## Poetry

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SHIBBOLETH
Devon Balwit

The Girl Scouts, he schooled me, was a fascist organization. Corn eaten only by pigs. Gum-chewing no better than cud-chewing, a thing never done. Dutch, he ruined me for America, as one by one, his beloved disciple, I adopted each prejudice. It was us against suburbia, us against kitsch. I posed nude for him amidst our backyard hostas, a scandal revealed at my thirteenth birthday party. Shame on me. A recluse by necessity, I hung with him, side by side on the couch, toking up to cacophonous jazz, sticking it to The Man, the promise of otherness squalling in its cradle. Never centered, I tilted all the way to the edge. I haven’t recovered.
January is bleak in our city—
fog settles over ancient banyan trees,
snakes through their gnarled limbs.
The air feels thick on our tongues,
in our throats; we taste woodsmoke and jasmine,
petrol and neem.

A chill cradles the big house,
reaches into every old brick like a spell
unspooling from the lips of a recluse witch,
nursing a many-times broken heart.

In our mother’s garden every year, on the day of her death,
lemons the size of large marbles
seem to ripen overnight from green to canary yellow. We walk across her handiwork thriving
despite the winter and her absence—mint, coriander,
turmeric, chili peppers, a jazz composition of herbs and spices—
our wicker baskets getting heavier with our harvest,
the fog lifting in patches, the sun shining dimly
in narrow blades across the gooseflesh on our arms.
QUIET HEADS
Anna Martin
GRISTLE
Lea Graham

For Georganna Ulgary

Gristle, (n.) cartilage; tough cartilaginous, tendinous, or fibrous matter

Grit’s spell. / A bone of sound / between hustle, just whistle. / Grist to the mill of welter, / close to grisly but more wattle / less huddle. / Tattooed thistle, / apple of my ire, / a subtle gris-gris / around the wrist of tussle. / The gist of it: / a muscle that fasts is lost. / We must wrestle that lustful, fustling angel of self, / bedazzle that recluse; / bust and move the offal, / dis refusal. / Wrest our names, / our castling furies, / cast and fuss to surge, / gird and guzzle that shit; / grease the wheels against hair-shirts of hurt, / storm the bastille of cry, the cradle of grow; / jazz and cussle this tigress, / this mottled grindle of rage, / muddle the sonic barb. / Steal away steal away steal away home—
RECLUSE
Hugh Anderson

There is only the chair in the middle of the clearing, and dappled light. Quiet, but a sense of jazz just gone, a lullaby in 5/4 time. A single leaf falls, and rests.

He is a rumour, this recluse, a story of music fled from the streets. A song composed of nothing except the space between notes.

He is a shadow in a cradle of shadow. He is a clarinet instead of birdsong. Instead of presence, immanence. But in the clearing, there is only the chair.
INDEPENDENCE

Nancy McCabe

Even before dark,
fireworks explode in St. Louis,
in Charleston, in Indianapolis,
in front of us, alongside, behind:
the ghost of a Ferris wheel,
a green gushing waterfall,
a red blossom sprouting
in one forceful heartbeat,
petals of light drifting,
autumn leaves cradled on the wind.

We stop to pee in St. Louis
where fires burn in streets,
smoke bombs trail their exhaust,
Roman candles fizzle,
sparklers carve the night air,
twirl in children’s hands,
bangs and pops exploding around us
and we’re dazed as recluses suddenly thrown
into the middle of a war zone
though the war zones of mothers and daughters
are not unfamiliar, you erupting
because you don’t know why
you had to come on this dumb trip
and why aren’t I always there
when you need me
but why won’t I go away when you don’t.

You rail at me as we speed
toward our exit, our next destination
toward the fall, you far away at college,

but now white lights shatter
like popped bulbs raining
sharp splinters of glass.
Lights flicker, tremble,
a sky full of jazz hands.
Stars falling, falling, falling.
JAZZ LIFE (CENTRAL AVENUE)
Gregg Chadwick
LEARNING TO LISTEN
Elizabeth Landrum

*Silence is not the absence of something but the presence of everything*
—Gordon Hempton

Once I retreated for silence,
spent half a day listening to a waterfall—
eyes shut, hands cupped
behind my ears to tease out the piccolos,
and flutes, the blue notes riffing behind.
The other half I sat on the edge
of a creek to worship with stones
while they made their joyful noise.
I could even hear a closing song—
the jeweled jazz of a purpling sky.

Then daybreak. Alone on a beach
I lounged until noon, shoulders cradled
inside a drift log, its ancient wood
the perfect diaphragm to amplify
every call and response
like kettle drums in my bones.
My tears sang back to the sea.
A true recluse would need
no other kind of conversation,
no explanation for the absence
of loneliness, no word for hurt.
I hurried away in search of a phone
so I could tell someone
about the concerts, and a pen
for my trowel to unearth a phrase,
but my tongue dried like cotton
and I could excavate only air.
I never had sex in my mother’s house. I can call it hers; she calls it The House and accepts no possession.

I grew up in The House and I turned out its lights when I kissed my first boyfriend, just in case liking boys where it could see could be grounds for a hell sentence. Back then it was my father’s house, his lifelong project. At night you could hear my sister run from Her Bedroom to the bathroom to avoid being in the dark halls too long. Even then kids would tell me The House was haunted.

My mother will later refer to the renovated half as Her Kitchen, and new counters were just installed in My Bathroom. My Bedroom is simply where I keep the boxes after moving out of my ex’s; I sleep in the guest room. The House’s name has no pronouns.

There are live traps around the porch for the opossum family that made their home under The House. We can hear the babies squeak through the floorboards. They’re cute until they appear on
Mom’s Living Room Rug, bloody and mostly dead at the jaws of a dog or the cats that sleep next to us: demon hunters and ritual officiators. I throw them to the fence line and watch the buzzards complete the exorcism.

If you’re in the front bathroom (not Mom’s Bathroom or My Bathroom, but the one that’s been suitable for guests all my life) at night with the lights on, you’ll hear muffled jazz rhythms scratching on the stained glass. I didn’t know you could hear moths bumping against windows that high, or that it sounds like nails against dry scalp — both things I’m glad I didn’t find out twenty years ago. My sister would scream when the indoor wind chimes sang unprovoked.

My father could see ghosts. He turned the lights on at night and spoke to the air above his bed, mostly in whispers. He whistled every s and liked vanilla ice cream because it was the same color as his hair. Whose daughter are you? Some apparitions were tobacco smoke with only the scent left. He doesn’t remember needing a cigarette.

He made friends with the girls living in photographs. He asked them about school and detailed his plan for a high school rodeo. Have you thought about college? In six years, those girls would move out of frames and sit with him while he focused on ghosts that didn’t grow up.

The House creaks with the wind and storms send rain to the kitchen for refuge. It breathes and stretches with the seasons until locks no longer fit properly in doors. We add barricades to protect
against animal intruders. My mother has a gun ready by Her Bed.

The House is a vessel designed to be left. Breeze sneaks in the seams, stirring involuntary houseplants cradled in lung sacks. Joints hinge when they can but are never encouraged. Here, ceiling fans are protected and pulsing, every door an artery. The entire skeleton is a rib cage: uneven, and given to a house of Eves.

The Walls are dead cedar and when I harvest living sprigs from the pastures for Christmas decoration, they resist and send a blind, itchy plague to my hands and eyes. It is sacrilege to bring them to their own carcass. Wash the doorways in blood to prove we are God-fearing. We don’t have a firstborn son to save.

We played hide-and-seek outside at night. Inside had fewer places to hide and more things to hide from. I always won. I wasn’t afraid to sit next to monsters, and I muffled giggles when their talons tickled fear up my neck. I could stay reclusive and still while the other kids ran wide-eyed from their hiding place to another nest.

We broke a wall once when we played inside. It opened a tomb to many dead mice, expulsion incomplete. Plywood now keeps the hole at bay.

I have a list of who might haunt The House, but I still think I don’t believe in ghosts and I’m not sure which ones are dead. My sister was little and she heard someone calling from Her Bedroom; when she was saved she said it was God or Jesus or whatever Holy Ghost is less scary than a ghost. I read Leviticus by a dim light across the hall.

We keep streetlights on Our Driveway. A boy offered to use
a pellet gun on the one shining in My Window. If the light by the road blinks closed, the driveway mouth will move or close entirely, and you’ll pass The House every time. It watches you slowly drive by the front windows. One lamp stays on always in the living room. You can hear my sister run when it burns out.
CRADLE SONG
Ann-Marie Brown
The windows, empty of glass, were full of sky.
—Jonathan Rabin, *Bad Land*

Once the window sill
held a jar of lilacs,
a breeze teasing calico curtains,
a wooden cradle gently rocking
on a rug braided from faded shirts
of the farmer who sowed
row after row of corn
that yielded barely one load.
Now it is overrun with wild roses,
a jazz quartet of bees.
Over by the cellar, a brown recluse spider
has woven a thin thread
across an abandoned shoe.
FLORIDA
Lisa Masé

Across the train tracks,
citrus and coconut grow lush
in front yards, the wisdom
of abuelas is their cradle.
Three cheering children watch
as one glides up a trunk
and tosses fruit down in delight.

I am the one who notices them
as we drive by, seeing
this abundant land
now separated by rich retirees
who live on the other side
of the tracks,
leathered nonetheless
from ruthless sun,
fortressed in mansions
with manicured lawns
where no food grows. 
One day, I ride my bike 
to the gate of a jazz era 
art deco mansion 
perched over the canal 
where a recluse 
is purported to live alone.

I peer through an endless weave 
of wrought iron and bougainvillea 
into the cobbled courtyard, 
impossibly lavish. It seems 
like nobody’s home.
SOMETIMES THE PAST RETURNS
Lois Harrod

Like the ex who walked out
for a cup of coffee
and never came back
for cream.

Like all those other
coffee cups you cradled
and tossed from Troy to Abilene.

Like the children
who never knew
or could not distinguish
his beer breath
from a whiff of jazz.

Yes, you thought
the past was long-gone,
vamoosed,
a recluse in some miner’s shack
but now he’s back
in a nearby hospital
begging you to visit.

Seems you are the only one
he left
who’s left.
JAZZ
Barbara Martin
Black boy sparks like sharps and flats, beats, stories, and jazz between his ears, underneath his fingers, rolling thumb on thigh as he walks, sprouts from cradle to full-grown jewel in the world. I warn him about rhythms and perception, about bass lines, thirds, and spaces. I try to balance my worry along the frayed line of his wonder, reveal to him history and specifics, the tender, bitter, glorious bits of living with brown skin in America. I try to get out of his way, hair on upper lip and other fresh places, let all that smile and wit, light and shadow, long limbs, ankle bare, welts of ash on skin, on bone, settle on his sleeve. I count it all joy each year he thunders towards the opposite of judge and jury, thunder and halt, escapes some semblance of death by someone’s sour or fear. His adolescence, a round of bright spokes, open and recluse, going on some number of years well beyond his age, a bell ringing, tower of mirth and torture, wonder of sweet spell lengthening. I do not trust the fire on earth—but I trust him. Coming of age, of self, and rising with song, wide wings full of shutter and bloom.
SEIZURE
Megan Merchant

Between screen and glass—
a recluse, a fly.

The same sound my son makes.

I slip scratch paper to trap it
into a cup. Release it wild.
It jazzes free.

After, the muscles in his leg sog.

After, he weights my palms over
his belly, to cradle him,
to keep him pinned.

The window still open,
just wide enough.
BEDROOM
Becky Weishampel
THUMP thump thump, what’s that sound, thump thump thump, what’s he doing in there, thump thump thump, will it ever stop, please stop, I can’t sleep, I can’t sleep, it’s been hell ever since they moved in, hell hell hell—the place where you can never get any sleep, I plaster my left ear to the wall that divides our rowhouses, it’s definitely some kind of home gym, is he lifting weights or doing some kind of kettle bell routine, it sounds like he is body-slamming an overweight gorilla in there, is that a new Crossfit thing? I remember the August they moved in next door, three years ago, the family didn’t bug me then, well they were not a family yet, it was just a couple, another yuppie couple—an Asian girl and her white boyfriend, what a cliché, lawyers from Manhattan in their late twenties with Equinox-toned bodies and mid-century modern furniture, they hosted dinner parties to the sounds of generic gag-worthy jazz streamed from Pandora, a year later they had a baby right on schedule, maybe none of this bugged me back then
because I had my own stuff going on, I had started dating a woman named Marlene, who had brown hair with kinky streaks of grey, streaks of grey that somehow made her look youthful and rebellious, the same goes for the crinkles around the edges of her eyes, her eyes—they were like the color of the sky one millisecond before a downpour, grey that masked the hue of blue beneath, placid but with the promise of chaos to come, she had kids too, at my age most of the women do, except for the real loners and psychos (is that what they think about me?) but I don’t mind, I always wanted to be a father, it never happened for me but I’ve always thought I’d be a good stepfather too, I listened to a podcast about step-parenting just the other day and it sounds like a blast, less “parenting” and more conversations and engagement with kids about their interests and hobbies, complicated, sure, more diplomacy, sure, but that’s what I’m good at, diplomacy, nation-to-nation, people-to-people diplomacy, it’s what I do at my job and probably why I never became a dad, I traveled all the time to these crappy places—South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, North Korea—so meaningful for me but what kind of a woman wants to stick around for that, and so I didn’t really mind that Marlene had kids, two boys ages 6 and 10, Jeremy and Abraham, I wanted to meet them and get to know them and be their friend, maybe I would never become their father, but I could be their friend, that’s all I wanted, I couldn’t wait to meet them but Marlene hoarded them from me like a secret treasure, at first I thought she was scared that her having kids would turn me off, quite the opposite, I insisted, I loved the fact that she was a mom, it made her warm and sexy in my eyes, as time went on I began to suspect she wasn’t scared about what I
thought at all, she actually didn’t give a shit, and she was possessive about Jeremy and Abraham and wanted to keep them for herself and she didn’t want to share them with me, not at all, she was a mother in all the magical mundane deranged obsessive ways that all mothers are—don’t let me get started about my own mother—selfish in her love, suspicious of anyone who ambled too close to her cubs, full of love, love, love, but not for me, not for me, too late for me, her life was full without me and I was just a diversion, something fun on the side, someone to do yoga with or go on bike rides with or to cook with for a few hours on the weekends here and there, while the kids were with their dad, their real dad, another lawyer, another fucking lawyer, ultimately after much cajoling (like I was some foreign mid-level dignitary begging for some face time with the Dalai Lama or the Prime Minister) we settled for a picnic together at Walton Park, and I prepared for that day with more thought and care than I ever did for any date with Marlene, I researched on Amazon the best educational toys for young boys (I decided on The Scientific Explorer: My First Mind Blowing Science Kit!), I dressed in a linen button-down shirt and shorts and sneakers so I could run around the playground with the boys, and I also went to the farmers’ market in the morning to buy fresh loaves of pumpernickel bread and made sandwiches with Gruyere cheese, basil, and tomatoes, the boys came with their mom, they were cute but I was disappointed that they didn’t have Marlene’s lovely grey-blue eyes, instead they had dark eyes, probably from their dad, kind of beady, but they were cute, the older one Abraham had his own iPhone (seriously, kids these days) and he barely looked up at me, he was playing some dumb game on
his iPhone for the entire two hours, when I gave him the science kit (rated number 1 on Amazon for his age range), he paused merely to scoff “thanks” softly without looking me in the eyes and kept staring at his iPhone game, and I can’t believe that Marlene would just let him do that, just play mindless video games on his iPhone all day, even while we are at this park having a picnic on the most gorgeous day of the year, the dogwood trees were in full bloom and my pollen allergy was really acting up, I get it, I’m not Abraham’s mom or dad, I’m not a parent, but I would NOT let my own kid do that, if I had my own kid, we would go on all kinds of fun adventures on the weekends, like canoeing on the Potomac River, or hiking in the regional parks, or bird watching (I’ve never done this, but I bet it would be a fun activity for a kid), and I’ve read articles about how screen time is a big issue for a kid’s development these days, so I made a mental note to discuss it with Marlene later, about how she should really do something about Abraham and his video game obsession, I mean he doesn’t have to like me right away, but he should at least learn some etiquette, like shaking a grown-up’s hand and enunciating “Nice to meet you” in a clear voice, is that too much to ask? I don’t know if things went better or worse with Jeremy, the six-year-old, at least he didn’t have his own iPhone yet, at least he looked me in the eyes when I introduced myself, though he didn’t want to shake my hand, and then he said—the first thing that came out of his mouth—not to me, but to his mom, not in a whisper, but in a loud voice, definitely loud enough for me to hear it, like he wanted me to hear it, Jeremy said to his mom, “He’s bald,” and yeah, I know, kid, I mean I’m comfortable with it, but it’s still something I’m a little sensitive
about, and how would you like it if I told you that you have small beady eyes, and too bad you didn’t get your mom’s beautiful grey-blue eyes, and that your haircut looks kind of messed up and uneven, I didn’t say stuff like that because I didn’t want to hurt your feelings, I just smiled and I passed out the sandwiches that I had prepared, and Jeremy said, “Why is this bread so weird, it’s like black,” and I responded, “It’s pumpernickel bread, from the farmers’ market,” and Jeremy said, “I’m gluten free,” I looked at Marlene with alarm, but she just rolled her eyes and said, “Jeremy, you are not gluten free, you don’t have celiac disease, your friend Robby does, but you are fine,” Jeremy put down his sandwich anyway and said, “I do, I have celiac disease, I will die if I eat this weird bread,” Marlene said to me apologetically, “He just says that when he’s being a picky eater,” and she bit into her sandwich with exaggerated gusto and gushed with her mouth full, “Hmmmm, it’s delicious,” each muffled syllable hit me like a stone and I felt suddenly very tired…maybe I could fall in love with Marlene, but I would never fall in love in her kids, more importantly I didn’t have the energy to try, I didn’t want to put myself through these awkward encounters again and again, subjugating my self-esteem to their youthful disdain until what…someday Abraham will look me in the eyes or someday Jeremy might eat my sandwiches or let me hold his hand, who knows when that day will come (months? years?) how humiliating, and for what, just for these kids—who, let’s face it, are not my kids, not the fruit of my loins, not a part of me—perhaps at that moment, I realized fully what it means to be a parent, to love someone that’s a part of you, despite all their flaws and annoying behavior and tantrums and character tics, like how
could Marlene possibly love Abraham, that soulless zombie of a preteen glued to his iPhone, because she’s his mom, but I’ll never feel the same way, I could never love that little shit, besides it’s not like these boys need me in their life—they don’t, Marlene gets along fine with her ex, and he takes the kids every other week, he is a successful lawyer and the boys like him, they have a good father figure and I don’t need them either, I have a fine life, I come home to my cozy rowhouse that I recently bought with my savings and I cook a healthy meal for myself, usually with quinoa as my grain, read books, do some yoga and meditation (I have this 20-minute app that I use every night), and why would I want to screw that up for these little brats, I don’t remember what happened for the rest of that picnic, but no one had fun, and then Marlene went home with Abraham and Jeremy, we dated for a few weeks after that and Marlene never mentioned to me whether the boys did the science experiments in the kit, like did they even open the box, or whatever happened to childhood learning and curiosity, she could have at least invited me to do some of the experiments with them but she never did, I knew it was over, so eventually she faded from my life and I never met those boys again, though sometimes when I bike past a neighborhood playground I look for them amid the colorful blur of running kids, I don’t know why… Look, I have free will and I make intelligent decisions about my life, I’m not a screw up, I’m not a recluse, but the world still has a way of giving my decisions a Big Middle Finger, at least that’s how I feel—living in this row of brick townhouses behind the zoo, infested with babies and toddlers and cradles and strollers, with cries and wails in the middle of the night that pierce the summer air like needles in
my spine, and now this young dad is going through some kind of early mid-life crisis, and he’s decided he needs to work out every morning at 5:30 am by jumping up and down, jumping up and down, this incessant pounding reverberates through my entire house, it rattles my skull, it sounds like King Kong going on a vigorous hike, I mean what is his deal? Thump thump thump, oh God, I cannot take it anymore.
Lovie Austin (1887-1972), a woman, was an American Chicago-based bandleader, session musician (piano), composer, singer, and arranger during the 1920s classic blues era.

Yes, Lovie be a woman!
She let the good times
roll right off the tops
of her fingertips. Oh my
could those slender hands
cradle a jazz number, shake
rattle and stomp. Her music did swim,
pine, dance. Left those young’uns
swooping into a trance. Nothing could
jar them loose, except a recluse maker,
The Great Depression.
RIFFING
Babo Kamel

It’s a busy, buzzy, jazz of a day
even the hibiscus seem to sing scat
through half-bloomed mouths

and those daffodils, dizzy with love,
all sex and come on, beckoning backdrops
of doo wops through the breeze

there’s a whole band blare out there
calling to the recluse, who tries
sonnets behind shutters, wants to cradle

her head against the high jinks
of the laughing muse, who snaps its fingers
throws its hat too high to catch.
How Much Farther Does the Arc Have to Bend?

Maria Rouphail

Take, for example, the Michigan boy, all of fourteen, who doesn’t look his age and has never committed a crime.

The newspaper says he missed the school bus taking him across town. Says that his mother took his cell phone (whatever was the reason, the paper doesn’t say), so he couldn’t call. Still, he wants to go to class. He begins to walk the distance between the bus stop and his school in a far suburb.

The paper says after a while he lost his way in the cat’s cradle of turns between his house and Rochester Hills. It was past dawn, and the suburban street was empty.

Maybe he sees a reclusive tabby yawning on a window sill. Maybe he hears a garage door whining on its track. Maybe he watches a car whirr down the street,
then turn into an alley. After the engine sounds fade, all that remains is the quiet blue chill of early spring curling around his ankles.

You’d think he’d panic, that fear would ripple through his chest like a jazz riff. But the boy has faith in the world, in its ineffable order, since he knows his mother loves him.

Loves him enough to separate him from whoever was on the other end of that cell phone and god-knows-what-else. The boy carries that faith up the front steps of a house with a porch, and a sign that says Please ring, a faith that from this house someone kind (maybe someone like his mother) might open the door, show him the way.

A woman comes to the buzzing bell (let’s say she pulls a sheer curtain panel from the sidelight), and lands her eye on the lanky boy with large glasses, standing back, staring calmly at the door, waiting. The paper says he was already forming the words, Good morning, ma’am, when he hears the woman scream.

Then a man comes (let’s say he, too, stares through the sidelight), cracks open the door and lifts a shotgun to the boy’s head. What choice does the boy have but to turn and sprint down the
steps as a bullet sizzles past his ear? The paper says the county sheriff arrested the man for attempted murder. But the man has a story he will tell the newspaper reporter, the lie and justification he’ll give about the shiftless and the larcenous, the homicidal and criminally insane, addicted predators everybody knows breed (he says) in the bowels of America’s cities like the parasites they are, and now, this boy who looks older than fourteen (he says), and who in early morning emerges from that same unfathomable blackness to land at his front door. The man says he could not rein in his fear. Just like the cop in Carolina a few years back, who, after he shot a man in cold blood on the side of a road, said to himself,

_They will believe whatever I tell them, because I am the law, and I am white._

The paper calls out the aggression and the lie. But the boy and his mother have no more peace than the ancestors who fled Alabama and Georgia.

Because history is supposed to bend toward justice. Because it’s been too long, and America keeps asking, _What the hell are they doing in our neighborhoods?_
JAZZ RIFF
John Chavers
If I’d had a choice, I would have asked for jazz instead, would have asked for anything other than the caterwaul of misery she and my father used as lullabies.

Flinging dirges from hell to heaven, and all of us knowing neither the devil nor the Lord gave a damn.

Much easier to become a recluse and create memories out of fairytales than to face childhood in the mirror.

I still wonder what it would have been to grow up cradling joy in my ear instead of their regret.

I still wonder if there was anything good about childhood, other than growing up.
Perhaps it was my father’s tap tap tap
On the typewriter keys
Accidental syncopation
Or the downtown sirens
Counterpoint to my sister’s cry
Cradle music
Soundtrack to childhood sleep

That led me here
As surely as Coltrane’s bleating sax
Or Mingus and Miles and my
Immersion in jazz.

The roads that lead us to where we go
Are mysterious.
I could have been raised on birdsong
Or the clank of chainsaws
Heavy metal cadences.
But I’m here, Blue Note
Usual table, dirty martini.
The band is blowing through the changes
The trumpet player must be listening to God
The piano sounds like falling rain

And the horns, tenor, soprano
Trading licks like a backstreet tussle.

In the dark, near the back
Leaning into the upright bass
Caressing it like a lover
The band leader, eyes closed.

He stands apart
Reclusive

But this falls apart
Without him.

I’m back in my childhood home
Tap tap tap
Sirens cascade
Sister cries

The band is wailing tonight.
ASSUMPTIONS
Nicholas McGaughey

Smoke sticks around after a year. Where pictures stared, yellow squares look out. Here

three, never close or near bereft
are penned in his place
to rifle through the bits he left.

*They’ll fit you fine!* she says, undoing
the camel coat and Guernsey
I still see him in.

A broken bed? What’s to be seen?
*The Sound of Jazz*, an ashtray, stubs…
the stifled den of an old marine.

She’s rooting for some clue
to a dear recluse
she never saw or knew.

There’s naught hoarded here,
nothing to be gleaned
about a man, who lit up more

than straights and rooms,
from the fake gold watch
she cradles and assumes.
SPLIT LUMINOSITY
Lisa Brognano

Jazzier than solar splendor—
fractured light—toggling between
a glimmer and well-lit gloss, such
a subtle system of nuances,
crystalline Morse code, riveting
flashes that required decryption;
not unlike the hushed murmur
of willows or the savvy smack
of a river’s flow on shoreline rocks,
craggy, wetted, having their own
slick polish and split-second allure—

Charismatic as ever, light
endeavored to blend in, scintillatingly
lovely, shy and curious, a recluse, known
to make a spectacle often enough; jazz
infused with transparency—one
miniscule, graceful breach
in a golden cradle.
CAT'S CRADLE
Jennie MacDonald
two days, Walter had gone missing. I’d put his dog bowl on the back porch, hoping the smell of kibble would lure him back. When it didn’t, when it only attracted thousands of mindless black ants merrily pilfering a stockpile of food, I got in my car to find him.

I drove down Crescent Street, my head out the window, calling his name, which floated into the warm spring air—the magnolia trees blooming, showing off their creamy petals, the cherry trees dusting the ground pink—though it was only January. Spring wasn’t supposed to be here for another couple months, even in Northern California. Things were rearranging themselves in new formations, new patterns, and lately, when I stepped outside into the world bright with sun and tremulous light, I felt uneasy and slightly hopeful. If the world was collapsing, maybe something better would emerge; but then again, maybe it wouldn’t.

At a stop sign, I glanced over and saw on the car mat a pack
of spearmint gum. Probably my friend’s, whom I drove home two nights ago—the night Walter vanished—from the book club. We’d read the strangest book, no one understood it, how it was put together, what the characters’ motivations were. Finally, my friend said the whole thing gave her a headache—honestly, who knew why anyone did anything. Any rationale we gave was after-the-fact, revisionist history, a bald lie. I didn’t really like chewing gum but found myself unwrapping two, three, four sticks, shoving them in my mouth.

I turned left on Magnolia Street and turned on the radio. Jazz floated in the warm air. There’s a sense when you drive around that you’re actually doing something, and it’s an easy leap to tell yourself you’ve made progress, though I’d circled the neighborhood three times with no sign of Walter. I widened my search, a pattern of concentric circles—each one bigger than the last.

I’d first found Walter at a circle, technically a labyrinth on top of a hill. No collar, his chocolate brown hair matted, fleas galore. As soon as he saw me, he wagged his tail, as if he’d been waiting for me to show up. When I started walking the outer circle, Walter followed me, and we spiraled inward to the center, where people had left little offerings, wishes for something, or maybe thanks yous for something already received. I suppose it was the biological proclivity to collect and stash things away, in case tomorrow brought nothing at all—whatever the reason, I picked through the pile of stuff. I chose a blue rock—shiny and smooth to the touch—and, in exchange, I left a pearl earring in the cradle of a shell. I’d lost its pair. I must have made a wish—a long life, health, happiness, something that I could no longer remember. Walter
followed me back to my car, and when I opened the passenger seat he jumped in. That was one year ago.

Up ahead, something lay in the road. In my lane. I slowed down. Brownish, splayed out, a lump where a head would be, the size of a dog. I held my breath and a rush of thoughts blasted me, all the things I should have done—checked the side gate so Walter couldn’t have gotten out—why hadn’t I? And why did I go to the book club meeting in the first place—the frustrating book that I still didn’t understand: one day, the man loved this woman, the next, he went cool, a wandering eye, his desire blowing around like a leaf. Walter got tired of waiting for me in the dark. The wind blew the gate open—he ran out and—

A piece of cardboard, now a strange shape because cars had slammed into it, sending it flying, tumbling down the potholed road. I floored it, squealing rubber.

On the next street, a girl was selling lemonade in front of a blue house. It was 75 degrees out. January. I heard the whistle of a bird. A sleeveless green sundress, showing off skinny pole arms, her dark hair in a messy ponytail, she shouted, “Lemonade! Fifty cents a cup.”

I pulled over. I was thirsty after all that gum—I’d chewed half the pack already. And I’d made it a rule to always buy lemonade from a child, so they gained confidence they could change the world, even if it was only by selling lemonade.

“How have you seen a chocolate lab around here?” I said, handing over the money.

She had the most beautiful green eyes. “No,” she said, eyeing my wallet. “Did you know the polar bears are dying?”
The lemonade was too tart, then too sugary. She licked her lips, still looking at my wallet. She told me she’d earned $15 and needed five more to buy a zombie app. Her older sister had $50 in a Nike shoebox in her closet, and if she didn’t earn the money today, she’d take five dollars from her sister’s box. Before I could lecture her about stealing, etc., she quickly added, of course, she’d pay her sister back later.

“How about you buy another cup?” she said.
“No.”
She crossed her arms. “Why not?”
“I think you should donate some of that money to save the polar bears.”
“My friend has the Zombie app and I can’t stop playing it.”
“Go run and play in the park.”
She poured herself a cup and downed it, eyeing me the entire time, as if I was a suspicious creature. “I bet I know why your dog ran away.”

I didn’t want to hear it, so I drove off, looping a bigger circle, then reversing and making smaller ones, back to where I started, two blocks from my house. For reasons I couldn’t explain then and can’t explain now, I slowed down. A white house with a bright green lawn, a woman on a chaise lounge chair, sunning herself. She was lying on her stomach in a pink and purple flowered bikini, and a dog was stretched on its side in the shade of her lounger.

I got out of the car but didn’t close the door, because it made a terrific scream, and I didn’t want to startle the woman, who had undone the thin string of her bikini top, the string as thin as spaghetti. I didn’t want her to think I was some kind of weirdo,
sneaking up on women, startling them to see their naked breasts. Then again, it was my dog, and she was the one who untied her bikini top.

The tanned woman—she was the color of bronze—had her hand on Walter’s head and was stroking it, playing with his hair, absentmindedly, like a lover. A big bird flew overhead, the loud beating of wings. As I got closer, Walter lifted his head, looked at me, then put it down again.

“What is it, Sammy?” said the woman.

“Hi, there,” I said.

She abruptly sat up, yanked a colorful Mickey Mouse beach towel in front of her, and gave me a big-eyed alarmed look, an amalgamation of fear, anger, and outrage. I’ve had that same expression many times, whenever I thought I had the high moral ground. “Who are you? What do you want?”

“Sorry to bother you, but that’s my dog,” I said.

“What are you talking about?”

She was slender, a narrow waist. Her hair was shiny, chestnutty, scraped carelessly back in a nonchalant chic way. She was beautiful, and I took solace in the fact that her left eyelid drooped.

“Come here, Walter.”

Walter looked at me, and the strangest thing: he seemed to have a tinge of guilt in his nutbrown eyes, a sense that he’d been caught two-timing. But then I dismissed it and resumed my role as rightful owner of a disobedient dog.

“Sammy,” she said, her voice protective.

He put his head down again as if the act of choosing was too much, too overwhelming, and he’d let us battle it out.
“Walter.”
“If you don’t leave right now, I’m calling the police.”
“Get over here, Walter,” I said, angrily.
“Don’t use that tone with him,” she said.
“I’ll use any tone I want. It’s my dog.”
“As if you own him,” she said, rage and mockery ensnaring her voice.
“In fact, I do.” I rattled on about vet bills, kibble, dog beds.
She had long, red fingernails, and her face was etched with anger and a sense of violation, her nostrils flaring. I could tell she viewed me as an intruder, a trespasser, a crazy recluse who occasionally stepped out of her house to engage in an argument. She was the type to call the cops, with that stench of righteousness about her. Next thing I knew, I’d be hauled away in handcuffs, because Walter wasn’t budging, and I’d forgotten to put on his collar with his dog tags, so it was her word against mine.

I left, went to work. After work, I went to the laundromat to pick up my clothes. The Korean man handed me my plastic-wrapped bundle, and I took it to my car. Tucked in the middle of the black and grays was a flash of yellow. I quickly rescued the cheery yellow from the confines of brooding darkness. A bumblebee yellow with big white flowers. I was seized with wanting it, I’d never owned such a coat before, or anything so bright, and I simply had to have it. As soon as I got home, I threw my black coat on the floor and put it on. I stood in front of the mirror and couldn’t decide if I looked good or if I was astonished at what I looked like—yellow! Flowers! An absurd thought took hold: maybe Walter would like it. I wore the coat around the house,
strolled around the block.

   The girl was out selling lemonade again. “How about a cup. Only $5.”
   “Five dollars! That’s outrageous.”
   She shrugged. “Half my profits go to the polar bears.”
   “Why should I believe you?”
   She crossed her arms. “You can believe me or not.”
   I didn’t believe, and as I walked away, she yelled, “Your dog left because you’re mean.”

   The next day was Saturday and I put on the bright coat. One thing led to another and I found myself in front of her house again. Another warm spring day. They were sitting on her porch, listening to Bob Dylan. Walter was right beside her, chewing a sizeable bone. The air was sweet-smelling with lilac and lilies, and the day made you believe everything was in its rightful place, and there was no reason to doubt or question anything.

   The woman looked like a Jennifer to me. Jennifer was decked out in red shorts and a short cutoff top, showing off a mid-drift of bronze skin. She said something to Walter, then kissed him right on the mouth, and I felt repulsed but at the same time I stood there, riveted.

   When she saw me, she frowned. “I thought I told you to leave.”
   “This sidewalk is public property.”
   “If you don’t leave right now—”
   “What? What are you going to do?”
   I’ve always disliked the name Jennifer.
   She waved her cell phone in the air. I didn’t back down because
of that, or because of her hostile, superior sneer, unsheathing her front teeth, but because Walter’s ears pricked up, his forehead furrowed, his gaze narrowed, sharpened, as if he was funneling in on danger. He started barking—at me.

She was standing now, triumphant hands on her slim hips. “It’s clear he doesn’t want anything to do with you. Whatever you had with him is over.”

*Whatever I had with him?* Walter was looking at Jennifer, his tail wagging. Then he reared back and placed his paws on her shoulders. They were the same height now, and in this warm spring air, the crickets chirping, the birds singing, the two of them gazing into each other’s eyes, I saw them as a couple, that they belonged together. Why shouldn’t a dog have feelings, preferring one human over another? Why did I presume deep emotional attachment was the exclusive domain of humans? And why couldn’t Jennifer be sincerely and profoundly in love with Walter? How limited my view of things, how restricting. Then I felt repulsed and full of fury.

I returned the coat to the laundromat, went back to my blacks and grays. Every time I happened to pass by Jennifer’s house, every time they happened to be outside, I slowed, watched. Walter looked happy, content. So did Jennifer. One warm night, I stood in her front yard in the dew-laden grass, below the swooping bats, and listened to her laughing and talking—to Walter, I presumed, the white curtain wafting in and out of the open window. Twice I heard him howl and it seemed a howl of delight. I pictured them together, nestled in white sheets, then I recoiled from the image, and chastised myself for thinking such wretched things.
I kept busy, spent days and days planting daffodil bulbs and tulips and irises—come spring—real spring—a storm of lively color in my front yard, flowers wagging their tongues at me. I swept the porch, the driveway, the sidewalk, and repainted my porch steps, the wicker chair. When I stopped at the end of the day—an endless list of tasks, only to be repeated tomorrow and tomorrow—I stood in the living room. Once there was the sound of Walter’s breathing, his sighs, the jingle of his tags. Now it was a funeral home. Everywhere in my house, a white outline of absence. I missed him, and I began to understand there was more there than I ever realized. I put on my black coat and went to the café to listen to the chatter.

I drove in circles, but this time it felt aimless as if I was lost. Invariably, I ended up in front of her house. I took great Schadenfreudean pleasure that the white paint on the front of her house was peeling, exposing the wood, only a matter of time before dry rot settled in. I was aware I was acting like a jilted lover, consumed by envy, but there was nothing I could do about it.

On my way over there for the umpteenth time, the girl was out selling lemonade, shouting, “One dollar a cup!”

I stopped the car.

“Did you find your dog?”

“He’s found a good home. Better than mine.” That was what I was telling myself.

“So you want a cup of lemonade?”

“Is the money going to the polar bears?”

She hesitated. “Yes. Yes, it is.”

I’d once been a little liar, too, and occasionally still told lies,
mostly to myself. I bought a cup.

One day, I drove by a pet store and out front, they had dogs available for adoption. All shapes, sizes, colors. There was Truman. Black and white, ears that stood up. A herder breed. “A dog that sticks by you,” said the volunteer. “No need for a leash on the trails. Very loyal.”

I took him for a walk around the block, and he trotted right beside me, casually looking up at me. Kind, caramel brown eyes. In the old days, I would have said he was trying to please me. Now I thought he was trying to gauge if we were a good match. I liked him. I was on my best behavior.

“You can take him home,” said the volunteer. “See how it goes.”

He sat next to me on the couch, and we watched *Homeward Bound*. I kept glancing over, making sure he enjoyed it. He liked popcorn, so I made him bowl after bowl. When I opened the front door and asked if he wanted to leave, he stayed right there on the couch. He had a lot of energy, so I took up trail running, five, ten, eventually twenty miles in the hills, Truman right beside me, his long legs galloping, his tongue hanging out, ecstatic. I became sleek, strong, like a cheetah. In the early days, when I whispered, “Walter,” Truman would perk up his ears, as if he understood everything, and come over to lick my hand.

One night, we were watching *Homeward Bound*—it was Truman’s favorite movie—when I heard a scratch on the back door. Truman looked at me. Barked. We’d had a freak snowstorm, the world continuing to rearrange itself, this time into winter,
everything blazing white, my backyard a big white sheet. We heard a whine as if pain was only a plank of wood away. Walter sat there. It had been over a year, and he was grayer around the muzzle, his eyebrows had long white hairs protruding like antennae.

He’d found his way here as if nothing had been forgotten, as if everything had been forgiven.

“Walter!” I hugged him, invited him in, he wagged his tail, and the dogs ran mad circles through the kitchen, into the living room and back again, round and round, beating a path in the carpet. After they wore themselves out, we went to the couch. I got Truman his popcorn, Walter his beef jerky, me sitting between them.

I turned on the movie and I sat back, enjoying myself immensely until we came to the scene when the boy starts crying. Jennifer was probably standing on her back porch, calling, “Sammy! Sammy!” The edge of panic strangling her voice. The quiet, an awful quiet that spread in ripples, so quiet it seared you and you felt everything that had gone missing and would soon go missing.

I didn’t know how I knew, but I sensed they’d an argument, Jennifer and Sammy. He’d wanted to go for a walk, she wanted to stay home; he wanted beef, she said no. Whatever had happened, they had to work it out. I wasn’t going to be put in the middle.

“Sammy,” I said, my voice full of understanding and reproach.

He looked at me, hung his head. Then got up, his tail between his legs, and headed for the front door.
UN-
Anna Wang

Ma came home on the last day of work
like she planned it. The winded bag
silked in craft feathers,
plastic shafts nubbed green as
a newborn’s squeal. Mardi Gras sounds
like *murr-dey grass* and raw pebbles stuck
in dew-clung flesh,
her mouth a summertime. Hey Ma,
let’s stay.

How do you strip a dream from someone
who still paints dandelions, yellow hearts
in the foreground of each crying portrait? How
do you warn somebody that tomorrow
has already passed as yesterday?
Do you say *Ma, mar-dee graw*

    is over. /

Say *jazz does not lilt*
    here like a street / dancer.
Say *in fact it stops*
    and is weary, / and wears a long skirt so wind-frail / to bear like
    a yoke.
Say *there is a time*

to stop comb / ing over the bald spots.

And when she finally wakes, bleary
-ey ed as a child from the cradle,
does the tired recluse surprise you, do you wait
and remember

—pillow-arched and night-shy—

how young she looked?
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Drake Truber
UNCOMMON RESPECT
Hugh Anderson

Never one to focus long on any task,
I abandon the tedium of clearing
the detritus of pruning and move instead
to straighten frost-shifted caps
on the retaining wall.

Curious, I lift each one to see what life
has wintered in the well beneath.
Slugs, pill bugs, snails are common—
to my mind, this close to the garden,
too common—I am not gentle with these.

Less frequently, a silken ball, spider’s cradle
full of eggs unguarded in the dark.
Or not. Motionless in this particular
hollow of the wall, a good-sized matriarch
hovers on a thin silk line.

The books are adamant the brown recluse’ range
does not extend this far, but I am not convinced
and not inclined to take her up to find
the violin inscribed behind her eyes.
The cap is reapplied.
I’ve heard the refrain: *the recluse does not shelter here,*
*a spider’s bite will rarely kill a man,*
and all that jazz, but I respect the privacy
of anything that creeps eight-legged
and has fangs.
THE JAZZ MAN
Alexander Radison

The instrument he cradles so delicately
in those callused hands
sings a song like rain
pattering on cold concrete,
a song of recluse streets,
its brass gleaming, piercing
through smoke from hand-rolled Cubans
heavy as the blue bassline.
I wonder what he’s thinking
when he takes a breath, veins pulsing
as his heart struggles to catch up to his lips.
Is he thinking about the next note?
Does he know that the melody weaves
through the crowd like an autumn wind
before wrapping, gently, around my bones?
LONE TROMBONE
Dave Gregory
CONTRIBUTORS

Hugh Anderson is a Vancouver Islander. He has lived long enough to have been, among other things, a bus driver, an actor, and a teacher. His poems have appeared most recently in Ottawa Arts Review, Right Hand Pointing, The Quilliad, 3Elements Review, and Grain. He has one recent Pushcart Prize nomination.

Devon Balwit teaches in Portland, Oregon. She has six chapbooks and two collections out, among them: We are Procession, Seismograph (Nixes Mate Books), Risk Being/Complicated (a collaboration with Canadian artist Lorette C. Luzajic), Where You Were Going Never Was (Grey Borders), and Motes at Play in the Halls of Light (Kelsay Books). Her individual poems can be found in The Cincinnati Review, The Carolina Quarterly, Fifth Wednesday, Red Earth Review, The Fourth River, Long Exposure, The Free State Review, The Ekphrastic Review, Red Paint Hill, and more.

Neil Bostock is originally from England but has lived and worked in the Hudson Valley, New York, for over 30 years. He writes poetry and short stories, sings traditional folk songs, and is using his recent retirement to further explore his creative potential.

Ann-Marie Brown is a Canadian painter from the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia. She lives on a narrow strip of land between the forest and the ocean with her husband, son, dog, and the occasional bear. Her oil and encaustic paintings have been exhibited across the United States and Canada, and included in private, public, and corporate collections.

Judith Waller Carroll is the author of *What You Saw and Still Remember*, a runner-up for the 2017 Main Street Rag Poetry Award; *The Consolation of Roses*, winner of the 2015 Astounding Beauty Ruffian Press Poetry Prize; and *Walking in Early September* (Finishing Line Press). Her work appears in numerous journals and anthologies and has been nominated for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize.
Gregg Chadwick’s artwork is considered the ephemeral nature of our lives as well as the aspirations we carry in our dreams. Each artwork begins with a remembered, researched, or observed moment that is sketched loosely onto the surface of the artwork with fluid colors. Layers overlap and merge with earlier sessions to create a sense of shifting time. Surfaces are scraped down, painted over, and layered with transparent pigments. Opaque swaths of color are brushed into the wet surface, leaving remnants of past figures and locations, while memories and future visions surge to the surface and overwrite the image. Figures appear and then often vanish into the mix. Themes may shift during the painting process and locations may change much as our thoughts can move quickly from one memory to another as we travel down the tracks of our journeys. In this fashion each of his paintings is a passport of memory.

John Chavers enjoys working as an artist and photographer. His work has been accepted for publication at Cream City Review, Whitefish Review, JuxtaProse, Camas Magazine, Stonecoast Review, Permafrost Magazine, and Glass Mountain, among others. This November he will be the guest artist at the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona.

Dionne Custer Edwards is a writer and arts educator working at The Wexner Center for the Arts. She created Pages, a writing program where she curates arts experiences for high school students and teachers, and co-edits an anthology of student writing and art. She has a BA in English from the Ohio State University, and an MA in creative writing with a focus in arts education, from Antioch University. She lives in Columbus, Ohio.
**Laken Emerson** is a Master of Music candidate at Wright State University, where she studies flute performance with Dr. Christopher Chaffee. A native of Oklahoma, Emerson earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith in 2016, where she was an editor for the campus literary magazine *Applause*. Previous publications have appeared in *Applause* and *Fourth & Sycamore*.

**Lea Graham** has several publications, including the forthcoming book of poetry *From the Hotel Vernon* (Salmon Poetry Press, 2019), the chapbook *This End of the World: Notes to Robert Kroetsch* (Apt. 9 Press, 2016), *Hough & Helix & Where & Here & You, You, You* (No Tell Books, 2011) and the chapbook *Calendar Girls* (above/ground press, 2006). Her poems, translations, and reviews have been published in or are forthcoming in *Crab Creek Review, Bateau, Poor Yorick*, and *Southern Humanities Review*. She is an Associate Professor of English at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York and is a native of Northwest Arkansas.

**Dave Gregory** is a Canadian writer of fiction who has spent the last seventeen years working on cruise ships. He has taken at least 30,000 photos in more than seventy countries.

**Daien Guo** is a writer based in Washington, D.C. She recently published fiction in the Winter 2018 issue of *Little Patuxent Review*. She has previously published articles and non-fiction in *Bethesda Magazine Online, Columbia Journal of Asian Law*, and *Merlyn’s Pen*. 
Lois Marie Harrod had her sixteenth and most recent collection *Nightmares of the Minor Poet* published in June 2016 from Five Oaks. She is also the writer of the chapbook *And She Took the Heart* (Cherry Grove Press, 2016), *Fragments from the Biography of Nemesis* (Cherry Grove Press, 2013), and the chapbook *How Marlene Mae Longs for Truth* (Dancing Girl Press, 2013). She is published in literary journals and online ezines from *American Poetry Review* to *Zone 3*. She teaches creative writing part-time at The College of New Jersey.

Babo Kamel has been published in *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Abyss & Apex*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Cleaver*, *The Grolier Poetry Prize*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Rust +Moth*, *Mobius*, *2River Review*, and others. She was a winner of The Charlotte Newberger Poetry Prize and is a three-time Pushcart nominee. Her chapbook *After* is forthcoming with Finishing Line Press. Find her at: babokamel.com

Dr. Elizabeth Landrum has retired from a private practice of clinical psychology and is enjoying living a quiet life with her wife and dog on an island in the Pacific Northwest, where she enjoys the beauty and quiet surroundings for reflection and writing. Her poems have appeared in *Cirque, Shark Reef, Southern Women’s Review, Grey Sparrow, Touch, Soundings Review*, and *3Elements Review.*
**Jennie MacDonald** is a prizewinning writer and photographer. *3Elements Literary Review* featured her photo “In a Scrape” in Issue 18. Other images titled “Inspire” and “Madea” appeared in the Mythos issue of *Obra/Artifact*. She received her Ph.D. in Literary Studies at the University of Denver and publishes on 18th and 19th century literature, theatre, and visual culture.

**Anna Martin** is a visual artist and writer, native to Baltimore, Maryland, and currently based out of Salt Lake City, Utah. She is an avid explorer and much of her artwork is inspired by her travels. Her work is also heavily influenced by nature and science. Anna’s work has been previously exhibited in various galleries and museums, such as the Rosenberg Gallery, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, New York. She has also been published in various art magazines such as *Grub Street, Litro, Green Writer’s Press*, and *Plenilune Magazine*. Anna also frequently works under the pseudonym Vacantia.

**Barbara Martin** grew up on three continents, and has lived in eleven states coast to coast. She currently lives in Oregon where she keeps a studio and teaches art classes. Art is an adventure for Barbara, where each painting is a new exploration of place and emotion. Her work is contemporary in style and leans toward the abstract, and sometimes surreal. Her subjects range from the serenity of a landscape to the horror of a nightmare. Barbara belongs to the Oregon Society of Artists and is a member of several galleries and artist groups in Oregon. Her art is in many private collections and has been featured in galleries, shows, and museums across the country, as well as in Norway and Australia.
Lisa Masé has been writing poetry since childhood. She teaches poetry workshops for Montpelier, Vermont’s Poem City events, co-facilitates a writing group, and has translated the poetry of writers from Italy, France, and the Dominican Republic. Her chapbook *Heart Breaks Open* was published by the Sacred Poetry Contest.

Nancy McCabe is the author of four books, most recently the novel *Following Disasters* and the creative nonfiction book *From Little Houses to Little Women: Revisiting a Literary Childhood*. Her work has appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, has won a Pushcart, and made notable list six times in Best American anthologies.

Nicholas McGaughey is an actor who has work forthcoming in *Lit-tapes, Skylight 47, Blood Puddles, Sarasvati, Dusk Anthology, Writing Armistice Anthology*, and *Gyroscope*.

Megan Merchant lives in the tall pines of Prescott, Arizona. She is the author of two full-length poetry collections: *Gravel Ghosts* (Glass Lyre Press, 2016) and *The Dark’s Humming* (2015 Lyrebird Award Winner, Glass Lyre Press, 2017). She is also the author of four chapbooks and the children’s book *These Words I Shaped for You* (Philomel Books). She was awarded the 2016-2017 COG Literary Award, judged by Juan Felipe Herrera. She is an editor at The Comstock Review.
Annie Klier Newcomer grew up in Syracuse in the 1950s with parents devoted to home and community. Now residing in Kansas City, her work has appeared in University of Kansas’ Coal City Review, Austin International Poetry Journal, New Zealand’s, Broadsheet, and others. She teaches poetry classes at Turning Point, a community resource for the University of Kansas Health System. She enjoys judging local children’s poetry contests and volunteering in L.I.N.C. After-School Chess Programs.

Noorulain Noor is a member of the Community of Writers at Squaw Valley and a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee. Her poetry has appeared in Spillway, Sugar Mule, Santa Clara Review, Muzzle, and other journals. Raised in Lahore, Pakistan, Noor now lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her poetry explores themes of identity, multiculturalism, and the immigrant experience.

Alexander Radison is an MFA candidate in poetry at Queens College, where he also teaches creative writing. His work has appeared in Utopia Parkway Lit, Newtown Literary (where he now serves as assistant editor), The Violet Hour, The Coachella Review, and at www.laborarts.org, where he won the “Making Work Visible” poetry prize.

Alexis-Rueal is a Colgumbus, Ohio poet whose work has appeared in online and print journals throughout the US and in Europe. She has performed in venues and festivals throughout Ohio and Kentucky, and was a member of the Women of Appalachia Women Speak project in 2016-17. Her first full-length collection I Speak Hick was published in 2016 by Writing Knights Press.
Nina Schuyler is the author of the novel *The Translator*, which won the 2014 Next Generation Indie Book Award and was nominated for the William Saroyan International Writing Prize. Her debut, *The Painting*, was nominated for the Northern California Book Award.

Drake Truber’s sketches are recognized for their emotional energy and narrative qualities. Truber has been exhibited at various locations, including The Rochester Contemporary Art Center, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, and the National Department of Education. His interest in interactive learning nurtured the creation of a Latin language learning video game, Vindac, which was entered in the Independent Games Festival. Vindac is now available on the App Store. Truber is currently contracted to illustrate his second children’s book. He enjoys attending various art workshops and has done some teaching. Truber has done live caricature portraits for many clients, such as University of Manchester, Plymouth Blueberry Festival, Graystone PMC, Indiana State Fair, Passages Art Show, and the City of Valparaiso. Truber is currently studying entertainment and fine art illustration at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. Truber also takes interests in history, metaphysics, public speaking, and writing.

Anna Wang is a high school sophomore from Lincolnshire, Illinois. She has been recognized by the Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, and her poetry appears in *Eunoia Review*.

Becky Eason Weishampel received her BFA from Tyler School of Art of Temple University in Philadelphia and Rome. She currently resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico. “Bedroom” is part of the series “Introverted Sanctuary,” with each painting 2x4 feet acrylic on masonite board.
Submission due dates are **October 31, January 31, April 30,** and **July 31,** for issues forthcoming January 1, April 1, July 1, and **October 1,** respectively, unless otherwise noted on our website.

There is no minimum word count, but please keep your fiction and nonfiction submissions under 3,500 words. Poems must be under two typed pages.

It is equally important that all three elements given for the specific submission period be included within your story or poem. Artists and photographers are only required to represent one out of the three elements.

For multiple submissions, fiction is capped at no more than two stories per submission period. Poems are limited to five per submission period. In the event your material is accepted in another publication, we request that you withdraw your submission from *3Elements Review* should you decide to publish your piece elsewhere.
Staff - 3Elements Review

Mikaela Shea received her MFA in Fiction Writing from Columbia College Chicago. She was a writer-in-residence at Ragdale Foundation and has published stories in *Midwestern Gothic, Copperfield Review, Chicago Literati, Hypertext Magazine*, and others. Mikaela won the Editor's Choice Award for Fiction at *Waypoints Magazine* and *Superstition Review’s* First Page Contest. Mikaela is currently looking for a home for her novel and lives in Des Moines, Iowa with her husband and two little boys. @mikaelashea.

Megan Collins received an MFA in Creative Writing from Boston University. She currently teaches creative writing at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts. A Pushcart Prize and two-time Best of the Net nominee, her work has appeared in many journals, including Compose, Linebreak, Off the Coast, Spillway, and Rattle. Her debut novel, *The Winter Sister*, will be published in February 2019 by Touchstone/Simon & Schuster. Check out Megan’s work on her website, megan-collins.com.

Katherine Davis earned an MFA in fiction from the University of Maryland and a PhD from the University of Tennessee. Her most recent work appears in *Gravel* and in *Broad River Review*, and she won Gigantic Sequins‘ 2014 Flash Fiction Contest. Currently, she is living in Wisconsin with a small flock of cockatiels and is completing her first novel.
Sarah Wylder Deshpande has published fiction and poetry in The Dunes Review, Tammy Journal, 3Elements Review, Gravel Magazine, and Fire Tetrahedron. She holds an MFA from the University of Maryland. She lives in Oregon with her husband, son, and border collie.

Jane Andrews has a BA in Creative Writing and a minor in Attic Greek from NC State University. Andrews teaches writing and poetry courses through Duke Continuing Education, and is currently Head Writing Coach at Central Carolina Community College. She is Nonfiction Editor at The Main Street Rag and Glint Literary Journal. In January of 2017, Andrews joined the editorial staff of 3Elements Literary Review. She has earned awards in memoir, personal essay and poetry. Andrews’ fiction, essays, memoir and poetry have appeared in Prime Number Magazine, Lunch Ticket, The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature, Verdad Magazine, Kindred, The News and Observer, and other publications. She is a past board member of Carolina Wren Press and the NC Poetry Society. Andrews is a freelance writing instructor, workshop facilitator, and book editor. Jane Andrews lives in Raleigh, North Carolina with her husband, four cats, a dog, and a special needs turtle named Jim. Her adult children live nearby. She enjoys striking up conversations with strangers and watching British mysteries.
Justin Rogers is a poet, educator, coach, and venue-owner from the city of Detroit, Michigan. Rogers is an advocate for literacy among inner-city youth, and the amplification of Black voices. Still performing around the Mid-West and teaching poetry with InsideOut Literary Arts, Rogers actively shares poems surrounding living and growing as a black man in America. He also acts as an editor with Wusgood.black magazine – a magazine specifically for urban artists of color. Rogers most recently has work published or forthcoming in GRAMMA Poetry, Mobius Magazine, Radius Poetry, and Tinderbox Poetry Journal.

Marlon Fowler is a full-time web developer for a Fortune 100 company, while also working on 3Elements Literary Review on the side. Marlon received his bachelor’s degree in journalism with a major in advertising from Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Marlon enjoys all things technology, making websites “do things,” running, reading, and good movies & TV shows. He currently lives in Des Moines, IA with his wife and two children.