for the Love of a Book

Cover: *The Flock* by Steven Kenny
Artemis 2022

Artemis design and layout is based on Sacred Geometry proportions of Phi, 1.618. This number is considered to be the fundamental building block of nature, recurring throughout art, architecture, botany, astronomy, biology, and music. Named by the Greeks as the “Golden Mean,” this number was also referred to as the Divine Proportion. The primary font used in Artemis is Berkeley Brand, from the Berkeley family, modernized version of a classic Goudy old-style font, originally designed for the University of California Press at Berkeley in the late 1930s.

Foreword

For the better part of four decades, Artemis Journal, published annually, has showcased compelling new voices with notable authors ranging from poet laureates to Pulitzer Prize and other major award winners and nominees. Artemis has served the Appalachian Region of the Blue Ridge Mountains and beyond for 45 years, with 28 publications as a Literary and Art Journal. The rich history of creativity of Artemis has played an integral role in the success and perseverance of Artemis. Through the years, over 1000 writers and artists have been featured contributors or have donated their time and expertise as board members for the all-volunteer operation.

The theme of this year’s journal, “For the Love of a Book,” was inspired by Distinguished Poet Nikki Giovanni’s poem, “Fall in Love (For Artemis).” This theme expresses a core belief that implicitly drove the inception of our journal, and it can account for our compendium’s continuance into the present. According to Gustav Flaubert, “The art of writing is the art of discovering what you believe.” We believe in the importance of art and literature in our lives and acknowledge its potential as a coping mechanism and its utility in helping us understand the realities of the world around us. Adopting this theme recognizes a community of people who feel the same and celebrate our journal.

This year, along with Nikki Giovanni, we are honored to include the work of former US Poet laureate Natasha Trethewey, Virginia Poet Laureates Ron Smith, Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, and current Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia Luisa Igloria, and many other remarkable poets and artists from around the world.

The Artemis mission has not changed from its conception. Borne out of the writing workshops held for the victims of domestic violence in Southwest Virginia, Artemis Journal has been an advocate for social justice since 1977. Artemis has been a bright star that began in a basement at the Roanoke, Virginia YWCA. Artemis supports fair trade policies, artists, and women-based businesses. 10% of earnings are donated to a women’s shelter for abused women in Southwest Virginia.

Besides creating literary events, Artemis hosts a monthly podcast, Artemis Speaks, with Artemis Editor Jeri Rogers interviewing artists and writers published in the journal. Now entering its three seasons, interviews include notable poets Nikki Giovanni, Virginia Poet Laureates, Ron Smith, Luisa Igloria, Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, artists Bill White, Betty Branch, Dona Polseno, Sharon Mirriatheri, and Steven Kenny.

This year’s cover “The Flock” is by artist Steven Kenny, a renowned painter who recently moved to the Blue Ridge Mountains, Virginia. Steven Kenny was born in Peekskill, New York in 1962 and now resides in Check, VA. He attended the Rhode Island School of Design, receiving a BFA in 1984. After studying independently in Rome he gained notoriety as a freelance commercial illustrator, later devoting his full attention to fine art. His award-winning paintings are exhibited in galleries and museums across the United States and Europe.

For the better part of four decades, Artemis Journal, published annually, has showcased compelling new voices with notable authors ranging from poet laureates to Pulitzer Prize and other major award winners and nominees. Artemis has served the Appalachian Region of the Blue Ridge Mountains and beyond for 45 years, with 28 publications as a Literary and Art Journal. The rich history of creativity of Artemis has played an integral role in the success and perseverance of Artemis. Through the years, over 1000 writers and artists have been featured contributors or have donated their time and expertise as board members for the all-volunteer operation.

The theme of this year’s journal, “For the Love of a Book,” was inspired by Distinguished Poet Nikki Giovanni’s poem, “Fall in Love (For Artemis).” This theme expresses a core belief that implicitly drove the inception of our journal, and it can account for our compendium’s continuance into the present. According to Gustav Flaubert, “The art of writing is the art of discovering what you believe.” We believe in the importance of art and literature in our lives and acknowledge its potential as a coping mechanism and its utility in helping us understand the realities of the world around us. Adopting this theme recognizes a community of people who feel the same and celebrate our journal.

This year, along with Nikki Giovanni, we are honored to include the work of former US Poet laureate Natasha Trethewey, Virginia Poet Laureates Ron Smith, Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, and current Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia Luisa Igloria, and many other remarkable poets and artists from around the world.

The Artemis mission has not changed from its conception. Borne out of the writing workshops held for the victims of domestic violence in Southwest Virginia, Artemis Journal has been an advocate for social justice since 1977. Artemis has been a bright star that began in a basement at the Roanoke, Virginia YWCA. Artemis supports fair trade policies, artists, and women-based businesses. 10% of earnings are donated to a women’s shelter for abused women in Southwest Virginia.

Besides creating literary events, Artemis hosts a monthly podcast, Artemis Speaks, with Artemis Editor Jeri Rogers interviewing artists and writers published in the journal. Now entering its three seasons, interviews include notable poets Nikki Giovanni, Virginia Poet Laureates, Ron Smith, Luisa Igloria, Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, artists Bill White, Betty Branch, Dona Polseno, Sharon Mirriatheri, and Steven Kenny.

This year’s cover “The Flock” is by artist Steven Kenny, a renowned painter who recently moved to the Blue Ridge Mountains, Virginia. Steven Kenny was born in Peekskill, New York in 1962 and now resides in Check, VA. He attended the Rhode Island School of Design, receiving a BFA in 1984. After studying independently in Rome he gained notoriety as a freelance commercial illustrator, later devoting his full attention to fine art. His award-winning paintings are exhibited in galleries and museums across the United States and Europe.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the Mind’s Eye of Tree Sitters</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Past Futures Have Dead Ends</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summons</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots, Beets, and Bok Choy</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luisa A. Igloria, Ph.D.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substrata guardian</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elegy for Grief</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Attracted the Ghost</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Domestic Work, 1937</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Right to Privacy</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As You, Mary Shelley</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinning the Wheels</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Attracted the Ghost</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pussy Paradise</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Healing Hunt</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Shy of the Lyric Danger</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Blue Whale’s Heart</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting the Slow Passing of the Dark Night</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparent Death</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Lake</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarf Dance</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Weeping</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream Big</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminum Balloons</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the Poets of April</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papa Paradise</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wholeness of the Moon</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulp people</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Matters</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeplace</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog Curious</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor Dribben</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivy</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Want to Ride through this Life</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Tail Hawk</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here’s the Situation</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LuAnn Keener-Mikenas</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boulders</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Crockett Hill</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner Child Work</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirsten Holt Beitler</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slug slime shame</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Iler</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crazytimes</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Supranowicz</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbi Nester</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song of Whitman</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Elliott Martin</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang On</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Stephens</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephemerolove</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heath Reynolds</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Hearts Glory</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska Argers</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoetrope</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Greer</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do two colours, put one next to the other, sing? Picasso</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piper Darrell</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picasso’s Sister</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy Meeker</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poems from the Dark Room</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleen Redman</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley Brown</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avatar</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Fog Rises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>The Cocoa Stallion of Wilburn Ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Dream of Winter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Energy Mother, The Abundance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Domestic Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Rumi on the Beach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>A Touch of Blues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>More than what the moon can do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>All That Remains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Gordian Knot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Sewn to the Skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Things that have died this month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Second Wave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Pythian Song of Rebirth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Oracle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>The Gleamers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>The Wolf, or Baba Yoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Flower Pods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Sacred Soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Sunday afternoon in the Villa Borghese,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Nymph Maiden and Crane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Dinah Visits Leonard Cohen's House on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Alice, the Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>Festival of Cats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>The Coat Rack Reflects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Dragon Pup Fire Lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>The Royal We</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>To Bee or Not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>It's All About the Hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Roamoke was Once a Big Salt Lick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>What a Trophy, or My Deer Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>Cage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Help Wanted (signed, Mother Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>The Sound of Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Forktail Needlefish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Golden Ginkgo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Wherever You Look</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Puma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>In the Throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Something Beautiful Calls and We Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Nasty Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>The Two Fridays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Josephina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>War &amp; Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Hirundo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Valery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Yellow Tee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>The Price of Dancing Lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>The Loneliness of the Harem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Facebook Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Library 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Grasping after an Election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>F-Bomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Pigment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>A Grandmother’s Psalm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>The Road to Ballingeary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>The End</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>Finale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Soul Searching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Walking Home at Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Uncharted Topography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>Winter Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>My Uncle’s Mattinee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>Anniversary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>Still I Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>On the Walk Home from Apple Tree City's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>The Pond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>Nocturne IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>Auro of Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>In Memoriam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Illegal Alien</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>Salt Water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Dusk at Mono Lake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Featured Artist and Writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fall In Love
Nikki Giovanni
(For Artemis)

If you have to fall
In love
And you do

It should be with a book
Not a novel
Nor a mystery
Certainly nothing scary
And always remember other life forms
Aren’t aliens but other life forms
Just as we are earthlings
Not people to be feared and killed
But life forms inhabiting the same planet

Maybe ideally a recipe anthology
With great ideas of things to do with garlic
Or especially a mixology book to tell us how to relax
If we are careful
We all need to know how to taste beer
And how to judge wine
(the same way we do people—carefully)

And we definitely need a book that lets us
Laugh
And every now and then one
That let’s us cry

We need a book and a dog
And a quilt
To tuck into
And love
And that will be faithful
And true

That’s what love is
A good book

Once upon a time
Betty Branch
October’s Mortal Joy
Ron Smith

We’ve got gold finches this year, who hang on the feeder upside down, and today the sky’s been full of sailing ships and icebergs floating in the deepest blue. No wonder the air has an edge and the greenest leaves are looking a little let’s say silver. Chipmunks—five of them!—were hard at play after our breakfast, right here on the still rich grass. Where’d this new baseball on the patio come from? This gust of sadness?

Cricket, finch, squirrel, next-door dog barks, chatters, cheeps, chirps. Those silver linings in the southwest could blind you, there in the tree gap where the sun wears a tattered bank of dark cloud like Zeus robing himself in mortality for yet another divine seduction. The dogwood in the corner is all over red, shivering with anticipation of throwing down her clothes of flame to become Semele’s blackened bones.

Known
Michael Lyle

Nights when the blanket fails the wind raking oak and eave
an undercroft of quiet hangs like vestments in a sacristy.
The creaking sash relentless porous as a threadbare glove
and still I hear the chipmunk breathe all curled around with root,
the vixen’s kits beneath the shed awaiting mother’s hunt.

Our rising chests a compline prayer of hope to keep us warm.
Poem 025: Domestic Work, 1937
Natasha Trethewey

All week she’s cleaned someone else’s house, stared down her own face in the shine of copper—bottomed pots, polished wood, toilets she’d pull the lid to—that look saying

*Let’s make a change, girl.*

But Sunday mornings are hers—church clothes starched and hanging, a record spinning on the console, the whole house dancing. She raises the shades, washes the rooms in light, buckets of water, Octagon soap.

*Cleanliness is next to godliness ...*

Windows and doors flung wide, curtains two-stepping forward and back, neck bones bumping in the pot, a choir of clothes clapping on the line.

*Nearer my God to Thee ...*

She beats time on the rugs, blows dust from the broom like dandelion spores, each one a wish for something better.

A Painting for Dinner
Paulina Swietliczko
Her hand holds his, clenches it at times, readily pulls his arm upward to keep him safe from the breaking wavelets. His little body is almost lifted off the sand. The early-morning swash is too cold for his bare feet, even at the height of summer. He is a sickly child, born with a malformation, mostly wears a shirt and a hat even when the sky is veiled, or sunrays strike next to level. He moans and whines, digs in his heels or wiggles around, puts on a pouty face. Why, he doesn’t really know. Maybe he wants to be let go, free to splash along the water’s edge, or else to collect shells and pebbles. But mom can see, sees well beyond the horizon. One day, not before quite some time has forced them apart, alone on the beach at the crack of dawn, memories hardly emerging from the glitter, he’ll be allowed a glimpse of what alarmed her bosom’s eyes. Then all will be crystal clear: the yanks, the rants, the harmless punishments. He’ll want to be able to go back in time, through every single moment. Inseparably. Hand in hand. A child again. And everything.

At The Seaside
Alessio Zanelli

I am uncertain why my mind drives me to the keyboard. To bend words into meaningful shape, but like an addict I am drawn. I search for meaning of thoughts express them with caution. Run through a literary compendium and learn my notions have been said. I know when I speak, my tongue, a map of Virginia, paints idioms of colloquial color and betray the depth of culture’s undergrowth. From this deepness comes the words gently filtered as from a stream, heard and read by others, tasting fresh or rejected and erased for all time. The back of my hand, a map of my past, the palm a reflection of today, while finger prints search and dance in varying rhythms on the keyboard.

In Search of Why
Al Hagy Sr
She braids a rope from her fresh wound, she braids three strands, she speaks three words. *Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

Long skeins are prayed from her soul’s heart for ropewalks stretching from a wound to her tongue’s tip. Within her words creaks a taut rope tethered to shade and solace beneath His aegis.

*Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

Bloodied by fall onto cobbles, my mother’s mouth weaves a three-strand rope as she sits under fluorescents – *Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

An unfahtering tongue pulls taut a deliverance graspable, her creaking orisons sounding sure salvation under His shield.

*Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

From her fresh wound she braids three strands, she speaks three words, she braids a rope. *Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

Long skeins plaited in a ropewalk, her orisons strain bolts in locks of empyreal gates, her words imploring after the promise of succor beneath His aegis.

*Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

She braids three words from her fresh wound under emergency room lights, draws taut a lifeline of three strands. *Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.*

Awaiting the doctor’s return with her jaw’s x-ray, she nurses her gash with talisman-tone words, tending herself under His shield.

Mercy, may her Lord have mercy.

Weight belied by weightless plaitings sounds solid a rope from her soul’s heart in revelation aural: three words straining heaven’s gates.
Afternoon in the woods,
B. Chelsea Adams

a slow walk,
a twig breaks
and I wonder how
I did not know
the woman with hair
the grey-brown color of winter trees—
her hair tangled in an untidy nest
of dead flowers,
spider webs, and leaves—
is only three feet away.

She takes my hand.
as if she is inviting me to dance.
We sway up the path,
bend before the oak,
step high over roots
and rocks.

I am not sure
where she is leading me
or why I go so willingly.

She guides me
without speaking.

And as she shimmers down these paths
between the trees, she draws me
to a bed of moss.
We rest.

I wonder
if we will pause long enough
for a spider, a bird, or a leaf
to build a nest
in my hair?

Appalachian Golden Girls
Angie V. Clevinger

them Golden Girls weren’t the first women
to sit around a table and bitch about their lives

they had cheesecake
Momma and her sisters had out of date Ding-Dongs
Aunt Sandy got free down at the Merita Bred store where she worked
what Momma and company were missing was a matriarch
there was no Sophia among them
these women lived too fast and hard

there were no Roses at their table
naivety was lost somewhere between the shedding of first blood and the breaking of the caul

Momma’s coven of sisters understood all too well the cyclical nature of life
They chanted the raw verses of childbirth Spells of bitchery whispered about Jessabelles
real and imagined

They damn sure weren’t no Golden Girls
but them were the golden years
when their bouffant heads would bob in rhythm with each woman’s fleeting thoughts
their cigarettes flitting like lightning bug to the cadence of their talk
ashtray cauldrons scattered on burnt tablecloths
held the ashes of their memories and when the scent Jean Nate and nicotine
smoke filled the room and floated out the rusty screened window into the summer night

Song for Fibonacci Flower Girl
Annie Waldrop
But the mountain hides behind a screen of white chiffon and doesn’t respond.
I ask the fog but it lifts and is gone—a ghost.
I ask the ghost but it was never here. Maybe it was a deer?
I ask a deer eating muscadines from the vine but it disappears.
I ask the muscadines but the grapes aren’t wine yet and won’t help me forget.
I ask the seed inside the grape, but it’s hard, like a tiny stone, a grit.
I ask a gray stone but it has no mouth and cannot speak.
Like Niobe, it weeps and weeps.
I ask the tears but they taste of salt from the ocean.
I ask the ocean but it’s far away and can’t hear me over the crashing waves.
I ask the waves but they speak in a rolling tongue I can’t translate.
I ask the tongue but it’s twisted and tied.
I look up to the sky as a muscular cloud rumbles by.
I ask the thunder but all I hear is a drumroll on the day Charlie Watts died.
I ask the cloud but it shifts from a feather into a fist.
I ask the feather but it drifts away.
I ask the fist but it won’t loosen its grip.
I ask the rain, but how can it heal my heart when it’s grieving, too?
I ask my heart why it’s hurting and it says, Why ask? You know what to do.
I open the door to my heart and step into rooms wallpapered with bloody roses.
I ask the roses to heal my heart and they say, Go ask the moon.
But the moon’s sunlit face only smiles. So, I ask the shadow side and it whispers, Stop asking, Let it bloom.
The reporters on the radio say it’s over, the fight to save our mountains, our water, our land. The tree sitters have been taken down by force from their home in the trees sheltered there for 932 days, a long enough time that the rhythm of life from the trees, the sunlight, the wind has become part of them. It is far from over! Men on machines may cut down the White Pine and the Chestnut Oak they lived in but the resistance to this assault on nature and to life in connection with nature gains momentum as the chainsaws hum. The perpetrators of this violence believe there is no price to be paid for leveling those trees but Mother Nature suffers no fools! Humanity has only lived on Earth in the blink of an eye, machines and corporate rule have only been here a millionth of a blink. The Earth knows how to renew herself and those who love her will survive these assaults. In the mind’s eye of the tree sitters hundreds of trees are already growing stretching to the horizon.

Prayer flags
Megan Zalecki

Our wrung out washcloths are hanging on the shower rod like forgotten prayer flags. These prayers are wrinkled and wet.

I try to pray sometimes, to whisper into the dark, or silently hope. They say worry is a prayer, I add it to the pile, too.

Worry, song, laughter, silence, sleep. Our baskets are full of these, piles of them, a long thread of our own flags, repeating.

What does it mean for me to pray when I don’t know who might be listening? Does the wind carry my prayers or do I?

Maybe prayer is a spell Words must be said, with implements, at the right time, and under the right moon.

Maybe prayer is a wish list for Santa, for God, for Buddha. I’ve believed in them all. I try to be good.

Bodies and jewels
Fire and horses
Blessings and curses
They all fade under the sun
All have come and gone
and the cycle continues

The laundry continues The soap and water and spinning. And hot air. And folding. The wearing. The wrinkling. The fading.

I fold our clothes and cloths and pray we wear them in health and healing and light And wonder who out there might be gracious enough to grant us this.

In the Mind’s Eye of Tree Sitters
Anne Lusby-Denham

To Wren and Acre, and to all Tree Sitters and Water Protectors

The reporters on the radio say it’s over, the fight to save our mountains, our water, our land. The tree sitters have been taken down by force from their home in the trees sheltered there for 932 days, a long enough time that the rhythm of life from the trees, the sunlight, the wind has become part of them. It is far from over! Men on machines may cut down the White Pine and the Chestnut Oak they lived in but the resistance to this assault on nature and to life in connection with nature gains momentum as the chainsaws hum. The perpetrators of this violence believe there is no price to be paid for leveling those trees but Mother Nature suffers no fools!

Solar Power
Robi Sallee

Our wrung out washcloths are hanging on the shower rod like forgotten prayer flags. These prayers are wrinkled and wet.

I try to pray sometimes, to whisper into the dark, or silently hope. They say worry is a prayer, I add it to the pile, too.

Worry, song, laughter, silence, sleep. Our baskets are full of these, piles of them, a long thread of our own flags, repeating.

What does it mean for me to pray when I don’t know who might be listening? Does the wind carry my prayers or do I?

Maybe prayer is a spell Words must be said, with implements, at the right time, and under the right moon.

Maybe prayer is a wish list for Santa, for God, for Buddha. I’ve believed in them all. I try to be good.

Bodies and jewels
Fire and horses
Blessings and curses
They all fade under the sun
All have come and gone
and the cycle continues

The laundry continues The soap and water and spinning. And hot air. And folding. The wearing. The wrinkling. The fading.

I fold our clothes and cloths and pray we wear them in health and healing and light And wonder who out there might be gracious enough to grant us this.
Do Past Futures Have Dead Ends
Claire Scott

My wardrobe all greys and blacks
easier to mix and match I tell my friends
no worries about clashing colors
totally efficient, highly cost effective
but really the colors keep me safe

Don’t stand out
don’t be the center of attention
fit in or fade into the wallpaper
or a half-human mother will whip you
with a leather belt or a freshly cut willow branch

Do our clothes shape our future
the way they reflect our past
could I risk the bright colors of my sister
who stood out against the bleak background
and was beaten more

Yet still I dress in somber,
my mother’s long arm reaching,
hers manic laugh echoing through time
’a bleak labyrinth, ice clinking the gin in her glass
although she died over thirteen years ago

Maybe I will buy a nubby orange sweater
to see if dawn rises with rosier fingers
to see if hot pinks, bright blues and turquoise greens
no longer cringe in corners
and muted colors dim and disappear

But what will I have without memories
that tell me how to be
I am no Ariadne risking her life for love
no Theseus with a sword and a ball of red string
the Minotaur biding his time, bloody fangs drooling
I slip on a dark sweater
and wait at the window

Summons
Dianna Henning

This is my cutting board. These
are my hands adept at cutting. This
is my chicken whose neck I’ll sever.

My cutting board floods with new
gerographies. I pluck my fingers of blood. Who
knows a woman’s aim when she swings?
The word-hands of the world lay wreaths
at the serifs of despair. Who says
it can’t be done? The potted
chicken boils and bubbles. My poem
writes itself.

This is my cutting board.
These are my hands. What happens
when it’s over remains,
this indenture to memory. Today, taste of your skin
suffices. How salt enters the bloodstream,
flows straight for the heart. Don’t take me
for a mad woman or shrew. All day
I’ve stirred. The river over-flowed
as we reclined on the ground.
May I? May I, you’d asked. The river answered.
Already, I swoon in recall
of the Yuba, its fluctuance, its greed. He almost

Carrots, Beets, and Bok Choy
Jan Knipe
As in not only the aftermath but some afterward.
Meaning what we survive, or what survives us.
The mail, finally delivered beyond the end of the world.
Little squares of sticky-backed neon paper, untouched.
The electric car whispering your driving score.
The as yet unimagined successors of the manila envelope,
the horse-drawn carriage, the pneumatic tube,
exto-end encrypted email.
Are we there yet, asks the speaking donkey.
Evidently not, if animation extends only to a 3D screen.
Meaning after the statues have come down
there are still caverns of dark, haunted histories.
Meaning we are in the throat of a moment
that hasn’t completely spat us out yet.
We’re working as hard as we can.
We can be as rust-colored fishbones,
as calcium stones; a mouthful of marbles
refusing to give away their brilliance.
It is the come home to roost, grief, which, unattended, settles in, mundane as furniture.
What, after all, are we to do with it?
This sweet old world cannot bear grief along for long, either:
like industry, like lapse, like light gone slack into the edge of dusk before the black oblivion of night, the world lingers on its objects and insists, in any loss, on some loveliness.

Who were we to imagine immortality?
The death of aesthetics?
Napoleon himself needed a nap.
Our best theatrics, the gods, our losses, refuse to punish us, but loll among us, abstracted into other mild states resembling the play of light.
And in this, loved one, the one I once thought the trees lay their leaves down for,
you are no more than the abandoned instrument in the forgotten ballroom of the gods.
You are no more than the window there open to endless kudzu. You are no more than the crumbling limb of a marble statue, than the pink light against which swallows stitch untranslatable erratics.

Elegy for Grief
Melanie Almeder

It is the come home...
Winter, years ago, at a Washington D.C. gala—a celebration for a friend—and who else is there but Sandra Day O’Connor, swinging with her husband on the dance floor. Her dress, black and belted, is knee-length, her hair, that bob we’ve come to know, vestige of the fifties, when she was new to the law, among the first women graduates of Stanford. No one would hire her then. So forbidding was her sex, so mysterious, we might liken her to Eve, who’s had the book thrown at her for bearing all that feminine baggage. But tonight she wears her history lightly, yes, she is light on her feet, her arms wrapped gently around a man she loves, she is slim in that black dress, a shorter more shapely version of that familiar black robe. Tonight she shows leg, supple and strong, she shows, albeit judiciously, sex appeal as he twirls her and she smiles, supremely happy. Though she’s maintained a woman’s right to privacy, it’s hard not to conceive how later, home, she might very well disrobe, make love, her mind free of the day’s weighty decisions, her body safe in the arms of her love, her head turned briefly to the window beside her, to the moon’s penumbra, illuminating this intimate domain with its spare glow.

“We have had many controversies over these penumbral rights of ‘privacy and repose.’”


Pierce
Lisa D’Amico
Mary Shelley?
About your Frankenstein.
A monster?
Cursed. Gawp-mouthed.
In pain. From parts.
The book itself is the mutation.
Who else’s hand could leave these cursive fingerprints?
Your brain at driven play:
gestalt encompassing gestalt,
electricity in chains.
Sudden? Often.
Normal? Never.
Always, always toward mutation.
Do you conceive it as Saint Elmo’s Fire on the fingertips?
Or do you stitch, un-stitch, re-stitch into a softened stop,
half-asleep by candlelight.
Mary, do you startle from a nightly grave when a lightning strike sets fire to a line?
How often does a page breathe without a warning in the dark?

What Attracted the Ghost
Emily Hockaday

Though my daughter was born the same year my father died, it doesn’t occur to me this is what attracted the ghost. Instead I think of shiny objects like a rook might bring to its nest: mother of pearl buttons, hairpins, a lost charm, polished rocks or marbles.
My life has been strung together, collected moments of pain and pleasure and peace. The ghost holds these baubles and weighs them. One the mass of a kidney or liver. Another the weight of a toe.
My life is open for autopsy.
It isn’t over yet I want to say. Am I convincing anyone?

To You, Mary Shelley
Eric Forsbergh

“The gift offered is different for each, but all are equal in their grandeur.”
Lyanda Lynn Haupt

What Attracted the Ghost
Emily Hockaday

Though my daughter was born the same year my father died, it doesn’t occur to me this is what attracted the ghost. Instead I think of shiny objects like a rook might bring to its nest: mother of pearl buttons, hairpins, a lost charm, polished rocks or marbles.
My life has been strung together, collected moments of pain and pleasure and peace. The ghost holds these baubles and weighs them. One the mass of a kidney or liver. Another the weight of a toe.
My life is open for autopsy. It isn’t over yet I want to say. Am I convincing anyone?

Spinning the Wheels
Page Turner
There was just the one, so I sat with it by the creek. We knew each other then, the way old friends do or relatives, when young and not yet estranged or old and ready to reconcile. Above us, a Vireo sang. Near the creek, on a rock, a snake rested in the sun. It was entirely peaceful, my time with the Showy Orchid. The violet-pink of this flower reflected an amethyst in my ring, the amethyst wishing it was wild. A Swallowtail Butterfly, sensing that, lit in my finger for a moment. I buried the ring by the orchid. Maybe I wished I was as wild, or maybe I wished I were tamer, but I knew I needed a ring no more than the Showy Orchid needs a crystal vase. And we sat, a breeze blowing, and I drank some water that I shared with the orchid before I set back up the trail.
Animal Healing Hunt
Florinda Ruiz

On the prowl for a bite of life,
she’s a bruised nocturnal animal
soaked in a dreaminess of being,
eyes only fixed on survival.

She has dried all sorrow and salt
out of her jabbing dire tears,
muster a stricken smile,
not a trace of gloom or fear.

A chilling veil of deep gray haze,
can’t shield her good cheer,
nor transform fright into fate
at each daunting new frontier.

Pushing along at a brisk trot,
she knows to keep an even pace
to hunt the forces of healing,
to hoard serenity in her life’s mace.

Just Shy of the Lyric Danger
Frederick Wilbur

Before knocking, I hesitate;
oboe notes ghost through the door
and, disguised by autumn’s
falling reds and yellows, drift away.
Reticent, I will not puncture her
concentration as passion desires;
music is the grace of promise,
the flowing toward loss.
Can what I have to say compete?

She enjoys my small news,
my pocket poems,
over kitchen coffee and her
lavender-sweet scones.

Our lives touch, but not enough.
She plays a sunny sonata
to cheer my natural deafness.
You have self-deprecated your talents
to an understanding, she tells me.

I hear humble gods holding
love in blameless consequence
and turn, descend the few stairs to the sidewalk.
The trees still giving themselves away.
I want to know: are you there? Are your particles flickering motes in shafts of sun- or moonlight? Are you there? What lacunae separate my flesh and blood from your sidereal plane?

And yet: we go on, don’t we, suspended between dank earth and celestial tapestries. We carry on deciphering imagined lines connecting stars — fettered to our metaphors.

Because of the strength we’ve acquired over the years, because of the will to overcome obstacles, we carry on like brave soldiers at war. We persevere by writing about life’s woes: an abusive husband unlike the current one who cuddles up next to you with a twinkle in his eyes — while beyond, a government fights to halt an influx of immigrants, a debt ceiling on the rise, and you far away reclaiming your power by staying on track.

A dismal fog shrouds the cold house. Time to light a fire. I dither — clumsy, unsure of the moves. Tending the hearth was your job in this house we built together. Now I want to cocoon myself in my mourning, wrapping it around me like a bandage to keep from falling apart.

My habit of tears is a cat curled on my lap, or an armchair in front of a blazing fireplace.

I yearn for a breather, an interlude from appeasing others with book blurbs, reviews, critiques — tasks that interpose on my own writing, on the freedom to lose myself in the moment. I crave solace, comfort from the loss of friends to a demonic outbreak. Beneath a towering oak, my husband and I fill flower pots with botanical gems — Golden Asters — and pray for those we lost.

** “Interruptions” is an excerpt of a longer poem by the collaborative authors.**

---

**Interruptions**

Gabriele Glang & Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda

Dedicated to the memory of Rudi Ebert (1954-2021)

We must be prepared to let God interrupt us.

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

III

A dismal fog shrouds the cold house.
Time to light a fire. I dither —
clumsy, unsure of the moves.

Tending the hearth was your job
in this house we built together.
Now I want to cocoon myself

in my mourning, wrapping it
around me like a bandage
to keep from falling apart.

My habit of tears is a cat
curled on my lap, or an armchair
in front of a blazing fireplace.

IV

I yearn for a breather, an interlude
from appeasing others with book blurbs, reviews, critiques —
tasks that interpose on my own writing, on the freedom to lose myself in the moment. I crave solace, comfort from the loss of friends to a demonic outbreak. Beneath a towering oak, my husband and I fill flower pots with botanical gems — Golden Asters — and pray for those we lost.

V

Setting the table for guests,
I set a place for you. It’s hours
before I notice my mistake.

Some days my lungs breathe liquid sorrow.
I can get no air, drowning, spent
from the heavy work of grieving.

We’re never done with our travails.
Beneath the closed parenthesis
of moon, night’s hiatus offers peace.

The woods I walk in are a grace.
How little I have to offer — only faltering reverence.

VI

I display photos of the deceased
on counters, book shelves, an upright easel, a bedroom armoire

in hopes of receiving a message
from above: a fluttering butterfly,
a cardinal’s crisp cheer, cheer, ending in a calming trill as a mild breeze caresses a cloudless sky.

Why not take a break,
collect one’s thoughts, gather parcels of optimism for the future?

Why not aspire for all?
A Blue Whale’s Heart
Epiphany Ferrell

The heart of a blue whale would swallow you, wrap you head to toe. A blue whale’s heart would beat all around you, moving whole rivers of blood. The pulse would be steady, a lullaby to curl into. You could drift off to sleep in it, secure, using a red blood cell as a float, dipping your toes in the plasma. You would be surrounded by walls of pink heart, always warm, always safe, cradled. The heart of a blue whale would never turn cold or grow distant. You would never be left all alone. You would never be lost.
You know even with this chair’s lever action, its need for meeting every curve halfway at least, even after I’ve told you Christmas won’t be the same this year without our usual cold compress against the neck, even though comfort sometimes gets between your teeth and shaking hands are just a transitive of tremor, even though you come to me expecting judgement and some parable about a crow or a fox or some bullshit excuse for exclusion, even though sitting here before a white television set makes us feel immobile, even if its tonic, even if it keeps the mosquitoes off our pink muffin bits bulging out from shirts and covers, even though I heard it’s cool to not be like your parents, even if it’s too apparent, even though life sometimes feels like the hardening of slime, until all fixatives, save formaldehyde, lose themselves and we run back into types of ooze, even though the classification stings the eyes, even though rabbits actually hate what they appear to enjoy.

even though lists cheat, even though poetry doesn’t always negate or specify whatever feelings should be felt, even though fear doesn’t look so different from sitting in this chair, and we talk about feigning death but rarely feigning life, like a rattle in brown leaves, even I can’t keep it up much longer, even though I never settled on an alternative, and we talked about finding someplace where the air occasionally talks back, and everyone is buried sitting upright, and I don’t think you can kill me in a way that matters.
From the dry branch of a dead tree
A bald eagle looked down at me,
Then leapt into a gust of air
Opened his great wings and flew north.

In the heat, I felt like ripe corn
Begging to be shucked and planted,
Naturally metamorphosed.
I slipped off my shoes and clothing.

Descending into the dark lake
I dove deeper into the blue,
The lake dissolving confusion.
I opened my arms wide and swam.

At first, I felt too slight and small,
Demanded to be more important
Than the fish and birds that lived there.
An altered wisdom in the waves,

And water invited coherence.
We merged,
   all wildlife elements —
One ripple beyond time and space.

All at once I was the water,
The air, the fire, the earth, the eagle,
The intelligent soil sprinkled with star dust.
Then I felt my small form again

Floating in the aware water,
A child enfolded in the sage lake,
I relaxed and grew easy
Simply trusting the moment.
According to Man
God is sword and shield,
rolling thunder,
shock and awe,
security and salvation,
commandments,
domination or damnation.

Oppenheimer's Trinity revelation:
Now I am become Death,
destroyer of worlds.
Iron domes, drones,
outcasts at sea
huddled masses wailing
beneath deaf walls.

Godless or godfull,
beyond dreams and schemes
Life is its own commandment.
All ye mighty carvers of land,
remember Ozymandias and
worship not your sandcastles.
Time will swallow them all.
On one of her last days after retiring she called me and said, “Lou, let’s go have coffee together before we both expire.” I picked her up at her home and was aghast to see how much weight she had lost; she looked ghostly radiant though, smiling the entire trip to the sidewalk cafe. I told her that Cat and I had recently gone to my high school reunion and one of my old friends took one look at much younger Cat and laughed, “You screwed yourself.” Rita guffawed and spat out coffee onto the street. I had met her ages ago when I came to interview for the job. She treated me to supper at BT’s and we hit it off instantly. Sometimes you know when you click with someone you just met—and we clicked. She had recently emerged from a sloppy divorce and of course talked about it. That’s what you do. I think we both got a little drunk. Because I recall a lot of laughing. Soon after we drank coffee that day I received the dread phone call . . . she had indeed expired in the hospital after eating a meal, something about choking. Someone informed me that she wanted me to speak at her funeral service. I had already grown hesitant about public speaking but I would not let her down. I stepped up to the podium and related a few memories and read some of her poems and one or two I had written about or for her. I refused to view the body in the next room. I never view bodies, never. Bodies are remnants, not essences. It took me years to jot this down, Rita, and I wish I hadn’t—it’s not the essence.
We are gathered in the comfort of this truth: that we are blunderers together. If there’s an art to the pie in the face, let’s master it. So you’re the weird spawn of weird people? Sometimes you screw up royally? Well, hey, me too, today’s our day! For today we are given license, we are the Fools of April, flocking to the clown car roll call—


hooting and clouting each other about with our names’ noise like a cinema of stooges, until the jeer is knocked from them— until the spit, with a whoopee cushion squawk, cries uncle— chuckles, Cousin, Sister, Human, Friend, Amen! Alleluia!

“For the Fools of April”
Derek Kannemeyer

“The first of April is the day we remember what we are the other 364.”
—Mark Twain

Within

Alan Bern
I look at the moon this evening
Through pre-budding trees
Splayed in their skyward beauty
Reminding me, that I only see
part of the whole
Obscured, but present
I ponder how to perceive the
Wholly holy when elements
are unseen
Do I trust blindly
Or look deeper through limbs
containing growth, even as they
hide the full view
Tonight, I am missing something
Or is it someone?
Fragments appear
Spearing through my heart
It may be that my attachments
are bleeding through
Though it seems the loss is more
than mine alone
Somehow, I do know
The moon is always full
whether I see her
luminous whole or not
Perhaps, “I” am in the shadow
For tonight, she eludes me
Denial
Laura J. Bobrow

The light in her eyes is too bright.
Tears tremble under her lids.
She relives the scenes of last night,
but smiles as she cuddles the kids.

Oh no, dears This isn’t the end.
Any moment he’s going to call.
For now we’ll just have to pretend
that Daddy’s not gone after all.

Maybe he’s out for a walk
and soon he will come through the door.
We’ll all laugh together and talk,
and we’ll be the same as before.

She touches the bruise on her face.
The real wound is some other place.

Poky people
Jillian Everly

The only lots with the nice lawns belong to the
Church of God
They turned the leftover wine back into water
And left the rest of the west to martyr
Moving furniture with a cigarette in the
Hand he holds the chair leg with
Floating there without pressure
As if he knows it’ll stay attached to his
Finger
Out his one-story house
Yard large enough for his Pitbull to stand
And bark
But not run
The man yells at his bored dog when he
Bites passersby
But never asks if they’re alright
And he refuses to smile at me because I
Look different
Than the folk he’s used to
And that’s okay because I love the torture of
Not being loved
So does the rest of the town
An older couple
Now walks down the sidewalk
Mouth wrinkled around the edges
Grey hair flushed back against the head

Seems as though it’s been pulled tight
Their whole lives
The man wears a wife beater
Tucked in to allow the belly fat to protrude
Over his low belt buckle
And beats his wife most every Monday
When the beers wear off and the job
Edges him back in
But she also wears a white wife beater
Throwing punches back to his back
Marlboro light in her mouth
Screaming with her lips taut
(So as to save the cigarette)
As he carries her down the midnight street
Under the above ground telephone wires
The swaying aspens
The unfixed house cats fucking in the
Street
The sprinkler systems lighting up the church lawn
And the Pitbells left out all night to pace in
Their 12X12 foot yard
All there is to do in this tired town
They tell themselves
Is to bark, bark
Bark
Body moving to and fro in tight space,
feet slopping in wet socks from sink splashes,
finger seared by the red hot stove,
eye splinters when the wine-glass shatters,
head colliding with the fridge door in all the bustle,
voice crying ouch as the bruise purples,
swearing when the cream whips onto the wall.
Oohing when the bread rises
out of the oven,
just perfect.

All this body experience feels like the essence of daily living—at least for this human not accustomed to baking.

But this ditty arose from a question.

What if matter—our bodies, the wet feet, the splinters, the bruises, the smell of the perfect loaf—what if our bodies are not the essence of daily living, what if the kitchen is distraction?

What if one spirit lives in us all and our matter is merely contingent?
What if the one spirit inhabits our bodies until matter dissolves?

But, you may argue, (and you have a point), the loaf is important. Without it, the body dies. Without bodies that can sit at the table together and hug one another, the one spirit dies.
Or does it?
Mortality today smells fresh: seep of snowmelt, meandering sun. A day to clip sheets to the line, spring-slack and thin as your death smile.

I feel you as near as my shadow on this sun-struck sheet. When I push the cotton, it lifts like a curtain—no dead, no living, just you and me, face to face.

Sparrows sing your whereabouts, Our dogs, too, know where you are. They nap, each in her own scrap of light intuiting trust in a way I can’t.

Where are you? Please.

In childhood dreams I’d raise my hands to the bleached sheet, cross into the realm of the dead. How I wish seeing you fleshed was that simple.

I watch sheets drying in sun and wonder how long it would take to get outdoors, clip wooden pins on my fingers to make witch nails, to run headlong into sheets to reach the secret place where the dead smoke cigars and play cards over a cable-spool table.

If I threw back our bedcovers, would you appear, grinning, as if cancer had never sealed your sleep?

What magic can bring you to my side of the sheet, where we could visit over coffee: mine latte, yours, espresso? Teach me the voodoo to summon you.
I Want to Ride through this Life
Kim Ports Parsons

like a child standing on the hump of an old sedan, leaning over the front bench seat, not knowing what’s beyond but full of eager anticipation, gleaming windshield of possibility, sun breaking through greening trees. You drive, beloved. I know you’ll go gently, assuring it’s not too far or too long or too hard, that wonderful things are waiting. Along the way, songs we know and sing along, and new songs, and special things to eat and drink, and games with words, and laughter. And space for silence, too, for sleeping, and even dreams. You’ll go just fast enough on a country lane, mountains in the blue distance, that if I jump as we climb a cresting hill, and if I catch the moment just right, my jump will become weightlessness—a suspension, a floating in joy, a kind of flying, a hawk testing its wings on its first miraculous glide.
Here’s the Situation
Llewellyn McKernan

Midnight poetry is called for
Dawn poetry and noon
Poetry of the cat and dog
Frog and loon

Poems you can write on the brim
of a newsboy’s hat
A poem that’s nothing but the chat
Rain hat with a roof

There’s music in the opening of a door
especially if it’s old
and the hinges aren’t oiled,
There’s music in the goldfish bowl
that swims around and around
up and down

And then there’s the poem
that’s only
bound by its own
unchanged
unheard howl, plus
everything
else
inbetween—
including a clue (or two)
to
what
cannot be
seen.

Emily
LuAnn Keener-Mikenas

The way she kept them in order: white rectangles folded like origami, the invisible snake of the Infinite, autumn maples that could lift the scalp, the swashbuckling hummingbird—captured, bound at their luminous zenith, parties to the contract. Art can save us. The perfect wine, it survives outside time. Alive in the Egyptian tomb the locked trunk, the brain’s drawing room, kindling to the spark we offer—we, stumbling in shadow, falling into grace. Which is an ordered simplicity, a White Sustenance, yes despair and its concomitant insight: Beloved, thou art a fragment of the light.

cf. Dickinson’s #706
Of course, the girls suffered then as they do now, but then I didn’t have a mouth for anything but tart green apples, corn raw from the stalk, ears morning-cold and wet — I did not speak the language of cause/effect, so when my belly churned with gravel, it was the curse of fairies, a wicked queen who sought to put my tangled hair to sleep.

The girls were hungry, sick, dirty, but they served — orifice for all the urge that must enter to explode — I could not hear, so long ago, how could I then — but how can I not now

and now this solitary self, who seems so tethered to the pulse of an empty field — who steeps her own children in tales of the good father, food for the hungry, medicine for the ill —

can she now break it to the clouded sky that yes, no wall exists between herself and others, but no cord either, nothing tying, nothing separating: I do not speak for them —

Forty years later on the back stoop of morning (warm cup / branches shadowing the ground) is it wrong to tell the child I was to come, sit on my lap — to comb and braid her hair?
I’m told the world to come will be the world that we inhabit now, but without loss. Yet lacking the certainty of ending, it wouldn’t be the world we know. Like everyone, I’ve lost so much—the fireflies of childhood, snow, hermit crabs and tiny sea anemones in tide pools emptied out by climate change. I’ve lost my parents, all my aunts and uncles. I still have those tiny purple flowers I can’t put a name to, and somewhere, bright dragonflies still skim a pond. I’m afraid of losing everything. But life’s a forest where seeds keep falling onto patient earth, keep rising, against all expectations.

**slug slime shame**
Sarah Iler

what happens when you are sorry you have done it all wrong

left behind scars and bitter taste what happens when you are grateful

for the direction of your missteps you are lucent with happiness

and ashamed at the same time for the slug slime trail of pain

you leaked along the way

**After**
Robbi Nester

I’m told the world to come will be the world that we inhabit now, but without loss. Yet lacking the certainty of ending, it wouldn’t be the world we know. Like everyone, I’ve lost so much—the fireflies of childhood, snow, hermit crabs and tiny sea anemones in tide pools emptied out by climate change. I’ve lost my parents, all my aunts and uncles. I still have those tiny purple flowers I can’t put a name to, and somewhere, bright dragonflies still skim a pond. I’m afraid of losing everything. But life’s a forest where seeds keep falling onto patient earth, keep rising, against all expectations.
I celebrate you, Walt Whitman,
reading *Leaves of Grass* and *Drum Taps*, seeing as you did.
I hear your voice as a melancholy, lyrical drawl
while I read your words,
as real, breathing and alive today as when they were written.

From a hundred-fifty years you reached across the ages and found my heart.
Your word has shown me parts of myself,
as boundless as earth, effortless, free, timeless.
You bade me not to read, but to listen, and thus to hear.

You wrote with a new form and structure,
and so you gave freedom to the world,
as sure as the workingmen you exalted.

The sawman draws his saw, back, forth, back forth.
The typist sets his words, click clack, click clack.
The fisherman casts his line; the Christian fisherman brings in men.

Inside my mind is a red-fanged, growling demon,
and a winged angel ready to do him battle and destroy him
I know that good will prevail.

I have seen the men at work,
in warehouses, power lines, salesmen hawking wares.
My hands are calloused over.

I have been them, washing floors, dishes, cooking food
salt-of-the-earth, and still rising,
intellectual discovery on the horizon.

It shines, bright as sunlight upon the library on the hill,
where I found books, where I found god, where I found you.
the morning wakes with you, sinking into larval afterglow.

orange-tinted heart below the skin of my rocking body you hold.

sun overwashing our bed, yellow recreating us, new.

morning hearts hang brightly from the windowsill, sipping stale cups of water that glowed in light of the passing moon.

the morning wakes with you a disbelieving glory bloom.

Tonight the quarter moon spins on our dirt road a zoetrope of black leaves I think death will be like this quiet, no car horns or exhaust the light soft, no glare of streetlamps the night’s essentials are sweet: rock insisting on mountain moonlight intent on shadow here beyond myth’s coy seductions is where our truth lives and you, on the far side of our divided continent would take this walk with me would understand the soft dark our new lease on death whippoorwills chant the night’s only prayer these silhouettes of leaves the single sacred alphabet
Poets place their words one after the other still they become a song each expression waltzing off the page into our dreams.

Somehow from somewhere a word melts into a phrase then, this creation of rhythm and reflection emerges into the world.

Crevise crack cranny each empty space on the page filled, reviewed, revised, until the images dance off the page into our hearts.

An incantation twenty-six letters fly high capture a vision that elusive melody of a poem, a song, a life.
Poems from the Dark Room
Colleen Redman

It takes time in the dark room to bring into focus and develop the meaning we’ve made of our lives.

Imprinted stills
Proof of life
Picked up at the corners
and held to the light

A body of work
made of muscle and flesh
A lost art developed
from a landmarked distance

We hid them to protect them
then forgot where they were
We saw their reflections
and cast them in dreams

Now dredged and named
and hung one by one
We signed their originals
while still recognizable

We captured their honesty
before letting them fade
and saw how they shaped us
frame by frame

Avatar
Diane Porter Goff

A wolf has come to stay by invitation
or choice
the dream is unclear
only she settles her sleek limbs
with entitlement
onto the end of my sad
bed she watches me with keen eyes
silver ruff springing from her neck
haunches coiled
inky toenails dark and wet
ruby tongue glistening
the smell of wild
coming off her like smoke

she is how I will devour
the summer days as I once did loping
through tall grasses
push seed heads brushing against my skin
entering the river again and again
to tumble in the currents
swimming to the far bank
pulling myself up to sun
on the flat hot rocks

I will lavish
myself with the sweet sharp sandy
smells that heat pulls from earth
doxing the night in my cool dirt wallow
call of the owl mummer of insects pleasures
rocked in the cradle of the moon

I will follow the tracks of animals
deep into the brush
where Nature keeps her mysteries
the berry
the blossom the springs
I will push my muzzle into cold
and drink like I am famished

I am famished
for The Mother’s feast.
Fog Rises
Anne Deaton

We twice met in Prague
the first time when curls of gray smoke
rose from cottage chimneys
circling the palace dark and silent
a time when ashen, worried people
hurried through the misty fog
scurrying over St. Stephen’s bridge
where saints prayed over the meandering Vitava
carrying away all romance that might have been

the second time years later
in Wenceslas Square where bright lights
revealed freshly painted medieval walls
that guided spirited, laughing people to
cafes where lovers leaned into seductive charms
was it then you said that you were saddened
that it all seemed a bit too dolled up
rather like Disney World for the tourists
and did you mean for me to wonder whether we too
weren’t making a bit too much of the second time around

Dream of Winter
James Broschart

During the lingering stub of a winter night
we sense the faint chime of glass bottles
slipped side-by-side into the zinc milk box
on a front porch already slick with snow.

We stir only slightly in our sleep, assured
by the metallic tic of the box lid closing,
and when we rise and crack open the door
the milkman’s footprints have already filled.

The milk is halfway frozen in bottles so cold
they seem to burn bare hands. We tender them
into the kitchen, careful not to jar twin plugs
of rich yellow cream, winter’s bounty thrust
aloft past frosted glass lips, glistening posts
of butterfat still wearing jaunty paper bottle caps.
We’ll spoon it off to whip for waffles, use it
to glorify the coffee just burbling on the stove.
I was in the car,  
fatheral,  
the grotesque, the magical and  
majestic stone configurations of  
our ancient New Mexican land.

I was driving and I  
had the radio on.  
The stations kept  
switching as I traveled.

I was driving through that  
world and bright-burning landscape  
and over the radio, a voice on the radio,  
a voice began intoning:

*The earth is our mother.*  
*The earth is our mother.*

Chanting this as I moved among  
the towers, the arches, cathedrals,  
all of them striped and stippled  
in reds, in orange and ochre and green.

*Our mother.*

Now her forests are burning,  
her veins going dry.  
We thought we were lords of it all,  
ot anyone’s children.  
I don’t know why.
Rumi on the Beach
Curt Alderson
What better place for bringing him along?
As fine a spot for fellowship
as can be found.

Here, where
salt and wind
and skin collide
in a string of stinging kisses.
Where innumerable grains of sand—
like time itself—soften the soles
of the weary, the hardened.

Wade into this verse.
Slip inside this water
here before you.

The waves, the words—
they wish to have their way with you.

Let them.

The words, the waves—
each holds a magic
no hand can grasp,
no mind fully comprehend.

But there’s joy in that. Deep joy.
This thing beyond all naming.
This speechless truth.
This comfort.

What better place
to linger with the master
than here,
bearing witness
to the union
of the sensual
and the sacred?

More than what the moon can do
Barry M. Koplen

Lurking in shadows, a siren sings. I try not to listen,
try not to hear its warning, not to stare as I locate
its plaintive call. I wonder whether its direction,
itself ambulance of remedies, follows mine, my
heartbreak I thought was ordinary, routine,
a malady a soft lunar balm might soothe.
All That Remains
Sandra de Helen

All that remains after seven
decades is a human body,
a shambles, not its former self.

Wrinkled skin, sagging parts, battered joints,
clogged arteries, a broken and much repaired
heart still bursting its seams with love.

A human who sought love and freedom from
battery and pain. A woman who loved and lost
and gave her love to the wrong people
until she didn’t. A mother who abandoned her first-born
to save them both. Who failed and succeeded and tried again.
A grandmother who cherished her chance to do better,
be better, to love again.

All that remains is to live the next decades
with gratitude and grace.

Reflection
Susan Crave Rosen
The way from out, inside, around between, up through, within, then back, is tracked by hands made tough tugging thread, finding ends to work the path the needle took before the heart’s missteps, and not by hands kept smooth—unknowing, blind, imperative, imperial.

Who’s to soften this boy’s fury? History such as his is the story of a twilit mother who extinguishes time or is put out by another. children know who left for another. Who wants to sleep beside a father or mother anyway? Bedtime—the old construct for missing each other—late at night when the thoughts come flying, and the mind won’t sleep, and the sheep don’t work. Lament of two who once shared a bed. Love is made of lamb-side softness felt one to the next. Touch sewn to the skin is a child’s longing. Belonging. Dream of one’s kind. Roy-man child-father. The mother-daughter pairs. They’re family to the living.
Things that have died this month
Kindra McDonald

An American Bullfrog caught in a net in Acris pond, limp in my hands and laid on the shore near a cypress tree. Food for a heron.

At least six turtles. The remnants of their eggs scattered near a shallow hole surrounded by tracks of coyotes and claw marks.

I once read Mary Oliver fried up turtle eggs for breakfast, having dug them from the nest near her favorite pond where she’d watched their mother emerge.

Three rainbow snakes, rotten and decomposing from a disease we try to find the source of. Their faces so disfigured, they’d become unable to feed.

Michael’s father in a nursing home where no one could visit him.

A northern water snake with a belly bulge hard from catfish.

The catfish.

The 100 foot pine tree crowded by the canopy of oaks, leaning to the left and dead on the right side. Soon to be ground into woodchips.

A fishing spider still clutching a tadpole.

Michael’s mother in a nursing home where no one could visit her.

On Mother’s day I wave to my mom at a distance. Slip cucumber sandwiches through her mail slot.

My neighbor, Jean, I talked to only once, handing her a misdirected postcard that I didn’t even read.

977 Virginians.
In the throat, all buttoned up, I swallowed him up. I did. From the tip of his top to the bottom of his cock I swallowed him up. I swallowed him up and turned him into me, a me without the anger. I swallowed him up and turned him out and made all that rage work for me. Up in the belly of me, I will float and be eaten up by my hunger, my hunger is enough to give up all that is my own and give it to myself. My heart is a hearth and a home, my body my widest spoon. I swallowed him up, I swallowed him up, I swallowed him up.

Pythian Song of Rebirth
Cassandra Whitaker

Three of us: maiden, blue cap’s neck flap, Protecting her from sunburn. Clueless Youth, Cultivating that curve for kisses. Thick-handed, middle-aged matron Jabs for one more leaf of wheat for one more Tiny loaf. I (too old to be silenced), speak of hands: Rubbed the morning’s cold white lamb to life; Prised many a baby from gaping wombs, Pain for Eden’s exit. (How much red spreads on rough white wool). I’ve reamed out warm innards of rabbit, Slicked the stump with chicken’s blood, Cracked the heads of trout on ragged rocks. I myself birthed child upon child to try to love— When all were born and none had left. Sheaves of children ready for life’s scything. I have followed the sun’s arc, the whirl of wheat in wind, Absorbed the meaning of work: So much sweat, stink, dirt and disapproval, I’m no longer awed by The curve of a dove’s head. All heat and dust and grave musings. Are you afraid yet?

The Gleaners
Jean Wollam

Oracle
Jane Winders Frank

Jean-François Millet painted this work in 1857. The French upper classes were disturbed that such a large canvas depicted laborers at work.
The Wolf, or Baba Yaga
Anna L. Tulou

how often in my youth
did i alter flesh and supple bones
for praise
bend would i, twist, contort
reshape myself to please another
mother father friend lover
till my chimera bones became confused
tender muscles bruised
and i hardly knew my native form

in their second age
these bones have hardened
and i have learned to be leery
to give cautious berth to that cauldron
which in the making might unmake me
render marrow into gel
slippery and pliable
eager to fit any form but my own

wary of my own dogged appetite for approval
this i have learned:
to carry a wolf in my purse
for when such vanity strikes
Flower Pods
Kim Lashley Sutliff

Sacred Soil
Ann Thornfield-Long

Remember that you are dirt and to dirt you will return, time after time the desire for the loam of flesh will allow you to think of nothing else but satisfaction. Arms that hold you with desperation, pull you in, drink you up. Even the baby that suckles the breast.

Remember how you love the soil from which you were formed. A jigsaw puzzle longing to be solved, pieces locked. You are half a physics problem, the fulcrum, inertia, gravity. Every solution comes to bring you to ground, reality, safety. The place from which you came and will begin again. A speck of dirt that makes a garden of your belly.
Dinah Visits Leonard Cohen's House on Hydra

Stuart Gunter

For Dinah Gray

Like a bird on a wire
like a drunk in a midnight choir
I have tried in my way to be free.
—Leonard Cohen

She did not cry when she picked up a tiny lime in the road outside of his front door. It dropped from one of the limbs overhanging the back wall. She wondered why, and put it in her pocket. A strange event, a code between listener and disembodied voice. If only she could sit with him at a table in the yard, drinking strong black coffee or mountain tea. What would they discuss? She guessed they would steer away from music or poetry: that would be too obvious. But just to sit and dream with him. Talking of clouds and sand, wearing linen shirts, eating mussels in wine. Later, she would put the blackened lime, a talisman of a love, along with a rock from his step, under glass.

Nymph Maiden and Crone

Therry Neilsen-Steinhardt

runners streak by on cobbled paths, dogs bark, off-leash, racing through pines, lapping from fountains old as emperors whose broken busts line the boulevard.

Music from the carousel celebrates a cloudless day as parents push babies in strollers, and old men rest on benches in stippled sun.

From the shore, a violinist serenades lovers on the lake rowing a shaky boat. The man in tux props up the oars, pours champagne and fills two flutes.

The girl, demure in little black dress, drinks a sip, looks deep into his eyes. He directs the show, hand signals to the shore where a photographer captures the scene.

Inside the Borghese, former palace of popes, Bernini’s statue dominates the gallery, lit by spotlight, focal point of every eye—

The Rape of Proserpina

Pluto’s fingers push deep into the thigh of the girl he’s stolen away, her marble flesh pulsing beneath the violent, grasping hand.

Proserpina’s face contorts into a howl for help that does not come. She is dragged into the Underworld, damned to wed the god of darkness, thrown into a never-ending cycle—rising to sunlight once a year, falling again back to the pit, doomed for eternity.

Outside on the lake, the man presses a ring onto the finger of the girl. Music dies, and the blood-red sun drops low behind the Roman ruins.

Sunday afternoon in the Villa Borghese,

Esther Whitman Johnson

runners streak by on cobbled paths,
dogs bark, off-leash, racing through pines,
lapping from fountains old as emperors
whose broken busts line the boulevard.

Music from the carousel celebrates a cloudless day as parents push babies in strollers, and old men rest on benches in stippled sun.

From the shore, a violinist serenades lovers on the lake rowing a shaky boat. The man in tux props up the oars, pours champagne and fills two flutes.

The girl, demure in little black dress, drinks a sip, looks deep into his eyes. He directs the show, hand signals to the shore where a photographer captures the scene.

Inside the Borghese, former palace of popes, Bernini’s statue dominates the gallery, lit by spotlight, focal point of every eye—

The Rape of Proserpina

Pluto’s fingers push deep into the thigh of the girl he’s stolen away, her marble flesh pulsing beneath the violent, grasping hand.

Proserpina’s face contorts into a howl for help that does not come. She is dragged into the Underworld, damned to wed the god of darkness, thrown into a never-ending cycle—rising to sunlight once a year, falling again back to the pit, doomed for eternity.

Outside on the lake, the man presses a ring onto the finger of the girl. Music dies, and the blood-red sun drops low behind the Roman ruins.

Nymph Maiden and Crone

Therry Neilsen-Steinhardt
Alice, the Details
J. Scott Wilson

Alice, Alice
Cat of Malice;
Eats not from platter
Nor drinks from chalice
Lives in the bathroom closet
Comes out only late at night
To guard over sleeping humans
Perched on the bed – off to the right

Was ever a beast so hurtful-sad
As Alice in her youth
But when the other cats come along
She’ll greet them with the tooth

Not quite savage – never tame
Only in her heart she’s lame
Favors humans, yet knows she’s not
And other felines dread her name

To my girlfriend’s other cats
I never seem to warm up
Alice is the only of the multitude
Who doesn’t lick my plate or cup

Alice, Alice
Cat much reviled
Knows her place, knows her mind
And with me alone aligned.

Festival of Cats
Luana Stebule
The Coat Rack Reflects

Susan Bennett

The coat rack, tired of bearing the weight of damp raincoats and ill-fitting overcoats belonging to random strangers, shakes off the protection of garments never tailored for him. He leaves the cozy warmth of the neighborhood bar to strike out on his own, yearning to find his own unique clothing style, something well-suited to his spindly frame. Unaccustomed to the feel of a cool breeze on his limbs, he wonders if he has made a grave error in his escape. The door to the bar has shut firmly behind him and so he gathers his gumption and strides down the street, invigorated by his new-found mobility. Halfway down the street his attention is attracted by the window display of a bridal shop. He has never seen so much satin, lace and chiffon. The dreamy arrangement of these sensuous fabrics enchants him. He imagines himself wearing these glorious garments and for a moment is transported into a kind of heaven. He sees himself on a marble terrace overlooking the sea, dancing and twirling, lace flying around him as a crowd of elegant people admire him. He is brought out of his reverie by the realization that the mannequins in the window are reminiscent of females and his dream is dashed. Slowly he begins to wonder, how did I come to believe I was male in the first place?

D. H. Lawrence

Susie Gharib

[A reading of his poems]

He wanted to live as a flower, to die blooming like a dark pansy in the after-gladdness of death among its darksome sunrays.

He who boarded the Ship of Death was not intimidated by the Styx. With a Bavarian gentian in hand, he yearned for the inevitable descent into the kingdom of Dis, where Persephone reigned and lived, a fertility without end.

He had spurned the deadly Victorians who castrated the body politic, and though the dark satanic mills of Blake had grown darker to him, he predicted the defeat of the machine for mechanical men are driven mad from themselves. Like the phoenix, the cowed swans, larks, and lambs will rise to triumph over iron.
Your lot may want to stay clear of the nest,  
but mine clamor for closeness, can’t do  
enough to wait on me—by wing and corbiculae—  
all 60,000 plus of them. They flutter and flap  
if it’s hot, flap and flutter when it’s cold.  
Their lifting off and landing is a constant buzzsaw  
gnawing at that oak outside. I’m deadly sick  
of this throne existence—pampered and plumped—  
not even in charge of my own waste. Oh, here  
she comes, my jack-of-all-trades, one of my many,  
disposing of my crap with a rear leg while feeding  
me royal jelly with a front. Repulsive, really. Most days,  
I revel in reliving my maiden flight. They would die for me,  
those boys, so mad to mate. I strung them  
along for their millions, sperm stored now  
for a lifetime. I dole it out bit by bit for my girls,  
grow up to think me just a handmaid, born  
to breed more of them in my image. But to be  
or not be female, I choose for them with a flick  
of my spermatheca. A scant privilege of royalty,  
sweet and sticky like revenge.

The Royal We
Pamela Wax

The queen bee lays between 1,000 and 2,000 eggs a day...  
If the queen bee fertilizes the egg, that egg will become female.  
—sciencing.com

To Bee or Not
Bob Rotche
Sequel
Laura Younger
The Ministry of Vice & Virtue will now resume the removal of hands for state security.
The sports stadium executions are henceforth reinstated.
The one-eyed minister has spoken.
You girls, now encased in black-fabric coffins, you cover your face, you stay in the house, you cook family meals, you close your books and you wait for a man to take you to shop.
The one-eyed minister has spoken.

Roanoke was Once a Big Salt Lick
Annie Woodford
The wind is full of doors.
Daffodils clap, pale cups not long emerged from dirt.
The bottle-blue sky shuffles, April beckons, the moon unrisen.
The yellow brick of the Catholic church, glazed by hands that crumble even as they are conjured, gleams in spotlights angled from below.
In the roadside altar, a statue of a supplicant kneels in unnatural shadows, bouquet of nylon flowers clutched in her concrete fist.
Mary, however, stares up at the stars, arms bared by flowing robes.
A freight train emptied of coal in Norfolk hurtles through the heart of town, rattling back to the absence of mountains.

It’s All About the Hair
Gerri Young
I write some words in the glistening morning,
“There’s a dead buck in my yard,
And I’m tired of Art.”
I pick up the guitar in the corner, covered in cobwebs.
Louise Hay, with her positive thoughts and affirmations, is right.
You have to stop with the excuses, and create.
I pluck the strings,
begin to tune them.
As the sun comes up,
shining over the mountains,
illuminating an opalescent veil of lacy cirrus clouds,
on a late October morning, with a crisp blue sky,
the buck lifts his head (he is not dead after all).
He is facing east, away from me,
towards mountains that are patchworked in autumnal colors.
He tries a couple of times, but cannot get up, swaying unsteadily from his seat.
I get close enough so that he can see me from one eye.
The deer agrees that a mercy killing is in order,
As, he points out, he can only raise his head, and he is in great pain.
When the sheriff comes,
The deer still has his head up. He has been patiently watching the mountains and waiting to die.
The sheriff says it is the widest spread on a buck that young that he has ever seen.
“It’s a shame,” he says,
And shakes his head.
“Somebody would have mounted that one day...I’d have shot him myself,” he says, speaking of hunting,
of which I know nothing, and meaning, if the deer had not been hit by a car, and had lived and had
loved. He’d have grown an even bigger rack, and had a harem of beautiful does, and made little deer,
and lived its happy deer life.
He goes back to his vehicle, gets his shotgun and noise headphones.
When he shoots him, the buck curls his remarkable rack in, one last time, as if to go to sleep, then flops
back against the ground he is already on, neck straight.
The Sound of Water
John C. Mannone

I wake up to the sound of rain, that swish of water pelting a metal roof, I don’t fear the angst of storms, but rather revel in the percussion of the deluge, a rising snare that washes me in an ocean of wide-awake dreams in the city of my birth: the rash of waves, the cavitation of pearly bubbles, foamy spray on the beach of my childhood; the swoosh of salty air through eucalyptus leaves, the harmony of my stroller wheels making music with the earth, the soft flutter of my sister’s dress as she guides me through the park.

That sound of drops splashing open, their hearts flooding with mine through the churn of water by the ocean liner steaming through the Atlantic from Uruguay to America to New York; that sound of spume sliding down the dark green crests of waves all the way into the harbor.

That sound awakens my youth. The ebb and flow rinsing me clean of today’s tumult. I want to swim in the past, sleep in the sound of water as rain, ocean, river, waterfalls. Water falling over boulders my father took me to by the Potomac. There were rainbows there in the mist. The hope of a future still secret to me.

Today, I walk by a stream in the mountains, listen to the gurgle of water over rocks, its language... and that of rain.
When I saw it—so exquisite—three feet long, thin and shimmering, I heard myself say, 
That's all I need to see today.

Then I caught and chided myself. Still, it was indeed enough to fill up the rest of the day. Jaws prolonged into a pointed beak. No leap out of water to sweep me off my feet, but perhaps if I had lingered longer... A fast swimmer, slender-bodied, feeding near the surface in the shoal. Silver-sided, blue green-backed, it glowed like a satin ribbon around a flowing blue gown, and I slowed my pace, felt myself bowing ever so slightly to it, applauding how it lives sublimely in these saline waters, how it's come to terms with a warm, shallow sea. As for me, all these years trying to fathom this desert land jutting into the Arabian Gulf, to feel less cut off from its opposite, an arctic oasis. I have been many places more exotic, but this limestone dolomite peninsula with its marine terraces, salt flats, pedestal rocks, shifting sands and singing dunes so hypnotic, edging up to a shallow tropical sea.

It has captivated me—spare and austere, barren and yet opening suddenly into such richness (mangroves and gypsum crystals) once one opens herself to it.

No godforsaken place, here is evidence of life wherever one stops to be still and silent. Like here, now, with this exquisite needlefish—one swish of it, and I'm transfixed, forgetting all about my varicose shins and greying hair. I swear I feel fit enough to jump in and join him in his watery kingdom.

Forget the splendor of Wandering albatrosses. I'll stay engrossed in my Forktail needlefish. Thank God the Caterpillar's yet to reach into his little shoal. Let the salty breeze rust the Cat away. The needlefish sees me. Oh I do wish. I wish it would leap out of the sea just to catch a glimpse of me, and not in the least feel threatened.
At the family farm you heard it shriek in the night. Numinous by definition, it slunk the underbrush of unscythed hay fields, the feral perimeters of an unfenced boundary. Limestone caves cored the land beneath our view, and occasionally you'd come upon some scat, check your guidebook, given pause. Your mother sprang things on you from the vault of inappropriate family history. Off-handedly, she thrust upon you a vat of scalding water you had to balance just so. Then there was that time some hunters claimed they laid sights on the black velvet face of a creature (Puma concolor couguar) whose tail unburdened them of doubt, yet their shots missed. For me, the high rim of a ravine above a creek was where it stalked, above the road, above my car as headlights illumined a darkness not of the tawny lion, an absence pointing to the thing.

Puma
Cathryn Hankla

Wherever You Look
Sarah Bolduc
In the Throat
Angela Dribben

Another life. Lungs of the forest. Roots pulse comforts to one another. The first one to die bequeaths all they once lived for. Were we once trees? We clamber to find one another. Is it our palms listening, held hot to bark—one risen rough and rigid, one smooth as the Earth’s tilt. Before we ever pressed together flesh, mine to yours, i chased you down this country like chaos in pursuit of a familiar stranger. You a ghost and i your body. You’re the only one i’ve never known how to leave.

The only one i ever rooted into. My anchor. My source. Your Magnolia bark the antidote to my anxiety. Your seed my pain killer, fever reducer. Grandiflora. Salve for soft-bellies. i, your Oak. My medicine your astringent. Your remedy. My canopy your shelter, in Autumn a mantle of auburn and gold to hang your worries on. Your strong, hard wood with tight close grain—i am your barn, your barrel, your ship, your bed. This pulsing through the earth. This way we ache for one another. Otherworld, Underworld, in another life. Our ancestors Hickory, Poplar, Dogwood, Redbud, medicines of the earth, muladhara of the earth. Hyphae calling us home.
You buy me a small box lacquered
with this painting: What can I hide here?
The work a self-portrait, yet there are so few
with women this way: in solidarity.

Seated, joined by hand and artery,
cardiac machinery painfully exposed,
they endure, bleeding and holding
both sharpness and memory, fused.

Maybe the question really should be:
What is it you have hidden?

Like them, we sat together for so long, so close.
You bore me, but it was never clear
who raised who. You were a girl
who birthed a girl who grew to your tangled light

and exposed passions, your heart visible
as you tried to write and paint your story, suturer in hand.

We are mirror images: one intact, one
savage, ripped open, busy with triage.

Despite your hemorrhaging, still I got up,
saved myself: Is this your reminder?

Pandora also received a box meant to teach
not to anger the gods with excessive wanting.

I look deeper inside your gift, but there is nothing.
As always, this emptiness will be what I make of it.
Josephina
Jerrice J. Baptiste

Hearing the border bird’s song
My aunt Josephina escaped in the night
Her babies left behind, tucked in burlap.

She begged the Silverlight of the moon
to console her babies forever
Hearing the border bird’s song.

Her husband had sworn he would kill her
He slept with a gun under his head
Her babies left behind, tucked in burlap.

Her legs slashed like a bushwacking woman’s
In the light of the border’s dawn
Hearing the border bird’s song.

The light of dawn, should she have gone?
Her husband had sworn he would kill her
Her babies left behind, tucked in burlap

While he slept with a gun under his head
She wept
Hearing the border bird’s song
Her babies left behind, tucked in burlap.
Hirundo
Marjorie Gowdy

Our sun is midway through the northern sky.
Frost teases wild roses winding along lines of an aching fence.
A waking blue sweat bee seeks tattered pollen larders.
Violet-bright blooms inch along the redbud’s branch.

An anxious time.
Flattened timothy, quartz luminous in the half-frozen creek.
Misted lens on early morning trysts of the cardinal, the bluebird, the wren.
We can yet see straight down the valley of poplars to an empty road.

They give us four months, the passerines.
A scout arrives first, blustery after its vernal journey.
I’m feeding the horses, surrounded suddenly in a blur of orange and blue.
Fearless straw thieves, they burrow and squawk.

I wait for them, their altricial promise in song.
They swoop diffidently, differently than the mocker,
more “hey” than “get out.”
Didactics for weeks as downy young fly from stable to high wire.

Then, as they finish off gnats and green horse flies,
a final sitting. Blistering tar, gravel, and rest. Swallows disappeared in dry heat.
Passed by. Passed on. I could jump to catch them as they leave.
But it is Hirundo’s burden to keep the barn raised.

Valery
Susan Hankla

For Valery Nash, in memory of all her good works for Artemis Journal, and as poetry teacher at North Cross School, Roanoke, VA.

Because it is Valery’s, the flower is blue.
Always my teacher, each lesson is blue.
Blue poems, like Galoises packs—foreign, unfiltered.
I never smoke, but that does not seal virtue.

Yet I think Valery when I breathe;
Single iris in the vase in France.
The Price of Dancing Lessons
Melinda Thomsen

My brother says just 20% of what my mother says is nonsense, thanks to new her meds mix.

For me, it’s still too much.

Remember how much I spent on dancing lessons for you?

No, the weather is fine here how about there?

Those humiliating dancing lessons, where boys with outstretched hands asked the pretty girls to fox trot. I danced alone.

Apparently, my mother keeps my hurt in the arsenal of her mind, ready to shoot.

After I hang up the phone, I cradle into myself and walk outside to watch chickens scratch for worms until dusk darkens the earth.

The Loneliness of the Harem
Sherry Poff

Even when resting, incumbent on the wind-bitten grass, long tails languidly switching, they avoid one another’s gaze.

Accustomed to walking a narrow path, nose to flank, they blush to notice their own slow awkwardness and years of keeping their heads down, submitting to groping hands for what is theirs to offer.

Their very voice a sad complaint, they cannot bear to see the beginning of compassion, glint of their own sorrow in another’s eyes.
If a waning moon
is still a moon
then we were children.

We were also wet
and nearly naked,
half-hidden in the dark,
hoping our drunk parents
would remain dumb.

Our probing tongues
made easy promises
that tasted like truth
with a dash of delusion.

But now the moon is new
and we are Facebook friends.
We share our virtual lives;
celebrate our virtual victories
while still hiding in the dark.
Still
Suchitra Samanta
(To my daughter, at three, on a beach in India)

Small, shining beach creature, busy shell hoarder—I watch her laugh in the tropic sun, thrill to the feel of velvet froth. Only she is there.

At three, Time holds no sway. No future beckons in hope or fear, no past opens to imagine, no repertoire of remembered wonder, or grief, or love. No stories of oneself.

No need. At three a god who rolls across the universe. Now is all. A ball bouncing off its worlds, knowing only instances, endlessly.

But Time moves me differently. I must seize the moment, hoard, hold still what may be lost, clasp to me what is mine.

So in words I freeze this instant. In mind’s caves where no years gloss a child in sand-sift Laugh-limbed by a gold-flecked sea.

F-Bomb
Ralph Eaton
Today, I thread a needle of hope, for you, little one. Child of my child.

I sew your earliest smile into my heart. The fabric of recognition. It lifts the veil and your light rains pure-pure, upon my wrinkled brow.

I hem our connection, thread by thread. It fastens us, pulling me back into the timeless infant space of liminal imagination.

From this needle of hope, each stitch is an invocation. An exquisite breath-blemished promise of a world made perfect – by you.

From this poor needle, this humble seam, Spirit pours from every eye. In this moment and every moment – it lives, as we live. In us. Through us.
The Road to Ballingeary
Don Hogle

Yesterday, I was headed to the pharmacy on 14th Street. As usual, the hot dog man sat on a pail next to his cart, listening to Egyptian pop music on the radio. As I turned the corner, the buildings suddenly seemed unusually solid—as though their red and brown façades had been thrust up from the bedrock below. A triangle of clear sky cleaved them where the avenue cut through, and its blueness ached like a throbbing heart. This is it, I thought, there’s nothing more to life than this sky, these buildings, and this moment.

Don’t ask me why, but then I recalled being on the road to Ballingeary the year we went to Ireland. I assured you the sign I followed at the fork was Gaelic for the name of the town. You thought otherwise, and later it was clear you were right, but you never said I told you so. And suddenly on 14th Street, I felt something like love—for you and me, for Ballingeary, and for the hot dog man sitting on a pail next to his cart, listening to the radio.

Finale
Anita Firebaugh

Autumn.
Close skies. Tinged leaves.
Did she smell rain? Eyes shut.
The crisp, clear morning caresses.
Breath ends.
Tonight, the stars are bright. Unsteadily, I walk home from the tavern. The night overwhelms me like a gigantic cavern. I see the moon, reflected in the dark water. If I were drunker, I might reach out to grab her. They say that is the way Li Po died. I doubt it. He had too many poems yet to write. I stumble over dead leaves. Such is my inexcusable life. I slowly stagger home to my empty bed. It’s now been a month, that my wife has been dead.

Loose skin exhales a time when her breasts were still round
Pulped scars whisper just below the surface
Each breath no longer tethers what is missing
A soul imbues today’s terrain
Saturdays he left behind the grit, broken mirrors, and pitted concrete floors of the glass shop. An early day. Time for lunch, time to count change. Time to watch the old cowboys on TV. The room filled with gunfire, war whoops, fallen horses, the long drawl of the Duke, thick as clouds of pipe smoke, sweetness of cherry tobacco, brown bits drifting from stained hands to mottled carpet.

Sun cracked the edge of drawn curtains, hit the white haze, stopped before it reached the blazing screen.

The television never stopped. Even the floor vibrated with long-gone explosions. He tapped the packed ash to the knobby green ashtray, glass heavy as the hand iron on the hearth. He smiled at the shootouts, the screaming horses, the hero who rode the swell of violins into a painted open sky.

My Uncle’s Matinee
April Asbury

Like you, after Grandpa Albert’s stroke at breakfast, I refuse to cry on the date marking your demise.

First time I heard you cry reminded me of Ali feeling Foreman’s body blows. Pegasus airlifted baby brother born with green mucus in his lungs. Doctors put him on the ECMO machine in D.C. You got depressed, no room at the Ronald McDonald House promoted in those TV infomercials.

A man tucks in his upper lip instead of bawling his ass off in public, you’d say.

I study Polaroids I posted on social media, 10 years today, the one of you in army ripstop sateen giving a peace sign in Cambodia, and my throwback: you in traditional trucker wardrobe, white t-shirt, blue jeans, Red Man bag, holding me in the middle of an aisle at Drug Fair.

On my porch, I eat cottage cheese and maple syrup, your nighttime treat, under a raven’s sky shorn of the North Star.

Anniversary
Kevin J. McDaniel
She lingers in the kitchen,
apron tied around her waist
pushing a loose strand of hair
behind her ear. Leaning
against the sink, she gazes
out the window.
Bone weary, family to feed,
blue —
blue as chicory.

Thinks how she never expected this —
cooking to live,
not living to cook.
Not loving the man she married
for that matter either,
though she’s stayed with him
year after year.

But the smell of homemade bread,
rising —
this she loves.
She considers her floured hands
pushing the dough
kneading it against the table,
molding something beautiful
out of what little she had.

And she remembers how
he leaves her alone
in the kitchen,
and all the kids, too,
with their everlasting hunger.

Here, free of them all,
she can pound the bread
twist in her frustration and loss
shove it into the oven,
pause, breathe in the aroma,
and feel her spirit rise—
even as the dough does.
On the Walk Home from Apple Tree City’s Tree Stand
Sean Prentiss

The world is ten thousand stars and one black blanket as I climb from the tree.

Hunters, like me, leave stands for home, bows in hand, our hunts unsuccessful.

The world is quiet and empty as I step over fallen pines, duck under low hanging branches until, while walking into a night field, I stumble—only to hear the clatter of deer hooves trotting through brittle leaves.

Regret washes over me until I realize—who needs anything more than a chance to pull the bowstrings, the almost of the hunt.

Nocturne IV
Yun Wang

When night flowers into stars
I anchor my boat in your dream
The lake mirrors a field of cold flames

Darkness will disperse at dawn
as a flock of ravens
You will wake with tears in your eyes never having met me

On the Pond
Jeri Rogers

The world is ten thousand stars and one black blanket as I climb from the tree.

Hunters, like me, leave stands for home, bows in hand, our hunts unsuccessful.

The world is quiet and empty as I step over fallen pines, duck under low hanging branches until, while walking into a night field, I stumble—only to hear the clatter of deer hooves trotting through brittle leaves.

Regret washes over me until I realize—who needs anything more than a chance to pull the bowstrings, the almost of the hunt.
Mary
Kari D. Ross

I am Mary the Mother in this moment with you.
I hold you I cradle your heart it beats in your miraculous body, it beats in mine.
My lips on your cheek soft and sticky and a perfect love I want to eat.
My body I give for you in exquisite pain of birth.
Perfect love I am yours as I am mother quickened with that sublime awe.

I am Mary from Magdala now in this present time,
Here now we are friends you and I, face to face side by side, we talk with brains of flesh.
Words that live so I may hear my life with you in dialogue.
You tell me I tell you, our words waltz together.
You watch me I watch you, you lead our dance you've extracted into being.

Now in this measured moment of effort with you, I am the woman born Mary F. O'Connor.
Baker of words, spiller of beans, co-creator of truth in beauty sincere.
My faith is stretched and tested here, you disappear then reenter.
Plant the seed and watch it grow the Kingdom is within.
Gravid worlds are only born of that perfect love and pain sublime.

Love and awe and friends divine, gardens of creation.
We seek that moment of understanding the mystery of relation.
Mother, friend, and co-creator point me where I follow.
I follow you, steps within to glorious faith revealed.
We lift the veil to goodness of truth where I carry your cross of beauty.
In Memoriam

Rod Adams

Rod Adams enjoyed people as well as entertaining them. He played the curmudgeon and the flirt; he told tall tales and embellished true ones. He was also generous and kind, and he loved teaching watercolor. He donated workshops to regional art groups and taught classes in Bedford, where he became a mentor to many. In contrast, he could slump over a painting with a 00 brush in hand and ignore the world.

Before the days of computer graphics, he illustrated Yellow Pages for 15 years and those skills show up in his painting. He was one of the studio artists in Roanoke’s Butterflies & Unicorns Gallery and later a member of The Market Gallery.

He is known for his intricately detailed watercolor paintings; his favored palette of browns, deep oranges and reds and his favorite subjects—rusty trucks, red rock, and aging buildings. With his typical humor he claimed to paint what he was: “rusty, crusty, and falling apart.”

He was both proud of his art and harshly critical of it. Although he favored photography and watercolor, in recent years he experimented with oil painting and also has considerable work on a novel saved on his computer.

-Eddie Bays

Illegal Alien

Rod Adams
Everything was grey, yet nothing was really grey, thought Imke. The seawater holding her body seemed dark grey, but she knew it also to be blue, and sometimes green, or black. The low horizon looked pale grey, but she’d also seen it green, and orange. The huge sky, empty but for a few kittiwakes here and there, was a washed-out grey, but she’d also gazed up at yellow and red skies. Thinking about colours helped pass the time while she was swimming, especially when she tried to remember the old words for them.

The swim back to Frowland would normally take less than an hour, but Imke’s cargo slowed her. The rough twine chafed her shoulders, and the weight of the makeshift raft was adding laborious minutes to her usual stroke. The rhythm of swimming, the pull and the draw, usually calmed Imke’s thoughts, but today her mind rolled like the rougher waters she’d swum from.

A confident swimmer even in these northern seas, Imke had been put into the water as a baby by the mother she couldn’t really remember. She knew her mother had been executed, presumably for the crime of having had a child, in the days when there was still an Erdpolizei, before the Manplaig had wiped most of them out.

Raised after that by a band of women in a derelict village at the edge of the New Mainland, Imke had swum in sea lochs as a child. She cherished the freedom of swimming. In the water no one could hunt her, arrest her, rob her, or rape her. And it was a release from the everyday work of foraging, cooking up scraps, making, repairing, and scanning the hills in the distance for raiders.

When the village had been raided one day, half a dozen women died in its defence while Imke and an older girl ran, then swam, then swam again. The other girl perished in the dark water but Imke got to the other side of the river and made her way out to the coast, where she found Gan and Azra.

Gan was an older woman with hollow cheeks, few teeth, and part of an earlobe missing, bitten off by a raider. Azra seemed younger, with most of her teeth and fleshy brown breasts. Azra had made her way as far west as possible during the Great Migrations, whereas Gan’s origins were unknown to all but her. Imke, young and alone, posed no threat to them, and she was taken in as an extra pair of hands and as the group’s only swimmer and sea-forager. The mutual benefit was understood, but Imke knew she couldn’t trust them.

A gannet plunged headlong into the sea just ahead of Imke. Fish in the water! Healthy fish, and gannets diving for them, meant a food chain; the sea around them had not died just yet. Glancing up at the gannet as she took a breath of air, Imke noticed Frowland in the distance. She’d be ashore within a half hour, she calculated, picturing herself on the steep pebble beach, dragging the raft, and explaining herself to Gan and Azra.

You were supposed to get rid of it, Imke. We’ll do it ourselves if you cannot.

There had been so much death already.

Their Frowland project had meant defending the boat they were building and keeping unwanted New Mainlanders from joining them. Gan was smart and Azra was strong, and together they made a formidable pair. Knowledge of the boat had cost several people their lives – people who wanted to join the expedition to the new islands, or who might have informed on them or stolen the boat for themselves.

Imke herself had often worried that she brought neither cunning nor strength to the group; she couldn’t plot like Gan, or bludgeon raiders like Azra could. But she had currency, being young and vital – a valuable connection with a Manplaig survivor who knew how to make boats. Boat Man knew how to get wood, bring it to a place, join things together, and build a sea boat. More than that, he was able to keep their Frowland project secret in an unspoken exchange for the reluctant favours Imke had granted him, rushed episodes that took place up against trees and in frozen ditches and even under the half-built boat.

Gan had insisted they call him Boat Man to avoid attachment issues once he’d served his purpose, although he’d told Imke his old world name. In any case, said Gan, he had the signs of Manplaig – the pustules and the cough and the sunken look in his eyes - and he surely wasn’t long for life in the new islands.

Imke’s moments of secret exchange with Boat Man had exacted a sobering price of her. Soon enough, as they were preparing to sail to the tiny uninhabited island they’d named Frowland, Imke noticed her belly swelling and felt her blood tightening. Those first weeks she lay awake at night worrying that she wouldn’t be able to sustain a child on her meagre diet. Babies were of course illegal without a permit, but without Erdpolizei around it was less of a concern. Once Imke’s condition became evident, though, Gan and Azra insisted that she drown her child once it was born, as so many women had done before her.
That very night, Imke gave birth in some soft ferns away from the shore, Canis keeping watch and Wulfrun frantically licking the baby’s head almost as soon as it emerged. Imke rested there till dawn, not really thinking about anything but looking up at the night sky. The first faltering words she said to her baby were the old world names for all the colours she saw in the galaxies.

As Imke swam now with Frowland in sight, with gannets overhead and the sleeping baby strapped onto the raft behind her, she cleared her mind of all other thoughts. She shivered, then turned in the water, glancing at the sky turning from grey to pink.

A steady hour later, the horizon was burning a deep red as Imke, exhausted and almost delirious, reached the shore of Boat Man’s island. Canis and Wulfrun greeted her as she pulled the little raft onto the shingle beach, lifted the baby, and kissed her.

Imke spoke aloud to the dogs and to her tiny daughter.

I’m sorry we’re alone here, but that’s safer. An uncertain future is better than none at all.

As night fell, woman, infant and dogs slept together on the flattened ferns where the baby had been born. Imke cried softly without knowing why. As the tears touched her lips she tasted the salt, the taste of tears and the taste of the sea.

She watched a shooting star heading west and felt the quiet joy of being alive in the world, tired but alive, in an old-new world of stars, water, land, and salt.

Dusk at Mono Lake
Gordon Davis
Adams, Chelsea
cbadams3@verizon.net
Alderson, Curt
curt.stpoet@gmail.com
Almeder, Melanie
melanialmeder.com
Asbury, April
apriljasbury.com
Aulan, Kyra
hello@kyraulani.art
Baptiste, Jerrice
AuthenticPoetry.com
Boitler, Kirsten
kirstenboitler.com
Bennett, Susan
eureklagrl@gmail.com
Bennett, John M
johnbennett.net
Bern, Alan
linesandfaces.com
Bidinelli, Paola
paolabidinelli.com
Blanchard, Jane
jegblanchard@aol.com
Bobrow, Laura
laurobobrow.com
Bolduc, Sarah
sarahbolducdesign.com
Branch, Betty
bettybranchio@gmail.com
Broschart, James
brolinks@hotmail.com
Brouwer, Charlie
chbrouwer@swva.net
Brown, Wesley
wendybrownmua@gmail.com
Cates, Gwen
gwencates.com
Chantal, Katherine
lifeceremoniesbykatherine.com
Clevinger, Angie
moon197599@gmail.com
Cole, James
jdcole@email.wm.edu
Copeland, Beth
poetreeline@gmail.com
Counihan, Brian
studioarticulo.com
D’Amico, Lisa
lisaadamico.net
Davis, Andi Pitcher
andipitcher@gmail.com
Davis, Gordon
sochoesoi@aol.com
de Helen, Sandra
SandradeleHelen.com
Deaton, Anne
deadona@missouri.edu
Dolinger, Ed
edolinger@yahoo.com
Dove, Linda
evodal66@gmail.com
Dribben, Angela
angeladribben.com
Duensing, Lennie
lduensing48@gmail.com
Durrell, Piper
pldurrell@gmail.com
Eaton, Ralph
F-Bomb
Everly, Julien
jeverly@swva.net
Ferrell, Epiphany
epiphanyferrell.com
Firriburgh, Anita
afirriburgh@gmail.com
Forbergh, Eric
forber@verizon.net
Freese, George
georgerfeese33@gmail.com
Gabrielle, Jane
OneWorldArts@icloud.com
Gallo, Louis
lgallo@verizon.net
Garcia, Elizabeth
elizabethgarcia.wordpress.com
Gharib, Susie
thechictextemplar@gmail.com
Giovanni, Nikki
nikki-giovanni.com
Goette, Jane
jane.goette@gmail.com
Goff, Diane
dpgoff@gmail.com
Gowdy, Marjorie
bluebridgehome.blogger.com
Greene, Kindra McDonald
kindramcdonald.com
Green, Jack
jackgreer.net
Groves, Piper
pipergroves.com
Gunter, Stuart
stuartz.gunter@gmail.com
Hay, Al Sr.
john.hay@swva.net
Hanks, Cathy
cathrynanchalka.com
Hanks, Susan
hanksl.mudpie.susan@gmail.com
Hengerer, Tonya Rieley
info@everyday-sommelier.com
Hill, Mary
marycrockett.com
Hockaday, Emily
emilyhockaday.com
Hogle, Don
donhoglepoet.com
Hoover, Teri
artworkarchive.com/profile/t-hoover
Igloria, Luisa
luisaigloria.com
Iler, Sarah
@sarah.ier
Johnson, Esther Whitman
ewjppuff@hotmail.com
Kannemeyer, Derek
petalridge.com
Kapral, Patricia
kapralart@yahoo.com
Kayati, Lisal
bellalavitan.com
Keener-Mikenas, LuAnn
lkeener444@live.com
Kenny, Steven
stevenkenny.com
Kilbourne, Brandon
functionandevolution.com
Knipe, Jan
janknipe.com
Koplen, Barry M.
bkop.poetscry@gmail.com
Contats

The Flock

Steven Kenny

Bennett, John M
johnbennett.net
Bern, Alan
linesandfaces.com
Bidinelli, Paola
paolabidinelli.com
Blanchard, Jane
jegblanchard@aol.com
Bobrow, Laura
laurobobrow.com
Bolduc, Sarah
sarahbolducdesign.com
Branch, Betty
bettybranchio@gmail.com
Broschart, James
brolinks@hotmail.com
Brouwer, Charlie
chbrouwer@swva.net
Brown, Wesley
wendybrownmua@gmail.com
Cates, Gwen
gwencates.com
Chantal, Katherine
lifeceremoniesbykatherine.com
Clevinger, Angie
moon197599@gmail.com
Cole, James
jdcole@email.wm.edu
Copeland, Beth
poetreeline@gmail.com
Counihan, Brian
studioarticulo.com
D’Amico, Lisa
lisaadamico.net
Davis, Andi Pitcher
andipitcher@gmail.com
Davis, Gordon
sochoesoi@aol.com
de Helen, Sandra
SandradeleHelen.com
Deaton, Anne
deadona@missouri.edu
Dolinger, Ed
edolinger@yahoo.com
Dove, Linda
evodal66@gmail.com
Dribben, Angela
angeladribben.com
Duensing, Lennie
lduensing48@gmail.com
Durrell, Piper
pldurrell@gmail.com
Eaton, Ralph
F-Bomb
Everly, Julien
jeverly@swva.net
Ferrell, Epiphany
epiphanyferrell.com
Firriburgh, Anita
afirriburgh@gmail.com
Forbergh, Eric
forber@verizon.net
Freese, George
georgerfeese33@gmail.com
Gabrielle, Jane
OneWorldArts@icloud.com
Gallo, Louis
lgallo@verizon.net
Garcia, Elizabeth
elizabethgarcia.wordpress.com
Gharib, Susie
thechictextemplar@gmail.com
Giovanni, Nikki
nikki-giovanni.com
Goette, Jane
jane.goette@gmail.com
Goff, Diane
dpgoff@gmail.com
Gowdy, Marjorie
bluebridgehome.blogger.com
Greene, Kindra McDonald
kindramcdonald.com
Green, Jack
jackgreer.net
Groves, Piper
pipergroves.com
Gunter, Stuart
stuartz.gunter@gmail.com
Hay, Al Sr.
john.hay@swva.net
Hanks, Cathy
cathrynanchalka.com
Hanks, Susan
hanksl.mudpie.susan@gmail.com
Hengerer, Tonya Rieley
info@everyday-sommelier.com
Hill, Mary
marycrockett.com
Hockaday, Emily
emilyhockaday.com
Hogle, Don
donhoglepoet.com
Hoover, Teri
artworkarchive.com/profile/t-hoover
Igloria, Luisa
luisaigloria.com
Iler, Sarah
@sarah.ier
Johnson, Esther Whitman
ewjppuff@hotmail.com
Kannemeyer, Derek
petalridge.com
Kapral, Patricia
kapralart@yahoo.com
Kayati, Lisal
bellalavitan.com
Keener-Mikenas, LuAnn
lkeener444@live.com
Kenny, Steven
stevenkenny.com
Kilbourne, Brandon
functionandevolution.com
Knipe, Jan
janknipe.com
Koplen, Barry M.
bkop.poetscry@gmail.com
Featured Artist and Writers

Nikki Giovanni, poet, is one of America’s foremost poets. Over the course of a long career, Giovanni has published numerous collections of poetry—from her first self-published volume Black Feeling Black Talk (1968) to New York Times best-seller Bicycles: Love Poems (2009)—several works of nonfiction and children’s literature, and multiple recordings, including the Emmy-award nominated The Nikki Giovanni Poetry Collection (2004). Her most recent publications include Make Me Rain: Poems and Prose (2020), Chasing Utopia: A Hybrid (2013) and, as editor, The 100 Best African American Poems (2010). A frequent lecturer and reader, Giovanni has taught at Rutgers University, Ohio State University, and Virginia Tech, where she is a University Distinguished Professor.
https://nikki-giovanni.com/

Natalia Trethewey, poet served two terms as the 19th Poet Laureate of the United States (2012-2014). She is the author of five collections of poetry, including Native Guard (2006)—for which she was awarded the 2007 Pulitzer Prize—and, most recently, Monument: Poems New and Selected (2018); a book of non-fiction, Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast (2010); and a memoir, Memorial Drive (2020) an instant New York Times Bestseller. She is the recipient of fellowships from the Academy of American Poets, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Beinecke Library at Yale, and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard. She is a fellow of both the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. A Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets since 2019, Trethewey was awarded the 2020 Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt Prize in Poetry for Lifetime Achievement from the Library of Congress. Currently, she is Board of Trustees Professor of English at Northwestern University.
https://natashatrethewey.com/
Photo by Nancy Crampton

Steven Kenny, an artist was born in Peekskill, New York in 1962 and now resides in Check, VA. He attended the Rhode Island School of Design, receiving a BFA in 1984. After studying independently in Rome he gained notoriety as a freelance commercial illustrator. Clients included Sony Music, Time Magazine, AT&T, United Airlines, Celestial Seasonings, Microsoft and many others. His illustrations repeatedly received awards from the Society of Illustrators, Communication Arts Magazine and the Art Directors’ Club of New York. In 1997 Steven turned away from illustration in order to devote his full attention to the fine arts. His award-winning exhibitions are exhibited in galleries across the United States and Europe. Honors include grants from the Virginia and Franz Bader Fund, the Joyce Dutka Arts Foundation, and fellowships from the Virginia Commission for the Arts, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Creative Pinellas. His paintings can be found in the permanent collections of the Polk Museum of Art, Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art, Museo Arte Contemporanea Sicilia, State College of Florida, and many private collections around the world.
http://www.stevenkenny.com/

Betty Branch, artist, maintains a studio and gallery in Roanoke, VA. For the first thirty years of her career, Branch focused on the female form and defined female rites of passage in both traditional and unorthodox media. In recent decades she has produced numerous public monuments and commissioned sculptures of varying subjects. She spent a portion of many years working at Nicoli Studios in Carrara, Italy and notably, she was the only American exhibitor invited to the first Salon International de la Sculpture Contemporaine in Paris. Her award-winning art has been widely exhibited in the US and abroad, with works from small to monumental in private, corporate, university, and museum collections. http://www.bettybranch.com

Jane Smith lives in Cheshire, England with her family of humans and dogs. She writes both fiction and non-fiction and campaigns on wildlife and environmental issues. She is a contributor to the journal Dark Mountain and in 2021 her essay ‘Crossings’ was short-listed for the inaugural Future Places Prize for Environmental Literature (UK). She is mainly interested in inter-species understanding and in human responses to climate emergency.
Twitter: @Jane_C_Smith; website: www.janeecsmith.com
Acknowledgements

*Artemis*, a charitable organization, would not be possible without the continued support of our donors. Our journal partners with many organizations, including The Light Bringer Project, Festival-in-the-Park, Taubman Museum of Art, & Final Track Studios, co-producer of our podcast *Artemis Speaks*.

**DONORS**

**Angels $1000-$6000**
Final Track Studios  
Roanoke Arts Commission  
Taubman Museum of Art  
Ambassador and Mrs. Nicholas F. Taubman

**Patrons $500-$1000**
Margie & Robert Shanks  
Sherrye Lantz  
Gary Israel, President Dorothy M. Gillespie Foundation  
Douglas Schwartz  
Warren Lapine, President Wilder Publications

**Friends $150-$500**
Betty Branch  
Cates Living Trust  
Mary Ann & Michael Koch  
Susan & David Icove Landers  
Jan O’Brien  
Trevor Parker & Jesica Parker  
Diane & Art Strickland

**Supporters $50-$100**
Lana Atkins  
Gwen Cates  
Sharon Mirtaheri

To donate or sign up for a subscription go to our website:  
https://www.artemisjournal.org/donate/