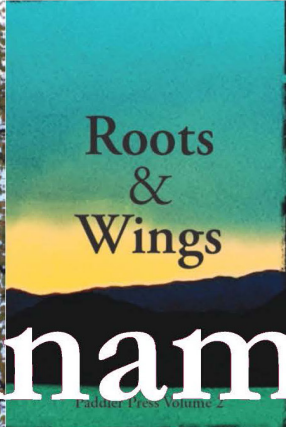




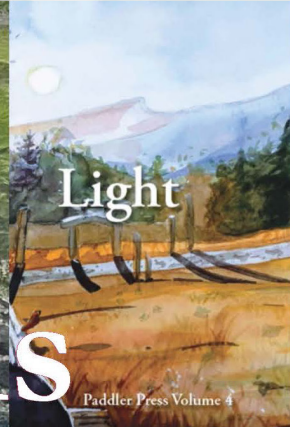
CANOE
LAKE
MEMORIES



Roots
&
Wings

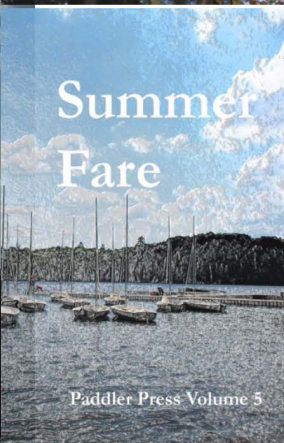


All
Together

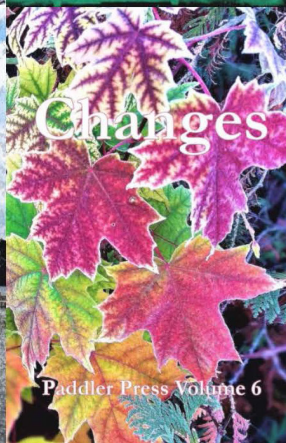


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Anamnesis



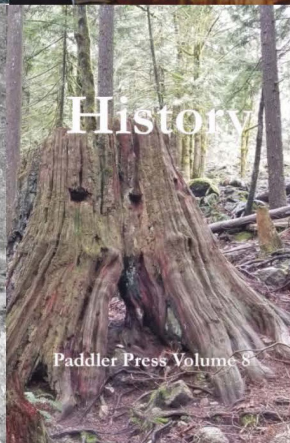
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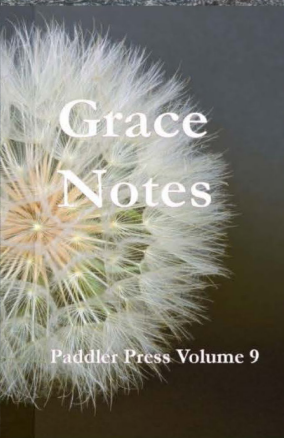
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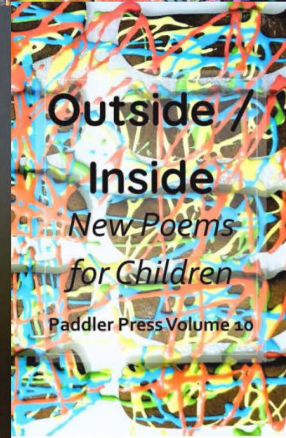
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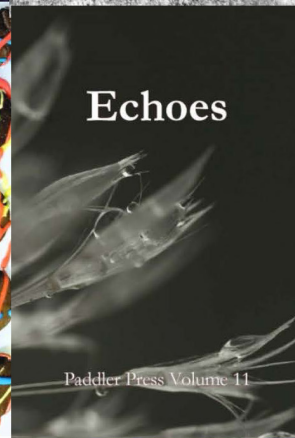
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Grace
Notes



Outside /
Inside
New Poems
for Children



Echoes



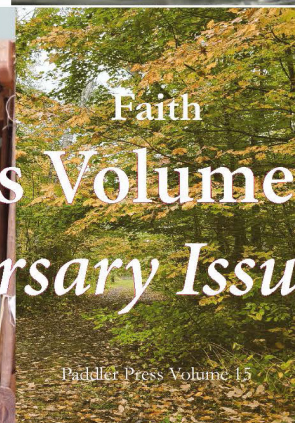
Warmth



Meditations
after Marcus Aurelius



Canada



Faith



Signs

Paddler Press Volume 17
5th Anniversary Issue

Paddler Press Volume 13

Paddler Press Volume 14

Paddler Press Volume 15

Paddler Press Volume 16

Paddler Press

Volume 17 - *Anamnesis*

5th Anniversary Issue



July 8, 2026

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Foreword

Five years ago, in the early days of the COVID-19 lockdowns, I bought a web site, logged into Wordpress, contacted my friend, Jeff, a graphic designer for a logo, created an account on (then) Twitter, and sent out my first tweet. All my life the mystery of Tom Thomson has resonated with me. Would people respond likewise? It was overwhelming. Writers and artists from all over the world sent in amazing work. What was to have been a one-off publication turned into two. Then three... And now here we are with Volume 17 - *Anamnesis*. Anamnesis comes from the Greek word for remembering or a calling to mind. This issue is full of memories and moments in time that will stir long-buried stories from deep within you as they have with me. Write them down. Send them out into the world.

Thank you to all Paddlers who have journeyed with us over the last five years. I have discovered so many wonderful people who have, sincerely, made my life a better place for having read their words and experienced their art. Running a magazine like this isn't always easy and sometimes it's a challenge. But knowing that my inbox will have generous people who support us with great work keeps me going.

In two days, on July the 8th, five years after our first ever issue, Canoe Lake Memories, was published, I will once again be on Canoe Lake, paddling toward the cairn then trekking up to the old Mowat Cemetery. This annual pilgrimage centres me within this great Canadian legend, rejuvenates me as I breathe in the pine forest scent, and refreshes me when I dive into the cool water.

This summer, I hope that you will find your place of peace and relaxation and that the poems, art, and personal stories in this issue will make that time even better.

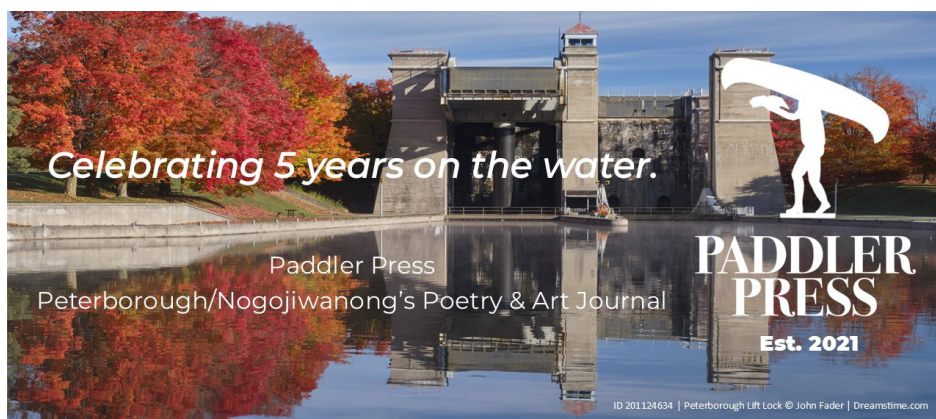
Happy Paddling,

Deryck N. Robertson
EIC, Paddler Press

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Your support of our small press is appreciated.

buymeacoffee.com/paddler

Coffee and Cake

Bart Edelman

Had a final thought,
Concerning the issue at hand,
But no one bothered listening—
Too busy serving coffee and cake.
Oh, I tried warning them,
Explaining the ominous scenarios,
What surely seemed imminent;
At least on my watch.
Yet it was fruitless,
And I had to accept the facts.
No amount of cajoling
Would convince them otherwise.
Dessert was what they craved.
To hell with everything else.
They would not be denied,
No matter the harm or consequence.
In the end, then, I was rebuffed.
Couldn't persuade a damn soul.
Grabbed a slice, just for spite.
Stumbled into the thirsty night.

Last summer

Katherine Mitchell

fireflies would fill the air. Cold glasses would rest on the back steps. You'd sit down beside me, barefooted, and tell a story about driving along the river road, the water so high it started to spill across the asphalt. Kids catch fireflies. Someone runs a blender in the kitchen. Breathless, the children scramble around us to get inside. The smallest stands on tip toes to hold the door open for his sister, whose cupped hands make a gentle firefly house. Diagonal lines from mowing have disappeared with night, but we can smell fresh grass and jasmine. We'd sip our frozen drinks, letting the icy chips rest on our tongues before swallowing. I would've asked, which constellation is that? The sky opening above our heads. And the soft black clouds of dogs would brush against our legs, then rush off like ghosts.

County Line, '98

Joshua Walker

We didn't have nowhere to go
so we drove anyway—

gas station light buzzing,
gravel popping under the tires,
radio fighting to stay alive
between two stations that hated each other.

Car should've died in August.
Made it to October out of spite.

We trusted it.

We trusted anything
that kept moving.

Windows down—
not for the air,
just so nothing stayed with you too long.

She laughed like it didn't cost her nothing.
Like it wasn't already written down somewhere
what that laugh meant.

I thought that was freedom.

Not owing the story yet.

But we did.

We always did.

Didn't matter where you parked—
church lot, dirt road,
behind somebody's uncle's place—

somebody saw.

Somebody always knew
whose kid you were
before they knew what you'd done.

We'd sit there anyway—

engine ticking,
beer gone warm,
hands not sure where to be—

waiting on something
to happen to us
or because of us.

Same difference back then.

Then morning shows up
like a witness you didn't ask for.

People look at you different in daylight.

Like they caught something
you dropped the night before
and decided to keep it.

Last time I saw her
she wasn't laughing.

Just standing there
by that same lot
like it never belonged to us
to begin with.

Didn't say nothing.

Didn't have to.

Story was already moving.

And once it starts—
once it gets a name—

it don't matter what happened.

Just that it did.

Los Angeles 2006

Michael Roque

You're just an old day
that ended in disillusion.

Venice—
the winter, 2006.
When the sun sank
over the ocean's edge,
the wind became frigid.
The beach—
dark and deserted.

The dreads, incense, crystals—
just mimicry of people you dream of being.

Peace Frog—
Live at a boardwalk bar.
A Doors cover band
costumed as characters,
staging someone else's rebellion,
we teens walked out—
vowing never to return.

poem, 20 years later

John Sweet

and you were
beautiful and i was blind and
time only ever moved in
 one direction

only ever pulled us
 further apart

Dead Sticks

William Doreski

Dead sticks in the forest rattle
back to life, dueling with us
in angry strokes. A stiff wind
applauds as little animals
titter at the mouths of their dens.

We run from the clatter and reach
a paved road. The sticks recoil
from the shock of full sunlight,
then lie down in random heaps,
pretending to lose their volition.

We can't return through the forest
so we walk around it, clinging
to the pavement. What aroused
such wrath? Maybe bulldozers
crumpling the local landscape,

extinguishing songbird habitat
and driving bears from privacies
they'd maintained for generations.
Pushing against the north wind,
we recover our small courage

and promise that the next time
we enter the forest we'll wield
sturdy walking sticks varnished
to confront, correct, and confound
whatever malevolence lingers.

I Wish I Never Grew Up

Sofia Pistol

I am from a high ponytail so tightly wound
It breathes an incessant verse of pain
From clownish crooked teeth
A montage of memories carved in every misalignment
I am from nails bitten so deep
My blood exposing a running river comprised from a thousand
worries

I am from my uncontrollable laughter echoing
As my father chased me around my favorite playground
From begging to go to the dog park every single day
Like a traveler yearning for the destination after a long journey
I am from my mom's daily packed lunches
Even the vegetables I didn't like were warm hugs
A constant reminder of her endless love and care

I am from poisonous possessive friendships
Like a venomous spiders web, they entangled me in their sticky
trap
Their influence is a camouflaged predator, blending seamlessly,
waiting to strike
I am from being an anchor in a storm, always steady and ready to
hold others up
Even when no one throws me a line in return
I am from wishing those bonds had ended differently

I am from hiding in my closet
My parents arguments are like wildfires
Sparking and spreading, devouring everything in their path
From constantly being yelled at

Like a broken record, replaying the discordant notes over and over
I am from leaving my childhood home, from everything I've ever
known
From not living with my dad anymore

I am from my stress feeling like a knot that is too tight to untangle
My anxiety is a cunning puppeteer, pulling the strings of my
composure
Now navigating unknown troubles, grappling with uncharted
journeys
My thoughts are butterflies, fluttering in a perpetual dance that
never stops

I am now wishing the past was the present
I am now wishing the future wasn't in my hands
I am now wishing I never grew up

Ghosts of the Digital Fade

Sofia Pistol

i send a message into the void

ding!

and somewhere it lingers

unseen, unfelt

waiting like a letter in a mailbox

that nobody checks anymore

delivered

these are the ghosts of our digital lives

pulsing through fiber and pixels

i press confirm on a post

whoosh!

these posts never die

with comments that echo long after we log off

i post a picture of myself

“click!”

a selfie that never grows older

a face frozen in time

frozen in a place where time no longer matters

my words float like wisps in the cloud

untouched by the passage of years

a post, a comment, a text

ping!

forgotten but still readable

stored in spaces that never forget

read

i wonder if these ghosts remember me

or if they’ve become something else

*a faceless part of a conversation
i can no longer join
reset password
i think of the posts I left in a rush
the thoughts I didn't finish
the links I forgot to follow
the friends I meant to message
these ghosts are not the ones I mourn
but the ones I forgot to say goodbye to
the ones who will outlive me
in an archive no one can delete
flicker
so here, in this quiet space
i send another message into the void
and wonder which of us
will remain when the screens go dark
are you sure you want to shut down your computer now?
if you do nothing, the computer will shut down automatically in 1 minute
59 seconds
58 seconds
57 seconds
56 seconds
Shut Down Cancel
*click!**
Shutting down now.

Rejections

Antony Di Nardo

The mango sheds its fruit like a maple
its leaves, a sure way of knowing the sun's
done its job and green thoughts scatter
at the back of the garden where garbage
is kept and sometimes removed.

There is kindness in giving. Kindness
in taking away tin cans and bottles, bags
of rejections, fruits that once burst
in your mouth when the flesh was ripe

and peels were discarded, pits unwanted.
The maple sheds its leaves like a mango
its seeds, bruised when it falls and left

there to rot, bursting its skin like bags
at the back of the garden spilling their guts.

Greetings

Simon Collinson

This morning,
a raven came
to greet me
while perched
on tree top,
nodded my way,
wishing me a
“Happy Birthday”,
I said how nice,
for the raven to appear
on my birthday,
to which
my wife replied,
“You know ravens are
a sign of death,
Happy Birthday, dear”

Poem for the girl

Carly Jo Helm

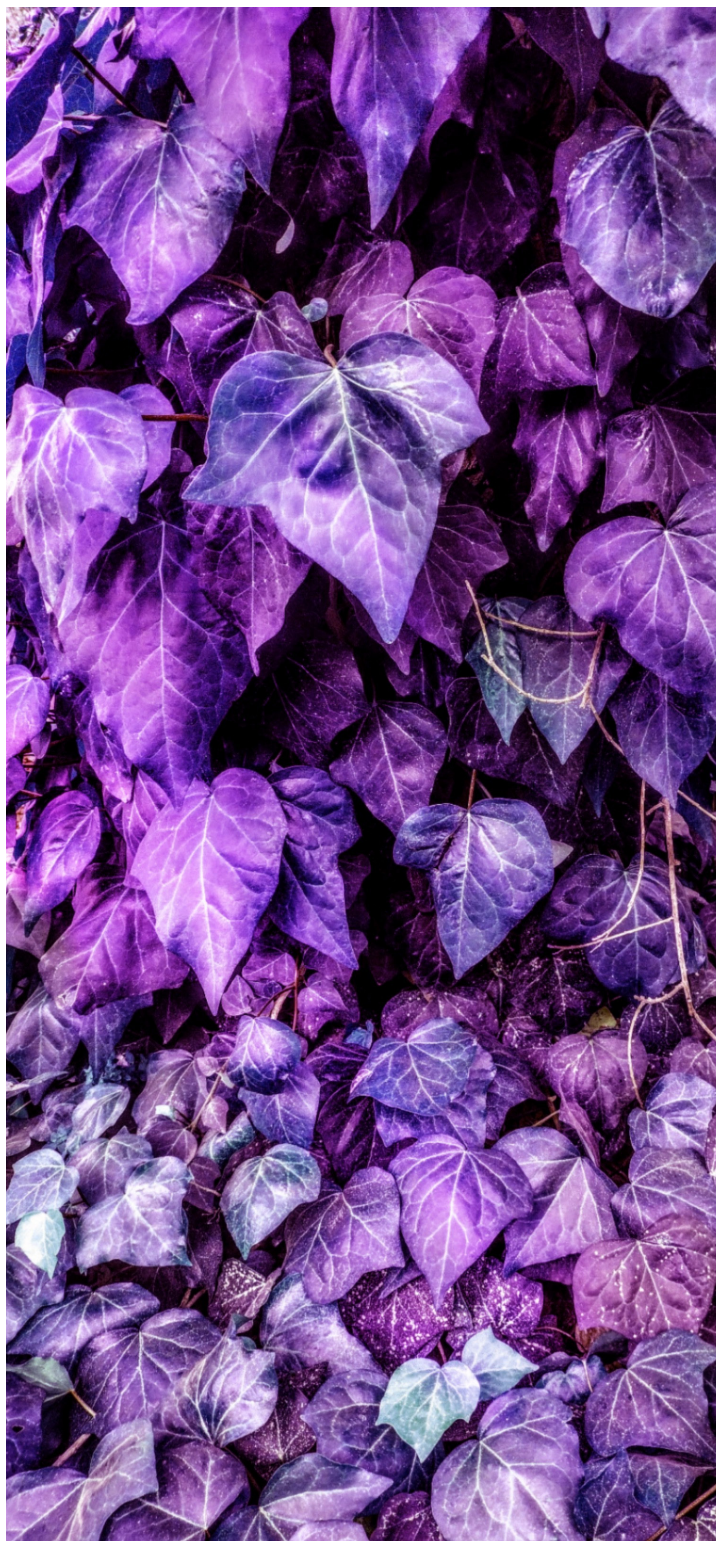
at the table who can't get a word in—
can I slide into the chair next to yours?

we're ten feet apart from each other's secrets
but so many times I have been in your seat
hands folded tightly and enveloped by silence
waiting for something worthwhile you can say

let me bring my sleeping bag and pillow
and we'll talk, if you'll invite me
into your space of safety, like when things
were easy, when we were young

we'll resonate until the sun rises in the morning
words we can't say at the table, to the girls
but our sameness is revealed
in the open, sheltered by the dark

I will lie on the floor next to your bed
for as many nights as you need me there
before we make our great escape to dreaming
and go through it all together when we wake



Midnight in the Garden by Carella Keil

My Movie Lover

Amina Alam

My Little Pony songs blasting
On your radio as we
Drove to my place
Karaoke was my final wish
Unspoken, yet somehow you knew

We sang like we always
Do, off tune and loud
And croaky, foreign to our tongues,
Yet captivated

Stepping out the car, I knew
Those corny friendship movies had sealed our fate
And we had wandered into the final scene.
The setting was staged, after all—
How could it snow in May?

Melting on our hot skin
It felt like
Rain
Damp to
The touch

Holding each other at 2 in the morning
Lamplights illuminated our weeping
Your tears were my fault
They mixed with the dirty puddles
On the ground

We took turns consoling the other
Like we always do
I froze til you drove away
Unable to turn around
Every second weighed
Heavier than all the months and years I had lived before.

It was not your fault
That I vomited onto the pavement,
My last tribute to Canadian soil,
You left before you knew.

My choice lingered with me
I thought of you across
North Dakotan fields
Nebraskan hurricanes
Iowan parks
My journal whispers your name
Over and over and over
My solace.

Our Separation

Ace Boggess

Why did you disappear from my life,
exit into shadow of a stranger land.

It was not because I loved you less.
Perhaps it was my absence:

you searched for me, took the wrong path.
Maybe it was the scent of roasting meat

that drew you into the forest
to find a satyr's barbecue.

Stars might have shifted in the sky,
misdirecting your navigation.

leading you from our castle of weeds
to a cottage made out of gingerbread.

I'm not an expert on leaving; I return
to my source like a circular river.

When you find what you sought,
whether treasure, lust, or god,

please look south to the pale horizon:
you will find me there

lodged in place, waiting
like a replica shaped in wax.

Commentariat

Sanjeev Sethi

Motion pictures and the written word
are potent,
but it's the encyclopedia
of exposure
propelling humanity
in trying moments.

Ratiocinating is for the riff-raff.
The head honcho savors
the supply reached
through rough plans and rowdy paths.
Laggards subscribe
to grifters from mass media.

Wishing for Freedom

Abasiama Udom

i.

Nineteen was the year I set out
away from mother's spell, into the freedom of the world,
ready to take the world by its tail.

I set out on my path not knowing what life would hold,
doing all, keeping friends, drinking and cussing,
when I set out, it was never to hurt
but I did for Mama called daily, pleading.

Nineteen I was, wishing for my freedom.

I set out into the world never minding the wailing storm.
Leaving home and all I knew, I reached for 'new'
needing more, beside what I was born to know.

ii.

The hens had come home to roost when I groped my way in,
it was during the season of ripened mangoes and plenty flies,
I came home, quiet, unannounced.

My coming bears stories best told in the light of day,
modules to be recited with the piety attached to prayer.

I am home, not for long will I stay but the warmth of the 'couch,

the comfort of a warm bed calls to me.

Songs from my childhood replays from memory— I know,
I am home, content even for now to watch the orange tree
dance in the wind.

Keeping Time For Mam

Anthony Wade

Always busy, you were,
as though forever chasing time,
but the opening bars of the
Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*
never failed to still you, and you would stop
with a look of listening somewhere else,
perhaps back across the wild water
before you were forced to leave.

Being young and hurrying into my future,
and ignorant that time is no more a thing
to own or possess than is a warm
summer breath upon a smiling face,
I never asked why but for this tune only
you always stopped, and stilled,
for there would always be another,
a better, a more convenient time,
a time when I would have more time,
time to spare you some of mine.

Then you were ill, and quickly
it was too late, for you died, young,
and now, as always, when the opening
swims from the speaker I stop,
still myself, listen, for you,
but never without regret,
as you did,
perhaps.

Visions

Jerrod Laber

I don't wish for death
but I have ideas
fancies desires requests
an order of ceremonies
no, not the funeral
that I leave to others

may the day be long
a day in late August
or early September
with a stubborn sun
let me upstage the melancholy
of the coming autumn
arrive prior to the leaves
on our shared journey
back to the earth

my children, my wife
whatever loved ones remain
reading to me
passages from my favorite books

shades of father's baritone
ferrying itself about the house
pleading *pietà*, Signore!
as evening approaches
and the sky slowly burns out
the draining of its color
taking with it bits of my soul
quietly, without resistance

watching from the window
the moon make its ascent
my body deserted of spirit
at its highest point in the sky

The Journey Cycle

David Anson Lee

The Put-in Hypothesis

My father said the river begins
before the water.

At the gravel edge where the canoe waits,
he lingers too long:
as if hesitation belongs to navigation.

He never calls it fear.
Only reading the current.

Years later I return alone,
and the shore still remembers pressure:
the weight of two bodies
deciding to become motion.

The water does not ask
who I came with.

Only whether I will enter.

The Grammar of Carrying

We carry what refuses to float.

Coolers, paddles, the stitched hull,
and the quieter load:
unspoken apologies,
a map we stopped unfolding.

The trail between lakes is always shorter
outside the body than within it.

Mosquitoes write brief theology
on our skin.

No one speaks until the second shore,
as if language must be set down
to cross.

Still, we carry on.

Meteorology of Names

The lake wakes gray,
as if it has misplaced us.

Wind combs the surface
until yesterday is erased.

I try to recall what we called this place
before weather renamed it.

Even birds hesitate,
unsure the sky is still permitted.

We are small here in a precise way:
not erased,
only revised by storm.

Dockside Practice for Returning

There is no correct way
to come back to a shore.

The dock remembers weight
but not identity.

My hand reaches for rope
as if it might answer
what I never asked aloud.

The water continues its sentence
without punctuation.

I stand there
trying to speak fluently
in what I have become.

Faith of the In-Between

Faith is not what I was taught.

It is the space between strokes
when the canoe still moves forward
without effort.

It is the turn of river
that arrives unannounced
and still carries me.

Not belief in arrival,
but in motion continuing
when certainty ends.

Mélange

John Muro

On its way to some distant hemisphere,
summer's left behind an exhausted
earth and temperate air laced with salt
as a chance westerly moves from
the North Atlantic landward, coaxing
disparate scents of resin, beach plum
and the palpable funk of decomposing
leaves and subterranean soil that
are now spreading like the gray-
scape of cloud that most resembles
the color of freshly poured mortar
and will soon give way to days
of watery light and mauve-blue
splendor only to unbuild themselves
into manic squalls of snow as each
yesterday begets a tomorrow and such
simple gifts of renewal could almost
be enough to heal a leaking heart
and keep it from emptying.

Nightfall

John Muro

Day's final hour wants to hold onto the receding
scents of saturated air, dampened soil and the dense
unraveling of a late-day storm as thunderheads
of plum-indigo lumber north and leave in their wake
trailing veils of showers, a half-torn sky and the sparse
glister of newborn stars, and further on, otherworldly
rumblings, eerily muted, as the wind gradually abates
combing through leaves of sweet birch and ash
revealing tiny coastal lights that appear like specks
of flour-gold while waves withdraw, pause and heal
themselves, taking sleep and light and whatever else
has been uprooted from my life with them as they draw
back from a hamlet of cottages settling like the remains
of this day into the murk and mud of an unremembered earth.

Star

Anatoly Loginov

We were in the Caucasus Mountains, quite high up. The air there felt noticeably different. I was twenty-three at the time. I was scheduled to be a teacher at the camp. But I didn't feel like one. It was late summer. I was still trying to make sense of myself — what I was doing there and how well I was doing at it. On the last night, we gathered around a campfire. It's a common thing. When it burned out, the children started to leave. Most of them had already left. And then a boy suddenly stopped right in front of me.

He was about eight or nine, I suppose. He was a quiet child, always noticing everything.

"I made a wish tonight," he said softly.

I smiled and waited for a moment.

"I wished I could grow up to be like you," he said.

I didn't know what to say. I just stood there for a second. My mind was completely blank.

He looked up at the sky and whispered, "And at that very moment, a star fell."

You actually saw it?" I asked.

He just nodded. No extra explanations, no "believe me." Just a calm little nod.

I often think about that moment. Even now. He had no idea how lost I was—and yet he chose me. Just like that.

The Woods Are Never Left Behind

Lisa Timpf

Walking in a forest, you can tell trees know things. Not in a smug way, but a real way. Things like the recipe for chlorophyll, and when the next storm is coming, and how many leaves they can afford to let go of, when the heat wave comes. And they would share these things with us, gladly, freely, if we ever bothered to learn their language. Which we haven't, though it might have saved us all a lot of trouble over the years.

The oaks and pines and maples sense the deer tip-toeing past in the night, hear the whip-poor-will. They cradle porcupines in their branches like prickly oversized bird-nests. On moonlit evenings, they stretch their arms to the sky, bathing in the wan light.

snowflakes
land softly
on bare branches

Trees know there is a time to retreat, and a time to leaf out, a time to sing in the summer rain, and a time to release one's burdens in the fall. Season follows season. Humans come and go. The deer and the raccoons and the squirrels and the woodpeckers revolve through their cycles, populations ebbing and flowing, the forest a vast ocean of life.

There was an oak I saw on my morning strolls with the dog, and I admit I took its beauty for granted. Same trees, same path, I thought, not realizing how much I didn't notice.

network of mycelia
pulse
below the surface

The life-fulness of it. Decay, rebirth. The sweet springtime scent
of the white-flowered shrubs whose name I never learned.

In our culture, you can “sell” a piece of land. The fact that the
land never acknowledged your ownership is irrelevant. The deed
may pass along, but the land’s hold on the heart does not. My
spirit still wanders those woods.

spring breeze
two dogs slumber
on the ridge

At the Feet of the Moon

Lisa Timpf

For Margo D., 1957-2008

it's raining and I'm thinking about you
at the feet of the moon or wherever you've gone—

back in high school our yearbook "obits"
playfully professed to prophesy the future

yours might have said a bright star was rising
on the horizon; you had talent, for sure,

I remember you playing your saxophone
at the coffee house in our high school cafeteria

we met, years later, at the Misty Moon
in Halifax when you were performing

with Parachute Club, and I remember being surprised
that you still remembered me

Man, I loved that music, "Boys Club" rang so true
back then, and "Rise Up" was like a hug of confirmation

years later I ran across your real obit
and I felt sad, like the rain,

and if there's something I could've done,
I would've but I didn't know

and I guess I never really did know you
like I thought I did—do we ever know

anyone? And yet, I still think of you
when it rains . . .

Turtle Soup

A.T. Williams

We are searching for pirates
in turtle soup country,
where the earth has contorted its underbelly
to uproot its dirt
and lay forth green pastures,
rolling over the land like a tongue from a dog's mouth.

This is the barely touched land
where memories of America
cling tightly to flagpoles
and red, white, and blue stars
lay faded on the road.

This is the land of dilapidated barns;
skeletons of hardworking families,
now standing as gravestones of a forgotten dream,
sagging in the hot October sun.

This is the land where a grandfather teaches his grandson how
to fish
in a pond surrounded by tall grass,
while a chorus of crickets
sings them a hymn

This is the land I drive through with my father
windows open to let in the hot, thick air.
I flick a fly carcass from the folds of his elbow
and close my eyes
while he sings along with the radio.

This is the land
of my father's childhood
where he ate turtle soup from styrofoam bowls
and sang of God.

This is the land where my father takes me
to see the pirates of the Mississippi
immortalized in statue, looking out to the horizon,
And all I can think is that it must be hell,
to always be looking across the water
and yet be unable to sail away.

This is the land the bird flies from,
knowing if she doesn't,
she will be swallowed by dust.
of times forgotten.

Skiff

Derek Jon Dickinson

“Put out into the deep and let down your nets...”

Luke 5:4 (ESV)

Fisherman—mendicant and muse. His skiff
adrift on the artist’s canvas. His yawning net
gleaning the deep;

the tackle drips, the breasthook flecked with
silver—

hand-over-hand, heaving the pleated net. In
his small rubber-harbor of shoreman-bibs
and wool. The wind thumbing Superior’s
waves, torn pages of an old Bible.

Gilded pendant anchoring his chest. And if
that should fail, two oars and some lashing
makes a fine wooden rood.

Presently, motor puttering well, chooses
a wobble pew from his straked church.

Below, the herring-ball—peened and
dented—cold-forged, like the soul, with its
shifting choices.

On the gunwale, seagulls brood like portentous
ghosts, stowed in plain sight. They lift and
scatter like bleached bones.

From land—salvor of hope—waves buoyed
with its unfurling light—the demonstrative
lighthouse casts its rope.



Event Horizon by Ellen Harrold
Digital Photograph, 5184 x 3456.

Enjambment

Derek Jon Dickinson

(formative)

Boat-less
fishermen have
tamped a path
through the wood-tick
grass;

faded price-tag
on a
plastic worm-lid, an
empty packet
of hooks.

The sagging
powerline
has collected tries
from their casts;

wind-chime of lead
sinkers and
monofilament, entrails
of unpublished
poverties.

(caesural)

fishermen || meaning me

(conceits)

And here
I am all these
years later,

sorting
through the tackle
of old words,

snapping-off
distances, retying
hooks,

casting lines
into this white lake
of paper.

(for B.R.)

East of the St. Croix

Dale Hall

Charlotte County
on the East Bank
of the St. Croix
river

a county commerce

left behind

Carman's Diner
has yet to change
it's been

twenty years since I first
stepped foot in

haven't been there in fifteen
The Facebook told me

I asked dad
What's St. Stephen known for?

He says to me, he says
Tar paper shacks and Cadillacs

The Unspooling

Layla Lenhardt

1.

Local honey on the tongue-
a pleasure we didn't earn. In dreams,
I crack open the vault where I keep your name.

2.

I've been testing my levies for years now,
watching the seams swell and stretch,
unsure which storm will break me.

3.

Some wounds won't cauterize.
They run down, slow as candle wax,
cooling into something unrecognizable.

Bowling for Dollars

Robert Witmer

He was a motorboat racer and she was one of those blonde bombshells that the magician cuts in half. Everything was hunky-dory. But that was before the pandemic. Now she sells bowling shoes door to door and he spends the afternoons texting emojis to a lion tamer in Poughkeepsie. A radio personality somewhere in Texas reckons it was the vaccine, but most people blame the weather. It rained so hard they found mushrooms growing on frogs. Some people, though, insist that it never really happened, that the lion tamer is Ted Turner's yacht and that it is Blondie's half-sister going door to door. All I know is that you just can't trust the sizing on bowling shoes.

The Drowning of the Dithyramb in the Nostalgia of the Sea

Robert Witmer

Place is the first of all beings.

— Archytas

Behold, what a full tide of terror swept over his head.
Now as we keep our watch and wait the final day,
count no man happy until he dies.

He awoke in a shroud made of sand, but he was not dead. The waves, so it must have been, lifted his body from the swelling brine and left him on the shore to die. Why? The barefoot light quickened before a playful breeze whispering above the treeless terra firma. Time stood still. Slowly remembrance returned. He had waited fearlessly for the oceans to rise and carry him away. Everyone was guilty he reasoned. Today would be the day. And so it was the waters lapped over the last step and onto his porch, climbing his body until he was afloat. Back where life once had come. And now he lay on the burning sand, clam bubbles winking at the fierce eye of the sun. Past, present, and future – froth on the final dream, mocking an unquenchable thirst for love. The chalice poisoned with chance. Bitter nature revoking the gift of annihilation. What next?

Everyone makes mistakes, but all must yield when the course is wrong. Yet not all yield. Our crime was pride. Faith in a limitless desire. Those who understood that ravaging our Mother Earth could end in self-destruction were ignored. Greed had overcome. The rich and powerful could not unbend their minds, and the mass hallucination of everlasting growth held sway.

What next?

Long ago when the circling Bacchants sung their wild choric hymns to wine and nature's free fertility, subverting the oppression of the men who called the shots, there were others of more sober countenance who spoke the same warning about the rape and poisoning of the land. Insatiable consumption shall increase an unrelenting hunger until the desperate king must eat himself. But few paid heed, and the sacred groves were displaced by palaces. And the rest is history. What next?

He lifted himself from the sand, where he wrote his name. The last witness to the dread work nature's justice had devised. Turning his back to the sea of human tears – *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangent* – he walked toward the arid landscape that stretched before him, with no hope of growth or change. What next?

*No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.*
— Gerard Manley Hopkins

* *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangent* (“These are the tears of things and mortal events touch the mind.” — Virgil, *The Aeneid* 1.462)

Chain Link

Jack Carenza

Once, a hand pressed here—
a body crossed

a hinge swiveled
a latch set

a rectangle skeletoned
into certainty
bound
to nothing:

stochastic boundary
or terminal shift?

I think of thresholds—
how they belong
to neither side.

A theorem of passage:
what welcomes us
erases us.

Redbed

Jack Carenza

Moenkopi Formation

————— IRON SIGNATURE

siltstone | ferric matrix | hematite brushing grain | anoxia recorded

index of internal strata:

Unit A: autumn 97'
firefinch petals abscise,
cuticles collapse, anthocyanin

weeping on loam,
a lean oxidized horizon.

Unit B: My sister's first blood—
iron-rich effusion,
capillary breach,
sheet-stippled cross-bedding,
domestic diagenesis in satin.

————— FAULT CONTACT *low displacement*

Unit C: At the Shetucket:
a silver Mepps spinner
lodged in gill rakers
of a Rainbow
Trout lamellae flared,
oxygen exchange arrested—

bycatch bowing to river bed,
fine sand mantling
laminar burial.

Unit D: My father's scorn
uncapped, erosive—
hatless red henna paint
can tipping,
flow overtopping lip,
a spill event coating
Tacoma bed in polymeric
slurry, incarnadine fury.

SURFACE EXPRESSION

Unit E: Each an iron signature,
 Fe^{2+} to Fe^{3+} , fixed.

I'm the outcrop—
tilted, tiled,
an exposed sequence
of redbeds.

You ask me for empty jars to make jam

Kathryn Reese

In your garden a mulberry pushes juice
 sunward
in my house the yellow rose drops petals
 counterweight
How can we live like this?
 Your fear
of too many things. My habit of accumulation.
 No, not
accumulation: I can limit myself

my protest is against letting go
 collapsing, losing all my petals
 at once
becoming only stem and hips
 no weight at all.

Self-portrait as a conditional subjective clause

Kathryn Reese

If I fill this shell with secrets:

a soft body, a muscle, a single
ligament holding two halves together; a
valve allowing an influx of ions and
the exclusion of sand—

If I home these secrets in the ocean

anchor to a rock shelf or
a shipwreck that the tide might
expose only under a new moon

If the secret is a body

only becomes a body in saltwater
growing an algae beard only becomes
when it no longer drifts when it is sealed
away from the ravaging changeable wind

Then come

prise open these clenched and sharp-edged bones
dislodge me take me
to your lips and swallow me whole.

Nurse Bertha Schmidtke of Ambleside Maternity Home

Kathryn Reese

After the 2019 textile artwork by Deb Twining.

Your portrait, projected on a curtain.

Draping to the floor. Stitches: silk.

Your figure, over seams, a little fuller
than you were ~

always hovering, as if
there were a window, a drop
of sun to bleach the cloth across
your bursting back ~

you've been so much
on your knees. Crumpled, your skirts between
the girl's feet, your hands a basket, receiving
or holding cloth to torn flesh

and later, in the gas-lit dim, your
eyes straining at your needle, working the silk
so nothing creases while newborn cries
billow in from the next room ~

and now you are silk
preserved away from sun and draughts. You
were always on quiet nights, sure
you would be summoned, if you closed
your eyes. You don't close your eyes.



Seeking Shelter by Rebecca St. Pierre
Composite Photography, 16.8" x 11.2"

Bare Meadow

Emily Von Hausen

I've never understood the fear
of being forgotten.

It's always been easiest to live
in indifferent landscapes
that could take or leave me,
frosted fields with naked trees
who keep their wisdom
to themselves.

There's a mysterious kind
of warmth that comes
with knowing your redundancy,
an odd sense of being graced
when in a world so powerful
that within it we vanish
entirely.

To live a life so rich,
so encompassing
in its gratitude
then to dissolve.

Where does it go?
What is it for?
In their charged silence
the barren plains
only accentuate
that we are not from here
and this is not where we stay.

Before we awaken

Emily Von Hausen

This is a blackout/found poem using my grandfather's favourite and most marked up book, "Earth Prayers from around the world: 365 prayers, poems, and invocations for honoring the earth" edited by Elizabeth Robers and Elias Amidon, which I inherited after his death.

All words used are from segments that he highlighted (shown through basic text), underlined (shown through underlining), or wrote in himself on pages or bookmarks (bolded). Large spaces show breaks in phrases used.

Retired at peace

I shall walk quietly in the earth's destruction waiting in the
grace of the world

May I be alone

to talk with the one I belong to
call upon our ancestors motivated by selfless compassion
Cherished unintelligible speech that rain makes along the
roads
Your soul on its way to God
We belong here before we awaken

It is our quiet time

Only music keeps us here

Changed
join, unjoin circles giving into all things worthwhile
Music, voices of this night
once with God

Now it is time to sit quiet

So remain

Wake write restlessly
seldom truly of the simple things

More and more possessions

Thick quilts, autumn comes

Moments pausing the dawn
Our meal, precious
Twenty four new hours become a holy fire

Sparkle

Tears of happiness in her eyes

Over

Keep quiet

Without rush
in a sudden shade
when not keeping our lives moving
perhaps interrupt
when everything seems dead and

Keep

Quiet

Day is now longer than night, and light has conquered darkness

Conservatory

Emily Von Hausen

One Sunday in the park
I stumbled upon a conservatory.
Its bubble filled with yellow warmth
while the windchill whistled outside,

each flower in their own little world.
After her time on a daisy, a butterfly
turned her back and the petals swayed,
a sunbeam projecting their red to the wall.
I go home to write and add another
journal to the drawer,
then light the fireplace with
an Ohio bluetip match.

After dark, alone
the night blooming cereus
queen of the night
stretches open
for the first and only time
revealing her pale body
to the darkness

The woman on my wall
in the photo of the painting
with fading ink
loses her ring

All of us
savouring
and momentarily free

in the sake of being
the beauty
of unseen
not quite gone
not quite here

The next day at opening time
the school children pour in.
I brew my coffee
and together, we miss

the light stain on the wall
a soft scent of rose
ghost image of diamond
on glass



Notes one morning

Sam Calhoun

The night sifts through my hands—
Leonids like loose dirt around strawberries
transplanted, cursing drought.

Remnants of cotton glow, these
tongues of fog unfurling
like the paper morning,

how a little wind catches a corner,
dances to the next section
and back again.

See the buntings, the starlings
in their flash dance of blue green
like peripheral auroras,

and the cardinal at the birdbath
every sip a salutation to the sun--

Chores

Sam Calhoun

Waking at four thirty a.m.
not to watch the low

stratocumulus folding
the night up in long strips,

or the birds,

all morning folding wings,
flushed red from nipping berries—

inside, the laundry rests,
pressed like puff pastry—

Spam Call

Niles Reddick

When I was young, we had a yellow rotary phone affixed to the kitchen wall. It was a newer phone, had a plastic rotary dial, and wasn't a workout on the fingers like my grandparents' black rotary phone of steel that was as heavy as my grandmother's cast iron skillet. Calls to relatives or friends in adjacent counties cost long distance charges in addition to regular local charges, monthly phone rental, and phone line rental. Rural friends who lived out of town had party lines, and for deviants, we were careful what we said over the phone (like who was meeting up at the river and bringing beer) because neighbors listened in on calls and reported back deviant behavior to parents.

I begged and convinced my parents to rent a blue streamline push button phone for my bedroom, so I could be more deviant, close the bedroom door, and my siblings couldn't eavesdrop while my brothers played with Matchbox cars on the hallway floor and my sister and I had imaginary conversations with a Miss Beasley doll. When I went to a friend's house in an adjacent community for a sleepover, I called "collect" back home (meaning my parents would pay for the charges) with the assistance of an operator. The operator said to one of my parents when they answered, "Collect call from Kevin," and one of them responded, "We don't know a Kevin" and the operator ended the call, but my parents knew I had made it to my destination, and they didn't incur extra phone charges.

Today, most people have given up home phones in exchange for cell phones whether prepaid ones purchased at box stores or monthly charges from a cell carrier, and while there are no more party lines, it seems our technology somehow listens like those nosey neighbors, and ads or spam mysteriously appear.

After watching a Netflix series about turn of the century Lon-

don gang activity, I had a message on my cell from a Sgt. at our local Sheriff's department wanting to discuss gang activity. I wondered why the deputy would want to talk with me. I didn't know anything about gang activity. It worried me all night. I conjured multiple scenarios and even had dreams about gang activity. My adult children had somehow been duped into gang activity, had lost their jobs, and needed to move back home to sponge off of me. Some of my neighbors were involved in gang activity, the deputy wanted me to spy, and low riding old cars circled my house riddling brick with gunfire and obliterating most of our potted plants. The third scenario was that some of the homeless and food insecure folks I served downtown as a volunteer were involved in gang activity and planted bombs in the store room that narrowly missed ending my volunteerism.

The next day, I called the Sheriff's department and asked for the deputy with the same last name as the one in my text. Fortunately, she answered and clarified she didn't have the same first name on the text I received. She didn't laugh at me, but she did tell me to block the caller, that it was spam, and they would likely call again. I felt pretty dumb but also relieved, waited for the next ad or spam to lure me into their web of deceit, and wondered how these people made a living. It seemed similar to the prank calls we made with our old rotary telephones when our parents weren't around:

"Hello?"

"Is your refrigerator running?"

"Why, yes, it is."

"Then, you better go catch it."

Though the victims of our silly pranks did not have caller ID then, they were suspicious of neighborhood children even though they still bought bottles of vanilla, chocolate bars, or poinsettias we sold door to door to raise money for various school projects.

The Last Fruit

Sean Bates

Every robin in the neighborhood,
every red robin in the valley,
 and their robin lovers
who are also robins,
all flitted to our apple tree,
our “Ornamental” apple tree
 says the sanctimonious voice in my head,
 the voice sounds like my voice.

But it still has fruit
even now

 I argue back.
In the ice-rain hellscape grey and grey
curtain of fog, which is also grey,
clings to abundance,
even an ornamental abundance
of showy dirty-red hues, of little marble fruits of fire
that bite hard as stone.

One afternoon after sweaty gardening and raking and raking,
you and I had front-tooth-bitten in and chewed some.
For one must taste all the fruits of their
ornamental apple tree
 planted by previous owner
 whose children
 buried plastic bricks
 revealed in turned soil.
But
the ornamental apple did
 not taste
 bad

or that
good.
We had to try.
We had to taste
the dignity of this little fruit.

But the robins, the robins, the robins
red chests gathered in our red tree on fire
to the winter eye,
a torch in the window or a message
from a mourned or from a desired season
at all ears with a cupped hand

whispering a secret:
“This
too
shall pass.
So just
hold on,
everyone,
hold on.”

This was the best day
the robins had
had in months.
A day which did include me
lucky to be
at the kitchen sink window washing dishes
in the nick of the afternoon.

While they feasted of the last fruit
at the last lingering autumn table,
I spied on
or witnessed
or attended
and listened.

Lunch Swim

Sean Bates

Sometimes if we worked
dinner shift,
the one last night, and
the one tonight too.
Sometimes we'd catch a swim

during lunch:
a high sun o'er lullabied docks,
tables full
vacationers with "it's 5-o'clock somewhere" drinks
or a salad
or a few more drinks.

And we would swim.

Sprinting through the bar
hopping down to the gravel,
skipping over bird shit on the docks,
and with a crow caw dive
we'd flop into the skinny lake,
into the quiet underwater.
A realization of what quiet
is like without silverware
tinkling like windchimes
or bastard boats breaking wake too close:
buzzing the docks.
A quiet with a chance
to steal a look back up
at the world and my round crater of rising bubbles.

That day it was my brother,
Will Jacobs and me:
restaurant knaves or something,
bobbing in the usual bath.
I imagined this place was our cottage,
our big rich cottage
the we closed
in the winter, shuttered up
with no use for summer
furniture, summer beds.
I imagined our ritual
of coffee and booze
for a noon breakfast
fresh baked something or other with housemade jelly.

But not too much.
Too much would spoil our
day's first swim.
We laid on the dockhead, our feet
to the lake,
hoping that on the back
of this blue afternoon,
we could make some cash tonight.

Lunch customers on the decks,
on barstools behind our heads,
rattling their ice water for more,
grabbing their server's arm,
asking, "Who the hell
let these kids swim
at a restaurant?"

No Bees, No Clover

Sean Bates

My yard is a verdant flat
gallows for the balding heads
of dusty Dandelions.

These defrocked weedlings who serve
and retire as quickly as tiny town heralds who hold
powder wigs in the wind
or loose white umbrellas in a gale.

The bees, they stumble
to each weedy deathbed
reassuring with a stroke
and don't-you-worry.

But it's the bees we're killing
in our latest list of blame
when the cities come down teetering,
a final flap buzzes
and downs
that last bastardly wall at Jericho,
the bees, the clover:
the last years of honey open
to an era of receding green,
of creeping blight,
of spare window boxes, postage stamp sized gardens
before a pure erasure
of what it was
to bloom.

Except for Dandelions
in my gut I know

that they'll come trumpeting and cheerful
as dooms-day-warners
the very day after they get it right.
Once frizzled prophets,
now empyrean, lionized, yellow monarchs
come to rightfully reclaim what's theirs.

For now, I stand in my backyard cornered
by weedy golden ambush.
With glee,
I kick their heads off
in high-stepping
marching band strides.

Together

Jonathan Moskaluk

Cross-legged on the city-print play mat,
we were King Kongs with baby teeth.
Towering over us, she presented
in her two hands, two sheets of paper:
one tight wad, palmed;
one flat white flag, dangled.
By the time she asked the class,
I was way ahead of her.

*If I drop these together, who thinks
the crumpled one will hit the ground first?*
Hands shot up with an audible snap—
like soft brains in crisp uniforms—
but I knew the trick:
you use the flat piece as a hoverboard
to slow the ball's descent, and the ball
never touches the ground.

Who thinks the flat one?
I blasted my hand into space,
half expecting a smirk, or wink,
but her eyes were empty like the others,
and I questioned whether she even knew
anything at all.

She did not drop them *together*,
but she did drop them *at the same time*,
and I watched that sad sheet pendulate—
each swing, each second drawn out
as it rode the collective peanut butter breeze
across the city, and landed somewhere
in the back of my throat.

I felt the semi-circle tighten,
saw the room for the first time, strangled
by a strip of alphabetized images:
Apple, Banana, Cat, Dog—
the whole world,
sick with simplicity.

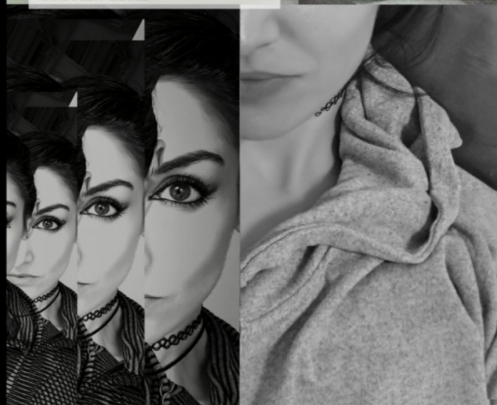
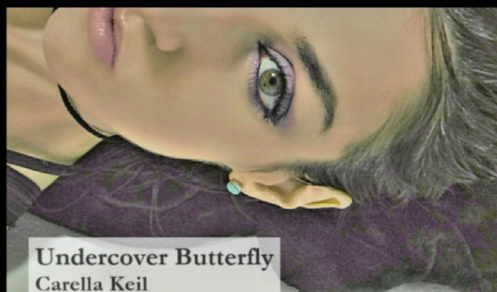
Three Reasons for Shouting *HULK HOGAN!*

Jonathan Moskaluk

One! To create an opportunity
as she glued her back to the carpet—
feet and tailbone a triangular base,
a pyramid of tibia and femur,
a capstone of knees—
an opportunity
as small as my clavicles,
wrapped in Skeletor pajamas,
to slam suddenly against her.

Two! As an incantation
to summon his strength,
to muster the oily muscles
needed to tackle and press
granite patellas to the ground
like a mousetrap,
and to hold them there—
to hold them—
for a count of

Three!
And because humour—
even during times when
her strength meant her survival—
has always made her weak.
Because a body, trembling
deeply with resistance,
can also tremble
with laughter.



*NEW BOOK
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Every poem a chrysalis

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Contributor Biographies

Amina Alam is an undergraduate student studying Health Sciences and writing enthusiast discovering new mediums. Her interests rest in medicine and serving underprivileged communities, public health and pursuing systematic change for health in societies, chemistry, and the arts. She aspires to intersect storytelling and advocacy as a medium for change and self-exploration.

Sean Bates is a poet and educator in Western Massachusetts by way of Upstate New York. He earned his MFA in poetry from UMass Amherst. His work examines family, labor, and inherited obligations. His poems appear in *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Stone Canoe*, *Rising Phoenix Review*, and *What Saves Us: Empathy and Outrage in the Age of Trump*, edited by Martín Espada. He is co-editor of *Naugatuck River Review* and lives in Easthampton, Massachusetts, where he serves on the public library's board of directors. Sean is an adjunct professor who teaches writing and poetry. substack.com/@seanjbates bsky.app/profile/seanjbates.bsky.social

Ace Boggess is author of eight books of poetry, most recently *Tell Us How to Live* (Fernwood Press, 2025) and *My Pandemic / Gratitude List* (Mōtus Audāx Press, 2025). His writing has appeared in *Indiana Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Hanging Loose*, and other journals. An ex-con, he lives in Charleston, West Virginia, where he writes, watches Criterion films, and tries to stay out of trouble. His first short-story collection, *Always One Mistake*, was recently released from *Running Wild Press*.

Sam Calhoun is the author of six chapbooks. His work can be found in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Cosmic Daffodils*, *Eratos*, and *Cold Moon Journal*. He is a frequent contributor to local NPR station WLRH's The Sundial Writers Corner. He lives with his wife in Elkmont, AL.

Jack Carenza is a South Florida-based copywriter whose lyrical work explores memory and history as they move through time and space. His poems carry a keen attention to sound, shaped by years as a hip-hop artist. Jack's work has appeared in *Lacuna Journal of Historical Fiction*, *Constellations Journal of Poetry and Fiction*, and *Inscape Literary Journal*.

Simon Collinson is a ND writer from England. He is a member of the All Seasons writing group. He will be publishing a collection of contemporary Gothic poetry later this year..

Derek Jon Dickinson is a writer living in Minnesota. A man of letters, a man of the pickup—drafting poetry and prose from his F150. He’s traveled the world extensively, thumbing his worn copy of Hill’s *Broken Hierarchies*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Transformations: An Oxford Flash Fiction Prize Anthology* (UK), *New Ohio Review*, *The Manhattan Review*, *Poet Lore*, and elsewhere. He is currently working on his first full-length collection: *Weathervane—Poetry & Lyrical Short Prose*.

Antony Di Nardo is the author of seven collections of poetry. His latest, *Forget-Sadness-Grass* (Ronsdale Press 2022), was a CBC Books poetry pick and his poem, “Among the Boughs,” first published in *The Fiddlehead*, will be appear in *Best Canadian Poetry 2027*. His work can be found in journals and magazines across Canada and internationally. He was born in Montreal and lives in Cobourg, Ontario.

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. His most recent book of poetry is *No Vacancy* (2025). He has published three critical studies, including *Robert Lowell’s Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals.

Bart Edelman’s latest poetry collections include *The Geographer’s Wife*, *Whistling to Trick the Wind*, and *This Body Is Never at Rest: New and Selected Poems 1993 – 2023*. He has taught at Glendale College, where he edited *Eclipse*, a literary journal, and, most recently, in the MFA program at Antioch University, Los Angeles. His work has been anthologized in textbooks published by *City Lights Books*, *Etruscan Press*, *Harcourt Brace*, *Longman*, *McGraw-Hill*, *Prentice Hall*, *the University of Iowa Press*, *Wadsworth*, and others. He lives in Pasadena, California.

Dale Hall is a poet and songwriter from Paris, Ontario. He writes about the ordinary moments that contain everything — wet grass, worn shoes, foggy mornings and the quiet weight of fatherhood. His work appears on his Substack, *Calloused and Calm*. He has never been published in a Literary Journal, but his work has appeared on *The Peak*.

Ellen Harrold (She/Her) is an Irish artist, writer and editor-in-chief of *Metachrosis Literary*. She uses painting, drawing, text, and textiles to explore anatomy and physics through creative abstraction. She has exhibited her art with the Irish Museum of Modern Art (Earth Rising, 2024), Lido Stores Margate (Memento Amoris, 2026), and An Stiúideo (Soilsiú, 2025). She

has also recently published art in *The Storms*, *An Áitiúil*, and *Orion*. She has published poetry in English and Irish in *Shearsman*, *The Pomegranate*, and *Channel*. She has a website: ellenharrold.art, an Instagram: @ellenharroldart, and a Bluesky: @ellenharrold

Carly Jo Helm is a multi-genre writer from Dallas, Texas. Their work has been published in *JADE & COMPASS*, *Nomadology Review*, and *redrosethorns journal*, among others. They are also an editor at *Tabula Rasa Review*. Find them on Instagram at @carlyjohelmwrites.

Carella Keil's debut poetry collection, *Undercover Butterfly*, is available from *Dark Thirty Poetry Publishing*. She is the 2023 *Door is a Jar* Writing Award winner in nonfiction and the Fall 2025 *Cardinal Sins* first-place award recipient in fiction. She has received multiple nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, and is the featured artist for the Fall 2024 issue of *Blue Earth Review*. Her art appears on the covers of over a dozen literary journals. IG: @catalogue.of.dreams | X: @catalogofdream

David Anson Lee is a physician, philosopher, and poet based in Texas. He trained in medicine at Boston University and the Mayo Clinic and has maintained a parallel practice in literary writing focused on memory, perception, and ethical attention. His poetry explores the intersection of clinical observation and lived experience, often through themes of landscape, migration, and transformation. His work has appeared in numerous literary journals including *Right Hand Pointing*, *Eunoia Review*, and *Ink Sweat & Tears*, among others. He continues to write at the convergence of science, narrative, and contemplative lyric inquiry.

Layla Lenhardt is the author of *Mother Tongue*, *Mainstreet Rag* 2023. She has been published in *Rust + Moth*, *Prairie Schooner*, and others. She has received her MFA from IU and is a gemologist and harpist. www.laylalenhardt.com

Jerrold Laber is an Appalachian writer and poet, and a previous nominee for the *Pushcart Prize*. He lives in Virginia with his wife, son, and dog.

Anatoliy Loginov is a writer and psychologist based in Saint Petersburg, Russia. His work appears or is forthcoming in *Asymptote*, *Rowayats*, *Space and Time Magazine*, *DNDP Quarterly*, *The Rome Review*, and *Folklore Review*. He writes about memory, attention, and the fragile architectures of the self.

Katherine Mitchell lives in St. Louis Missouri near the Meramec River. Her poetry appears in *Cloudbank*, *december*, and *The Southern Review*. She has a background in dance and has taught movement classes for writers. Her website: katherinemitchell.us

Jonathan Moskaluk lives with his wife and cat on the West Coast of Canada where he's always a few steps from a forest, a short drive from a beach, and a lifetime away from writing everything he'd like to write. He's a *National Magazine Awards* nominee, a *Hybrid Grain Contest* prize winner, and his work has been published (or is forthcoming) in *Best Canadian Poetry 2027*, *The Malabar Review*, *Grain*, and elsewhere.

John Muro is a resident of Connecticut and the author of three volumes of poetry. His most recent collection, *A Bountiful Silence*, was released in the fall of 2025. John is a four-time *Pushcart* nominee, a two-time *Best of the Net* nominee and a *Grantchester Award* recipient. His work has appeared in *Acumen*, *Belfast Review*, *Sky Island* and elsewhere.

Sofia Pistol is a 17-year-old writer from Toronto. Her poetry explores emotion, identity, memory, and human connection, often finding meaning in the quiet details of everyday life. She is currently developing her voice as a poet and sharing her work with a wider audience.

Niles Reddick writes from his home at Cherokee Lake in the Appalachian Mountains and is author of a novel, four short fiction collections, and two novellas. His work has appeared in over forty anthologies and five hundred pubs including *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *Bending Genres*, *Citron Review*, *Midway Journal*, and *Vestal Review*. facebook.com/niles.reddick.9 Instagram: nilesreddick@memphis.edu www.linkedin.com/in/niles-reddick-0759b09b/

Born and raised in Los Angeles, **Michael Roque** began writing poetry and prose while studying at Pasadena City College. He has been based in Tel Aviv since 2013. He is the author of *Writing to a Raid Siren* (Pomegranate Press). His work has appeared in literary journals including *North Dakota Quarterly*, *The Queen's Review*, *The Roanoke Rambler*, *Poetry Super Highway*, and *BlazeVOX*. Instagram: [@roquewrites2009](https://www.instagram.com/roquewrites2009)

Sanjeev Sethi is an award-winning poet who has authored eight poetry collections. His poems have been widely published and he has served as a judge in poetry competitions (*Wood Rose Spiritual Poetry Prize*). He edited *Dreich*

Planet # India, an anthology for *Hybriddreich*, Scotland and in 2025, *Fictile Feelings*, a poetry special for *The Hooghly Review*. In 2026, he was the guest curator of the India Edition of *The Candyman's Trumpet*. Sethi is the joint winner of the *Full Fat Collection Competition-Deux*, organized by the *Hedgehog Poetry Press*, UK. He lives in Mumbai, India. X: @sanjeevpoems3 Instagram: sanjeevsethipoems

Rebecca St. Pierre is a Canadian photographer, digital composite artist, writer, and poet. Nature is her muse and mentor. Her visual art has been juried into five exhibitions at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and published in such publications as *Blank Spaces Magazine*, *Unearthed Literary Journal*, and *ON Nature Magazine*. To see more of Rebecca's work, visit her website "Word Flight and Light", and follow @rebeccamstp on Instagram and Bluesky.

John Sweet sends greetings from the rural wastelands of upstate NY. He is a firm believer in writing as catharsis, and in compassionate nihilism. His published collections include *No One Starves in a Nation of Corpses* (2020 *Analog Submission Press*) and *Not Everything is About You* (2024 *Apathy Press Poets*).

Lisa Timpf is a retired HR and communications professional whose poetry has appeared in *Eye to the Telescope*, *Star*Line*, *Triangulation: Seven-Day Weekend*, and other venues. Lisa's speculative poetry collection *Cats and Dogs in Space* is available from *Hiraeth Publishing*. You can find out more about Lisa's writing projects at lisatimpf.blogspot.com/. Lisa is also on Bluesky: @lisatimpf.bsky.social.

Abasiama Udom is a creative who spends way too much time daydreaming of her future library, Camp Nou and plantain. She keeps up with the world via X @abasiamaudom.

Anthony Wade, the only child of Irish migrant parents into London, was educated in England (graduate lawyer with a Masters Degree) but spent most of his career in The Netherlands before coming Home to his Mother's county of Cork in 2008 to settle just ten miles from where he spent childhood summers. He joined Midleton Writers Group in 2016, and published a first poem in 2018. Now a *Forward Prize* nominee his poetry has appeared in print journals in Ireland, across Britain, Spain, India, the USA and Canada (including *Paddler Press*), and more widely online. Facebook. anthonywadepoet

Joshua Walker is an independent poet from Oklahoma City known online as “The Last Bard.” His work has appeared in *Potomac Review*, *Poetry Scotland*, and *Mid Atlantic Review*. With over 300,000 followers across platforms, his poetry explores working-class Americana, memory, grief, and mythic modern life through emotionally direct, image-driven narratives. Instagram/Threads: @bigjosh84 Bluesky: @bigjosh84

A.T. Williams (She/Her) is a midwestern writer who works across many fields, including poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and zine-making. She is currently studying English Education at Illinois State University, where she founded and now runs the ISU Creative Writing Club, as well as serves as the Poetry Editor for ISU’s literary magazine, *Euphemism*. Williams tries to capture the minute, mundane, and surreal in her work while also portraying the intricacies and simplicities of life in the Midwest. She is currently working on a collection of poems about her experience with chronic pain and the medical field.

Robert Witmer has resided in Japan for nearly 50 years. Now an emeritus professor, he has taught courses in poetry and short fiction at his home university in Tokyo and also in India. Living most of his adult life in cultural spaces quite different from the one into which he was born has been a transformative experience, helping him to better understand himself and the world in which he has wandered and wondered. His poems and prose pieces have appeared in many print and online journals, including *The Opiate*, *Bacopa Literary Review*, and *Bewildering Stories*. He has also published three book-length collections of poetry and prose: *Finding a Way*, *Serendipity*, and *Sunrise in a Rabbit Hole*.

Kathryn Reese is a queer writer living on Peramangk land in Adelaide, South Australia. She works in medical science and enjoys road trips, hiking and chasing frogs to record their calls for science. Her works are in *Red Room Poetry*, *Temple in a City*, *Wigleaf*, and *Pithead Chapel*.

Emily Von Hausen is a psychotherapist, musician and writer living in the Kootenay mountains in BC, Canada. In her practice she works primarily with trauma, grief and legacy, and writes about these same topics. Past publications include film and theatre reviews through *Anevibe* magazine, and she publishes music through her celtic band Heartstrings.

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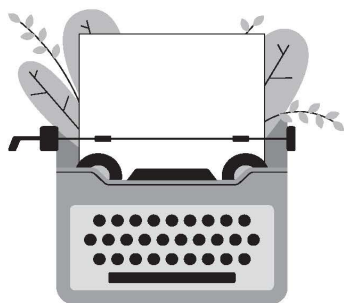
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