was terrible how your hair shone on a waxed you,
the priest un-ready, bungling your name,

the vacuum cleaner rumbling down the hallway
muffled by shag carpet and woe.
And time did *not* stand still,
not even for a moment, a year or a fictional day.

So who is to say there isn't a congregation
of Dead, coruscating by the piled stack
where my last envelope unglues itself,
bursts into flames, opens its mouth to wail:

the dirt's a tease, never gives back what we want.
With words, we unwind the earth's shroud
—stones, breastbones, bitter taste of solitary thoughts,
these fragments tumble out.

Axis

They called it the Black Plague.
Cheap casket wine, Pepsi Max,
& forgotten distillery remnants.

I remember the turning—unsure
if it was I or the world that had
slipped its axis (it was both).

A body both growing & shrinking,
swinging between girl & woman,
carried sleeping on broad shoulders.

A wobbly evening stroll past midnight,
climbing through bedroom windows,
of a boy (bound for the psych ward).

There was a panda-bear messiness
to me & on Sunday mornings, the
kookaburras cackled a waking mockery.

Loose

That year we lost
seven teeth between us.

One swallowed down my sister
's throat as she slept.

Surviving meant an extra quarter
under her pillow and I ached
for that overnight visit, the shiny money,
ached for a molar traveling past
my esophagus and into the well
of my stomach.

Rich.

One more was stubborn,
hanging from the sinewy meat
of my mouth. We tied one end
of a string to its root, the other
to the bathroom door, then slammed.

Out, out, bloody tooth, there
on the floor, diamond
of the damned, grabbed,
rinsed, and readied
for its levy.

Five others were barely accounted,
apple bites and bloody sockets.
Each night, coins appearing like sorcery
under our pillows. Each night, some
added heft to our novelty banks.
Childhood making way
for what was growing
in its place.

Kilbarrack

from the edge between footpath
and roadpath, weeds rise
in a row of salutes. in one driveway
a car sinks to cement on flat tires
with the folded-up manner
of a cat gone compact on a windowsill.
I walk to the shop with no
shirt on for bread and a packet
of a half-dozen sausages,
a two litre bottle of coke. years after
I'd remember this morning
so vividly: the sun, 26-year-old
shoulders. sparrows in clusters
on phone lines which hang
loose as flags on a coast in a calm.

I Never Said

she should remove the wicked,
warmest part of herself for the spider silk
she wraps around her mourning son
& holds like a balloon string.

I never said she should become his disease,
a festering boil to lance alone with a kiss,
a Polaroid she shakes until he's braindead,
a jaundiced collage she plasters to her fridge.

He only took up breathing when he had no choice
but to swap mother's warm fluid for the cold air
of a hospital room—his skin becoming a gown,
the hospital discharge papers—a voided warranty.

First Smoke

It was an early spring party, when gypsy moth
caterpillars dangled between the fingers of the trees.
We were as real and as pale as the ash.

Heft like a pencil scratching, throaty coughs
and bravado, parents on a business trip.
We smashed cans with our feet, all the weight

and need of adolescence generous in our steps.
At sixteen mom smoked in the parlor with
her father, flicking into the ash can, radio

tuned to *The Shadow*, knobby brass
dial set to scare. Who knew the plumes
of smoke would poison the home second-

hand, darken the draperies, collect in the
lobes, both lung and brain? Family history

meant nothing when every lighter flick
brought me closer to flight, every fiber
of the filter a promised remedy, and it gave
me something to do with my hands, stained
a vague yellow, sweater holding the scent tight.

Winter solstice

No, I will not yield my darksome
teeth into the candlewick hours. We burn
the whole yard in our living

room, while desiccation skitters through
the front door. Rowan. Holly. Hawthorn.
A coven bleeds into the sky.

We curse. Your smiles
are tilt on the knife. The wind
thrashes our sills and cold crawls

through our zippered intentions.
Blessed be, the dark miasma of these months.
When we remember

our deep drawers. Cardamom. Cinnamon. Clove.
That hope must be stirred
with a spoon.

Estranged

There's only one ghost in this story,
and the story is complicated by the fact
that she's still alive, despite trying
really hard not to be. She wears
a hospital gown carelessly left open
in the back. I have to look away
as she walks away from me
if I don't want to feel ashamed.
I have to look away a lot.
This gives her just enough time
to hide in places where she can
jump out and say boo. She hides
between the family photo
and the frame, in the absence
of her number in my phone.
Sometimes she slips into my bed,
plumps the pillows, pulls the blanket
up to her chin, and siphons all
the sleep from the room, guzzling it
until she passes out and I tiptoe
around so as not to wake her.
She needs my sleep. She needs
my love, my attention, my worry
my worry my worry my worry
and I think if I withhold it
I'll be safe, but it turns out
a ghost is a space you can't fill
with anyone else.

Poem Beginning with a Line by Bob Hicok

Where we are now, I have this theory
developed over all the dinners
we no longer have together,
and at night when I wake
to a brief forgetfulness,
or while waiting at the light in town,
my son in the driver's seat,
both of us raising a brow
at the hyperactive man-child
on an unlit ATV in front of us,
bouncing restlessly to see
if the traffic will move
to match his bloodstream –
no chance, with a punctured
gas main two streets over –
that we're so far apart,
we can no longer feel it,
the creeping numbness far worse
than the actual break, but then
a poet like Bob suggests peaceful
reciprocity, promising he'll hold
both my *briefcase and small*
intestines, in exchange
for nothing more than a refusal
to do harm and I can't even remember
when we gave up on the idea of safety
in numbers or enough of us choosing
to do the right thing, and I try

to let hope do its unruly thing
even as it slips through my hands.

The Apartment Above the Laundromat

Each spin cycle is a heart
pounding through the concrete floors.
I fall asleep to shirts and socks
colliding like planets,
to lint rising in secret constellations.

Neighbors argue in curses
about the rent, about God,
their words riding the ceiling fan's
slow blades.

I dream of detergent bubbles
blown into galaxies,
my body one of them, orbiting,
thinning, then vanishing:
not death, exactly,
but the soft collapse of foam
into air.

Morning: heat from the dryers
presses up through the floor,
a ghost's embrace.
I stand at the window watching
pigeons scatter from the roof—
gray confetti for no one's wedding.

Snowmelt, Returning

The river loosens its jaw in February,
all ice-teeth unclenching.
I walk out to the overpass,
boots loud against the iron ribs,
and below me a crow lifts from
the carcass of a deer, spine bright as
a violin bow.

I should not be here,
watching what the thaw uncovers—
beer cans, rusted bicycle,
the animal we all forgot until
its bones began to sing.

What is it to return?
Snowmelt finds old gullies,
shapes them open again,
as if remembering were a kind of
erosion. I press my hand
against the railing, chilled steel
saying only: hold on.

Withdrawal in Winter

The patient shivers beneath the thin blanket,
skin salt white,
eyes lit with a kind of desperate electricity.

I have seen this body before,
nerves firing like faulty wires,
a hunger no one names
without apology.

He whispers that he is ready,
then curses the ceiling,
then begs for water.
His veins retreat deeper,
as if ashamed of being found.

The snow outside
is its own withdrawal,
trees stripped bare,
earth brittle with longing.

I adjust the IV drip,
watch fluid bead into the line.
For a moment,
the room holds still,
just breath,
just the slow thaw of someone
not yet ready to die.

And in that fragile pause,
I feel winter lean closer,
pressing its frost against the glass,
waiting to see
whether we will let him stay.

Ama

What to do with time
married friends make
the mistake of calling free?
One idea is searching
out hard things. Japan,
for instance, where a shrinking
corps of aging women dives
for abalones. I don't yet know
what abalones are, but
I don't want to learn
anywhere but from them.
I imagine shellfish whose language-
less tongues curl around pearls;
I imagine this while knowing this
to be unlikely. I will acquire a crop
of Japanese relevant only to salt
water and its necessities:
bucket, breath, clam, cucumber,
abalone, abalone, everything
soft and mottled that snaps
shut to the touch like
my mother's heirloom mother-
of-pearl jewellery box.
They (the women) are free
divers. From them I will learn how not
to be afraid of the sea, or of being
in the sea alone. I will learn that one is always
in the sea alone.
These women live
a very long time.

They will not ask
me who I am or why;
they will teach me
like a child to tie
my white bonnet
my white dress I will dive
towards the salt floor I will
learn how to carry a still
living thing to the surface.

Opposites

I love waking up early, but today I slept in late, which I love too. I love the clock's slow blinking from an outage overnight, reminding me that time is relative, not absolute, and love my phone for telling me that it's 8:42. I love 8:42. I love the warm rug of the bedroom and the kitchen's cooling tile, the lightness of the empty bag of flour and the heft of one that's full. I love it when the plum boughs out the window bend with fruit as much as with this snow that fell all night, and reading these condolence cards feels just as good as getting to the end of them. Next, there's a call about the will, which pleases with its gravity, then after that a longer call that pleases with its farce: what type of pickle's best for lunch after a funeral. The day goes on like this, trying to weigh which I love most: bouts of commotion, bouts of rest. The holding on, and letting go. And when my kids, eating their pancakes, ask if they will see their grandmother again, I love the little war inside of me between *you bet* and *I don't know*. I love that place, wherever it might be, of peace, the place where nothing perishes or changes. And I love it here: the sticky plates and stupid phone calls, ripe plums sometimes, sometimes snow.

Cows in fog moored

The road unspools slowly, revealing
cows in fog, moored to the hillside's anchorage—
with gentle sway, the world's calm

like I've never seen before.

If I enter this tranquility the spell is broken:
sylvan ridges darken, and

cold vapors turn foul—their swirling arms
riddled with gooseflesh.

In mock anger I can churn the loose

gravel and squeal, letting spray
pebbles and chipped rock which does not belong.
I can inch forward, spider-limbed and lithe

on squelching grass, squashed,
which bears my slogging tread.
Great greaves of sky are crowded out

by the sullen charm of Autumn's morning.
I watch from the road, my face white and clammy—
The cows float on placid eddies, tails swishing.

Ovulation Testing

The thirty-something woman pees in a small green paper cup, then dips the test strip in the liquid for 5-10 seconds, after which she waits for five minutes before she can analyze the lines. During this time, she thinks of her client who wants six children and the fact that she herself would be happy with just one. Maybe two. She revisits her favorite baby names, like Cora, the name she argued about with her husband, who wanted to spell it after the animated fantasy series *The Legend of Korra*. Their solution was to abandon the name altogether. Now she is thinking about all the times in her childhood when her solution was to abandon herself altogether. She peers at the strip. Suddenly, she doesn't know whether to giggle or sob.

Aftercare

When you don't text this morning,
It's clear you don't know
what it's like to fill the hollow pockets
of your body with another's flesh and need.
The sacrum curved like an emptied cup,
twinned pelvic crests smooth and open
like hands holding out for more. I'm left
sated and sore in this lonely afterwards.
Your emptying, my emptiness, not the same.

Quivers fall down the spine from too much space
around me now, like a baby un-swaddled
too soon, or the way my father still drops
my gaze after a few seconds,
even as he mutters *love you*.

Confidence

—*for my stepfather*

An earthquake hits his nervous system, tectonic plates in full break. He's not particularly bothered.

I've lived a good life, he says—husband, father, foreman at a small business. Now retired, he lives beside a lake, sits on the deck to watch herons bathe, cormorants take sputtered flight, wings tapping ellipses. *This is where I'll die*, he says. It's certainty, not speculation.

Not for him the doctors' predictions—weakness, wheelchair, food through a tube. Not for him confinement or the doleful eyes of his wife, who will have to keep this man who defines freedom by his cigarettes and beer, bow-hunting deer every autumn, hiking the Appalachian Trail three times.

I have a plan, he says. Somehow, I'm the one he tells. The details he spares, but it's there, a scent that comes like jasmine in a darkened garden. He's glad, and I'm glad for him, thankful for this music made just for my ear.

I know he can do it. When the moon splashes full on water, he'll take a last look at the silhouettes of every blooming thing.

The loons will announce the morning.

9 out of 10 Creatures in the Deep Sea Bioluminesce

using that fallen angel's chemical,
luciferin. Some creatures make their shine
through photosynthesis, then sink down

to the abysmal depths, bringing a piece
of the sun with them. Some evolved that way,
and evolved that way, and evolved that way,

at least forty different times, each species
learning that no one would come to burn
a path ahead. They must make their own light

to survive. Still others discovered
if they can't make luciferin themselves,
store-bought is just fine. They offer their own

flesh as a home for glowing bacteria.
Born dark and dim, they secrete pungent
flavors for bacteria to sniff out,

then beat their cilia, sweeping in their light.
But all angels know the risk of shining
too bright. It does not do to attract

the attention of those darkened shadows
above. Those daytime creatures made of mud
and clay, golems for their master's delight,

hate the twilight twinkle of tentacles
waving just out of sight. Still, the hagfish
and the gulper eels, the vampire squids

and salps, nudibranchs and I, with my sharp
teeth, lurking in the dark, vow to glow.

When I and my fellow angels fall,

sinking down into drifts of marine snow,
feast upon our flesh. Know that our bodies
are broken for you. Take and eat.

Effervescence

How mold
holds mayo
is a miracle,

there in the cold,
there beneath lids,
without hands,
a whole-body
bloom of a grip.

How is it
one moment
smaller than pilling,
than pollen, than sparkle,
then frothing?
The spores
are always snowing.

A strawberry fleeced
with rhizopus
is garbage
and yet larger
than it was when edible:
dissolved into the fizzing
wilderness that knows
no wrap or gasket.

Snow Globe with Balding Professor

I always look forward to May graduation
—just not for the reasons you imagine.

Sure, I enjoy launching students into the world,
meeting parents, posing for awkward photos.

But my secret pleasure comes from biking
past the stadium in the weeks before.

As the grounds crew shoulder their
giant leaf blowers to clear glittering bits

blasted from confetti cannons, I ride
through the shimmering galaxies they loft.

I can nearly hear the winding stem,
the tinny music that makes me go.

About the Contributors

Cora Schipa is a writer pursuing an MFA in Poetry at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is a poetry reader for *Grist* and the assistant managing editor of *Crab Creek Review*. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *The Shore, ONEART, Unbroken: Prose Poems*, and *elsewhere magazine*, among others.

Courtney Ruttenbur Bulsiewicz writes personal essays, poetry, and critical work which tends toward themes of memory, nature, family, loss, and its accompanying grief. As a visiting professor, Courtney teaches courses in creative writing, rhetoric, and literature. She lives in the Mountain West with her husband and two sons

Mary Grace Mangano is a poet, writer, and teacher. Her poetry has been published in *JARFLY, Mezzo Cammin*, and *The Windhover*, among others, and her essays and reviews appear in places such as *Plough, Comment, and Literary Matters*. She lives in New Jersey.

Edith Krone is a jailhouse preacher's daughter. She is an MFA candidate at the University of Arkansas, a reader for *Palette Poetry*, and the Editor-in-Chief at *dogyard mag*. A trans-southerner, she can usually be found in the woods or on Bluesky @ EdithKrone

Belinda Liao is a high school student from Vaughan, Canada. Her writing has previously been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers. She adores little more than reading comics and bird-watching the robins in her backyard.

Helen Nancy Meneilly is an Irish poet and MA graduate living in Canada. Her work has appeared in *The Shore, Autumn Sky Poetry Daily, San Pedro River Review, The Orchards Poetry Journal*, and elsewhere.

Susanna Lang's fourth full-length collection of poems *This Spangled Dark* is forthcoming from Cornerstone Press. Her next published translation from French will be *My Forests* by Hélène Dorion (Book*Hug Press, 2026). Her work appears in such publications as *The Common*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Mayday*, and *RHINO Reviews*.

Gabrielle Munslow is a poet and nurse practitioner based in the United Kingdom. Her work explores intersections of myth, memory, and resilience, and has appeared in *Neon Origami* and other journals. She is developing several themed collections of poetry.

Sunni Brown Wilkinson is a poet and essayist. Her newest book *Rodeo* was selected by Patricia Smith as winner of the 2024 Donald Justice Poetry Prize. Other books are *The Marriage of the Moon and the Field* (Black Lawrence Press), and *The Ache & The Wing* (winner of the Sundress Chapbook Prize).

Kate Reider Collins is a poet and non-fiction writer who is a two-time alumnus of Banff's Writing Residencies. Her poetry has been published in or is forthcoming from *The Malahat Review* and *Prairie Fire*. Her work explores loss and imaginative leaps. Kate lives in Toronto. She's an MFA student at Guelph.

Kacey Martin is a Māori-European doctoral researcher and emerging writer-poet based in Eora/Sydney, Australia. Their work has appeared in *Cordite Poetry Review*, *PRISM International*, *Corporeal*, and others. They love nothing more than cozy nights in with a good book and the company of their two cats Rehua and Paikea.

Christy Prahls's collections include *We Are Reckless* (Cornerstone Press, 2023), *With Her Hair on Fire* (Roadside Press, 2025), and *Catalog of Labors* (Unsolicited Press, 2026). A Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominee, her work has been featured in *Poetry Daily*, *CALYX*, *Rattle*, and more. She splits her time between Chicago and southwest Michigan.

DS Maolalai has been described by one editor as “a cosmopolitan poet” and another as “prolific, bordering on incontinent”. His work has been nominated fourteen times for Best of the Net, ten times for the Pushcart, and once for the Forward Prize, and released in three collections, most recently *Noble Rot* (Turas Press, 2022).

HT Reynolds is a teacher and father whose work has appeared in *Moonstone Arts Center*, *The Rising Phoenix Review*, and his poetry collection *Chatter in the Skull*, published by BookLeaf Publishing. He holds an M.A. and M.F.A. from Wilkes University, where he was awarded the Beverly Blakeslee Hiscox '58 Scholarship.

Alisha Goldblatt is an English teacher and writer living in Portland, Maine with her two wonderful children and one lovely husband. She has published poems and essays in many journals, including *The Comstock Review*, *the Common Ground Review*, *Stonecoast Review*, and *Burningword literary Journal*.

Lindsay Kellar-Madsen writes compulsively in rare sleeves of time. She lives in the Danish countryside with her husband and four children, who only wear shoes when necessary. Her poems live with *The Shore*, *Humana Obscura*, *Cottonmouth*, and *Pork-belly Press*. Her work is forthcoming with *swamp pink* and *The Wild Umbrella*.

Suzanne Langlois is a teacher from Portland, Maine. Her collection *Bright Glint Gone* won the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance chapbook award. Her work has appeared in *Leon Literary Review*, *Florida Review*, *Rogue Agent*, and *the Best New Poets Anthology*. She holds an MFA from Warren Wilson College.

Dagne Forrest is a Canadian poet with recent work in *Rogue Agent*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Funicular*, *december magazine*, and *Prism International*. She belongs to *Painted Bride Quarterly*'s senior editorial and podcast teams. Her chapbooks include *Un/becoming* (Baseline Press, 2025) and *Falldown Lane* (Whittle Micropress, 2026).

McLord Selasi is a Ghanaian writer, poet, public health researcher, and performing artist. His work explores identity, memory, and our deep connections to the world around us. His recent works appeared in *Apricot Press*, *Isele Magazine*, *Subliminal Surgery*, *Eunoia Review*, *Poetry Journal*, *The Nature of Our Times*, *Graveside Press*, and elsewhere.

Veronica Tucker is an emergency medicine and addiction medicine physician whose poems explore medicine, motherhood, and memory. Her work has appeared in *ONE ART*, *Eunoia Review*, *Berlin Literary Review*, and *The Book of Jobs* anthology from Penn State University Libraries. Find more at veronicatuckerwrites.com and on Instagram @veronicatuckerwrites.

Lauren Delapenha writes poems while looking at the train tracks that run behind her apartment and the enterprising birds who have built a large nest above these tracks. She has decided without evidence that these birds are ospreys.

Michael Lavers is the author of two poetry collections, *After Earth* and *The Inextinguishable*, both published by the University of Tampa Press. His poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *The Kenyon Review*, *AGNI*, *Southwest Review*, *The Georgia Review*, and elsewhere.

Sammy Bellin is an aspiring poet. Bellin graduated from Juniata College with a Bachelor of Arts in History. Bellin contributed several articles to *A Brief Guide to the EBT* and enjoys reading poetry, hanging out with cats, and wandering.

Kate Kadleck is a writer and relationship therapist based in Dubuque, Iowa. She earned her MS in marriage and family therapy from Northwestern University and is the author of the chapbook *Corpse Pose* (Bottlecap Press, 2025). Kate is also a poetry reader for *wildscape literary journal*.

Emily Kedar's work has been featured in *ONE ART*, *The Malahat Review*, *The Maynard*, and *The Bellevue Literary Review* and is forthcoming in *Biblioasis' Best Canadian Poetry*. She received her MFA through Pacific University under the mentorship of Ellen Bass. She lives between Toronto and Salt Spring Island, Canada.

Morrow Dowdle is the author of the chapbook *Hardly* (Bottlecap Press, 2024). They run a performance series called “Weave & Spin,” which features historically marginalized voices. A former physician assistant, they are now pursuing their MFA in creative writing at Spalding University. They live in Durham, North Carolina.

Cam McGlynn is a writer and scientific researcher living outside of Frederick, Maryland. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Whale Road Review*, *Rattle (online)*, *Wildscape*, *The Shore*, and *ONE ART*, among others. When not knee-deep in a swamp, you can find her at pinkpossumclub.bsky.social.

Lisa Angelella's poems have appeared in *32 Poems*, *Willow Springs*, *Tar River Poetry*, and *Stoneboat*. She teaches community college English in Iowa.

Another untidy pilgrim from Alabama's Gulf Coast, **John Miller** keeps a pet dictionary. Miller's poems have appeared in *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Susurrus*, and *Sheila-Na-Gig*. Fernwood Press published his collection *How My Father Became a Boat* in August of 2025. Miller eats cornbread and occasionally raises hell.

