



All

Together

Paddler Press Volume 3

**Paddler Press**  
Vol. 3 All Together



January 8, 2022

Copyright © 2022 Canoe Ideas & Contributors

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means – by electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise – without prior permission from the editors/authors.

Extracts may be quoted on social media.

Paddler Press

Peterborough/Nogojwanong, Ontario

paddler@canoeideas.ca paddlerpress.ca @paddlerpress

ISBN 978-1-7750358-2-4

Cover Image: *Unknown Terrain* by Julie Francey

Back Cover Poem: *Circulation* by Richard Leise

Printed in Canada by DigiPrint

digiprint.com



*Unknown Terrain* by Julie Francey  
12" x 36" x 2" Mixed media on canvas

From The Weather Series 2021.  
Painted in midst of order and chaos.

Julie Francey is an Abstract visual artist who is versatile in multiple mediums. She moves between the two worlds of realism and abstraction with an understanding of compositional form that is present in all of her work. Her work is on display in several professional buildings in the Peterborough area. Julie's work can be viewed at her studio within the Commerce Building in downtown Peterborough and at [franceystudio.com](http://franceystudio.com).

Richard Leise writes and teaches outside Ithaca, New York. A Perry Morgan Fellow from Old Dominion University, his fiction and poetry is featured in numerous publications, and he is at work on his second novel. Follow him on Twitter @coy\_harlingen

*Tree and Rock, Canoe Lake*, p17 by Andrew Zahorouski

Born just outside of Algonquin Park on the York River in Bancroft, Andrew Zahorouski developed a strong value for artistic endeavours from his mother at an early age. He grew up just outside of the Park however didn't fully discover it until working there several seasons as a summer student building the "Big Pines Trail" and doing other hiking trail maintenance. Oil painting was finally pursued as well as a self made vow not to be influenced by pre existing techniques, but rather to study Canadian Art and be completely self taught. View his work at [lastcanoegallery.ca](http://lastcanoegallery.ca).



# Table of Contents

Foreword .....	6
<i>TimeSilk</i> ~ .....	7
<i>While watching baby stingrays at the Aquarium of Niagara</i> Clara Burghlea.....	8
<i>Drizzle</i> Pam Knapp .....	10
<i>White-throated Kingfisher</i> Scott Grigsby-Lehmann .....	11
<i>My Mother's Paddle</i> Cindy Bartoli .....	12
<i>To the Girls Who Became My Little Sisters</i> Kelli Lage .....	14
<i>Innocence &amp; How Ketchup is Made</i> Kelli Lage .....	15/16
<i>Tree and Rick, Canoe Lake</i> Andrew Zahorouski .....	17
<i>Bananas &amp; just once</i> Emma McCoy .....	18/19
<i>I Was a Gypsy in a Previous Life</i> Nolcha Fox .....	20
<i>From Edinburgh</i> James Miller .....	21
<i>Always an Outsider</i> Jennifer Schneider .....	23
<i>Why I Prefer to Read than Write. Why I Prefer to Write than Speak</i> Jennifer Schneider ..	24
<i>Moonshine</i> Vanessa Maderer .....	25
<i>Glass</i> Regine Ebner .....	26
<i>Do You Crush It Or Does It Crush You?</i> Julie Francey .....	27
<i>Almost Fully Dressed, Birthday Party &amp; freefall</i> Matt Jones .....	28-30
<i>My Home Tree</i> Helen Gwyn Jones .....	31
<i>developer</i> Robert Ledingham .....	32
<i>Viewmaster, what will you reveal tonight? &amp; Just Pretend</i> Cat Dixon .....	34/35
<i>Hurry Up And Wait</i> Julie Francey .....	36
<i>Hoisted by my own petard</i> Cat Dixon .....	37
<i>Friendly Fire &amp; Comeuppance</i> J. Villanueva .....	38/39
<i>Banana Fritters &amp; Packing</i> Joanna George .....	40/41

<i>it still haunts me</i> Linda Crate .....	42
<i>What Does It Take To Get Found? &amp; Woodwinds</i> Samantha Terrell .....	44-46
<i>Rapids</i> Richard Bramwell .....	47
<i>turtle, untitled baiku chain &amp; ennismore #2</i> Caitlin Thomson .....	49-51
<i>You Really Want To Show It</i> Hibah Shabkhez .....	52
<i>Grocery List &amp; End Scene</i> J-T Kelly .....	54/55
<i>The divers off the coast of New Florida &amp; Symmetry</i> Jared Beloff .....	56
<i>Daily Commuter</i> Eric Burgoyne .....	58
<i>Hello. Hi. Bye.</i> Zaynab Bobi .....	59
<i>A Country Funeral</i> David Harrison Horton .....	60-63
<i>Ma, Will You Fetch Me the Sun?</i> Matthew Hsu .....	64
<i>Confession</i> Jennifer Frankum .....	66
<i>Assumptions, Trousseau &amp; Royalties</i> Shane Schick .....	67-70
<i>forgive</i> Daphna Thier .....	71
<i>Sour dough</i> Damien Posterino .....	72
<i>At the Farm Pond &amp; Seaside Idyll</i> Byron Wilson .....	74/75
<i>A Cloud on the Ground &amp; Ursa Minor</i> Matthew Miller .....	76/77
<i>picnic</i> Jasmine Kaur .....	78
<i>in the summer of 2013, I thought I was clever for turning your absence into a visual metaphor</i> Jasmine Kaur .....	79
<i>Observatory &amp; On being elderly</i> Delilah Brumer .....	80/81
<i>The Power of Silence</i> Leona Boomsma .....	82
<i>Intertidal Anointment &amp; They to Her</i> Nicole Starker Campbell .....	83/84
<i>When Nature Calls</i> Jasmine Williamson .....	86
<i>Winter's Harvest</i> Mary Grace van der Kroef .....	89

# Foreword

As the work presented here in Volume 3 arrived over the last couple of months, I was amazed at the depth and breadth of what I had the privilege to read and see. It was evident right away, that no matter where we are from, we face the same struggles and the same joys, we share the same loves, and many of the same childhood memories (like looking through Viewmasters). These pieces have all stood out and have made me reminisce, smile, ponder, re-read, and re-think.

This volume opens with *Time*, a poem from Silk~, that begs for an answer in our continual searching, and closes with Mary Grace van der Kroef writing, “Life never tells you what it has in store around the next bend.” As we begin the new year and now face two of the longest months in the northern hemisphere, along with another move to online school and a partial shutdown here in Ontario, I know these poems, images, and personal stories will be wonderful companions to help us all get through to brighter days. We will do it *All Together*.

Thank you to all the contributors for continuing to trust Paddler Press with your work and for making the world a better place through your art. To you, the readers, thank you for supporting our small press and each poet and visual artist featured in our volumes. If you get an opportunity, please visit their web sites and follow them on social media.

Best Regards and Happy Paddling!

Deryck N. Robertson  
Editor-in-Chief, Paddler Press

# Time

Silk~

where did you go?  
Are you playing hide and seek  
out for a walk  
brb...grabbing a coffee  
stuck in my alarm clock  
still snuggled under the sheets  
on the highest bough I can't reach  
have you fallen, fractured  
floundering in folds of the sea  
Where?  
Are you the fingers of the wind  
feeding on our brittle bones and sins  
shedding your rusted skin  
buried along a silent highway  
Make a sound or something, please!  
Please.  
Please.

Publication Credits: *Frogpond*, *Wine Cellar Press*, *Akitsu Quarterly*, *Cold Moon Journal*, *Poetically Magazine*, *FreshOut Magazine*, and *Wales Haiku Journal*.

Longlisted in the 2021 Frontier Digital Chapbook Contest.

Twitter: @Silk73507704



# While watching baby stingrays at the Aquarium of Niagara

Clara Burghilea

I have a homeless soul. I wanted to be a nomad but charting and retracing footsteps requires some kind of commitment, a sort of joyful repetition. A rover seems to have the tough skin of a hard man around the vowels. The hem of sky belongs to the daring, I tell myself, every time I board the 2:30 am flight to NY. I make leaving my two kids behind the pinnacle of the trip, at least in the polite eyes of my elderly window neighbor. To mother is to smother at times, to morning your way through the circling Niagara aquarium, before the day becomes a rooftop in summer. I watch baby stingrays flutter behind the glass womb, all pink and lucent, tiny aliens stuck in ravioli dough. My son, the overly tall 12-year-old with a knack for scientific drawing would pencil the round mouth into a bleeding flower. His sister, her persiflage and green gaze, whispering how there should be a museum of this kind of weirdness. They'd bicker and banter with one another dragging feet across the blue tiles, and no, this is not a love letter, these kids who button and unbutton my days, are an ocean and two seas behind, it is I and the poems, who took the daily train from Penn Station to Niagara Falls, amtracking for nine hours, to roam and read, to shed and stand firm, Today, being a poet is a dangerous job, flashes the Guardian title, and though I am neither flogged, imprisoned or worse, I, too carry the sweet burden of poetry in the worn-out cabin bag, the jet-legged pores, the underside of well-written notes I am about to share with curious students who

shall kindly mispronounce my name, before they  
pin my thick accent to an imaginary map, an ocean  
and two seas back, past Danube, slightly east, down  
a mountain row, among natural springs, green woods,  
zoom in, there, second floor, two teenage stingrays softly  
breathing into the wee hours, no worries whatsoever.

Clara Burghilea is a Romanian-born poet with an MFA in Poetry from Adelphi University. Recipient of the Robert Muroff Poetry Award, her poems and translations appeared in *Ambit*, *Waxwing*, *The Cortland Review* and elsewhere. Her collection *The Flavor of The Other* was published in 2020 with Dos Madres Press. She reads poetry for various magazines and is the Review Editor of *Ezra*, An Online Journal of Translation.

# Drizzle

Pam Knapp

Driving through a melting hue  
of winter.

It's drizzling - hard.

Kids are bored and restless.

They're grizzling - hard

Like the eeking whines

Of windscreen wipes

Pam Knapp (@pamcountonwords) lives in the UK's rolling countryside of the Sussex Downs, close enough to London to feel the heat, far enough away to avoid being burnt. Optimism is her greatest asset. Her writing can be found in *Dreich Magazine*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *Owl Hollow Press*, *Lucent Dreaming*, and others.



White-throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), Varanasi, India  
Digital image by Scott Grigsby-Lehmann.

Photographed with a Panasonic Lumix DC-ZS70 20.3 MP compact digital camera with a 30X optical zoom lens and edited with Affinity Photo.



# My Mother's Paddle

Cindy Bartoli

A red canoe  
I take my seat in the bow  
And lift my mother's paddle  
We glide  
The world smooths  
Poems are written that will never see paper  
Songs that will never be sung  
But all sit nestled softly in my soul  
Until the next time  
I lift my mother's paddle

Cindy Bartoli is an outdoor solitude seeker and amateur photographer who harbours a deep-seated yearning for beautiful language. She finds poetry in the small things – a ripple on the water, a rogue sunbeam in the forest. Her natural habitat is the backcountry of any country though she calls Peterborough, Ontario home. She can be found in the virtual universe on Instagram @cbart03 where she posts random shots of places, spaces, and moments that feed her soul.



Photo by Cindy Bartoli

# To the Girls Who Became My Little Sisters

Kelli Lage

Twelve years old.

Teetering on the cusp of innocence and teenage years.

My first job, babysitting two sisters.

On sweltering summer days, I would arrive at their house,  
jumping out of my mom's cherry RAV4

at what felt like the first cry of dawn.

The horizon, still tender blue in parting from night's way.

I'd sprawl out on the umber leather couch,

often giving into slumber until the girls greeted sunlight.

Bouncing heads of brunette, ready to lunge on the day like lions.

We traveled to medieval times fighting off warriors and wicked kings,  
to save the princess.

We rode our bikes across the hushed town to my house.

Macaroni and cheese for lunch served on my trampoline,  
promptly followed by a game of popcorn.

To hear their mighty laughs in the air,

and feel the winds of solstice lean in and carry us on.

Hollering in the local pool when one of us inevitably bumped  
their head on the cement pool floor.

Ice cream and stories from their wise neighbor  
of gray hair and skin marked by lively years.

On the days where they'd rather stay in their pajamas all day,  
we headed for the computer.

*Sims 2* overtook the screen.

A performance of characters who would forget they had a dog or  
be stranded for the day because a chair lay in front of them.

We built worlds based on people we knew,  
chortling at the characters.

We'd dream of adult life and

the exact moment we would be free in this world.

At least we'd know better than the *Sims*.

# Innocence

Kelli Lage

You come into my dreams and  
I beg to hold your hand.  
Like a river, I want to flood  
through the cracked lines of your palms.  
Golden lifetimes flood my vision,  
matching the shade of your wind tossed hair.  
Oh! I reach for the days when we  
braided each other's locks.  
Your nails tugging  
at my mounds of curls.  
My fingers lost in pools of velvet.  
Beaches would brawl  
to be adorned in the color of your head.  
Honey blonde pours over your shoulders  
like a cracked beehive.  
Spotted from treetops,  
my chocolate crown decorating shadows.  
Your crown, guiding beings to sunlight.  
An era when moments were electrified  
by muddy feet and rusty bike tires.  
We are ancient now  
but I'd love to spin on the merry-go-round with you  
and catch snippets of our innocent selves,  
chuckling.



# How Ketchup is Made

Kelli Lage

He was a tomato seed,  
tasting Iowa dirt, deciding to make his roots in it.  
The red of his fruit, as deep as the blush of lovers.

She was a stalk of cane sugar.  
Skin kissed by the tropical sun,  
breathing in the taste of saltwater wind.

Farmers they each knew,  
carried them to the same grassy hill.  
Leaving their fruitful crops,  
to the glory of the sun's ritual.  
A bath of golden sky dribbled down,  
intertwining the two.

A man who was born to raise Iowa dirt  
and a woman whose kisses held sunrises  
become tomato-faced lovers.

When they sleep,  
tomatoes bloom in his eyes  
and sugar sprinkles from her fingertips.

At dawn,  
they run to the kitchen  
and drizzle their tongues in ketchup.

Kelli Lage lives in the Midwest countryside. Lage is currently earning her degree in Secondary English Education and works as a substitute teacher. Awards: Special Award for First-time Entrant, Lyrical Iowa, 2020.



*Tree and Rock, Canoe Lake* by Andrew Zahorouski  
24" x 36" Oil on canvas

This painting is of the first small island encountered heading North on Canoe Lake. With tree and rock perfectly counterbalancing each other, the clouds are a dramatic diagonal with midground trees done in an impressionistic style. Clearly an ode to Thomson.

# Bananas

Emma McCoy

groceries on Sundays/ I need a routine/ buy food/ put it  
away/ snacks on my desk when I can't get up/ Every Sunday/  
a bunch of bananas/ makes me nauseous/ I buy them/ a little  
brownier on my counter/ I like the color/ Stoplight/ green  
yellow/ brown/ I need a routine/ I watch brown bananas/  
routinely/ I will make banana bread/ I do not make banana  
bread/ On Sunday I buy/ slightly green bananas

## just once

Emma McCoy

I pick at the white linen tablecloth just a little  
and I do not meet your eyes just yet though I want to  
because I am not ready for that yet though  
we talked on the phone just last week and the most  
intense part should be over right?  
when I came to your wedding and you came  
to mine and I cheered with the force of a thunderstorm  
and your face was like the rain breaking  
and now not one but two decades have passed  
and I cannot meet your eyes because I cannot  
say how deeply I love you and the Lord  
says deep calls to deep at the roar of the waterfalls  
and I say my soul calls to yours at the whisper  
of the sidewalk corner when we walk  
to different cars and look back once at different times  
now let me say this once I love you in every way I can

Emma McCoy is a poet with love for old stories, the impossibly normal, and the passionate. Her work can be found in places like *The Crux*, *Seaborne Magazine*, and *Foreshadow*.



# I Was a Gypsy in a Previous Life

Nolcha Fox

Perhaps it's just a pressure change  
that stirs my discontent  
with What Is and longing for  
a hazy What Could Be.

Perhaps it's just the roasting heat  
that makes me want to pack  
and board a ship to Somewhere Else,  
to Leave It All Behind.

Perhaps it's just the autumn leaves  
that haunt my restlessness,  
that call me to a gypsy life  
to Nowhere to Belong.

Perhaps it's just the snow and ice  
That chill my peace of mind.  
And so I cling to you, my sweet,  
to anchor me to Now.

Nolcha (@NolchaF) has written all her life, starting with poop and crayons on the walls. That led to a long career in technical writing. She retired into creative writing. Her poems have been published in *WyoPoets News*, *Duck Head Journal*, *Ancient Paths*, *Dark Entries*, *The Red Lemon Review*, *Agape Review*, and *Bullshit Literary Magazine*.

# From Edinburgh

James Miller

Winter blew in  
from the North Sea  
to crush me against a post,  
plastered with notices  
for gigs and exhibitions.  
My left cheek peeled  
like putty from wet  
newsprint.

Next morning,  
I queued for the last  
train to London—we sprinted  
to the slick railcars.

The crowded  
cabin's rows and aisles  
blurred with adrenaline  
sweat, untended  
underarm itch.

One woman stood,  
inches from me. Drenched  
and dripping, breath raw  
with rhythm.

Slow, slow. Slow,  
slow. Held herself close,  
as a drowned  
infant.

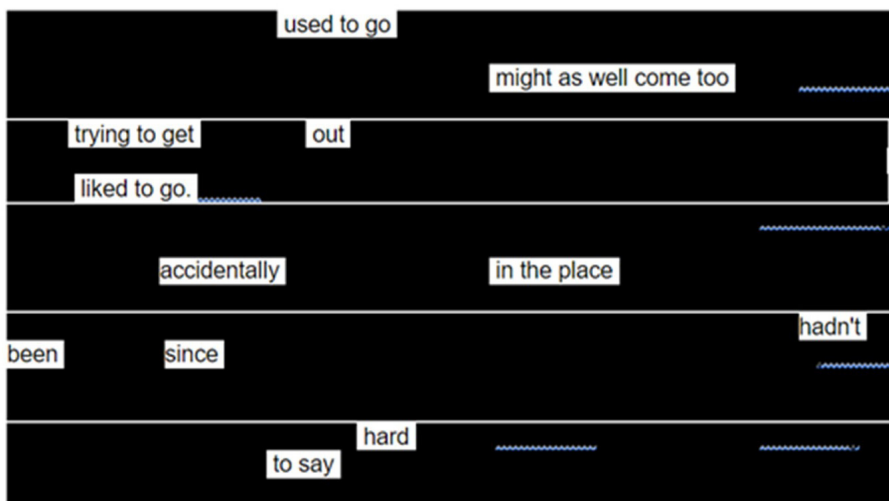
James Miller is a native of the Texas Gulf Coast. He won the Connecticut Poetry Award in 2020, and is published in the Best Small Fictions 2021 anthology from Sonder Press. Recent pieces have appeared or are forthcoming in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Scoundrel Time*, *Phoebe*, *Yemassee*, *Elsewhere*, *West Trade Review*, *Sledgehammer Lit* and *Daily Drunk Mag*. Follow on Twitter @AndrewM1621.

# Always an Outsider

Jennifer Schneider

The book cart met bail,  
and sagged more than stretched.  
I grabbed a copy  
of *The Outsiders*  
and saw myself in its pages.  
Both before & after.

## Before



Found in S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, Chapter 4

# Why I Prefer to Read than Write. Why I Prefer to Write than Speak.

Jennifer Schneider

words of [ cummings & hemingway & rankine & angelou ]  
of days & ways of errors that ebb & flow  
what could i saw that would not pale in comparison to what has  
already been said  
why would anyone listen  
words of [ ferris & frost. of poe & plath ]  
of paths not taken.  
in their text i see strength of many irons. i smell stews of many  
motions.  
i taste power of many potions. everything i am not  
plus, i've never been able to do anything right.

Jen Schneider is an educator who lives, writes, and works in small spaces throughout Pennsylvania. She is a Best of the Net nominee, with stories, poems, and essays published in a wide variety of literary and scholarly journals. She is the author of *Invisible Ink* (Toho Pub), *On Daily Puzzles: (Un)locking Invisibility* (forthcoming, Moonstone Press), and *Blindfolds, Bruises, and Breakups* (forthcoming Atmosphere Press).

# Moonshine

Vanessa Maderer

I love to get tipsy off the moonshine  
Dappling through emaciating treetops,  
Soaking reddening leaves in silver light  
Until they bronze, and it feels like  
I could pluck from above these  
Metal petals forged by gin-soaked starlight  
So strong of fuel I constantly await  
For fresh autumnal air to combust into  
Iridescent galaxies, marking the solstice  
With watercolour skies.  
And so I hold constellations on my tongue,  
Relishing the burn before I swallow them down  
And let potent cosmos blur the rougher edges of my mind  
Into moondrunk euphoria.

Vanessa Maderer was a young reader turned editor, writer, and finally enthusiastic poet who has recently debuted her first chapbook entitled, *Cusp of Dusk* after a decade of revision. Now, she has an insatiable appetite for new ideas and themes, and can be found most easily through Twitter at @MadererV.

# Glass

Regine Ebner

evening is often  
fringed with burnt edges  
from the afternoon's  
blaze

a glass ember  
that waits for  
falling stardust  
to turn fire into  
ice

and invite  
morning to  
collect the  
    scattered  
        diamonds

Regine is a Montessori teacher in Tucson, Arizona. She loves teaching eager elementary students poetry, science, history and other subjects. Her work has been featured in numerous publications including *Sledgehammer Lit*, *Black Bough Poems*, *Loft Books*, and others. The magnificent Sonoran Desert of the American Southwest is often her inspiration.





*Do You Crush It Or Does It Crush You?* by Julie Francey  
12" x 12" x 2" Mixed media on wooden panel

From the Weather Series 2021.  
Painted in the midst of order and chaos.

# Almost Fully Dressed

Math Jones

As tomorrow puts their clothes on,  
I look at all those yesterdays,  
some dressed so fine, but some,

like today,

feeling tight in outworn threads.  
Too late for them to change -  
dinner's called - and many of them

went ahead.

The wardrobe's not as full as it once was.  
There may not be much dancing left,  
but still, there might be sequins there, and

jaunty hats to wear...

# Birthday Party

Math Jones

I'll cry in a bit, 'cause after a party  
the empty room has a moment that hurts,

though threads of the warmth of you all  
still hang like smoke, and crumbs of goodwill,

so much that it spilled from the finger bowls,  
stuck on the side of my lip, and the songs

we sang are still bothering neighbours,  
I'm glad I'm not drunk enough to forget...

So, I'll drop a little tear, as I empty the beer  
and the wine, and the soft-shuffle dances,

the last kiss of the close of the door,  
leaving the room for hush and gratitude...

Same time next year? Your turn soon. How  
was it for you? Take a breath. Another x

# freefall

Math Jones

I am clothed  
by tomorrow  
as I fall  
naked  
out of every shred  
of today.

Math Jones is London-born, but is now based in Oxford. He has two books published: *Sabrina Bridge*, a poetry collection, from Black Pear Press (2017), and *The Knotsman*, a collection of verse, rhyme, prose and poetic monologue, which tell of the life and times of a C17th cunning-man. Much of his verse comes out of mythology and folklore: encounters with the uncanny and unseen. Also, as words written for Pagan ritual or as praise poems for a multitude of goddesses and gods. He is a trained actor and performs his poems widely. Twitter: @MathJonesPoet, Instagram: @mathjonespoet, FB: facebook.com/TheKnotsmansApprentice/



*My Home Tree* by Helen Gwyn Jones  
Digital Image

Helen Gwyn Jones (she/her) started recording her world at the age of 8 when she bought a Brownie camera from her sister, something which has become a lifelong passion. A collector of the past (hers and other people's) she likes nothing better than muted images of imperfection. May be found poring over Welsh grammar books when not photographing drains or going into raptures over rust. Recent publications include *BluesDoodles / Doodle Zine*, *Hungry Ghost Project*, *Free Flash Fiction*, *Acropolis Journal*, *Paddler Press*, *Blink-Ink*, *Hecate*, *Pareidolia*, and *Moss Puppy*. Instagram: @helengwynjones Twitter: @helengwynjones Facebook: Helen Gwyn Jones Photographic Artist

# developer

Robert Ledingham

memories like photographs  
taken by this big lake

you stare into  
the widening concentric apertures  
of the stone you've thrown in

I follow you  
through a hole in one  
like a viewfinder

after the storm,  
I capture a piper  
on film like a landscape still  
but the pibroch's keening's  
still playing  
in the uncut frames  
spooling on my feet

later, the bonfire  
will pretend it's a setting sun  
if the night's clear and still  
sparks will lace  
the swimming stars into  
momentary constellations  
that resemble you  
if I look long enough

it's all still promising to come into focus



a graduation of contrasts  
like our skin, weathering  
from over-exposure,  
thoughts of you  
always developing  
into something  
else

Robert Ledingham is a former Sou'westo educator with a bad hang-up for language that takes him places poetry, local theatre, music, and wild things sometimes go. Settler descendant re-learning what it means to live in the unceded lands of the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation. At 20, peeling back ignorance in Saugeen-Maitland Hall at UWO; now living by choice between those watersheds, clinging to the shore of this big water like a stone.

## Viewmaster, what will you reveal tonight?

Cat Dixon

Viewmaster, what will you reveal tonight?  
I click the black trigger so you can deliver  
reel after reel—zoo animals spin: prairie dogs,  
giraffes, lions, parrots, meercats. This window  
into their habitats transforms into another view:  
lonely kid, me, clicking through pictures of adult me—  
voyeurism—on the couch, in the kitchen, at work,  
at the grocery store, in the car alone as I race  
north to Michigan. No one wants to see that.  
Can we go back to the animals? Can we  
live lives not our own? Can the scratched reel be  
erased? If I'd known this was the result, I would've  
escaped, jumped out of the jeep, and ran  
from the group on safari, but now it's too late.

# Just pretend

Cat Dixon

Just pretend you're happy still.  
It was nice while it lasted, wasn't it?  
Little buttons in our brains pretend/  
lie that we're still together.  
People just need people. At least  
it was nice while it lasted.  
Little lies we tell people: I'll  
live with buttons forever, happy and still.



*Hurry Up And Wait* by Julie Francey  
12" x 12" x 2" Mixed media on wooden panel

From The Weather Series 2021.

# Hoisted by my own petard

Cat Dixon

Make me laugh until I crack. Tickle me,  
abandon me, wrestle me. Stage a  
roast where all my friends will join  
you to fling insults. Point at me. Go  
bowling—every memory a pin and  
every joke a strike. Every dot popped on  
the bubble wrap wrapped around my  
heart snaps against your finger. You grin.

Cat Dixon is a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee. She is the author of *Eva* and *Too Heavy to Carry* (Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2016, 2014) and the chapbook, *Table for Two* (Poet's Haven, 2019). Recent work published in *Sledgehammer Lit* and *Whale Road Review*. She is a poetry editor at *The Good Life Review*. Twitter: @DixonCat

# Friendly Fire

J. Villanueva

please forgive  
me for the things I  
say to you  
when I'm at  
war with myself friendly fire  
is just as deadly



# Comeuppance

J. Villanueva

Comeuppance.  
The word you think of  
when you know  
that you get  
what you deserve. Don't run—learn.  
Accept what you earned.

J. Villanueva is a Chicano writer/poet from deep south Texas. When he is not agonizing in front of his computer, he is building and riding his motorcycles. Currently, J. has work(s) featured or forthcoming on *Alebrijes Review*, *The Indianapolis Review*, *Gutslut Press*, and *Sienna Solstice*. He is currently an MFA student at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. You can follow him on Twitter @Jay\_theaztec.

# Banana Fritters

Joanna George

A layer of smooth yellow lump-free batter, I coat over the  
banana slice,  
that wriggles free of my hand into the bowl, like a fish sliming  
to its aquatic home.

And my memory sparks, with its dive,  
echoing our little conversation of how you loved your  
grandmother's banana fritters.

"Pazhampori"- a little sour jingled with ample sweetness of her  
love;

Like the orange candies of summer vacation,  
Sugary with a tiny splash of tart splash on the tongue,  
splattering joy, crushing that thin crispy crust of flour –  
batter yellowed with turmeric, speckled with jeera and salted  
enough.

Blended memories beyond time, sprout within each bubble  
blown,

As the banana with its yellow coat is dipped inside the boiling  
oil.

Laughing over black coffee, its 4.30 pm at least  
and we are family making all the noise in the silent  
neighborhood.

exploring the sweetness of flesh beneath the crunchy top layers  
and beaming joy enjoying every bite of this fried traditional  
banana snack - "Pazhampori" .

Ha! The taste of banana fritters, reminds family dear, like you  
said.

Love layered, and a bite oh dear a bite would always take you  
back home from universes across.

# Packing

Joanna George

I think of packing myself into a tiny bag of breathing air,  
and placing me in your lungs as an alveoli,  
as you begin packing your sweater for the cold of Canada,  
Let me be there in you till you sense an Indian chai somewhere  
in the corner  
pouring warmth and comfort out of its vessels to yours.  
Or should I pack you everything sweet and a piece of the  
moon,  
for the sour days and dark nights of strangeness there?  
But all I have here, are pressed flowers and leaves dried inside  
my pages  
containing few poems that spilled out of my coffee-less nights  
these poems that talk like you and me,  
reminds so much of us in the campus,  
should I be packing them into a bundle for an Indian warmth  
or can I send them once in every three days,  
to greet you on your doormat assuring home is never far away,  
when I can snuggle a hug across the oceans to you, from our  
gypsy home.  
Or can we simply merge the time zones into our dimensions of  
love  
while teleporting to our screens wrapping time  
until time heals this bruise of distance it made.

Joanna George (She/Her) writes from Pondicherry, India. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *West Trestle Review*, *Lumiere Review*, *Literary Shanghai*, *Mookeychick* and others. She tweets at [j\\_leaseofhope](#).

# it still haunts me

Linda Crate

i stared at the blood  
in disbelief,  
a most uncomfortable thing;

said something about  
my monthly but it wasn't that—

what was supposed to be  
spring in me was made winter when  
death whispered in my womb and i had  
to accept that bitter fruit,

and i sat there without any support  
because i couldn't tell you the truth

after seeing how happy you were  
that i wasn't pregnant i understood that  
you wouldn't handle my feelings  
with care;

and i knew it wasn't perfect timing but the  
loss still wounded me—

it still haunts me,  
that happiness you had,  
as if a weight had been lifted on your  
shoulders and given to me  
instead.

Linda M. Crate's poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published widely. She has nine published chapbooks: *A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn* (Fowlpox Press), *Less Than A Man* (The Camel Saloon), *If Tomorrow Never Comes* (Scars Publications), *My Wings Were Made to Fly* (Flutter Press), *splintered with terror* (Scars Publications), *More Than Bone Music* (Clare Songbirds Publishing House), *the samurai* (Yellow Arrowing Publishing), *Follow the Black Raven* (Alien Buddha Publishing), *Unleashing the Archers* (Guerilla Genesis Press) and three micro-chapbooks: *Heaven Instead*, *moon mother*, and *& so I believe* (all Origami Poems Project). She is also the author of the novel *Phoenix Tears* (Czykmate Books).

# What Does It Take To Get Found?

Samantha Terrell

Well, first you have to get lost.  
I've been lost many times.  
It's terrible business.  
But this  
Is a poem  
About finding.  
Ask any poet, we're told to  
Write what we know.

Speaking of things we are told,  
When I was young, and lost,  
Someone told me,  
"The world is your oyster,"  
Which was probably their (very gracious) way of  
Pointing me in the right direction.  
However, I managed to miss the metaphor.  
I was lost, remember?

I didn't know how to write  
About things like being found.  
Still, I had a good feeling about  
That oyster comment.  
So, I repeated it like a mantra.  
Mantras are soothing,  
Though they, themselves,  
Won't find you.

When I was a bit older, and lost,  
Someone told me,  
“You need to decide what you want.” And, I found  
That what I wanted, was not to want.  
So I threw off my shell, and rolled around  
In the mud and muck for good coverage,  
And I was found!  
An ordinary piece of sand,

At home –  
With all the others  
Who found  
The world  
Is not an  
Oyster,  
But the  
Pearl.



# Woodwinds

Samantha Terrell

To get away,  
Play  
Night chords –  
The ones  
Winter welcomes,  
And bad dreams  
Run from.  
Your prize  
Is my  
Palpitations,  
Water and warmth,  
Health,  
And music  
That must come up for air.

Samantha Terrell, internationally published author of *Vision, and Other Things We Hide From* (Potter's Grove Press; Arizona, U.S.A.), and the chapbook *Keeping Afloat* (JC STUDIO Press; Glasgow, Scotland), has been described as a “metaphysical” poet. Her work, which often emphasizes self-awareness as a means to social awareness, can be found in a variety of fine publications, such as: *Dissident Voice*, *Dove Tales*, *Fevers of the Mind*, *Green Ink*, *In Parentheses*, *Misfit Magazine*, *Red Weather*, *Sledgehammer*, and many more. Find her online at: [www.SamanthaTerrell.com](http://www.SamanthaTerrell.com) or on Twitter @honestypoetry.

# Rapids

Richard Bramwell

rough growth underfoot

body bearing carapace

footsteps make a trail

As a youngster, Richard Bramwell didn't know what he wanted to do when he grew up. He's still pondering. Richard lives in north-west England and his third book of poetry, *Mosaic*, illustrated by Rosemary Dring, was published in 2021. Find jottings at [www.richardbramwell.me.uk](http://www.richardbramwell.me.uk); [email@richardbramwell.me.uk](mailto:email@richardbramwell.me.uk)



# turtle

Caitlin Thomson

i went for a swim in the lake  
calm, full of life  
(the lake, not me)  
and mid breast stroke  
kicked a turtle  
imagine her frustration  
living her quiet turtle life  
not looking for trouble  
unbothered, moisturized, flourishing  
when suddenly  
some idiot comes along  
and ruins her day  
with one swift kick  
and really  
isn't that love

## untitled haiku chain

Caitlin Thomson

i am afraid of  
dying, but no more than i  
fear being alive

some days the sun shines  
too bright, offensive in its  
pure unbridled joy

the rain understands  
me better, so i wait for  
its gentle return

## ennismore #2

Caitlin Thomson

after a dinner of fish  
caught from the end of the dock  
we sit by the fire  
as a bag of marshmallows  
makes the rounds.  
the sky lazily slips into dusk  
and the cool night air  
surrounds, like jumping into  
the deep end.  
in the morning there will be  
bacon and eggs and good company,  
maybe even blueberry pancakes  
if we're lucky.  
the sudden appearance of mosquitos  
is a gentle reminder  
we haven't died  
and gone to heaven.

Cait Thomson (she/her) is a queer mama, policy nerd, and potato chip connoisseur from Ottawa, Canada. She primarily writes about her experiences with anxiety, trauma, parenting, and the natural world. Her work has appeared in a variety of Canadian and international publications. Cait hopes to see her first chapbook published in 2022. Some of her work and a lot of her nonsense can be found @cait.t.poetry on Instagram.

# You Really Want To Show It

Hibah Shabkhez

If you're happy and you know it  
And you really want to show it  
Post a pic.

They'll all come rallying round,  
Family and friends, and others  
You barely know. The popping sound  
Of their likes will send e-flutters  
Down your actual spine.

If you're happy and you know it  
And you really want to show it  
Post a pic.

You'll imagine them bad, mad, sad,  
Muttering snide things with eyebrows  
Lifted, as they coo 'I'm so glad!'  
You'll click on each 'congrats' for shows  
Of balloons and feel fine.

If you're happy and you know it  
And you really want to show it  
Post a pic.

You'll tell yourself it's digital,  
Ephemeral, not real. You'll say  
Nevermore, you'll type your 'final'  
Farewell, then decide just to stay  
For that meme-group's timeline.

If you're happy and you know it  
And you really want to show it  
Post a pic.

Hibah Shabkhez is a writer of the half-yo literary tradition, an erratic language-learning enthusiast, and a happily eccentric blogger from Lahore, Pakistan. Her work has previously appeared in *Plainsongs*, *Microverses*, *Sylvia Magazine*, *Better Than Starbucks*, *Post*, *Wine Cellar Press*, and a number of other literary magazines. Studying life, languages, and literature from a comparative perspective across linguistic and cultural boundaries holds a particular fascination for her. Linktree: [linktr.ee/HibahShabkhez](http://linktr.ee/HibahShabkhez)



# Grocery List

J-T Kelly

It's hard to guess  
how much to get,  
how much a fus-  
sy child will eat.

It's hard to spend  
all that you have.  
Appetite ends,  
but we still crave

the table set  
like a cast net  
for more than just  
the two of us.

You can't predict  
what God will send:  
angel, insect,  
children of men.  
Give what you've worked  
for. Work again.

# End Scene

J-T Kelly

A door. A bell. A stair.  
Who's there?

Go away. I'm tired.  
Liar.

I have nothing to give.  
You live.

A stair. A door. All's well  
that ends.

J-T Kelly is an innkeeper in Indianapolis, Indiana. He lives in a brick house with his wife and five children, his two parents, and a dog. Twitter: @JHyphenTKelly

# The divers off the coast of New Florida

Jared Beloff

watch the Golden Girls as an archeological reality  
before they close their eyes, splash over the bow:  
imagine the water's rush sounds like an applause line,  
their first breaths are canned laughter.

the bottom follows a grid: neighbors' lawns, faded ellipses  
of a crosswalk. Mary peers out of her garden grottos,  
her robes a billowed invertebrate, passive and patient,  
forgiving each coral's miraculous growth with an upturned palm.

stilts bear each home, swell and root like mangroves,  
inside walls display molded waterlines, each hallway a canyon's  
black strata marking time: here is when the flooding stopped,  
here the parabola that pushed Noah to begin collecting cedar,

move to higher ground. a fin swats at the water like a paper fan,  
dismissing fantasy: the lanai is empty, stares out into a blue  
that darkens without stars. the divers listen to echoes, keep waiting  
for Betty White to quip this is why we moved here gesturing earnestly  
at the vacant lot. their laughter at this depth only sounds like breathing.

# Symmetry

after M.C. Escher's "Symmetry Watercolor Bird 106"

Jared Beloff

the birds alternate	watching
their eyes down	whether we are
looking back	we are not
the pattern's part	lost as wings
locked in	the wind
there's not	an invisible force
only gravity	in our gazing
birds pushing	past the frame
desiring lightness	wanting shadows to elongate
movement	we cannot move
faster than light	our feet tucked under
no ground to land on	no ground to land on

Jared Beloff is a teacher and poet who lives in Queens, NY with his wife and two daughters. You can find his work in *Contrary Magazine*, *Rise Up Review*, *Barren Magazine*, *Bending Genres*, *The Shore* and elsewhere. He is the editor of the *Daily Drunk Magazine's* forthcoming anthology of Marvel inspired poetry, *Marvelous Verses*. His work was nominated for Best of the Net 2021. You can find him online at [www.jaredbeloff.com](http://www.jaredbeloff.com). Follow him on twitter @read\_instead.

# Daily Commuter

Eric Burgoyne

The Carrera's flat six cylinders  
scream like a tornado on meth  
race-firm suspension pounding

bumps into the pavement  
my good eye flicks between  
windscreen, rearview, blind spots

an hour strapped to the seat  
beats a week with the shrink  
few understand safety is more

complex than lack of speed  
concentration, meditation, relaxation  
processing dangers, options

desires, purifying thought  
filtering all but the essential  
entering the garage, adrenaline easing  
relaxed breathing, stress depleting

tomorrow's weightier considerations  
require taking the motorcycle

Eric Burgoyne is a surfing grandpa living on the North Shore of Oahu, Hawaii. He has an MA in Creative Writing - Poetry, from Teesside University, Middlesbrough England. When not writing, he's surfing, motorcycling or chasing his grandchildren. His poems have appeared in *As It Ought To Be Magazine*, *Brickplight*, *Spillwords*, *Skink Beat Review*, and elsewhere.

# Hello. Hi. Bye.

Zaynab Bobi

every living poem begins with  
hello. hi. bye.  
& dead poems with  
bye.  
hi...  
hello?

in my country  
every unannounced fallen body  
is a poem & opens with  
bye.  
hi...  
hello?

Zaynab Bobi, Frontier I is a Nigerian writer, digital artist and a photographer from Bobi, Niger State. She is a finalist of the Voice of Peace anthology, the treasurer Hilltop Creative Art, Abuja Branch and member of Poetry Club Udu. Zainab, is a student of Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto studying medical laboratory science. Her works are published and forthcoming in *Kalahari Review*, *Blue Marble Review*, *Sledgehammer Lit*, *PraxisMag*, *WRR*, *Anti-Heroine Chi*, *Barren Magazine*, *Typehouse Literary Magazine*, *Ice Floe Press*, *B’K Magazine*, *Olney Magazine*, *Lunaris Review*, *Rigorous Magazine*, *Salamander Ink*, *Acropolis Journal*, *Olit Magazine*, *The Shallow Tales Review* and others. Twitter @ZainabBobi, Facebook @Zainab Iiyasu Bobi, and Instagram @Zainab\_i\_bobi

# A Country Funeral (Acrostic)

David Harrison Horton

Calmness permeates the morning procession  
And the ladies are dressed most lady-like  
Retouched make-up, solemn smiles  
Order that follows a well-practice performance  
Laity their roles, the clergy one of them  
Yonder hills and sun half mast  
Now is as good a time as any

Striking differences in projected emotions  
Ushers, a most polite accompaniment  
Everywhere you look, a pastoral trope

How to talk, how we walk  
Oblige with stories half remembered  
Retold with details that can't be true  
To give comfort, to complete the ceremony  
Oblige and be obliged  
Nod slowly, a middle distance stare

# A Country Funeral (Apostrophe)

David Harrison Horton

Oh man, I'm guessing  
you won't get to Miami after all.  
I've been working on that notebook  
where I recorded our last year's worth  
of conversation.  
You are a funny old man.  
(I'm using the present tense  
because it's a living memory,  
for now.)  
I'm talking to you, so  
I don't talk to myself.  
It's better company.  
Look after yourself, wherever you're at  
and whatever that means.  
Don't worry about the cats:  
Noël is taking good care of them.



# A Country Funeral (Event Poem)

David Harrison Horton

Take a spoon from the parish pantry,  
any spoon will do,  
walk to the urn on the table  
and gently tap it  
in rhythm to any Elvis song you know,  
Jailhouse Rock will do.  
Now, softly hum along.

Remember how he hated Elvis  
and how much your mother adored him.

This is love  
put into the ground.

# A Country Funeral (Pastoral)

David Harrison Horton

You can't even smell the city from here.  
Only the squirrels go about their business,  
manoeuvring to and fro, a map surely in mind.

The trees, oak poplar and pine, seem static  
until stared at long enough  
to see their movements in wind.

They are not the grey tenement blocks  
that get more depressing  
with each and every rain.

And I think you will find a home here  
among the wild flowers that will surely sprout  
come spring and again late summer.

I do not know if you will find peace,  
but it is peaceful here,  
just you, a few others, and some far off trees.

David Harrison Horton is a Beijing-based writer, artist, editor and curator.

# Ma, Will You Fetch Me the Sun?

Matthew Hsu

Rope, golden rope, is what you use to  
snare the suns from their hiding-holes in the  
sky. They are mottled spheres, diamonds,  
blinking but not broken, rough in the palm as  
you wrap them in clear plastic. Back to  
the sitting room, where you withdraw a crisp  
machete, position the suns on an apple-  
wood board, prepare them for feasting. You  
begin by drawing the blinds, then raise  
the blade, slam it down, bang, bang, bang,  
until a pile of amber discs are dormant at  
your knees. If one should tumble astray, no  
matter; you scramble for the sun, then chain  
it down with hair pins so it does not escape  
again. Then you lay the sliced sun on a  
cracked dish, arranged like a star, or perhaps a  
dolphin, and bring me the plate. Slick,  
crunchy, threaded with bubbles, citrus, tangle my  
tongue as I remember what you said in  
Fengyuan before we left for San Francisco, my

peach body swaddled in rags: *Xiaowen*, no  
*matter where we are, I will always bring you the sun.*

Matt Hsu is a student from San Francisco, California. In his spare time, he enjoys playing tennis and eating dark chocolate. Currently he's querying his first novel: a twisty, thriller-mystery about a crafty assassin. You can find him on Twitter at [@MattHsu19](#).

# Confession

Jennifer Frankum

I have murdered  
two mice in as many days.  
Further deaths are pending.  
My feet did the deed.

I have baked two dozen  
pumpkin raisin muffins  
for the Celebration  
of Vermin Life.  
My hands did that.

The affair will be simple.  
Wear what you like.  
I suggest shoes.

Do not mention  
the former deed  
to my Quaker friends.  
I will see them on Sunday  
when I will not speak  
a word of it.

Jennifer Frankum is a retired high school teacher of English, Creative Writing, Parenting, ESL and Special Education. She has two poetry collections, a poetry chapbook, and a picture book for toddlers in print. In 2019 she was co-winner of the William Wilfred Campbell Poetry Contest, and in the summer of 2021 she took 3rd prize in the K. Valerie Connor Poetry Competition.

# Assumptions

Shane Schick

Bring my lips towards hers  
and she'll bring hers towards mine.  
Turn the tap to the right  
and the reservoir will respond.

Let this foot fall, then the next,  
and the puddled pavement  
will document the journey  
with its temporary tracing.

It'll be up to me to take  
the compost bag outside.  
The mailbox's unoiled hinge  
will screech around 2.

We won't wake up to a war  
tomorrow, at least not here.  
The sun will resist temptation  
to break from its routine.

The kids won't die before we do.  
We'll stay married forever.  
The roof will need reshingling  
right when the money's tight.

The universe was created for a reason,  
and behind the night's tapestry  
of dying stars is a proof of work  
beyond our scope to review.

I'll eventually be forced to recognize  
which truths are drafts, subject to revision.  
But I can put off the editing for now.  
I still have time.

# Trousseau

Shane Schick

Scratched as it has now become,  
Mom's hope chest sits in the basement,  
long emptied of dishes, quilts  
or whatever else was once involved  
in the unboxing of an adult life.

Take out the kids' old costumes,  
the forgotten toys and stray shoes.  
No more need for a dowry  
to take up these dimensions,  
but is there capacity to preserve

in cedar scent your satisfied smile,  
the feel of your fingers in my hair  
and more that might fortify me  
amid waiting to meet the future  
to which we've been betrothed?



# Royalties

Shane Schick

Originality was never the issue;  
Who cared if the song was a cover  
whose popularity had eclipsed  
the earlier version so fully  
it was lost in deafening shadow?

When I first heard the first one, though,  
I felt like I'd accidentally bumped  
into the surreality of Santa  
after getting comfortable in the lap  
of some guy in a red suit at the mall.

But there was also a sense  
of confusing chickens with eggs;  
that the original was a tribute,  
a faintly visible reflection of itself  
that only the cover could have cast.

I looked back at my kids in the car,  
hearing their renditions of my  
wisecracks, their interpretations  
of my idioms. It's true: no one will ever  
hear my music at its best from me.

Shane Schick is the founder of a publication about customer experience design called *360 Magazine*. He lives in Whitby, Ont. with his wife and three children. More: [shaneschick.com/poetry](http://shaneschick.com/poetry).  
Twitter: @shaneschick

# forgive

Daphna Thier

to find stillness in movement  
to find breath where there is no air  
to find quiet within the thunder  
to forgive the unrepenting  
to let the guilty die peacefully and unaware.

Daphna Thier is a writer and activist based in Brooklyn, NY. She is a mother, a bartender, an actress as well. She writes short stories and dark-comedies with an air of optimism about our dystopian life and class inequality. Her poetry, like her darkest thoughts, deal with trauma, grief and mortality.

# Sour dough

Damien Posterino

The snake queue hisses  
when men in starched aprons  
unlock their freshly lacquered doors -

a new weekend is here.

The first sale for the organic butcher  
2 filet mignons like fat ripe plums.

A conga line of latte sippers  
spend all their money  
on veal shanks and corn fed chicken  
for tonight's dinner parties  
of Osso Buco and Coq au Vin.

Pippa's pop up bakery  
slides another sourdough loaf  
inside a spit-shined paper bag;

A thirty-something man drops a bundle  
of asparagus.

The street bursts into millennial song  
of upwardly mobile chat and hipsters  
parading in front of virgin dwellings  
with their red ribbons freshly cut;

The oily waft from fried chicken shops  
has long blown away  
with crumpled betting shop tickets;

An Asian dry cleaners and old boozer  
is being boarded up  
as another clump of cladding  
gets ready to give birth.

The rough sleepers have seen it all before.  
They camouflage in hidden cavities,  
chameleons medicating so everything disappears.

Damien Posterino (he/him) is a Melbourne-born poet writing in Mexico. His poetry explores themes of characters, commentary, and capturing moments in time. He has been published in recent editions of *Fiery Scribe*, *Neuro Logical*, *Analogies & Allegories Literary Magazine*, *Abergavenny Small Press*, *BOMBFIRE*, *Jupiter Review*, *Fairy Piece*, *Poetic Sun Journal*, *Green Ink*, *Zero Readers*, *Melbourne Culture Corner*, *Sledgehammer Lit*, and *Rough Diamond*. You can find him on Twitter @damienposterino

# At the Farm Pond

Byron Wilson

We were just children,  
No matter how bold  
We felt alone together  
There at the water's edge.

We chased frogs instead.

And after  
We collapsed  
In the knee-high grass,  
Panting and almost hidden,  
Adoring each other  
And life in a way  
That only exists  
Before desire and pain  
Take root.

As if it would always be  
Simple like this.

# Seaside Idyll

Byron Wilson

The pulse and peel  
Of the shore break hush  
And the troubled water  
Settles into a limitless  
Sheet of blue grey glass.  
Mute gulls stand  
In rows on the sand  
While the morning breeze  
Holds its breath. The rise  
And fall of my chest is all.  
I don't even dare to blink.

Byron Wilson lives in Oregon with his wonderful wife and three rambunctious dogs. He writes for a living as a marketing copywriter, does freelance work as a motorcycle journalist, and composes poems in his head when time and space allow. You can find him on Twitter here: @olddelusion.

# A Cloud on the Ground

Matthew Miller

The uncertainty of growth, its fog without direction,  
forms in billows over unfrozen lakes.

I know where this goes, autumn curls its legs  
by a bonfire, eavesdropping snowflakes open.

I know dark mornings mean I will rise alone,  
cold air moving across my warm veins.

Condensation limits awareness, and all I can know  
is the first step to waking, this carpet, like soft ferns.

# Ursa Minor

Matthew Miller

Shedding a plump winter coat  
while shuffling the swampy thicket,  
unable to maintain pace.  
Awake, with claws that can't retract.  
Secluded hemlock circles, burying  
paws in the hillsides. So afraid  
to lacerate a healthy trunk, to leave  
the apple tops broken.  
This is not hibernation,  
it is hiding. By fall,  
scratching spruce roots,  
rawboned. Roaming the night  
alone, where I dim.  
A good, dark sky needed to see  
all my stars.

Matthew Miller teaches social studies, swings tennis rackets, and writes poetry - all hoping to create home. He and his wife live beside a dilapidating orchard in Indiana, where he tries to shape dead trees into playhouses for his four boys. His poetry has been featured in *Whale Road Review*, *River Mouth Review*, *EcoTheo Review* and *Ekstasis Magazine*. His work can be found online at [mattleemiller.wixsite.com/poetry](http://mattleemiller.wixsite.com/poetry).



# picnic

Jasmine Kaur

wine  
of grapes  
purple and blue

and joy  
on your lips / finger tips  
tips  
tips  
tipsy

a neatly drunk picnic set  
a curious chicken and an elegant mess  
no punch line for this tidy set up  
just you  
in the sun  
on the grass  
at a trying-too-hard  
picnic.

# in the summer of 2013, i thought i was clever for turning your absence into a visual metaphor

Jasmine Kaur

There  
is a  
hole where  
you once  
lived.

Jasmine Kaur (she/her) is a punjabi, queer writer/artist. She likes to surround herself with stories and poetics in any medium, including audio, video, still images and performance. Some of her work has been published by *Renard Press*, *...ongoing...*, *streetcake magazine*, and *Stellium*. She's currently a Masters in Philosophy student at Delhi University. You can find parts of her on the internet at [sites.google.com/view/jasmine-kaur/](https://sites.google.com/view/jasmine-kaur/) or @trying0000 on Twitter and @jasmineismeltingintosummer on Instagram.

# Observatory

Delilah Brumer

I bottle up my galaxies  
in mason jars and wade  
ankle-deep in the cosmos.  
When I find a nebula,  
I shove it in a Trader Joe's bag  
and seal it off with twist ties.

Why would I take a giant leap  
and say it's for mankind?  
Why should I bother feeling breathless?  
My oxygen's not burned up yet.

Adventure is for those who abandon  
the comets they can already clasp.  
I keep the universe at telescope-length  
cause asteroids are still amazing  
when you're not escaping them.

Don't close your eyes and  
bow your head and  
hope that I will change.  
That shooting star you wish on,  
it's just an airplane.

# On being elderly

Delilah Brumer

I.

I, woman-child  
neither woman nor child  
got a divorce (unpopular-popular girl, typical for a shotgun friendship)  
moved into a retirement home (I escaped, my jawline didn't)  
wrote my will (sticky notes are not a classy way to end it all, in hindsight)

II.

I forgot to mention  
that I'm 16, give or take a few bulbous scars  
my confounding adolescence is not fully  
cultivated, still needs some fertilizer

III.

I will insert the intermission here,  
as soon as my junk drawer is organized. the brain-trinkets need to be sorted  
I'm never able to recall this part. when time thrusts itself forward  
and nothing memorable happens

IV.

I wrote a song at one point, though I can hardly—  
sing to me about the white roses that will line my grave because  
you can't die if you were never born and I don't even show up on an ultrasound  
I can't sum up (although I used to be good at math) why I already have a  
wrinkle on my forehead

Delilah Brumer (she/her) is a high school journalist and poet who lives in California. She was named a finalist for the 2021 Los Angeles Youth Poet Laureate and her work has appeared in *Girls' Life Magazine*, *Los Angeles Times High School Insider* and *WriteGirl*. Follow her on Twitter @BrumerDelilah.

# The Power of Silence

Leona Boomsma

In silence  
She'll find there's  
A lot to be hidden

In silence  
She'll demand answers  
That cannot be given

In silence  
There's to be found all  
That's been forbidden

Leona Boomsma (she/her) will tell you that she writes sometimes, but in the end it's just words. Proudly, yet jokingly, calls herself an emo-instapoet. Writes about mental health and mixes it up with some love poetry. Recently published in the mental health anthology *There is a Monster Inside That I am Learning to Love* by Beyond the Veil Press and the Sapphic Writers Zine *Meet Me On Lesbos*. Currently studying European Languages and Cultures at the University of Groningen. Instagram @slechtsworden Twitter @leonaboomsma

# Intertidal Anointment

Nicole Starker Campbell

Bell buoy rings  
distant church bells.

Harbour seals sermonize  
from rocky pulpits.

Stellars' hymns float  
from lofted branches.

It's Sunday morning in Ukee.

# They to Her

Nicole Starker Campbell

Daylight, dusk, darkness  
fingers interlaced.

They walked  
together every evening.

And then  
dog leash,  
dog tags.

She set out under an April spring sky  
one morning  
and all of the mornings that followed.

Every day traversing  
Fish Creek forest trails for hours  
black dog trotting beside her.

In June plodding forward  
under caliginous skies  
coats and cheeks slicked wet;  
shoes and paws heavy with mud.

Together through  
August rays  
and shadowed paths  
along the Bow River.  
Sometimes stopping, sitting  
with churning waves.

In October marching alone  
among the dead  
leaves and bare trees.

Nicole Starker Campbell left the cubicle to pursue work that doesn't require wearing shoes. Her writing has appeared in *Legion Magazine* and *Rebelle Society*, *Blindman Brewing Session Stories*, as well as anthologies. Nicole grew up in Windsor, Ontario and currently lives, writes, and teaches yoga in Alberta. Her favourite people tell her she's a cool aunt.

Twitter @starker\_writes Instagram @nicstarker



# When Nature Calls

Jasmine Williamson

Waking up in Dominical, Costa Rica is a daily meditation on our ancient origins of primordial ooze. A thick layer of moisture envelopes my mosquito-net covered body, polyester glues to me with sweat and dew. Somewhere in my deep consciousness, the stickiness reads as familiar. Relentless humidity like hot breath bears down and gives birth to me and my fellow volunteers at the wildlife sanctuary. We slither out of bed and place our feet on the slip and slide floor, reaching for clothes placed on top of the dressers because if we fold them inside the drawers they will mildew.

We eat instant oatmeal while sitting on the cabin porch, serenaded by screeches of spider monkeys leaping round the canopy encircling our cabin. Round and round they go, males grappling each other playfully, mothers with infants clutching on tufts of fur for lack of seatbelts. We are in their territory, but they have grown used to us hairless, grounded monkeys and know that we aren't a threat. The animals contained in the sanctuary habitats are familiar with us, but we try to keep them as wild as possible with hopes for their future release.

My friend Hez and I are in charge of transporting three adolescent sloths from their chain-link cage, where they sleep protected from overnight predators, to their day-time jungle gym constructed from two small trees joined on a platform, with a spot in between for a blanket lined plastic basket nest. The basket is also a transportation device, which I hold ready, hunching over inside the cage, while Hez lightly grabs above the claw of each sloth's toe to activate their release response

so they will unhinge their toes from the tree limbs they have attached to. Then Hez is able to pinch the two pairs of sloth toes together, the sloth hanging captive, and gently place them into the basket. If this is not done swiftly and adeptly a sloth could clasp its razor sharp toe around a finger and slice it off, or get irritated and bite, which would mean a non-negotiable trip to the hospital because sloth's teeth don't have protective enamel, therefore their mouths are cesspools of bacteria. With each sloth placed into the basket, this balancing act gets more precarious. They are desperate to brachiate, so they repeatedly grab the air about the basket, reaching for anything they can find. I make sure they don't find any of my body parts, or get hooked on the cage as we duck through the door. It takes two of us to carry the weight once all three sloths are contained. We dodge sharp toes while trying not to trip up the small grade hill. They come close to launching themselves out of the basket multiple times as Hez and I rush them over to the jungle gym. Once, a launch was so close to completion we looked like tightrope walkers trying not to fall, and in my flustered state all I could think to do was yell SLOTH SLOTH SLOTH like a siren.

Once a week sloths need to come down from their high perches in the jungle to defecate, every time risking their lives as they are extremely vulnerable to predators on the ground. In absence of their mothers, young orphaned sloths in captivity need to be taught to do this, by surrogates. When their bellies are distended, we know it is potty time. Sloths hang onto a tree trunk to stabilize themselves when they come down to the forest floor for this most dangerous of activities. At the sanctuary, Hez and I have the distinct pleasure of carrying the adolescent sloths to the "poop pole" for their weekly relief. We chariot them, dangling by their toes again, to the pole, and wrap

their arms around it so they can droop their bums close to the ground and take the world's slowest poo. One awkward sloth doesn't quite have the hang of this and as we try to wrap his arms around the pole, he wilts onto the ground and lies there with arms outstretched. But the defecation has commenced, so we have to let him finish. Watching a sloth relieve itself is one of the weirdly most exhilarating things I have ever done. They squeeze their eyes shut tight and bear a look of serious concern for about ten minutes, unmoving. We know the act is complete when they open their eyes for a yard-long stare. Their smiles are permanent, so it can be hard to tell when they are truly happy, but that after-poop glow is hard to deny. The realization that I flew over 3,000 miles to stand around in a sweltering, steamy jungle watching sloths take a crap was also hard to deny.

After my sloth duties are finished, I walk back to my cabin to clean up for lunch. On my way, I pass the habitat containing Josefina, the yellow-naped parrot who had been raised in a hotel lobby for 20 years. She mimicks a human baby cry to beg for my attention. In response, I sing her name to her, which she tends to enjoy. She sings back a few lines of French opera, followed up by a couple cuss words in Spanish, punctuated by an all-too human laugh. I can't help but join in, even though it's possible the joke is at my expense.

Jasmine Williamson (she/they) lives in Cincinnati, Ohio with her two children, three cats, two guinea pigs, and a tortoise. She earned her MA in Creative Writing at Northern Kentucky University, where she now works. She is also a co-editor for *Many Nice Donkeys* literary magazine. In her spare time she can be found making art, traveling, or planning to travel. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Hearth and Coffin*, *Farside Review*, *Daily Drunk*, *Selcouth Station*, *Gutslut Anthology*, *Sledgehammer Lit*, and others.

# Winter's Harvest

Mary Grace van der Kroef

For a logger and his family, winter is the most important time of year. When the temperatures plummet, and the thick snows of Northwestern Ontario fall, it's prime harvest time.

"Here comes the next one." Josh, my older brother would yell, and we'd all leaned back in our seats in anticipation. Up, up, up the truck would climb. Then came the crest followed by speed down the hill forcing our stomachs to visit our hearts and say hello with butterfly flutters.

"Michael, you sped up for that one," my mom would chide.

It was a long drive down bush roads to reach our trailer. Dad's truck boasted a two-way radio, an important tool while navigating narrow roads frequented by logging trucks. He would grab the speaker and send off the message.

"Coming on to Turtle River Road. Anyone ahead?"

Releasing the button on the side of the mic, let anyone listening interrupt the static with a "roger that," and give the all-clear.

"Dad, what are those ribbons for?" my older brother once asked. We would pass all kinds of colours as we drove; orange and blue, even pink. The plastic ribbons all tied around trunks or branches, bright colours standing out against the white of winter.

"They mark different things. Like, what trees to cut, what one's

need to be left, and boundaries between lots.”

Sometimes Dad’s explanations were a bit much to understand, but we all got the picture when he said, “Never move them.”

When we arrived at our bush home the five of us kids would pile out of the truck, our legs screaming for a stretch after being squished into the back seat. Boxes of food and bags of clean laundry all needed to be carried into our cold trailer. Dad would get the heater going and we would all keep our snow clothes on until the small building warmed.

If it was late, Mom would tuck us into bed, snow pants and all. I shared the bottom bunk bed with my sister, Lorna. The boys, Joshua and John, slept up top, with baby Estella in her crib next to us.

The week was filled with homeschool, radio programs, and outside play. Our parents often told us, “It didn’t matter how cold it is, you can always put another layer on.”

Northwestern Ontario has cold stretches that regularly reached -40 below in January through February. This was the perfect temperature for harvest, and Dad’s choice of tool was Old Faithful, his cable skidder. With the ground frozen solid, this huge machine could drive through swampy land and over small ice-covered rivers. Winter roads of packed snow and ice made the backcountry accessible, and the job of harvesting ripe lumber much easier.

Dad’s machine was bright yellow, with wheels as tall as a grown man. Its heavy cable system separated at the end into a tangle of chokers, enough to grapple 12 trees at one time. We loved to

watch him drive this monster, roaring out of the woods at the end of each day, pulling logs so big it's hard to describe. The log pile he added them to could get taller than the skidder itself, and his machine would drive up the pile to deposit the logs along the top despite the shifting tree trunks beneath.

To five kids, this pile looked like the greatest fort imaginable. We loved to climb it and see if we could reach the peak.

“Get down!” Dad yelled one day. “If the logs move, they will squish you flat like a pancake.” That ended our fort game. But that was okay. There was always something else to do.

Some days we watched the sawdust fly as our father fired up his chainsaw. Each tree would be cut into manageable logs and loaded onto logging trucks. He and his fellow loggers all wore hard hats with muffs for protection. The chainsaw was loud and hurt my ears, so I would always stand well back and cover them with my hands.

If we were close by when Dad finished, one of us would get to stand or sit on a battery pack behind his seat as he drove Old Faithful to its parking place. This kept us out of the way of the steering system while giving an excellent view over his shoulder.

He always smelled of fresh air, sweat, and sawdust. It was a good smell. His hands, black with grease and grime, never came completely clean, but it marked him as a blessed man.

Dad was never so happy as he was in the bush though he often came home with torn jackets and cutting pants. Those pants were green and sported fibreglass pads in the legs for protection against sharp tree branches and the blade of his

chainsaw.

Mom worked many a night, restitching those pads back into place after a large tear. She knew their importance well. It was after a chainsaw accident that left a large scar across my father's foot that my parents decided we would all live during the week with him in the bush. It was good being together and keeping him safe.

When Saturday morning came, we packed things away. First the dirty clothing, soiled cloth diapers, and leftover food into the truck. Dad would turn off the heater. We never had to lock the doors. The only souls prowling the wilderness were not the kind to steal from bush shacks. Mom would have already gone for a long walk down a snow packed trail to empty the porta-potty.

“Why do you go so far, Karla?”

“I don't want the kids to find it,” she would say.

When the packing was done, we climbed back into the truck. The back seat was one of those small fold-down benches, barely enough room for four rambunctious kids, with one of us in the front seat between Mom and Dad. We all waved goodbye to the trailer as the trees slowly blocked our view of home.

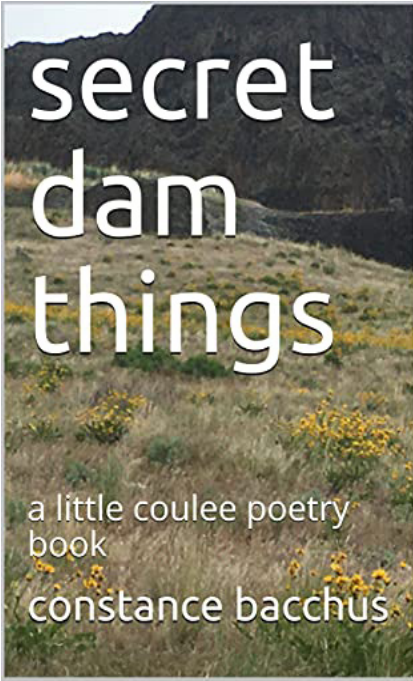
I don't remember the last time we pulled out to return to the house we lived in on weekends. I don't remember if there was grief or relief on my parents' faces when they decided to no longer spend the whole week in the bush. We didn't know how our lives would change at the decline of the logging industry a few years later, forcing Dad to leave the forest and find a

new job. Life never tells you what it has in store around the next bend. But we all choose to remember and be thankful for winter harvests and bush life.

Mary Grace van der Kroef is a writer, poet, and artist. She enjoys the simple things in life, and highlighting them with her writing. Her first poetry collection is *The Branch That I Am*. Her words have also appeared in various publications, such as *Honeyguide Magazine* and *Fahmidan Journal*. More of her work can be found at her website: [www.marygracewriting.ca](http://www.marygracewriting.ca).



## More Great Reading



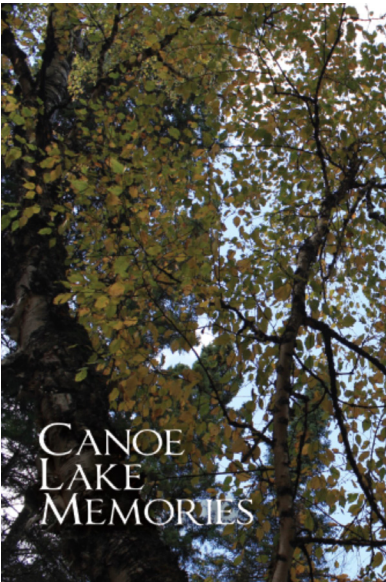
### Secret Dam Things

by Constance Bacchus

Poetry inspired by wildlife, scenery and people in the Upper Grand Coulee of Washington state. Some poems previously appeared in the *Gorge Literary Review*, *Wire Harp*, *Empty Mirror* and more.

Available here: [www.amazon.ca/gp/product/B096TW89WZ/ref=dbs\\_a\\_def\\_awm\\_hsch\\_vapi\\_tu00\\_p1\\_i2](http://www.amazon.ca/gp/product/B096TW89WZ/ref=dbs_a_def_awm_hsch_vapi_tu00_p1_i2)

And at: [www.waterstones.com/book/secret-dam-things/constance-bacchus/9798519715003](http://www.waterstones.com/book/secret-dam-things/constance-bacchus/9798519715003)

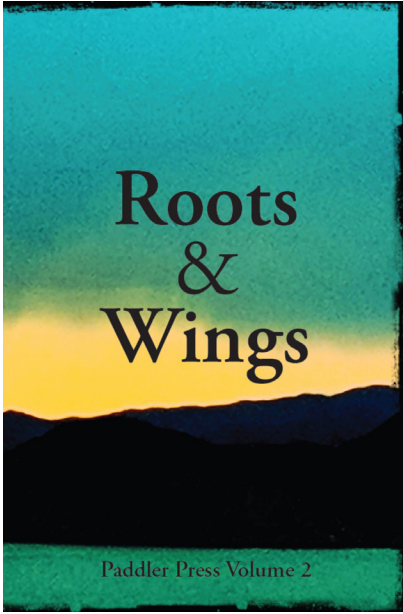


### Canoe Lake Memories

Paddler Press Vol. 1, July 2021

Poetry and art inspired by and dedicated to famed Canadian painter and canoeist Tom Thomson.

*Feat: Evelyn Robertson, Ren Pike, Jerry Bouma, Rebecca Lerner, Victoria Heartwood, Simon Lamb, Anna Kirwin, Timothy Tarkelly, Paulette West, Richard Bramwell, Ankur Jyoti Saikia, Annie Robertson, Michael McCourt, George Hemington, Robert Ledingham, Sadie Maskery, Kathryn Sadakierski, John Kinsella, Kristin Houlihan, Scott Grigsby-Lehmann, Mary Grigsby-Lehmann, Jeffrey Macklin, Jenny Wong, Adam Kelly Morton, Jaime Dill.*



## Roots & Wings

Paddler Press Vol. 2, Oct. 2021

Poetry and art inspired by what keeps us grounded and what gives us wings.

*Feat: Richard Leise, Monica Colón, Josie Di Sciascio-Andrews, Emily Bensen, Shane Brant, Tim Heerdink, Anna Kirwin, Christian Garduno, Kelly Kaur, Jody Rae, Charles K. Carter, Richard Brammwell, Simon Turner, Maggie Petrella, Rihanna Levi, Sadie Maskery, Paula Aamli, Carson Pytell, Tim Moder, Arden Hunter, Evelyn Robertson, Kelli Lage, Adrienne Stevenson, Ivan de Monbrison, Ileana Gherghina, Paulette West, Joshua Effiong, Helen Gwyn Jones, Bukunmi Oyewole.*

# WATSON & LOU

workshops  
studios  
local goods

Our mission is to host a dynamic, beautiful, creative shop that helps local artists and makers reach a wider audience, that invites people to try new artsy skills, and that helps everyone find the perfect, special, unique thing to brighten someone's day while also investing in the local creative community. We are beyond fortunate to have access to such a wonderful spread of local talent, with over 70% of our suppliers producing right here in Nogojiwanong | Peterborough. We hope you will love their work as much as we do.

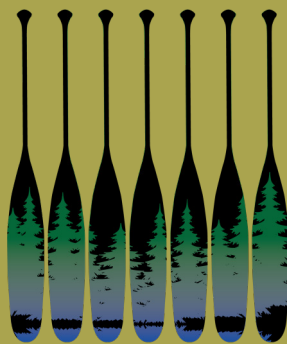


[watsonandlou.com](http://watsonandlou.com)

Paddler Press books are available alongside other fine publications at Watson & Lou.

*alone, in the library  
with the  
silence and the books waiting  
to be  
wanted*

*Circulation*  
by Richard Leise



**PADDLER  
PRESS**

Silk~ - Clara Burghlelea - Pam Knapp - Scott Grigsby-Lehmann - Cindy Bartoli - Kelli Lage - Andrew Zahorouski - Emma McCoy - Nolcha Fox - James Miller - Jennifer Schneider - Vanessa Maderer - Regine Ebner - Julie Francey - Matt Jones - Helen Gwyn Jones - Robert Ledingham - Cat Dixon - J. Villanueva - Joanna George - Linda Crate - Samantha Terrell - Richard Bramwell - Caitlin Thomson - Hibah Shabkhez - J-T Kelly - Jared Beloff - Eric Burgoyne - Zaynab Bobi - David Harrison Horton - Matthew Hsu - Jennifer Frankum - Shane Schick - Daphna Their - Damien Posterino - Byron Wilson - Matthew Miller - Jasmine Kaur - Delilah Brumer - Leona Boomsma - Nicole Starker Campbell - Jasmine Williamson - Mary Grace van der Kroef - Richard Leise

