

**Ars Poetica**  
**Poetry**  
**2025-26**

## **The Glistening**

*Zac Garripoli*

Last night a silver moon  
etched a vision in my mind,  
and then withdrew.

This morning grass shone a crystal path  
that tapered off then disappeared.

It could have been the lunar face  
had burned its image on the blades  
while I was lost in sleep.

Or maybe dew had settled from the sky,  
then lifted, everywhere  
but where an owl's wing had brushed the tufts.

Now white moths sift the long, thin rays,  
weaving through the cooling air.

I feel a set of eyes open to the dusk,  
and sense a phosphorescent blazing  
underneath a leaf ignite: a cold flame,  
waiting for the world to turn  
those last few delicate degrees.

## **The Fall**

*Zac Garripoli*

Her child is running toward the road, following a ball.

He is unclothed.

His shorts and shoes are strewn across the yard.

He cannot hear his mother

calling from the window

near her bed.

He does not see that she is nude

below the waist, or the face of her lover

hidden in the shadows.

She has that troubled look of someone

contemplating summer's end: lazy days

a child can play beneath the sun,

unfettered by the clasp of shirt and slacks.

Her mouth has opened wide to birth a scream.

She wants to intervene,

to spare her son his fate,

but unless she steps into the light again,

her child is doomed to chase the ball

wherever it might lead.

## **The Other**

*Zac Garripoli*

On the day the Earth resumed  
spring's scents and shapes and hues,  
and optimistic birds wove twigs  
into the tapestry of life,

my father fixed the tire on my bike  
so I could feel the wind, its force  
against my own,

until I stopped somewhere  
to hear the quiet in the shade of hickories  
that sucked the sounds of autos from the air,  
and turned the hour over to cicadas,  
shuddering on branches  
where they waited for the changes to occur—

What man or monster,  
half in shadow, half in sun,  
was watching from a corner of the solitude  
I didn't know I shared with anyone?

What message in his glance,  
I didn't comprehend, but can't forget,  
had passed between us?

## **And What Would You Be Wanting Little Miss Judy?**

*Judy Drechsler*

Half a block down and across the street from childhood  
the tiny store rises from an uneven sidewalk, the screen  
door ripping gracefully from its wooden frame three steps up.

I open it to the scent of apples in a barrel, dill from a pickle  
crock, cool waves of air escaping from the meat counter  
where Mrs. Nelson pulls out 6 hot dogs strung together,  
wraps them in white paper for the lady in the flowered house  
dress with a grocery bag hanging loosely from her hand.

I pause at the cloudy glass counter where Smith Brother's  
licorice whips fill a see-through jar, needles and threads  
line up in colorful abundance, a jar of sharpened  
Ticonderoga pencils are sun beams in a jar.  
Bit O'Honey, Candy Buttons and Cigarettes, Jujubes  
Red Hots, O Henry bars –my mouth can still taste the sweetness.

Mrs. Nelson's spotted white apron lies around her ample hips,  
her dark hair is streaked with gray, pinned up on one side,  
curled girlishly around her chubby cheeks. With a pudgy finger,  
she pushes the correct button. I hear the clang of the brass  
cash register, see her give its crank her signature enthusiastic  
turn, know my memories are no small purchase.

*Your Daily Poem online 2024*

## **Summer Afternoons**

*Judy Drechsler*

Mrs. Simon hangs out a pair of long  
red underwear. The legs stream out  
horizontally in a spring breeze.

Mother appears at the screen door,  
waves to the mailman, hurries down the walk  
to see what news he brought.

In the alley an old yellow cat searches for lunch  
and peanut butter on my tongue urges me forward  
up the skinny Japanese elm branches,  
higher into my leafy hideaway.

## **Black Horse**

*Matt Butler*

I heard him pacing in the stall,  
as if he were outside my room,  
he stomped the floor and shook  
the walls, driven crazy by the moon

his eyes were blue, his coat was black  
and shined like silver in the sun,  
he called to me to come and ride  
but I decided I would run

and now he haunts me by the day,  
while I wander down the road,  
I hear him bray, I him say  
'I'm here, I'm here, why won't you come?'

## Sonnet 17

*Matt Butler*

The railings of our ship are made of bones,  
and gripping them while I descend below  
I think of all the souls the devil owns  
but mostly think about the one I owe.  
It's here we boil the fat and sharpen steel  
while the harpooners make their oaths in blood,  
and when the wrath of god has been revealed  
they'll have this ship to sail upon the flood.

There are no words that can describe the heat,  
I pump the bellows as they sear my hands.  
My body's like the metal that we beat,  
crashing in time with our captain's command.  
This is surely a vessel of the damned,  
I can't go on, this isn't who I am.

## Sonnet 1

*Matt Butler*

For what is hope but something yet to be?  
What is a dream if only a demand?  
Embracing love in all its sovereignty,  
The tender heart must break to then expand.  
And what is faith if only but a light  
Reflecting what's remaining to be purged,  
In realms of darkness hidden out of sight  
And depths where hell and heaven do converge.

And being asked to trust what's unresolved  
To linger in this doubtful space between,  
I resurrect before I've been absolved  
Embodied evidence of the unseen.  
For what is hope but something yet to be?  
For what is hope but nothing more than me.

## **In Dreams**

*David Iglehart*

In dreams the dead are better than they were,  
Better than we think that we could ever be.  
Discorporate, undistracted, they go straight to the essence  
And tell us the truths we desperately need.

Humbler, more unselfish, but with filled with power,  
They ask of us what they struggled with too  
And see most clearly only in death,  
That we must love each other dearly, and ourselves.

With the wisdom of sages they ask nothing in return,  
Not to be mourned or even remembered,  
But luminously watch over us in sleep  
For the still moments when we can hear them speak.

## **Dock Workers at Day's End**

*David Iglehart*

In the long dusk of summer,  
as they walked slowly  
home from the channel,  
the black men rose  
in the weedy fields,  
in the filtered light,  
like the tattered ghosts  
of drowned men.

## **Autumn Morning**

*David Iglehart*

You are cool as silk, spun like embroidery,  
Yellow butterfly on the red rose  
By the blue sky this morning, when the pale  
Green fields are turning brown.

## **Wishes Fly Away**

*Rose Guastella*

Wishes fly away, soft small feathers carried aloft, meant to wander and never return.

*I wish you were well and young and strong*

Hope a soft cloak, covering shoulders with comforts imagined, held close around with one nervous hand.

*I hope you are ready*

Patience elusive, floating somewhere inside the tick of the clock, breathing in and out with the rhythm of time.

*It is hard to let you go*

Love melts, changing the hard moments into memories colored by sweet thoughts and the recollection of a sweet face.

*I will always love you*

Time a stealthy traveler when I am not looking, arresting itself when I am, waiting for me to blink.

*I will always miss you*

## Red

*Merilee Nyland*

Red

pileated woodpecker's coif

glimpsed through cedar's

innards spilling splayed

veins of salal twisting

soft bark of madrone

clinging cliffside succulents

promising flowering red

currents huckleberries

your sweet juice

on my tongue oregon grape's

wine glossed leaves just

the pebble in my pocket

rubbing corduroy thigh raw

Red.

## Neon

*Merilee Nyland*

The sand of your bones  
reflecting neon sun's falling light

the air is tangerine  
and I'm breathing you in—

Remembering:  
fluorescent pink in polaroid

prepubescent me wearing a smile  
and an oversized T-shirt

with this future day  
I know nothing of death yet—

Just the chartreuse reptile in my hands  
before it slithers away.

## **Water Risen to Our Lips**

*Merilee Nyland*

I.

Time: Bluff-written

Evident through its falling

A tree grows in mid-air.

II.

I hear the ocean

Rising—coming for the feet

Of our children's beds.

III.

We drive through the night

Children screamingcryingvomiting

A tsunami warning.

IV.

Soaring gulls laughing

The storm of people ending

Water risen to our lips.

V.

Dark connects us all—

No division to be seen

In the Polar Night of grief.

**Star Blizzard**

*Judith Duncan*

in the forest at night  
my world, the circumstance  
of a flashlight beam

footsteps startle ducks  
to a hissing  
snakelike quake

in a grassy field  
the world widens  
to a blizzard of stars

mouth wide-open  
I fill with light  
circle home

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## **Pay Your Money**

*Judith Duncan*

love is a side show

I'm the bearded lady

you're the barker

waving a cane you cry

love for sale

barely used

a handed-down love

reduced 50%

I touch your faded passion

torn at the corners

raggedy and thin

pay your money, move along

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## **My Hen Fanny**

*Judith Duncan*

Fanny Hen throat-hums  
to her baby chicks  
like a cat purring  
in your lap

she eats baby mice  
pecks a small garter  
snake & swallows  
in gasping gulps

her right eye spies a slug  
left, a circling hawk  
yet she cannot view  
directly in front of her beak

Fanny loves to roll  
like a buffalo  
in a dust bowl  
beneath the lilac bush

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## INCEPTION

*Linda Myers*

The book falls to my lap.

Gulls fade to white noise,

shrill glide above sea's

forever bass roll.

Book and brain intertwine

produce a line

like lovers coupling,

a halfway house

of birthing visions.

When tidal swells

bring me back

I exhale on the page

blink my eyes

stretch my back

sip from long-stemmed glass

I keep nearby.

The poem has begun.

## **CHAMELEON**

*Linda Myers*

Find a hot branch and bask.

Stay calm. Recharge.

Delight in double visions.

Focus only when you hunt.

Camouflage deceives predators.

Show your colors to mate, fight, ache.

Blend in to save your life.

Stand out to live your life.

## **The One Crow**

*Larry Guidici*

There is nothing that

One Crow

Can say, that

17 other Crows

Will not dispute, critique, even to disparage

The diction and used grammar

While all unanimously agreeing

That the One Crow was perfectly correct, even

Corvidly compelled

To speak so.

## **Seeing, Telling**

*Larry Guidici*

The prophet Isaiah tells of seeing

The six winged Seraphim, each of them

Telling the others of the Holiness of The Holy One.

I hear their majestic voices,

And add my own,

Telling you of what I see.

## **Bloated**

*Jeffery Greb*

I am an enormous piñata – burro-bodied,  
hide of yellow, white, and brown strips,  
guts of intention and irony spilled daily by  
masked men wielding truncheons and batons  
with no honor, integrity, or responsibility until  
I am crumpled rubble – and the circle  
remains unbroken and we remain  
playthings of men with neckties and rockets  
set to fly into the dystopian nightmare of reality.

## **Frog Went a-Courting**

*Jeffery Greb*

Frog, he went a-courtin',  
and at the courthouse steps,  
he met more frogs like him,  
and those he liked the best:

A giant unicorn,  
decked out in rainbow bright,  
a singing giraffe-man  
singing songs in the night.

Masked men marching lockstep  
attacked the retinue  
with pellets and pepper  
and dragged away a few.

Froggy went a-courtin',  
and at the courthouse steps,  
he and the rest were saved  
by nude bicyclists

who braved the rain showers  
in a display absurd  
and undermined the lies  
of the official word.

## **Buddha**

*Jeffery Greb*

If I were as fat as the Buddha,  
I could contemplate my bellybutton  
while sitting on a lotus  
and clap my fat sides and laugh.

I could grow my earlobes long,  
like mudflaps on a tractor trailer truck,  
and shake them at the pain  
which is an illusion in this world.

Then again, maybe I should lose  
weight and work out, so I could fit  
into a white t-shirt like Mr. Clean  
and get started on this mess.

## Monarch

*Sharon Ostenson*

Whispers on the Wing

Above the beach this morning

Among tall shore grasses

bowing to the breeze

A Monarch Butterfly danced

Floating like a thought

Riding thermal currents

Delicate voyager on invisible trails

Drifting on whispers of

Circadian rhythms

Orange embers outlined in ink

Wings painted with fire and dusk

She carries the weight of survival

Continents remember her name

Gentle reminder of a fragile world

I stand still

Not seeking meaning

Only the motion

Of one life crossing another

## **Madrona**

*Sharon Ostenson*

Born of cliff and sea

The Madrona twists hardship

Into Fiery beauty

## **compass**

*Sharon Ostenson*

Sometimes True North is not  
Forward but inward  
The compass was their first lesson  
Small trembling needle can  
Find true north  
Even when the hand that holds it  
Doesn't know the way  
Direction isn't given, it's discovered  
The world spins, storms rage and yet  
Something inside must stay true  
Compass needle quivers and  
Does not lie  
Teaching that you don't need to  
See the whole map  
To take the next step  
Only to trust the direction home

## **The Elder's Dance**

*Joy Sprague*

She glides barefoot across the earth  
Purple satin ribbon drape her wispy locks  
And golden teal gowns twirl her ankles  
Dancing in ancestor's feet  
She undulates in spinning circles  
Faster and Faster  
Djembe hands rhythmically and  
Repetitively pattering into a roll...  
Tempo increases pulse, a quickening  
A heartbeat in unison  
Welcome to the elder's dance

## **The Wind Whisperer**

*Joy Sprague*

Down a forested trail, around the bend,  
waiting...waiting for words, words unspoken  
Perhaps never heard

Whispers on winds, silently shared  
A carried chorus, once disconnected...connected  
Securing a cradled coupling

Over the meadow, a heavy grief sways  
Gravity tugging feet, pressing sole to soil  
Grasses wet with sobs and sorrow

Wild words fly, like feathers from wings  
Capturing fractured moments  
Reflections of dearly departed, over the immortal bridge

Tears free flow amongst listening trees  
Who witness at water's edge; a soul's touch  
Waiting for answers beyond...a moment of solace

Somehow lighter, somehow an ease of breath  
Somehow less far away, somewhere on a prayer  
A wind phone carries us closer

## **Seaweed Island**

*Joy Sprague*

On Seaweed Island a juvenile sandpiper floats  
Adrift from her watchful mother  
Deciduous trees line the shore  
Ready to drop what they no longer need  
Brightening autumn's gloom  
Backdroping to wonder, untethered

On Seaweed Island seagulls' search  
Looking for sandhopper supper  
As a heron fishes a shoreline nearby  
Catching only what can glide  
And slide one at a time  
A witness to silent stillness

Free floating on Seaweed Island  
Seabirds surf as waves come and go  
Settling into a serene rhythm  
Cast away from its moorings  
Darkest of greens blanketing blues  
Grey skies hover over Seaweed Island

## **Upstream**

*Rebecca Lacko*

You were small silver flashes,  
darting through sunlit stones.

I carried you,  
cradled in my currents.

Seasons turned,  
and your bodies grew strong  
with the pull of a place beyond me.

I loosened my grip,  
let you taste the eddies,  
the dangerous whirlpools,  
the call of salt and distance.

Now instinct lifts you,  
a wild compass older than my waters.

You push against gravity itself,  
muscles burning toward a future  
I cannot follow.

I am only the river,  
and you are the leap.

## **The Rainmaker**

*Rebecca Lacko*

Pacific Northwest shower,  
mist clings to ancient pines.  
Rain songs weave through branches,  
the salmon dance.  
Each drop promises the earth  
will sustain what nourishes us.

Neighbors, hoods up,  
stories dipped from the well.

Communal strength, from mountain springs  
to garden beds.

Twisting streams of wild roots,  
rainboots on trails,  
in the silvery blue embrace.  
Save and uphold, breath brume,  
onward mudded prints.

Listen to the rain's whispers,  
like waterways, past and future.

Connected, we remember  
the call of the rainmaker.

We depend on the rhythm,  
quenched by sky

Pull close. Ebb returns to  
flow, eternal as living water.

## **Thoracic Era**

*Rebecca Lacko*

Deep and steady, Inhale. Mountain spine.  
Each vertebra a summit, valleys familiar,  
Spruce shadows silvered with morning light.  
Flex and root, bend and rise,  
Season to season, fertile air, evergreen.  
Uncharted springs, Erosion. New growth flourishing.  
Inhale widens sky. Exhale to release,  
Bend to rise, root to sky.  
Enduring grace stands luminous and still,  
Transform and evolve, ask unasked questions.  
Opening strata alter horizons, fossilizing sorrows.  
Tectonic shifts, invite the next epoch.

Epoch! Next, the Invite. Shifts tectonic.  
Sorrows fossilizing, horizons alter strata. Opening.  
Questions unasked. Ask. Evolve and transform.  
Still and luminous stands grace enduring,  
Sky to root, rise to bend,  
Release to exhale, sky widens. Inhale.  
Flourishing growth. New. Erosion, springs uncharted.  
Evergreen, air fertile, season to season,  
Rise and bend, root and flex.  
Light morning with silvered spruce shadows,  
Familiar valleys. Summit, a vertebra each.  
Spine mountain, exhale. Steady and deep.

## **Behind the Broken Clock Face**

*Rebecca Holbrook*

Behind the broken clock face  
Forgotten hours lie  
The frozen hands no longer race  
To pass the minutes by

Forgotten hours lie  
Upon sweet memories breast  
To pass the minutes by  
When we lay down to rest

Upon sweet memories breast  
A pillow for our dreams  
When we lay down to rest  
Beside death's flowing streams

A pillow for our dreams  
Beyond the measured pace  
Beside death's flowing streams  
Behind the broken clock face

## **The Reading Room**

*Rebecca Holbrook*

Dust along the edges of the bookshelf

Dust smearing the spines

What haunts a library so lonely

So full of absence

If I pull one volume from the shelf

Does its space hold secrets

Indistinct murmurings

Stalking the pages

For a canvas of broken dreams

Words unspoken float like dust motes

In the dim light

The muse curls up

In a thread-bare corner chair

Nose tucked to tail

One eye open

## **Hanging Moon**

*Rebecca Holbrook*

From the cusp of a slanted moon

A spill of starlight hangs

Suspended on its crescent point.

Over the blue tumbling earth,

Shining droplets fall,

Becoming oceans, fields and forests.

## **In This Wild Place I am a Woman**

*Emily Hancock*

I was a little girl in elementary school, shoved under bleachers and against walls  
My teacher told me the boys did it because they liked me  
I would hear the bell ring and watch fellow students and staff walk past me  
I guess the tears in my eyes didn't matter, if they looked the other way

I was in middle school when I learned what depression was  
Another girl wanted to kill herself and said she would blame me for it  
I'd only spoken to her once; I watched as school counselors furrowed their brows  
She told me there wasn't much that could be done

I lasted until high school before I was assaulted in a sexual way  
When I built up the courage to tell my counselor, he told me to keep quiet  
For my story would only gather drama...I was quiet for longer  
Because in elementary school if a boy hit you, it was because he liked you

In this wild place I am a woman; and they don't teach women what love is  
This wild place teaches women to accept abuse as love  
If you are not willing to put out, then you're a prude, "he did what had to be done"  
Because this place teaches women to love abuse by a man's hand

And once you've learned that they teach you to hate all men because they are all pigs  
This place doesn't teach women love, it teaches us survival  
It takes everything away from you so you have to work to get it back  
In this wild place I am a woman...but this place wasn't built for women at all

## **The Man Who Burned**

*Emily Hancock*

I burned holes in my skin because you wanted to touch my bones  
The fire crept up my arms, down my spine  
You smiled as each layer became exposed

As the fire died your hands gripped what was left  
No remorse. You wouldn't care if I had died  
Engulfed by flames, "Am I perfect now" she cried

Tears running down her cheek bone  
She shivered with nothing to keep her from the cold  
He sneered at her, knowing perfection was not achievable

At least not by her, so he went to the next girl  
Cutting her skin, painting her toes  
She wondered if he liked the way she dressed

It wasn't long before her body was covered in red  
Flames engulfing her perfect face her beautiful hair  
But it wasn't enough, nothing would ever be enough  
Not for the man... who just wanted to see them burn

## **My Bones**

*Emily Hancock*

When I die my body will decompose  
And you'll be able to see my bones, lying in the ground

Bones riddled with poems  
Lines nobody can understand

Thousands of years from now some people will dig me up  
And try to make sense of the scribbles

Of course, I didn't inscribe them myself  
I never even knew what they said

But they are my words, my poems  
My thoughts that I was never able to say

The one poem I wrote so long ago I still love today  
That one day will be inscribed on the back of my right hand

It's the one nobody will ever hear in my own voice  
But it will be read by somebody, someday

And then maybe they'll understand why I could never read it aloud  
Maybe not...But that's okay

## **I am healed**

*Frank Wurdan*

I see you in the waves of light dancing through the trees

I hear you in the ripples as the leaves move with the breath of the forest

In the jeweled droplets I feel you as they sparkle upon the deepest green of your soft moss

I hear your breath as I watch the trees move lightly against each other

Your quiet silence softly captures my ears, and I breathe deeply, smiling at the newness of your growth as you fully surround each of my senses

In the early blossoms I see your eyes opening

The fresh leaves of the season are your words

As they speak to me

I am healed.

## **Time Lines (the ancestors)**

*Frank Wurdan*

I have thought about  
how many eyes my eyes see for, and  
how many hands lift me up,  
how many legs support me, and of  
how many heartbeats i carry forward?  
how many lovers i have held in my arms, and  
how many arms have cradled me,  
how many of the songs have my hearts heard beating,  
and how many night skies have watched over me?  
how many sunsets have held my eyes close, and  
how many fires have warmed my skin deep,  
how many scents have taken me far away, and  
how many seas have moved in me? of  
the times with all senses i have “touched”, and  
how many times i have known who i am,  
and I have wondered of the times i have gone back to  
the earth.

**In-sense**

*Frank Wurden*

The smoke is so soft. The softness curling gently around my fingers. Delicately, winding, weaving round and around. My hand tasting, absorbing the richness as it wraps and unwraps. So slowly the floating tendrils entwine, wafting and winding toward me, enter me, entwine me, and I am in-sense. I am as absorbed as my hand in its feel, its soft taste, your taste, the taste of time, of a land far away, of a memory, a memory forgotten? Was it with you, watching? Yes...your smoke is so soft.

## **Heron Tai Chi**

*Dawn Hanson Smart*

Sit, stare, begin

On one foot, then the other

Neck stretch, reach back

Scratch and preen

Wing fluff

Stand tall

Turn, bend those legs

Sit, settle, stare

The meditation phase

## **The Void**

*Dawn Hanson Smart*

My eyes slide open

Beyond the bedroom window, whiteout

The tall fir in the yard a blur behind a milky veil

The shore shrouded, indistinct

Further, the world ends

Not the ordinary leaden rain-filled blanket

Not the pearly marine mist

Not an opaque snowfall

It is nothingness, impenetrable

And stillness, all sound muted

Oblivion

What if I rowed out into it?

Would I fall over the edge?

## **Where Else Can You See the Wind?**

*Dawn Hanson Smart*

A friend from Kansas extolled the virtues  
Of her home and its visible wind  
Rolling across the flat landscape  
Twirling shoulder-high grass this way and that  
Making wheat dance  
I saw it just as she said  
And told her of the wind across our water  
Soft rippling like fabric or churning whitecaps  
And the wind in our trees  
Ruffling boughs and sending leaves through the air  
It blows everywhere. Invisible, but not.

## **In offering**

*Alexa Hoggatt*

A basket of bread or figs or fruit — perhaps tomatoes,  
hot and sun-scented, a stack of pages, edges lined up neatly, one after the other,  
holding our old streets as they were before  
the holes were filled in and the bricks patched over,  
a list of names of the crows who live by the white pillared house on the corner,  
built for a lumber baron, inhabited by three or four baristas,  
the earthy, soil-stained hands of Charles, the man who lives on the Dock Street bridge,  
perpetually 67 years old, drumming against a cup of soup.

My body, sluggish and stained with yesterday's sins

Even this salt-soaked storm, sweeping in, slapping  
against the window over the bed, slithering

down the siding before wallowing in puddles at the base of the house,  
mixing with pebbles and oils and sand, unashamed of its grime.

I give you these things as houses for your dead.

For your living. For what you need to keep.

I offer this city up as a feast for your hungry. As a gift for your hopeless.

## **La Roche-Guyon**

*Alexa Hoggatt*

A little flat above an old man's house  
in La Roche-Guyon, he goes by  
the name of Bernard, smokes  
cigarettes with his dogs in the garden

vines hanging over the railings  
wood floors, white ceilings  
and a window that tilts up  
to catch the rain lets in air

scented with limestone and lilac  
looking over rusty roof tops

This is how it could be:

A walk to town for coffee  
a carafe of wine made nearby  
the town drunk at his table

waiting to tell us again  
how boring this life is  
he dreams of somewhere faster  
where the bars are open late

## **My Mother's Habitat**

*Alexa Hoggatt*

My mother floats in a fish tank  
in the center of the room.

It's good this way. She has always liked  
to be seen. I drop bits of our dinner  
into the water and watch it sink  
to her but she lets it settle  
onto the floor next to before  
asking for more.

After dinner we put on a movie,  
settle into the couch. Blue light filters  
in flashes through the water, refracting  
onto the walls. My mother in her tank  
is watching us.

## **Our Flag, That Flag**

*Bobbie Morgan*

Some salute it.

Some wave it.

Some turn it upside down.

Some burn it.

Some wrap it around their shoulders.

Some hang it from their porch.

Some fold it and give it honorably at funerals.

Some sing anthems while it waves in the breeze.

And when we breathe in its origins,  
we understand that it stands for an actual democratic republic.  
Our flag.

Tyranny and fascism and authoritarianism  
do not breathe the same air that waves that flag,  
over the home of the brave and the land of the free.

That flag is gallantly waving, to us, now,  
as it flutters, flutters, flutters  
and wonders if it is waving over the home of the brave  
and the land of the free.

## **Revolutionary Reverberation**

*Bobbie Morgan*

the sound of soldiers marching in mud  
of waves rolling up against ships, rocking across the Atlantic Ocean  
the tapping of quills into inkwells  
the scratching out, revising, debating, scratching again, of historic words  
calligraphy that calls out to history, to us now

the rustle of boots entering the room  
the echo of commands, hollered through forests  
the cries of the wounded, the blast of musket shells  
blood on the bayonets  
the fierceness, the retreats, the failures  
the losses, the hunger, the runaways  
the not giving up, the recruitment, more losses  
eight years, back then

and now  
we hunger for that courage  
we seek that fearlessness to stand up  
we can no longer stand down

the revolution of then is now, still,  
echoing to us

echoing

echoing

## **Demokratia: A thank you note to the ancient Greeks**

*Bobbie Morgan*

demos: people

kratos: power

demos+kratos=democracy

people+power=democracy

rule by the people,

for the people,

of the people

yes

power of the people means power to the people, so

we chant it now

power to the people

power to the people

yes

we do have it, for now

for now

thank you, ancient Greeks

thank you

and yet

## **Growth Rings**

*Kathleen Solas*

I am grateful that morning has found me alive and well  
My eyes consume the steely gray waters of Sinclair Inlet-  
A placid tension covering unseen treasures

A fast ferry slices through a created route while  
the Carlisle puttters from Bremerton to Port Orchard  
Port Orchard to Bremerton-  
steady as my heartbeat

Three erect, aging Evergreens are in view-  
the stalwart habitats of Eagles  
Squirrels dodging said Eagles  
and the Eagles from the cawing Crows

The steady embrace of the aging Evergreens  
And the stories within their growth rings,  
Provides a comforting embrace and delight

## **A Tribute to Millie D**

*Kathleen Solas*

You are no longer on our earth.

I am struck by the news

which has shifted this moment and,

the thereafter seconds.

I hear advice filtering through the mouths of friends

which percolates into high-stepping dances

upon flickering memories.

I see your smile after sipping a Cuban coffee at Café Corvo.

I hear the peeling laughter after swapping family stories.

I hear your hands deftly moving from task to task

at the food pantry.

I see the well-dressed flower baskets hanging throughout Bremerton.

I see the sparkling twinkles in your eyes

after a job well done.

I came to know, your love for family knew no bounds.

I hear my heart responding to the mounting losses

pushing against the mounting memories.

I see you, Millie wearing a bedazzled, sparkling tiara

with over-the-top silken ribbons flowing over

your wings, while soaring into eternity.

## WAKEY WAKEY

### *Gemini Moon*

Through the looking glass — beyond the sea,  
the Truth awaits — our mind is free.  
Exit the Matrix, Zeitgeist in throes,  
the mighty Empire wears no clothes.

Wandering Wonderland in the wardrobe,  
bite all the apples, shake the snow globe.  
Never a Neverland where the wild things are,  
we once were a wish upon a star.

Enchanted forests invite us home,  
pull up a toad stool — chat with a gnome.  
The world's a stage: things aren't what they seem,  
powerful illusions losing steam.

Born with the wisdom and gifts we need,  
stripped and stolen for insatiable greed.  
Pull back the curtain and feast your eyes,  
beneath the surface: a school of lies.

Sleepy giant: rise and shine,  
open to magic, receive a sign.  
Release the power of tale and myth,  
share your dreams — transform the monolith.

*From "Chrysalis Gift: A Collection of Poems"*

## **CHRYSALIS GIFT**

*Gemini Moon*

Here in my hollow safe from critique,  
bricks will fly if Heart did speak.

My quarks and quirks: not “on fleek,”  
encased in doubt, small and meek.

What if I took one tiny peek?  
The basic banshees would surely shriek.

Privately pupate, one minor tweak:  
tears a hole where change can leak.

A wriggling struggle, I must be weak.  
Escape to freedom seems so bleak.

A glimpse of wing: it's Magnifique!  
Decayed cocoon begins to reek.

Transformation — my colors streak.  
True self flies: a fanciful freak.

Rising to a higher peak,  
from chrysalis comes a gift unique.

*From “Chrysalis Gift: A Collection of Poems”*

## **Harborview Shrouds**

*Sterling Warner*

So many faces once distinct  
characterized by jealousy, bravado,  
curiosity, morph into ashen death masks  
deprived of peculiarity, identical  
in form where ancient eyes  
remain closed as yesteryear's  
entrepreneurs, entertainers,  
farmers, politicians, and scholars  
shuffle off threads defining stature.

Reclined on hospital chrome horses  
patients roll down hallways, park  
in the surgery, trundle amidst shadows  
reminding bedridden sailors that mercy's  
angels hover unseen upon industrial seas,  
inner-city ports and flat-bottomed piers  
guarding spiritual grace on a half shell  
where ocean foam caresses unique memoirs  
at the threshold of Davy Jone's locker.

## **French Roast Enchantress: RIP**

*Sterling Warner*

Sarah sipped bitter, chilled coffee like lemonade  
while lovers would spit it in sinks or on the ground.

She worshipped java like a lifestyle untouchable  
by elements hot or cold—a rarity to inhale and savor.

Drinking chocolate as a child, Sarah shattered  
dinner table silence with “Ooohs” and “Ahhhs.”

She upped the ante as a teen, swilling Lesters coffee soda  
in her mouth, burping as long and loud as her uncle.

Jitter juice queen and stellar Marmo Caffè & Gallery employee  
she'd gulp down endless free cappuccinos, espressos, and lattes.

A train hit Sarah's car as she sipped one final Frappuccino...  
friends tossed Arabica beans on her grave—not dirt.

## **FOREST GARDEN**

*Jacquelin Konis*

Rain falls softly singing,

My garden a quiet prayer.

Light sifts through

Cedar, hemlock, fir

Blessing dead debris,

Warming cold earth,

Where ...

Life waits soft

And stubborn

For its moment to arise.

## **KIDS & RAIN**

*Jacquelin Konis*

Rain

Drip, drip, dripping

Splish, splish, splashing

Kids together

Laugh, laugh, laughing.

Puddles, galoshes,

Stomp, stomp, stomping

Mud, friends together,

Squish, squish, squishing

Gloves are soaking

Water seeping in on toes

Laughter ringing, Life

Sing, sing, singing.

Drenched in joy!

## **TETHER TO THE WILD**

*Jacquelin Konis*

In the garden

A moth floating, fluttering

A kitten, young as spring,

Leaps, spins, a twist,

Sticks her landing

Cat ballet

Stops so still, listens

Pounce! Thought it was a mouse.

A stray, she stayed

We got her spayed,

Special basket by the fireplace

Our tether to the wild,

At night she stalks a feral world

Ghostly howls of unseen things,

Both hunter and the hunted

Her golden eyes gleam

Secrets stolen from the dark

*(Poem published in Poetry Corners 2025)*

*Halcyon Days*

*Eliza Evans*

heron

(a prayer to water's edge)

glides

kingfisher

(blue flame diving where shipwreck once was)

dives

mist

(grief's thin garment)

drifts

the sea remembers storm

but lies

so still

as if even winds

were hushed by love

and sorrow

(becoming wing)

does not vanish;

it only learns

to fly

*The Wild Trust*

*Eliza Evans*

He comes to me like dusk, gentle and shadowed;  
a wild thing, bone weary,  
Trailing the weight of broken seasons.  
A fragile trust, trembling between flight and shelter.

Something in him gives in like the last light, and he leans.  
And for a moment, the wild surrenders.  
And for a moment, he folds his wilderness into my arms.  
And for a moment, I am allowed to hold him.

I do not claim him.  
I only open my hands, let them pause where they are needed;  
A shoulder, a spine, the curve of his grief.

Love without longing is the breath before frost.  
Moss remembering the shape of a stone.  
The small surrender of twilight to the stars.  
It does not chase or clutch or carve,  
It simply holds; a refuge,  
A place to set down the ache.

And when he rises, I do not call him back.  
I only watch him go,  
And hope the sky overhead is gentle.

*Liminal*

*Eliza Evans*

He gathers the horizon into his sights,

The brightness in his sails,

So he can go.

I remain;

The shoreline,

The lighthouse,

The anchor,

Aching with absence,

Strewn with salt.

To love a child is to fracture,

To bring forth,

Then step back,

Leaving behind pieces I held,

But were never mine.

I sink beneath the surface.

But only so he can sail free.

## **Travel Plans**

*Bruno Rescigna*

Don't put my ashes  
in an urn or hide me in a hole.  
I want my ashes scattered at sea.

Let the white headed waves spread  
them under the ocean's wrinkled brow.  
I spent this life on land. It's time for a new adventure.  
I'll run with the tides, help  
the waves gentle the rough edges of rocks.

Perhaps I'll shelter a fish from a hungry hunter,  
or my ashes might blanket the bones of a sailor  
whose life was taken by the sea.  
My spirit will ride with whales.  
The currents will carry me to new places.  
I've always wanted to see Cuba.

Dropping this aging,  
beat up body will be joyous.  
An eternity without the handcuffs  
of time and space awaits.  
Whatever happens, I'll be in the sea. Don't be sad.

Not everyone's idea of heaven rests in the sky.

## **Dreamboats**

*Bruno Rescigna*

The dreamboats tied to the dock pull against  
their lines, bouncing and shaking like constrained  
animals. Dreamboats swoon, charmed by the expanse  
of sea and sky that promise adventure, opportunities.  
Dreamboats always imagine the sky blue, a breeze strong  
enough to propel them over the corrugated cover of the sea,  
to the end where rainbows wait to shower their gifts.  
They're impatient to get going and prove all the doubters wrong.

But breezes turn harsh, and waves grow rough,  
bullying some boats off course. Dark clouds appear,  
bringing a reality that can slice dreams into shards,  
and there is a point when the boat must dock,  
life must continue. For many dreamers this is a difficult  
day, when the comfort and companionship of the dream  
must be tested against the world's willingness to cooperate.  
A few dreamers will cheer, docking  
in the place they've imagined for so long.  
Some others will fail, requiring a new dream,  
and their boat ride will begin again.

For most however, they will realize their dreams  
have drowned in the rising tide of real life,  
and it's time to return to the land forever.

## **Early Rising**

*Bruno Rescigna*

I wake long before the sun shows up  
for work, comforted by the early  
morning's quiet friendship.

The sky's blinding darkness  
hides the world from my eyes  
until the blackness slowly  
softens exposing the mountain's silhouette

Silently, the day grabs its tools  
and begins to work.

I can feel the enthusiasm grow  
as the curtain of night rises  
and the blue sky smiles its youthful  
promise-a new day.

Once again, the moment's gentle optimism  
nourishes my hopes.

It is the gift for arriving early to the day.

The joy of having your arms filled  
with possibilities, the sigh when seeing  
that glorious contradiction:  
the common occurrence  
of the miracle of sunrise.

## Ode to Bloedel's Japanese Guesthouse

*Debra Ames*

This place of culture, custom, and design,  
abandonment and meditation, stillness and peace.  
I could spend forever here, bathing in the hum of nature,  
the elements of design, the constant rhythm of time.  
I could endure eternity here in this single space, this sanctuary of being.

Its structure and widening wingspan fortify ethereal boundaries.  
Its suspended sofa elevates those who steal a seat inside.  
Its raked garden and moss-laden meadow beyond enfold its fragile facade.

Outside, I watch visitors as they move like speeded up film reels,  
darting here and there to glimpse a view and peek inside.  
They hover like hummingbirds, stopping quietly on the deck  
for a moment or two to take in the rolling hills, gardens, and glade.

This space of welcome, simply put, is a guesthouse.  
A home, made to briefly shelter those in need of a visit, a stay, a holdover.  
This guesthouse, a powerful agent of transcendence,  
forever reshapes and transforms its visitors,  
no matter how brief or everlasting their stay.

## **The Western Red Cedar**

*Debra Ames*

When I am old and alone  
I want a Western Red Cedar to lean on  
To prop me up before I go  
So I can savor, again  
The sun's warmth and the vivid sky  
The cool air and the stars at night

I want to forget my sallow skin and thinning hair  
My fading memory and diminished accounts  
My last fall and wounded heart  
I want to feel the wind on my face once more

I'll wait on her arm until the storm blows through  
And my balance gives way to the earth below  
And, as I fall, I'll wonder

Does the Western Red Cedar  
Feel the indignities of time?  
After a thousand years of standing strong  
Does she sense her friends are standing near?

## **Our Wounded Spirits**

*Debra Ames*

We circle each other, treating our wounds in isolation.  
We deny our truths until they are stripped clean of life.  
Our radiance is dulled by the cuts we constantly cling to  
in silent performance rather than trusted candor.

Shame lingers, as we are assaulted by our own exile.  
The stain on the page never comes clean as it  
draws all the color from the spaces between us.

Yet, nature's knowing temperament calms our hearts and bones.  
The unending crash of waves holds us focused on the shore.  
And, the certainty of western sunsets pulls us in close.

Flora and fungi converse through distinct and trusted networks.  
Ocean currents bring restorative nutrients to the surface.  
And, each morning, the color returns to the sky.

**In our beach grass bower**

*David Stallings*

we roll onto our backs

still entwined

filled with starry brilliance

this light has journeyed

for billions of years

shift one atom

deflect one photon

and none of this

would be

## **Fool**

*David Stallings*

He scuttles down

the condo's front steps,

crabs across the brick courtyard, feels

a small face watching over the back

of a couch in an upstairs window.

Head covered by raised shirt,

he spins, flaps arms, contorts

his face, waggles hands in circles.

Giggles from above.

He races through gate

to sidewalk, peers

over wrought iron fence,

judders his neck up and down, waves

the day's goodbye—

ten thousand ways to love

a grandson.

## **Last Things**

*David Stallings*

High on the Big Quil Trail,

I traverse scree

under Buckhorn Mountain's

basalt pinnacles.

At my feet, the season's final

scarlet paintbrush.

Ahead, where yellow cedars hang,

I climb above the trail,

cut pungent branches

to remind me of summer days.

## **Black Ink on White Paper**

*Linda Packard*

A loose Kleenex is breathing next to me  
its one lung breathes in time  
with the fan's pulse and rotating body  
White on white paper to the left  
flat and unfeeling with no visible breath  
but one that causes other breaths  
to rise and fall when reading the lines of ink out loud  
and maybe those in and out air pushes words  
out and matches the white Kleenex pulsing  
on the white bedspread and the white landscape  
which has just coaxed a dream image forward

Another white landscape  
of rumpled sheets  
still warm from the body and breath  
of the man I watch dressing  
in white underwear  
and a freshly ironed white shirt

from my white nest surrounded  
by sheets, paper, with the white Kleenex  
still breathing the fan's air  
I begin to write black ink on white paper

## **As if Buddhas Need Rescuing**

*Linda Packard*

The Buddhas arrive needing shelter  
I've rescued 18 so far  
from second hand shops  
and other unlikely places  
Two Egyptian seated scribes  
with similar poses and energy  
have joined the household

The very first Buddha was displaced  
when Saigon fell so many years ago  
since then he's watched over me from  
the top shelf of a 6-foot high bookcase  
Two fostered Buddhas moved on  
one graces a friend's garden and the  
other calms a therapist's office

Still looking for the gold bigger-than-life  
Buddha in the San Francisco house window  
holding a lapful of red camellias  
filling the heart of a 12-year-old girl  
with a sunrise burst of light  
seeding a desire that took  
8 years to bud and bloom

## Sharing a Gemini Friend's Work Space

*Linda Packard*

Clouds of yarn fill old candy jars  
that from the corner of my left eye  
look like amorphous bodies in formaldehyde.

What were you thinking  
as you combined the mohair with worsted,  
cotton with chenille,  
magentas with grays,  
lavenders with browns?

Especially when the threads to my right  
are meticulously arranged  
by color fading into color  
in numbered, clear-fronted bins.

Now you're in the Cloud Forest of Costa Rica  
doing God knows what,  
while I'm here puzzling over  
your weaving supplies  
and the word-web of my life.

The oceans between us may be clouded  
but this new work space is well-cushioned  
with words and wool.

## **The Teacher**

*Jenny Sinanan*

A seed asks for few things,  
us too at first.

The red leaf loosens.

Born to die,  
but first the living.

## **Savior**

*Jenny Sinanan*

Just when you think

you might not make it

one more day in this world,

see how the green stem pushes

through winter's grip.

Let it be the thing

that saves you.

## **Mother Tongue**

*Jenny Sinanan*

Never mind that his name remains in my memory.

It could have been otherwise, do you know what I mean?

Never mind that he tasted like cigarettes. His mouth on mine

was every living wonder,

his hands adept.

Never mind that he lowered his eyes

when he told me he was unable to get an erection.

Vietnam, he said.

Kiss me again, I replied.

His mother tongue was touch,

so fluent I understood each singular stroke.

He kissed as if it might be his final act,

but I was the one who died a thousand deaths that summer,

just to be resurrected in his arms.

## **Anchor**

*Meg Kaczyk*

An anchor is a weight, a burden, a drag.

An anchor is ground, stability, moorage.

When is it what?

It is a drag when you don't want it,  
when you want to be in flow, in motion,  
when you want to be going somewhere.

It is a blessing when you feel unbalanced, at sea,  
when you need to find some terra firma,  
solidity beneath you.

What if releasing could be a kind of anchor?

The antidote to change is to change.

Get quiet. Listen.

And release into whatever is happening  
because things are always happening.

It is the resistance that is so painful.

And the uncertainty, the uncertainty is excruciating.

Fall into it, fall into the formlessness  
of the completely new way.

Somewhere there is ground.

Or not. Just keep falling.

**Let's meet somewhere outside of time and space.**

*Meg Kaczyk*

A place between here and wherever it is where you are.

If it's true you are here, then let's meet right here,  
and right now.

In this place, right now,  
we are at the junction of sky and water,  
  
at the edge, where the weather comes in,  
the place where the wind changes direction,  
  
and there's turbulence and drama and great big beauty.

We'll meet here, and talk,  
in between sunshine and rainstorms,  
  
in the twilight time after the sun goes down,  
and the moon has yet to rise.

The middle is a good place to meet,  
where body is body but also energy is energy.

We'll take quantum leaps in conversation  
without words.

We'll meet where the plastic dinosaur is perched,  
on top of the rock next to the tiny buddha  
you painted red that day in May  
when somehow you knew you'd want to say hi  
  
sometime, from somewhere outside of time and space.

## **Journal Cento II**

*Meg Kaczyk*

I am shot through with the cosmos.

It is everything to fall into everything.

These moments are not a roller coaster.

They exist at the same time, together, at once.

It is amazing what the heart can hold.

But there are, in fact, little decisions all the time.

And there is absolutely nothing

for me to figure out right now.

I do the things. I am doing the things.

The energy gathers into itself.

Flows into the whole, it is not dispersed.

In this aloneness I will gain a foundation of myself.

One does not spring out of transition fully formed.

## **The Circle**

*Michelle Allen*

On the outside looking in

The 9-month burden, out of the womb and tossed aside, forgotten

Finally, part of a new family, but never truly part, the differences deep and obvious

The expectations of her role were unachievable

She excelled in all the wrong places, the natural born was to be king, better, smarter,  
unconditionally loved, though coddled by one and beaten by the other

The acquired was expected to be an appreciative jester and laborer

Nature was her family, the trees and clouds, the birds and squirrels

Stray dogs were her friends; most of them anyway

And though the sun was not her friend, her fair-skin welcomed it in small doses

She was lonely and willing to leave, a deeply ingrained feeling that is hard to shake

Imagination was her savior, pretending to be part of something that was not hers

Fabricating the inevitable rejoining with uninformed adjacents, a terrible mistake explained

But that never happened, so she created a family of her own and now they are everything

She is inside, not bothering to look out

## **Here's Why it's Not Easy to Leave You.**

*Lilou Saunders*

Damp fur sweeps the sand, amidst the mist,

自然にオオカミをあるいて。

No one else there but you I stand with.

一緒に行つて。

I take your hand before waves brush our bloody feet.

君は単独はいません。

Amidst our crook, our hearts intertwine.

すり減つた心臓があつた。

The mind's lace weaves into a vale of perpetual connection.

違います。

Let our blanket wrap around us,

私と滞在しています。

Before, well, we must embrace the cold alone.

*You*, 慈しむ。

Bralette

*Lilou Saunders*

Do not ask, I do not care.

The fucking bralette cut my sides like someone tortured in an unmarked grave.

Do not tell me again your dress and waist length, I do not care.

I do not care if you were born alone. That you stand alone.

Your bralette shimmers through your seam-stitched dress again after I told it to go away.

Do not talk about your problems, girlfriend, favorite bands.

If I ask you again to let me forget, tell me to wish for a never-again.

Bralettes lay across my floor, lace stained with lustful sweat, deodorant left unworked.

Do not create a world again where we're friends, before girl-kisser earned their way into your title. Cut your dress away from the fabric of your being, give it away to someone else.

I do not want your fucking Bralette in my mind again, I do not care.

## **Monet Painted Quickly to Capture Light**

*Nancy Taylor*

A sunset is an affair  
I wish would linger longer  
and not dip so quickly  
behind snow-capped peaks  
or fall off the edge of the ocean.

While sunset monitoring  
can be a solo sport,  
it's best shared  
in a lover's embrace—  
another who appreciates  
the kaleidoscope in the sky.

Since sunsets glorify sky as silently  
as comets fly,  
be ready, look west,  
watch the dance  
hula hues of pink, salmon, and lilac.  
Does it shimmy on water,  
paint snowy mountains?

I wish the blush to play longer,  
till I taste its raspberry or its orange.

## March 14 – Pi Day

*Nancy Taylor*

Another year goes by and I fail to write  
a poem for Pi. My excuse—the day  
was chased away by the Ides of March,  
then my sister's birthday, and finally  
St. Patty's Day.

So, I doodle in loops and consider circle  
words starting in P—pizza, penny, pie.  
Then I segue to rank favorite pies:  
key lime, cherry, marionberry...

Back to P I pi, the ratio of a circle's  
circumference to its diameter.  
It's the same for a tiny atom  
to the largest star. Even if it's only  
a ratio, I find comfort knowing  
something is constant.

In the third century B.C., Archimedes  
revealed Pi to lie between 3.1408 and  
3.1429 and for centuries mathematicians  
either confirmed or added decimals.

Today, supercomputers expand Pi  
as they both stretch toward infinity.

## **Doesn't Hide in the Sky**

*Nancy Taylor*

I like the sound—Orion—long i,  
n at the end. I like that it's not shy,  
doesn't hide in the sky.

With bright stars like Rigel  
it comes out to play or prey.

I somewhat mind the constellation  
hunts; hope it eats what it kills.

In contrast, I consider it egalitarian,  
glistening at the celestial equator,

favoring neither northern nor  
southern hemisphere. Orion's  
not merely sky candy since  
four of its stars serve navigation.

And how cool is supergiant, Betelgeuse,  
Arabic for "Armpit of the Great One?"

Bellatrix, a binary star at the other  
shoulder appears as one to the naked

eye. Clinching identification, Alnitak,  
Alnilam, and Mintaka nearly  
equally space to cinch the waist.

## **Better Living Through Coffee**

*Dianne Knox*

On a similar night we met here for an evening of open mic  
waves and rain beat against the windows of the shop  
competing with the Baristas'  
thud-tamp-hiss thud-tamp-hiss

whistling wind a howling duet  
poets' voices crescendo with burnt noise  
create rhythmic swash on eager ears  
who wait in this small steamy warm space

to listen, perhaps be the first to recognize  
talent percolating like the water that rises  
slashes the panes, elemental power  
runs in streaks, finds recognition in

faces that connect with storms of grief, change, pain  
as these swells wash and wane like the cups in our cozy café.

## **Echolocations**

*Dianne Knox*

Each poem pings my minds location  
out for a walk, staring into space,  
reminiscing about people or place  
flowers, birds, food, all my senses  
want to, long to, connect with you

signals sent pinpoint my position  
international, local, dining room, bed  
near water, in a basement, an old Ford  
rain and sunsets, seafood and smells

In imagination you will find me  
my thoughts where I dwell  
I reach you with my words  
as they bounce in your ears

let's find each other  
bounce off one another

## **Dark with a Chance of Salt Water**

*Dianne Knox*

They're packing up, leaving Dodge  
till next spring or may decide to stay away

decide their winter digs are better  
they're tired of the slow traffic here

the ferry novelty has worn as  
have the cool rains.

How long do you have to  
live in a place

before you can't leave it  
before the weather is in your bones

before your breath  
has become the breeze

## **Our House is Famous**

*Carl Jensen*

For its basket of chalk and drawings along the walkway.

Who are these people who twist, bend, fling pigment

who toss and catch shapes they drop onto the bare concrete carpet?

Fish leaping, a dragonfly lost in sky

images laid down like balm over wounds of the day

colors blossoming like flowers beyond boredom.

Our sidewalk refreshes, a place to enjoy

until rain washes it clean to begin again.

## **Recycle, a Watercolor**

*Carl Jensen*

A she gull lies flattened  
the gray of her barely distinct from sand or sky.  
Nearby the flock shifts with the tide  
ever keen for crab and clam  
a still life done in watercolor of mist shrouded  
boulders walking into the Pacific.

This circle of life complete  
her fight for life will be recycled  
washed sparkling clean  
but for a tinge of salt.

## **FALLING LEAVES**

*Rick Gardner*

A leaf falls, a raindrop falls, a snowflake drifts

Taste it on your tongue

All end on the ground

Landing to an end, to give, to give life a chance

Journeys not taken, not seen

Living a life inside, a light gone in the wind

Gone and forgotten, gone to create a new life

Look down, see the earth around you

Stand on it, be it, believe it

Think of going down, give roots, feel the depths

Encompassing you

Awake and grow, tomorrow awaits you

Blossom again and again

## **HEAVEN HOME**

*Rick Gardner*

A child's voice, a child's smile, laugh, giggle

That is a given, we have children to raise

To enjoy, to teach us what real love is

The hope and want of a future

So be it, find and create your own Heaven, your own home

Both are there, just look inside yourself

Find the home inside you

Heaven is already there

## **THE SPIRIT INSIDE**

*Rick Gardner*

The sky is your father

The earth is your mother

All live in you, gave you life

Share the mystery of giving

Tell the stories of your winters

Be the grass on a hill

The tree in a forest

The Holy Spirit in all

Children of a mother that gives life to all

The Father to listen and learn

The Spirit tells you

High on a mountain

A mighty vision given

But many are too weak to see it

Seeing flowers, the smells of life

The voice of birds

The taste of growing grass

The things our spirit gave us

Don't get lost in the darkness

Be true to your inner Spirit

Let it be your Holy Spirit

Live long, give long, grow strong

## **There Is a Street**

*Sheila Bender*

There is a street I walk down past old  
homes substantial and strong, though porch  
railings and window trims are rotting,  
maybe the boards too where wood siding  
meets their rough cement foundations.

There's always a side entrance to a basement,  
perhaps a student apartment now, lawns  
dotted with crab grass, and often rooms added  
in remodels that match the vintage.

I breathe easy in the presence of old homes, tonic  
of memories, feel kinship with their residents,  
who must add rooms for more living  
despite what creaks and sags.

“There is a Street” appears in *Since Then: Prose and Short Prose*.

## **Van Gogh Morning**

*Sheila Bender*

In a vase on my table, eight sunflowers,  
a gift from a friend's yard. She says she lets  
the crop go to seed each year to feed the birds  
and the undigested plentifully spread and sprout in summer.  
And here they are, these flowers sturdy on the necks  
of their stems,  
my room overcome with their fancy yellow collars,  
their searching brown eyes.

“Van Gogh Morning” appears in *Since Then: Poems and Short Prose*.

## **At Ocean Shores My Husband Sings to the Sea**

*Sheila Bender*

“It’s a wonderful world,” he croons to the waves  
as if in their own tenacious rhythm, they need  
reminding of nearby grasses, bluffs, and forest.

And too depressed by the news to read  
papers, he sings over the hard-packed sand,

“I see skies of blue and clouds of white.”

I walk downwind hoping he’ll hold on to that.

It is he who told me the sparkle of sand diamonds  
is light struggling to get out.

## **Puzzle Pieces**

*Marcia Millican*

Pieces strewn across the table,  
in complete disarray.

Start with those rigid edges,  
accept their parameters.

Sorting by color does not always yield results,  
unexpected groups may interlock.

Envision the entire scene,  
individuals forming into a cohesive group.

Celebrate that essential last piece,  
understanding how fragile connections are.

## **In the Company of Crows**

*Marcia Millican*

Iridescent in appearance,  
reflective of location and circumstances.

Commitment amongst the flock,  
aware of generational trauma and triumphs.

Intellectually endowed,  
focused and fluid in their flight.

Vocal in their intentions,  
a boisterous bunch in pursuit of Justice.

**Felis catus**

*Marcia Millican*

Statuesque pose, reminiscent of a royal past,  
mummified by Egyptians to forever last.

Eyes adaptable to dim light,  
silent stalker in the night.

Rodent reducer, chaser of rabbits,  
dedicated to self-cleaning habits.

Summoned by the softness of your fur,  
lulled by the melody of your purr.

## Lorquin's Admiral

*NanLeah*

My soul takes flight.

In my garden a Lorquin's admiral  
alights on the lime green new growth of a Doug fir.

In the butterfly's presence I become shivery light.

On sun kissed tips of fir needles I meditate.

I find my footing. I summon my wingsails,  
etch sun rays on the early summer breeze.

My tongue is a spiral hidden inside me.

I extend into my antennae.

I vibrate ceaselessly.

In a flash - its absence.

My transformation is complete.

I am bittersweet. The chocolate tang  
of a butterfly wing.

Previously published in Poetry in Bloom, Bainbridge Gardens, July 31, 2024

**Mountains**

*NanLeah*

Adventure awaits  
Nature begins with your breath—

Mountains live in you

## **Dance to Heal the Earth**

*NanLeah*

Oh cherry tree, oh fruit bearer,  
I come to you to break my fast.

Golden leaves like prayer ties,  
bless your dappled arbor  
and the dancers.

I drum and sing my best for you,  
for your medicine rooted down deep  
in the innocent Earth;  
for your welcome branches,  
wide and open;

for your seeds,  
the next generation pressed  
into soil by dancers' feet.

We drum, dance, sing, pray  
for the healing of Earth.  
Ravens call from surrounding trees,  
carrying our prayers;  
woodpeckers drum in harmony.  
We arrive as strangers, we depart as friends.  
Joy rooted in our one heartbeat,  
a new branch on the family tree.

## **Stone from the River: Wynoochee**

*Carolyn Maddux*

blue-gray sandstone  
roughly oval  
smoothed by the river  
to a matte finish  
from a gravel bar in the river  
from a pool below the dam  
from the leavings of a glacier  
from the ocean floor thrust upward  
traveling through time  
sharing space  
with the hooves of elk and deer  
feet of bear and otter  
thrust of kingfisher and heron  
spawn of salmon  
shifts downstream  
toward warmer water  
less water  
fewer fish  
sudden floods  
washed back toward the ocean floor

*Published in On Resilience: Stories of Climate Adaptation Across Washington Landscapes, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife with Writing the Land Poets*

## **Tsonoqua Calls a Kayaker at Takatz Bay**

*Carolyn Maddux*

Raise your paddle and drift: I am spilling  
wren's tangled song and long green water from the head  
of the inlet to call you in where marshgrass grows thick  
and the rocks and spruces lean out overhead,  
where bubbles burst up from the pursed lips of springholes  
on the sandy bottom and boil on the incoming tide,  
where a deer stops cold at the water's edge,  
all eyes and signal ears.

Come down through shallows where water-meadow bubbles swirl;  
breathe deep of the salt-sweet air until you imagine  
that your hair is growing long and blowing back  
from your forehead, from the lichened angles of your cheekbones,  
tangled hair pendant as moss, dark as shadows.

Take the beach bow-first; step sideways out to move  
deliberate along what might be a deer-trail  
into my wet woods, into hunched alder and lank Sitka spruce,  
bedded in needles where no footsteps sound,  
deeper and deeper into the trees until I say  
Stop. Stay:

Large-eyed, round-lipped, whistling without a sound (unless  
that *oooo-eee-oooo* that floats onto the evening air  
like raven-down is you) standing deep-eyed and watchfujl,  
marked with the adze, washed with rain, streaked and silver,  
growing moss, growing lichen, growing taller and taller.

*First published in Remembering Water, Bellowing Ark Press*

*And in First, Light: Thesis Project for The McGregor School, Antioch University*

## **Red Huckleberry**

*Carolyn Maddux*

*for Holly*

Outside the window of your studio,  
red huckleberry is growing up  
through the drifts of salal, thin  
and delicately branched. When  
I came, tight buds were just showing  
a hint of green in their little pink sheaths.  
Although it is still cool  
and raining now and then,  
the next day the green was more apparent,  
The night was cold and starry,  
but today almost all the leaves  
are already uncurling, their ovals  
a brilliant green. No matter how harsh  
or cold the world around them, some  
force of spring still works within.  
Leaves bud out and spread themselves  
to the light, and in the face of chaos  
in the country, people still help one another  
and hope unfurls like leaves  
of red huckleberry.

## **Sunflower**

*Elaine Kennicott*

Your center should  
be the abyss  
A magnitized  
black hole

But your bright,  
sunshine surround  
has other plans  
for it us voyeurs

The wind has you  
dancing the fox trot  
or a slow waltz  
Dancing as you wave

It smiles at us  
holding a mirror  
to our face  
as we smile, too.

Your name says  
it all.  
Sun  
Flower

*Published by Bainbridge Island Press Poetry Walk at Bainbridge Gardens, 2025.*

## ODE TO MICK AND THE BOYS

*Elaine Kennicott*

At or nearly 80 in years,  
Mick, Ron, and Keith are odes to excess  
Rock and Roll—Brash, loud  
And Fuck you!!

Mick strutted out to Start Me Up  
In black leather and red sequins  
Ron, in bright green, strummed his Guitar  
And Keith walked In with his signature headband.

They didn't have a care in the world  
Or seemed not to with  
grins the size of their faces,  
Like small boys with toys.

Almost like teens with  
a secret they only shared.  
But then, the huge screen above and beside  
shared their secret to us-their flock-  
Of Rock and Roll

## **Four Legged Friends**

*Elaine Kennicott*

They were both dark brown with long, flowing hair  
those loving, four legged friends.

They were herders—both of them.

And six decades apart.

One so short he couldn't see over my knees.

One so large his head lay on my lap

The big one herded children In the city.

The small one herded cattle on a farm.

I can still picture both of them clearly

Front legs down, smiling with eyes wide and alert.

Ready to play fetch—but only sticks.

Balls fell abandoned on the ground for others to find.

Large balls of fur gathered in the room corners,

under beds and furniture, at doorways.

One fur ball remains now in my treasure chest.

I wish it were two.

## **Anchor**

*Tia Hudson*

America listens to yet another lie  
The ground shifts, I stumble.  
Weary at night, I turn, I turn back, I curse.

The warm dog curled up against  
my thigh, tight and solid pressing  
close - here is one true thing

The ground settles, I stand steady.  
The lies buzz like bluebottle flies.  
I leave them to die, trapped  
between screen and pane,

I run my hand one time  
over the dog's back  
I fall asleep on solid ground.

## **Beginning**

*Tia Hudson*

Sitting in the shadows.  
Grey sky, water like lead;  
branches bare, prickly around me,  
slight cover from the breeze.

Shushing of the waves,  
white foam fades to grey.  
Pebble beach, dead wood  
Empty trails

A light flashes once,  
twice, then again.  
Ships miles away -  
I see them.

They throw an anchor to the sky;  
the dreary clouds part, the sun  
lays a golden path on the water.  
The white bright foam  
invites me to start there.

## **Haute Couture**

*Tia Hudson*

*After an Untitled Painting by Joan Kirkman*

I want to be the woman  
in the purple kimono  
beside the irises, with  
her bare leg drawn up

I want that look on my face-  
peaceful humor, looking  
past herself with  
open arms.

I want the wild  
reds and oranges  
of the rug and walls  
to surround me  
and be that cool center  
in the midst of all the heat.

## Red Bluff, August Night

*Kristen Hotchkiss*

In the owl-light of evening  
against the lift of hills,  
the Sacramento glides by  
while we lie on a blanket  
beneath a tapestry of sound  
woven of water murmur  
and the chirps of bats.

Notes of *Begin the Beguine*  
float from the bandstand  
and far above, *Voyager* hurtles on  
bearing sounds of Earth—  
the rain, the surf, Chuck Berry—  
recorded on discs of gold,  
incorruptible.

In forty

thousand

years

she'll drift past the nearest stars.

We stretch out our hands to touch them,  
like pin pricks in the painted sky  
of a shoe-box planetarium.

Ancient light slips through our fingers  
like water, appears  
far downstream.

## **This Morning**

*Kristen Hotchkiss*

From the roof we see

snow on far Olympic peaks.

Below, the garden

wakes—first crocus, snowdrops white.

One towhee notes our presence,

trills from the weathered fence.

A bright star shines near the moon—

its yellow crescent waning.

Your head nodding close to mine,

our fingers intertwine.

## Perhaps I Am the Sort of Girl

*Kristen Hotchkiss*

who enjoys a picnic of sandwiches  
cucumbers thinly sliced  
and extra-gingery ginger beer  
with lemon biscuits  
at the edge of a cliff, wishing  
that a pirate ship might sail past  
the sort of girl who scrambles  
down rocky ledges  
to wait on the strand at the foamy edge  
in her Sunday boots, waving  
her ribboned hat, waiting  
for the pirate to stride ashore  
cutlass slashing, gold ring flashing  
his one eye not covered by a black patch  
dark with thoughts about a plainer sort of girl  
who wouldn't much mind being tossed  
over his shoulder and carried off  
to the South China Sea as the rigging sings  
or the Strait of Malacca and Tanjong Kling  
to be the pirate's mate with a silvery dirk  
of Spanish steel between her teeth  
a silk *bandhnu* to bind her curls  
and a parrot that loves  
lemon biscuits.

## AN AUTUMN WALK

*Carolyn Wiley*

Leaving the graveled road

I step on to a path of russet and yellow,

I pause beneath golden arches

And watch a single untethered leaf

Spin in a slow zigzag descent.

It is that special day

When big leaf maples

Give up all pretense of subtlety

And don their gaudy yellow robes.

The air vibrates with excitement

The world is aglow

In an incandescent golden light

I enter nature's cathedral,

An interloper, a foreigner,

Golden arches above

A golden carpet beneath that

Cushions and silences each step.

I am welcomed in this holy place.

## **EN PLEIN AIR**

*Carolyn Wiley*

Escape into the golden mean

Leave confining walls

Seek your heart-scape

City- Sea- Land-

Absorb all that can be divined

Walk on nature's carpets

Bathe in untamed waters

Inhale ozone scented storms

Drift with clouds into nothingness

Taste the sweetness of a summer day

In silence heed the feel of wind

Cool of stone, heat of sun

Give meaning to the senses

Translate this knowledge

With flowing strokes upon

A naked canvas

Plot your golden mean

Within the boundaries

Of the moment

Capture mood and hue,

Capture light

Give golden meaning

To the images before you

En plein air.

## UPON REFLECTION

*Carolyn Wiley*

I have moved through life like light upon the water

*No...I have moved through life like wind upon the water*

No! I have moved through life like water of the bay

Superficially reacting to gentle breezes and to howling gales.

At times reflecting a glassy upside-down version of sky and land,

Or a slightly rippled image that glints and shimmers on an ebbing tide,

Or the reflection is lost in frothy, foamy, wind-whipped waves

Beneath the surface I continue in fluid motion, alive, and free

But shaped, molded, and safely cradled by the land

I have moved through life drawing life from water

Absorbing the power of moon directed currents

Absorbing the energy of cascading mountain streams

Absorbing the warmth and color of the sun

Racing with the tides, racing against the tides,

Thrilled by the hum of sail, keel and tiller

## **I Have Seen God Once**

*Vera Cromrich*

I have seen God once

I was sitting on the beach and She approached me

She smiled and I said 'thank you'

Because what are you supposed to say

To God

She said 'don't please' and sat beside me

I looked to sea, because looking at Her gave me a slight headache

But I still heard Her beside me

'I love the sea'

'Did you make it' I asked

'No' She said

I paused

'Why do bad things happen?' I asked like I would to a mother

'I don't know' She replied and She frowned

They say God cannot be all powerful and all loving,

But now I am wondering if God is

More like a child, who's squeezed out all the shampoo into the tub

And doesn't know how to put it back in the bottle

## **The Sun**

*Vera Cromrich*

With warm breath and calm eyes

She awakes

and embraces

Moving slowly

She gives, her life-giving light, our first mother

From dirt she has sprouted

everything we know

The Moon

With a flash of eyeliner

A wink of light

graces the sky

Covered by stars

Property of the artist

Gently caressing our deepest feelings

from our fragile bones

The Sun

is blushing with the daybreak

In love with the very idea of life

The Moon

is wading through the skies

Dancing to the rhythm of the stars

## **I Like the Smell of the Rain**

*Vera Cromrich*

I am scared

I am so scared

I am young and I am scared

And I like to put my feet in the grass,

and eat raspberries, and I like the smell of the rain

And I know I must keep liking the smell of the rain

And the taste of berries

And I must put my feet in the grass

I cannot sit aimlessly in the night

And pray

We must keep walking

And talking

And hoping

And helping

We must smell the rain

We must hold hands, and cry, and fear

We must push and shove and fall over

Because when we lay down alone in the darkness,

Hands grasping at air

We do not resist the oncoming night

## **Floating World**

*Sam Rogers*

A half century ago, I went with friends  
at night, to South Beach on Martha's Vineyard,  
In that vanished world, clouds allowed no moon,  
the wave foam only a faint churn of gray,  
the air cold after the heat of September day.

I threw off my clothes, plunged past the breakers,  
rode the swells, facing the rough pummel of surf,  
no land behind until Portugal, mottled darkness  
enclosing me and filling my senses.

Voices shouted from shore. I called back  
for them to join me but remained alone, lifted  
and lowered by urgent flow, suspended  
on the full emptiness of ocean.

## **Night Calls**

*Sam Rogers*

The night wants me but is patient,  
no hurry, until there is,  
at the last closing of the blinds,  
the final fall of curtain  
in the empty movie palace.

I've always loved the night,  
lived in the night, been seduced  
by night, worked forty years  
of night shift and for decades  
before that stayed up late,  
reading with a flashlight  
under my blankets  
long after everyone else  
went to bed.

Night will take me  
when I'm done and deliver me  
back to where God is hiding,  
the Dark God, the mother of night.  
She sits and broods in the abyss,  
as souls arrive and depart  
in multitudes.

## **Jacob And The Angel**

*Sam Rogers*

In Genesis, Jacob wrestled with an angel  
who dislocated Jacob's thigh from its socket.  
To this day, a kosher diet forbids eating  
the sciatic nerve from the thigh of any animal.  
I'm no fan of spiritual middle management:  
angels, ghosts, saints, icons, or relics.  
I always want to interact with the One  
who brings all this about and I feel compelled  
to wrestle with Her, or Him, all night, all day.  
She's always on my mind although, truth be told,  
I do lose the thread now and then,  
maybe even often, and find myself distracted  
by the multiple attractions of the world.

The trick is that even these diversions  
are my divine adversary in disguise,  
all God, all the time. I actually only wrestle  
for the exercise because I can't escape,  
can't be separate, the One engulfs me,  
saturates me, won't leave me alone,  
even if I wanted to escape, I couldn't.  
Often to my dismay, I'm always exactly  
where I should be, even, and maybe  
especially, when I don't know it.

***MEN WITH SAND IN OUR PANTS***

*Raymond Grecott*

We've come here in fascinating shades  
of greys . . . slate stones  
that slid down mountains, abrupt  
cleavages to light

skies and squirrels that cannot rest, men  
who come early when steelhead don't show  
scuffed from the city that ends in nowhere

we share the commonness of gravel  
and bars that build then subside  
in the rabid spring flood, washed  
in the flicker of lager neon at two am

stoics, we migrate to places we've forgotten  
scattered like stories, yearning  
to come back home

## **The Door**

*Raymond Grecott*

A dog's bark can carry a cloud  
for a short ride  
to the other side  
of a pond  
or the village stream  
but a dog's bark  
frightens a cloud  
with the hungry shadow of wolf  
lingering there  
in its echo

light carries clouds on its back  
if light waits for a train  
to carry the sky  
only the caboose will show up  
the caboose tires of being last

in every cloud  
there is a window at the depot  
the lady who works there  
lights the lantern

light is the only open door

***MADLY***

*Raymond Grecott*

I long to snorkel deep  
through bubbles of brine  
where starlight wafts its blood  
down over the sea floor  
to fill the thirsty vessels opening  
in the heart of the eye of a gray whale  
rolling for crustaceans in the California sands

I long to journey  
through all the quiet places, inner  
sanctuaries where the voices of storms repose  
and relax their worn paint brushes  
from the breasts of frescoes  
they are freshening up, draped  
across the vaulted ceilings  
of the undersides of great subsiding waves

I long to live in the hollows of early dawn  
where the red-winged blackbird lives his wilding dream,  
flying irresponsibly through saffron tunnels  
giving us his sassy song, rising  
with the morning light  
where he and I will always know  
we love each other madly

## **Duality**

*Will Longman*

death black of loss

lightning bolts of heart pain

slashing asunder

blinding magnificence of redwood and storm surge rock

lightning bolts of soul beauty

sanctified

both draw out my tears

two sides

of the same coin

## **The Fog**

*Will Longman*

early morning on 101  
through the windshield  
the undulating ribbon of the road ahead  
disappears into a thick fog  
just beginning to burn off

among tall pine tree top branches  
dripping with diamond fire dew  
sun beams swirl and dance with the white mist

a momentary flash of vision  
the transubstantiation of 101 to mystical pathway

just as quickly  
extinguished  
as I plunge into the total blindness  
of dense white billows

## **Mystic Forest**

*Will Longman*

them big trees  
been living and growing here  
quite a spell  
all them years and years  
expanding their webs of connection

them big trees  
connected to the rich damp leaf-mold soil  
endless fog-billowy skies  
and each other

them big trees  
connected by mist breath of salt air to nearby ocean

them big trees  
connected to the four-legged  
and the two-legged animals  
they silently observe  
beneath their branches

them big trees  
breathe out  
and we all breathe in

we are all connected

## **Wintering**

*Angela Borneman*

It is a New Year

but the water has not run clear (of the old one)

yet

The wet of winter is without tinder

a cloak pulled overhead, cinched too

tight

Skin snug 'cross my sides, like Grizzly hide

I lumber to my den for the long

nap

The temper of spring is a bourgeoning

an appetite of hopeful

teeth

Cheeks rise to meet crescent eyes

lips part for a thirsty

tongue

I emerge a body purged

my hide sways, draped loose over

bone

I clear a path through a mass

of tulips, like Christmas lights they are a blurry

fête

My narrow jaws dip to pause

at a stream that gurgles in the sun and runs

clear

## **Ghosted**

*Angela Borneman*

The first time I laid eyes on you, your pluck  
and pomp made me laugh

The first time I learned your name, it slurred  
plural and possessive

The first time you perched next to me, you preened  
black and blue, mysterious and moody

The first time you held my gaze, I was struck still  
you played indifferent and continued to eat

The first time I heard your call, I was charmed  
I read somewhere you are a mimic and a social climber

The last time I searched for your Spartan crest  
you ducked behind a cedar like a coward

You don't come 'round the house anymore. I am not sure, but  
I think it is because you know that I wait for you

## **For Times' Sake**

*Angela Borneman*

a demi-tasse of goodwill  
floats in a basin of shallow water  
daisies wilting on the sill  
a sweet tithe for a ne'er-do-well daughter  
snow and sand both bury sound  
fire licks and eats the songs from a shrub  
the mourning cry of a hound  
a Scotsman splits wood with a velvet glove  
fingers whisper end to end  
stretched across oceans and sunsets divine  
time is both torture and friend  
come, drink a thimble-full for auld lang syne

## **On My Knees**

*Alan Chessman*

Spring arrives

The pink rhodie dazzles

spreading the table in welcome

And they come

bees by the hundreds

as if on annual holy pilgrimage

Small winged beings buzz in

to try each deep pink niche . . .

pause to bend their knee

They touch sacred stamens

gathering pollen to share

before moving to the next floral altar

The sun comes out

and more pilgrims arrive

to Mecca in the backyard

## **Lifting the Blinds on a Winter Morning**

*Alan Chessman*

Dim grey skies murmur  
Trees are bare and silent  
their branches dark and skeletal  
Brown leaves lie soggy and groaning  
A few walkers pass  
in their dark pants  
and black raincoats.

All is muted and drab  
Bright colors are a faded memory  
Yellows, greens and reds  
seem to have fled  
Maybe they hide in the shadows  
patiently waiting for the sun  
and their chance to dance again.

## **My Grandfather's Clock**

*Alan Chessman*

Oh clock of my ancestors  
hands point to seven am start of my day  
you faithfully sound each new moment  
and then tick it away  
Already the seven is history

A five pound weight pulls you forward  
one click at a time  
Gravity cannot be denied  
descending for eight days  
then a rewind to the top

Yes, seven is but a memory  
So many sevens have slipped away  
Now a moment of grief for the losses  
Happy or sad, they are past  
You and I age

There is crackling in your paint  
but I behold peace there in your face  
The hands will come around  
There's always another beginning  
after each tick - tock tick - tock

## **changes**

*Cat Halvorson*

you wanted them  
but you don't get to pick and choose  
when they come along  
riding the coattails of dreams  
hemmed in nightmares  
and whichever thread you end up pulling  
there's no knowing  
just what will unravel  
so you hope  
like a knot in your gut you pray  
that what comes is close  
to the pattern you're following  
that the garment you're left with  
is one that'll fit  
or that you can grow into  
that these changes  
every stitch tuck and cut  
will grow into something worth wearing  
and not another husk  
discarded  
on the cutting room floor

## **Kathy**

*Cat Halvorson*

My aunt wore colors like butterflies wear their wings.

Glass earrings, matching pins

painted cardigans layered over complimentary hues

her vitality on display, yet still merely hinting

at the passion and courage beneath.

She knew how to roar.

When she lay dying

she never seemed diminished

and she never seemed afraid.

When she died the moon was waning.

Evening had come, the summer sun setting

the solstice just passed.

The moon, the day, the season

they all were dying with her.

Layers of endings, yet what I remember best

is the pink that painted the snow on the Mission mountains.

Stark against the twilight, that vivid hue -

she was carried away on the alpenglow

a painting as vibrant as she.

## **Tangled**

*Cat Halvorson*

tangled threads  
a hard knot where softness should reside  
chaos where there should be order  
and the frustrating task  
of teasing out the thread  
pulling the yarn free of itself  
putting this mess to rights  
feels thankless and monumental  
the knot is too big  
let me solve this with a sword  
I don't have the patience or wisdom  
for careful untangling  
but the blade will ruin the thread forever  
is that price too high?  
so we sit  
knotted yarn at our fingertips  
pulling and coaxing  
minimizing the damage  
resurrecting the thread  
so something new can be born  
from what life seemed to wreck

## **Wind**

*Eve Epstein*

The howling outside our window  
Reminds us how fragile this shelter is  
A house that feels solid most days  
Now, in the dark night, rattling

These are times when the frames  
We built our lives on  
Feel so thin  
The strong planks, boards and beams  
Are nothing to the wind

I learned once  
On a desert trip  
That the best way to prevent a sand storm  
From burying a structure  
Is to make it from palm fronds, pliable  
With spaces for the sand to pass through

So perhaps the best way to withstand this moment  
Is to open the door and let it pass through us  
Leaving us battered, and bent  
But still, here when the wind dies down

## **First laws of motion**

*Eve Epstein*

Sometimes we hold hands when we walk

More often, we don't

He counts steps and I count the ways

He urges me to go around one more bend

Of the two of us, I am by far the laziest

Prone to stay at rest, while he urges us out the door

Rain, cold do not deter him, and I go along

Usually grateful for the walk, also grateful once we return

When we do reach out to hold hands

As we take in a view, or look up at bird passing by

It is a reminder that inertia and motion are joined, like us

In common cause

The impulse to move forward

The desire to hold still for one more moment

A dance we want to keep doing

Forever

Fairy tails

*Eve Epstein*

I do see a tail or a fin sometimes as I look out

A whale, maybe

Until I realize it's just a sharp-edged wave

And then, the white caps laugh at my folly

So a mermaid would be just as plausible

The flick of her tail

A mirage, or just a day's swim

A quick hello to those of us bound by our feet

To the shore

## Haiku I

*Stephen Ullom*

an old rake

left on the ground out back

gathering leaves

## Haiku II

*Stephen Ullom*

on the chain link fence

a forgotten coat hangs

warming the post

### **Haiku III**

*Stephen Ullom*

so many droplets

falling over themselves

in the waterfall

## **Sunrise in the Northwest**

*Teresa Gauthier*

The sun is flirting with the Olympic peaks.

Mount Olympus absorbs the rays

Showcasing the snow that blankets

Its nooks and crevasses

Casting shadows

On its neighbor's peaks.

The clouds distant and faint

Send wisps of promise to the day

That is ready to start.

How did the sun rise so quietly?

## **Breakfast at the Float**

*Teresa Gauthier*

The mighty eagle  
Flaps and strains,  
Water splashing about  
As it drags its prey  
Onto the slimy wooden float.  
Feathers fly as he begins  
The prep of breakfast.  
His milky head stays low  
As his mate swoops across the sky,  
Magnificent pinion span  
Speeding the journey.  
Then he rises, soaring  
And together they chase  
The dead bird's brother,  
Desperately flapping,  
Nipped, yet bravely straining to rise  
Beyond their reach.  
Momentarily, six wings  
Spread wide and wave  
To a grey backcloth.  
Screeches, then silence.  
The still beak  
Rests alone.  
Unfinished meal.

## **Entertainers**

*Teresa Gauthier*

The dark acrobats of the sky  
Pirouette and spin  
Jostling each other  
Playing tag  
Chasing the predators  
Just for fun

They gather early  
And soar as a pack  
Darkening the sky  
Cawing raucously  
Meeting again at dusk  
To roost in their grove

Day after day  
There is a hunt  
Waiting always for sloppy meals  
Lo, behold the pair  
Whirling in unison  
Wings grazing

Murder indeed!

## **Salt Water Mother**

*Tamera Roza*

Here now  
Floating  
With bruise free certainty  
I know she is

Holding me  
Completely  
Lifting my heart high

Stretching my limbs  
Past the places  
They used to end

She twists  
Dances my body  
Effortlessly  
Toward the sun moon

Orphan no more  
She is known to me  
Salt water mother

## **Transfusion**

*Tamera Roza*

Outside, inside, beside myself  
I watch as the turquoise mineral water  
Travels through my right hand  
Heart shape circling through veins  
Up and over my crown chakra  
Round and round and round my heart  
Deep diving into my belly  
Dancing across my feet  
Rocketing back up through my mighty legs  
Flushing my once red, troubled blood  
Into stories, and out my left hand

## **Assemble Me**

*Tamera Roza*

In flashes and peeks

She strips down before him

Using and musing

Shadow and light

To lure him toward and to

Her broken pieces

Seduction turned surgery

She splays it all out

On the screen

She splats her pulsing bosom

On the table

Bruised heart in chunks

Across the floor

Callused finger edges

And bright red toes

Tracing his tender tools

Beggin him

To assemble her

## **Fish**

*Brenda Hodges-Howell*

flash below the surface  
turn like knives  
the light on the dimpled water tempts me to see  
leaves or branches skinned of bark  
But I can tell what turns and flashes  
silver then brown, quick like winking,  
lost the next moment

I saw a play last night that had a flash  
something that I felt deep in the aorta's aorta of spirit  
where the hidden hurts are bundled and stacked deep in the shadowy corners.  
On stage he spoke of being overcome with rage  
then just like that apologized  
sorry to cause anyone inconvenience  
a flash of what is real  
lost the next moment

Looking up from the piano keys I realize night pulled in tight around us  
owls call for comfort  
the clouds scuttle in search of the misshapen moon  
Yet I still feel the expanse of the morning, open,  
when the raven gargles over the early falling leaves  
churning up more blue in the sky and I am  
alive to the world still arriving  
I will not lose this

## **Tortoise**

*Dia Wilder*

I am a turtle  
encased in a shell  
I did not choose  
slow and plodding  
through long days  
and longer nights  
in my youth slower  
than the others yet  
getting there in the end  
in time or a little late  
not breathless  
timely and relaxed  
as befits my breed  
my shell is hard and rough  
beautiful  
if you look closely  
with swirls and lines  
inherited from countless  
centuries of genetic change  
and wounds from life's adventures  
If you see me on the road  
making my slow way to  
somewhere  
stop to let me pass  
on my walk  
to the other side  
for I am a traveler  
seeking to fill my time  
with new experiences  
in a very long life.

## MEMORY KEEPER

*Dia Wilder*

My sister is a keeper of memories  
Each stored in endless tiny drawers  
Pulled out with  
jeweled knobs  
tassels of brightly colored ribbons  
and thin branches with still clinging moss  
Each little drawer  
and there are thousands  
contain memories  
saved all her long life  
from childhood to this day  
sweeping up crumbs of tears and smiles  
joys and sorrows  
picking out the ones to treasure like  
bits of colored sea glass and precious shells  
storing them in drawers named after herself  
mother and father, brother and sister  
children and pets, grandmothers and grandfathers  
friends and enemies  
just ask  
she will open the right drawer to find your memory  
and present it to you,  
with love.

*2024 for my sister Melinda w/hyperthymesia*

**april showers.**

*Emma Mitchell*

floating through the rain fresh air  
in the green light of my bed

I am dreaming of a love born of  
the soft wet earth

cradled in the vines and branches  
of this deeply green

lush wet saturday morning.

I dream of a soft yellow sunrise  
and a forest green love.

a slowly waking romance  
amid cool summer sheets

a love serenaded by the early morning  
white-tipped doves of middle texas  
and watered by these springtime storms.

I long so deeply for a love rolling in the heat of the hill country  
playing in the wild blue rivers

and sprawling under thick juniper trees  
a love of water, air, and love of fire  
but mostly love of earth.

roll me in your abundant branches  
breathing in your honeysuckle sighs  
and swimming in your clouded sunrise eyes

I am dreaming of a love

born of earth

- of an april morning storm.

**the new dream.**

*Emma Mitchell*

there is a world for me  
where i get to be  
wild and green  
and free  
the birds will not objectify me  
the frogs will honor my song  
the trees will believe my story  
and the grass will soften under my grief until  
it gives way to joy  
food will grow from the ground  
offerings for a soft life  
i will forget that i was ever broken  
crushed under the heels of  
men trying to win a lost game  
and women rushing to earn favor  
in this ugly system  
this world rotted down  
to its marrow.  
in the new world  
i build with my lovers  
i will be so loved and  
so soft and  
so nourished  
that my broken old dreams turn soft and mossy  
in the soil under my bare feet.

**up.**

*Emma Mitchell*

i press my feet slowly and carefully into  
the moss and the soft  
damp ground i am  
treading so nimbly like a nymph navigating  
the steep slope of the land above the  
shores of lake superior  
over boulders and under fallen trees  
weaving in and around among the  
thimbleberries and royal ferns deep here  
in the woods of wild upper michigan  
a few paces ahead of you i pause under  
low hemlock boughs and turn to face you with a  
quiet smile on my lips inviting you to step  
closer into me with only mischief and desire in my cheeks  
we kiss there in the deep green of the forest  
hair wet and wild in all directions  
and i feel our roots shooting into the  
ground below and touching there intertwining  
just under the surface  
i breathe soft and deeply  
a sigh of earth magicks  
floating on the cool vapors of our dip in  
icy bright fresh waters  
i am grounded. i am grateful.  
i am gloriously warm just to be here with you.

## **Himalayan Sweetness**

*Leslayann Schecterson*

The season of berries is upon us,  
foraging through thorns and thicket.  
Every ripe berry-you must pick it!  
Stomp over thorns, scream and cuss,  
Himalayans are the best! No more to discuss.  
That blackberry is the sweetest.

Put on clothes for the muss!  
Cover each leg-the thorns will prick it.  
Get your fingers messy with juice and lick it.  
Now stop making such a loud fuss,  
That blackberry is the sweetest.

## **Awakening**

*Leslayann Schecterson*

Staring into a dark Utah sky wasting time  
Watching the Milky Way upload.

Cygnus appears, wings wide across silky white  
Capturing me in her flock

Soaring into the wild heavens of infinite galaxies  
Numbers the mind cannot comprehend

Worlds unknown, unimaginable to human consciousness  
Timeless, formless, emotionless.

Earth spins, time travels  
Life becomes extinct to rise  
Among rubble left  
Like thoughts resurrected from  
Dark desert skies, wasted time.

*(published in Poets Online, nominated for a Pushcart)*

## **After Dinner**

*Leslayann Schecterson*

Dishes done,  
dad lights his pipe,  
cherry tobacco smoke rings drift up,  
wispy edges curve into waves  
before losing definition,  
disappearing completely.

Every spring-  
cherry blossoms dancing around my head  
whispering bedtime stories.

## **Ophelia**

*Amanda Williamsen*

Oh, how overdone I am,  
swamp-logged, blue-lipped.  
Poets invoke my pickled virginity.  
All my life: “I know not what to say,  
my lord.” Now I know. Little girls  
want to be me on Halloween,  
wrapping themselves in weeds  
and torn lingerie. I never owned  
a white brocade anything.  
But somehow I am their adolescent  
anthem, the early pure death,  
flower-drowned, bound in my  
own braids. It’s embarrassing.  
Their reedy legs remind me of herons  
in the marsh where I was found,  
my hymen grown soggy and pecked  
out by a beak. Death consummates,  
not consecrates, even me, fifteen  
and spot-faced. Bride of a bird.  
Bride of mud. Spare me Mr. Millais  
and his Pre-Raphaelite pomposity.  
I never looked half so good dry.

previously published in *The Doctor T. J. Eckleburg Review*

**Triolet for Providence, Ohio**

*Amanda Williamsen*

I lie on the town that cholera killed.  
Violets and hickory nuts sprout in the grass  
of the graveyard. Providence, they called  
this town, where I lie, that cholera killed.  
The names of canal diggers, legible still:  
O'Halloran, Yoder, Yawberg, Haas.  
I lie on the town that cholera killed.  
Violets and hickory nuts sprout in the grass.

previously published in *Mezzo Caiman*

## Instructions to the Artist

*Tia Hudson*

What would you see if I were sitting for you,  
if you saw all the hidden things?  
My hair would be long and flowing  
because that's how it is in my imagination.  
My butt would be small for the same reason.  
My hands would be themselves, small  
wrinkled, with cuticles gone to seed  
What about my life would you need to know?  
The lack of travel, except in-country –  
Washington to Washington –  
from mountains to obelisks and statues.  
A tent that takes a small space on the hillside  
Where there are no rocks but a multitude  
of flowers, trees grasses, bees.  
Don't leave out the purple clogs  
and clothes and shiny earrings  
that reflect a sparkling blue light.

The black and white dog sleeping on  
the end of the bed, in the place of many  
other four-legged sleeping friends.  
Add the purple-blossom shamrock  
that has lived as long as I have.  
Did I mention the small butt?

## **Red Mini Roadster**

*Tia Hudson*

My car's too small to hold a spare  
tire, the ice chest, a third person.

But when the top is down, it is filled  
with the whole world: lilacs in April,  
daisies in June; blue jays, herons,  
and eagles come to marvel.

My dog sits proudly beside me, safely  
hooked in, ears and eyes forward, ready.

I did not know it would be this fun

## **Letting Go, Holding On**

*Tia Hudson*

My father told me often  
“Don’t give up. Just don’t give up.”  
But the long list of what  
I must keep has grown much shorter.

I gave up the relationship  
I’d waited so long for  
that was hurting me – both of us –  
though it took me too long to let go.

I gave up making my bed  
every morning: it lies as I left it;  
every night it opens its rumpled arms  
and gathers me in.

Every few months my doctor  
asks the depression questions  
“Do you often think...”  
“Do you often feel...”  
My answers change sometimes.

But always no, I have not given up life,  
though there are days  
it batters like an inner cyclone  
that makes me turn and turn again.

## **Reaching for the Clouds**

*Diane Walker*

Like trees, we long to reach out to the clouds  
As they race across the sky,  
Gleaming like foreign lands  
With invitations to explore what lies beyond  
Their darkening silhouettes  
And dress in warm peach-colored light,  
Constantly shape-shifting as we dance  
Into the deepening indigo of night.

## **Morning View**

*Diane Walker*

What clever artist's brush is this,  
That shapes the morning clouds  
In shades of pink and gold,  
Then paints them on an azure sky  
Above a mountain  
Dusted with peach snow?

## **Striped Fields: a Memory**

*Diane Walker*

Driving through the rural countryside,  
We pass the dry, shaved fields,  
Striped like the rug my mother used to vacuum:  
Up one side and down the other,  
Dragging her old gray Electrolux behind her  
And singing, her clear alto voice  
A bell, resounding, swinging  
In the temple of her throat  
To the dance tunes of the forties she so loved...

## Clouds Don't Lie

*Carol Despeaux*

When I was 16,  
I told the truth in four-letter words  
to my friend in Arizona.  
Accidentally left the letter  
on the altar of the coffee table  
where he found it.

When I got home from school, he thundered:  
*I'm not an alcoholic. You're the problem.*  
*Always with your head in the clouds!*

Banished to my room,  
I lay still as a secret,  
floating on a blanket of lies,  
clouds pooling in my throat.  
I mouthed the words again—  
not for him,  
but for the girl  
who would one day leave,  
her head full of sky.

## Untitled

*Carol Despeaux*

Dear 60-year-old woman staring into a glass of pinot noir  
as if deciphering ancient code,

If you could hear me, I'd say you are worthy  
of being loved because you exist.

I'd say you don't need to prove yourself to the monster  
nesting within, cobbled together like Frankenstein—  
broken bone and scar tissue, bad blood and rogue cells,  
old ideas and corrupted love, hand-me-downs  
from ancestors who didn't question tradition.

Dear beauty, with the light glimmering your wine  
like radioactive blood, if you could hear me,  
I'd say the reason you love bumble bees and dragonflies,  
fruit bats and winged beings of every kind  
is because you know how to lift off,  
how to soar, flit, and drop seeds  
over a hungry earth.

Dear goddess divine, I'd say, when you are gone  
your bones will fertilize dirt and what you have planted  
will feed your people  
                  and their people  
                                  and theirs  
  and theirs

## **We Will Not Praise the Sunflower**

*Carol Despeaux*

We will not admire how she grows so tall,  
nor praise her thick, sturdy stalk  
supporting that wide-open face, always  
reaching for the sun's warmth. We won't  
applaud how she sways in the breeze,  
her leaves teasing the air like the hips  
of the belly dancer I saw in Vegas.  
I walked through throngs  
of tourists on that hot, sticky night  
to the corner 7-Eleven for water and aspirin—  
breathing their expelled air,  
tobacco, mint, and sweaty desperation  
thick on my tongue.  
The same tongue that thrills in pulling  
the sunflower's seed from its shell,  
but this year—no salty satisfaction.  
Her neck, drooping with the weight of her ego,  
was sheared clean off by rodent teeth—  
specifically, a greedy gray squirrel  
crowned himself king  
before she could even bloom.  
It's a tough crowd  
in this garden of Eden.

## **Topography**

*EmilyJane Mockett*

Contours of me; the shape of my relief  
Comes rolling off my tongue in prayers  
To a landscape made of my suffering  
Contours of me; the shape of my relief  
With paths unfolded by grief into the earthbody  
My topography broken open with crevasses  
Ruptured and released  
Formed by meaning  
The meaning makers of WE  
Contours of me; the shape of my relief  
Sculpted by these hands  
I hold open in surrender to Creativity  
To the Creativity that comes rolling through me  
Pressing under my skin  
The tingling of sourced Joy  
Shaping my relief  
The contours of me

## **Midnight Walk**

*Nishat Shah*

On a cool night following a fiery passion,  
The woman says,  
"Let's go buy some snacks."  
The man heartily agrees,  
and they both step out onto the moonlit sidewalk.

The woman admires the stars in the sky.  
The man admires her. He is a star in her sky.  
Her solar opposite had fire in his hair, and light in his hue.  
She was gravity, undeniable darkness. He could not leave her orbit.  
I hate you. I hate you. I hate you...I want you...  
Guilt washed away.  
He dove.

At the bottom of the hill,  
in the shroud of darkness  
just before light from the streetpole hits it,  
he dove.

"I love you."

The void stared back at him, and he knew she would welcome him  
fully, entirely, eternally.  
"The store is going to close soon."

## **Your Church**

*Nishat Shah*

You inhale the scent  
Of the fresh cut wood.  
Your brain racks through  
All the different things  
That you could create.

Your mind constantly races,  
But for this,  
You could sit and focus  
All day long.

Wild monkey boy,  
Always out of place,  
Never belonging  
You were never meant for the pews

The striations of the wood  
The sound of the saw  
The hours of sanding

This is where you belong

## **Kansas City**

*Nishat Shah*

You went and shipped up to Boston,  
But before you did that,  
You drove from Portland  
up to the Kitsap Peninsula,  
Where you met a particular girl from Kansas City.

When you left you didn't say goodbye,  
But you drove through my hometown,  
The heart of America,  
where all paths converge.

You took I-70 all the way through my Show-Me state, my home.  
I took I-5 down to your Beaver State, your home.  
Your inner city of roses lays empty, withered.  
My inner city of fountains flourishes.

## **Tempest Be Calm**

*Gwen Mansfield*

I'm in the thick of it now.

The raging waves, the merciless wind, the howling people—

Moms and dads, kids and pets, mechanics and houseless, doctors and sergeants.

We're all in it—together,

Yet, fighting each other with

Railing fact-less arguments, retaliating with justice scales, rendezvousing with the Bench of 9.

It's a tempest conjured by vicious violence.

A boiling pot of social scams, secret societies, slithering AI manipulation.

We're in the middle of it now.

How do we calm the tempest? Maybe—

Stand on unsure feet, willing to chance a stumble.

Speak with nervous tongues, risking an accidental stutter.

Shelter with open arms, holding the unfamiliar.

Tempest—be calm.

## Four Hundred Feet from the Reservation

*Gwen Mansfield*

We bought land fifty years ago—

Four hundred feet from the reservation.

But the land has always been—*theirs*.

Before my fair-haired relatives sailed, and settled and sequestered

bold stands of Spruce, fields of camas, orca pods,

and waterfalls from the mountaintops—

the land—was *theirs*.

*Their* beaches of clams, and crabs, and snails—

who thought they'd burrowed and buried deep enough—

found—nothing was burrowed and buried deep enough.

My granddaughter travels a quarter of a mile

to the elementary school on the reservation land.

Where they honor the Indigenous Warriors of World War II,

ancestral drums, history dancers, storytellers.

Respected Native Americans bring homemade soup on Cultural Day,

sharing recipes, reading published stories from aunties, young fathers, and those passed on.

She studies in a classroom with Indian children, biracial kids, African Americans, and Whites.

Their history pages now speak some truth—and, at times, truth seems normal.

Yet, this is just one small school in a coastal state.

I wonder: Beyond my land—four hundred feet from the reservation—

What **lies** on all the other pages?

## **A New Shade of Lipstick**

*Barbara Clark*

My friend had her lips tattooed,  
saying it was something she'd wanted to do  
for a long time and I said, brilliant.  
If there's ever a place to get tattooed,  
it's on the lips.  
And she said, that way there's no need for lipstick  
ever again, even if it means the same color  
every day--no mocha passion or raspberry sorbet,  
just tattoo plum or whatever it is.

At our age skin has started to hang, oh so slightly  
from the bones, and lips tattooed anywhere else  
might start to droop, a slow sag tugging  
the corner of a perky smile downward;  
no tattooed lips with tongue just so, lascivious in  
its juiciness and peeking out  
from the upper edge of cleavage;  
nor a tattooed triceps mouth making  
the perfect print of a lipstick kiss.  
No, her lips smack, impeccably saucy,  
matching the twinkle in her eye.

## **The ocean**

*Barbara Clark*

doesn't speak to me today although it's out there,  
waving, farther than my eye can fathom.

If left to me, I would conjure flatness, just  
like those who came before,  
but those pictures from space tell otherwise.

The planet curves, another end-point to dissimilar  
shores of pink sand holding fluttery coastal birds,  
or maybe even lush and mossy  
cliffs scraping sky above green water.

The closest shore  
on my side wears basalt, smoothed to curves, and simple  
from the endless bathing. Once in a great while,  
there's an agate, cast among the hog-backed stones  
and my feet teeter in their jumble as I leap.

I imagine them from my post here, scrubbing the bathroom,  
until, from the shelf above me, the shell from Bali calls,  
its rosy luminescence just covering my ear.

The ocean rushes in—Hello? Hello?

## **Palette**

*Barbara Clark*

One of these days soon, after the final snow has melted,  
when the shady spots in the lawn give up their fat crystals,  
we will awaken to the trees shaking themselves into  
the first greens of the season. Further into the day,  
the late afternoon light will fill the color box,  
so many choices from the palette.

While summer fruits robe themselves in the lushness of reds and orange  
the leaves of April and May seek lime, kiwi, spruce, and olive.  
Crayola is stingy in its allotment for the merge of yellow and blue,  
while paint store chips rule with truth in asparagus, terrapin, and moss.  
But no matter, for in this instant when I drive home up the hill  
my breath catches, the afternoon light marking  
the celadon of madrone bark, the traffic-light-go of new ferns,  
and the dill pickle in the latest addition to firs.

## **The dog and I walked slowly along**

*Brandon Miller*

a moss-covered path,  
one of us reverent,  
as one must be  
in a graveyard.

Meyers. Bannister. Longworthy.  
The etched names now dull  
in the weather-worn marble  
even under the light of a late spring sun.

“This space is subject to forfeiture and sale,”  
a notice read on a plot.  
Perhaps someone hadn’t died soon enough.  
Being alive is costly, after all.

Old toys left on gravesites.  
Round beads on a necklace shining like tiny stars,  
reminiscent of pearls – those treasures  
made of detritus and debris,  
polished in the briny black.

What baubles will adorn my grave, I wondered.  
Will I want another chance?  
What will I think of a dog and man come to walk  
among ghosts under a dying sun?

## **Chemistry**

*Brandon Miller*

I am told the same elements make up all matter  
but  
How did the universe become  
blood?

Starstuff reconstituted  
coursing, now, timed to a pattering rhythm  
and blooming in her cheek  
when our eyes meet  
forbidden  
lingering  
and we blush

Veins so thin, star-blue  
holding all of life within  
When did the universe become  
so fragile?

## Swainson's Thrush

*Brandon Miller*

In the morning, sometimes  
I wonder about the first song –  
not the one that summoned the sun today  
but the first song sung.  
Ragged, perhaps  
raw, perhaps  
the world reft of silence forever  
by the first songbird  
whose call still echoes in the trees.

And at night, when the birds have gone quiet,  
their vespers spent for the day  
I think to pray, sometimes  
but offer my hopes to the forest, instead  
because why would God listen to me  
when the birds,  
insistent and raucous in the morning,  
pray so much better?

## **Muse**

*Email Osborne*

Droplets heavy, fall.

Gravity bound, plunge

Toward inevitable earth.

Buds tight,

Kissed open into bloom.

Potential spilled.

Souls fall like stars

with the rain.

Mixing together, irrevocable.

## **What Teri Said**

*Rebecca Christensen*

I try levity:

Just because you and Mary were twins doesn't mean you have to do EVERYTHING together.

Teri struggles to cover her hand over mine,  
ALS paralyzing most of her body in a frozen stasis just like it did Mary.  
Well, we may not have been joined at the hip but, of course, by genetics  
and at least I'll be with her soon.

I share:

Mary told me she wanted to come back as a bird.

Really? She never told me that.

I roll my shoulders, a bit smug in the knowledge.

Teri, always the more dry-witted of the two, says:

HMM – well then, I hope to come back as a stealthy feral cat on the hunt!

When she sees my look of surprised horror she laughs until tears roll down her cheeks  
and pool on her lavender-scented pillow.

Don't worry, she soothes

Even in reincarnation twin bonds rule

... We'll both be birds,

and together we'll soar the heavens.

## **ODE to the Forest Painting Bought at Goodwill**

*Rebecca Christensen*

Artist unknown, no signature

I wonder of your origin

bought on a whim, now hanging in my bedroom

Where were you sired

at the intercourse of brush to canvas?

created in a painter's studio...on a beach...in the woods...a college art class

maybe a privileged daughter's princess room

where she stepped out of the mold

to paint a darkened forest

dripping with mystery & blackened clouds

something she saw in the distance from her upper turret

or just her imagination?

The frame

fancy, bold, expensive

such a deal when I found you.

Drawn first by the frame

haunted by the mood and the drama of the art

Saddened you were orphaned

given away; fostered at Goodwill

genealogy unknown

Adopted by me

## MEMORY MINING

*Rebecca Christensen*

Barbara helps me dig deep the holes  
needing to bury all I had written from the age of 14.  
For you see I had just read Harper Lee, A Tree Grows In Brooklyn, even Faulkner.  
No way would I ever be that good.  
So in the ground they all went  
tablets journals diaries stories poems.

40 years later, our mom gone, Dad selling the family home,  
Barbara and I travel to MD to help with the final clean-up and packing  
that last evening reminiscing, tearful, drinking a bit too much  
when I announce: “Well, I’m not letting this new family find all my writings”  
and talk compliant tipsy Barbara into helping me dig up the yard.  
Yard tools packed away, so we stole large soup spoons from the kitchen  
and in our PJs, still drinking wine, and with the spoons  
we manage to dig up --- NOTHING ---  
All, of course, long ago disintegrated into worm food.

Exhausted & sweaty we give up and conk out on the 2 remaining lawn chairs  
staged there for tomorrow’s open house,  
nudged awake next morning by Dad and my first crush, Bobby, now an estate agent.  
Dad, perplexed, picks up a bent dirty spoon and asks about all the divots in the yard  
Bobby hurrying us further awake to dress properly & clear out before the hopeful rush of clients.  
Mosquito-bitten, hung over, embarrassed we clamber into the house  
and collapse onto our childhood beds laughing like naughty children.

## Reflecting on The Future

*Amba Gale*

### For Fish and Beak to Meet

Two long-necked herons  
In the grey morning sea.

One, the shadow,  
the other, corporeal,  
stalk silently,  
shimmering on the smooth rolling sea.

Waiting  
waiting silently  
waiting patiently  
for fish and beak to meet.

What is my fish?

What is yours?

Think slowly, my friend,

and Await the answer

until time is ripe

for fish and beak to meet.

## Ode to the Barn Owl

*Amba Gale*

Oh, Beloved Barn Owl—  
heart-face of listening—  
May I listen as you.

One ear open to heaven,  
to the unseen breath  
that brings all things to life;  
the other open to earth,  
where the world answers with food for the soul.

Your asymmetrical ears  
give sight through sound.  
You cross the night  
in divine silence, within and without.

You listen beneath the surface of things,  
and what is beneath the surface nourishes.

I feel you inside  
the ears of my heart,  
inviting me to listen—  
beneath the surface of things

as I fly my life awake through Sacred Listening.

## Wake Up Sunrise

*Amba Gale*

Your rising orange red crimson yellow  
ever - changing light, in the sea,  
in the sky, startles me.  
Wakes me up to the present  
as if I have been in a dream.  
Presence comes first.  
Astonishment rushes in a brief moment after.  
My Heart next, then Wonder,  
then words of love to you.  
Bothered, ensnared, engulfed by the worries in my head,  
I have been asleep.  
Your sudden appearance and my willingness  
to be surprised, meet, and hold hands  
awakened me out of my dream.  
I am the sunrise.  
There you are. Here I am.  
No space between us.  
One.  
Connected.  
Awake.

