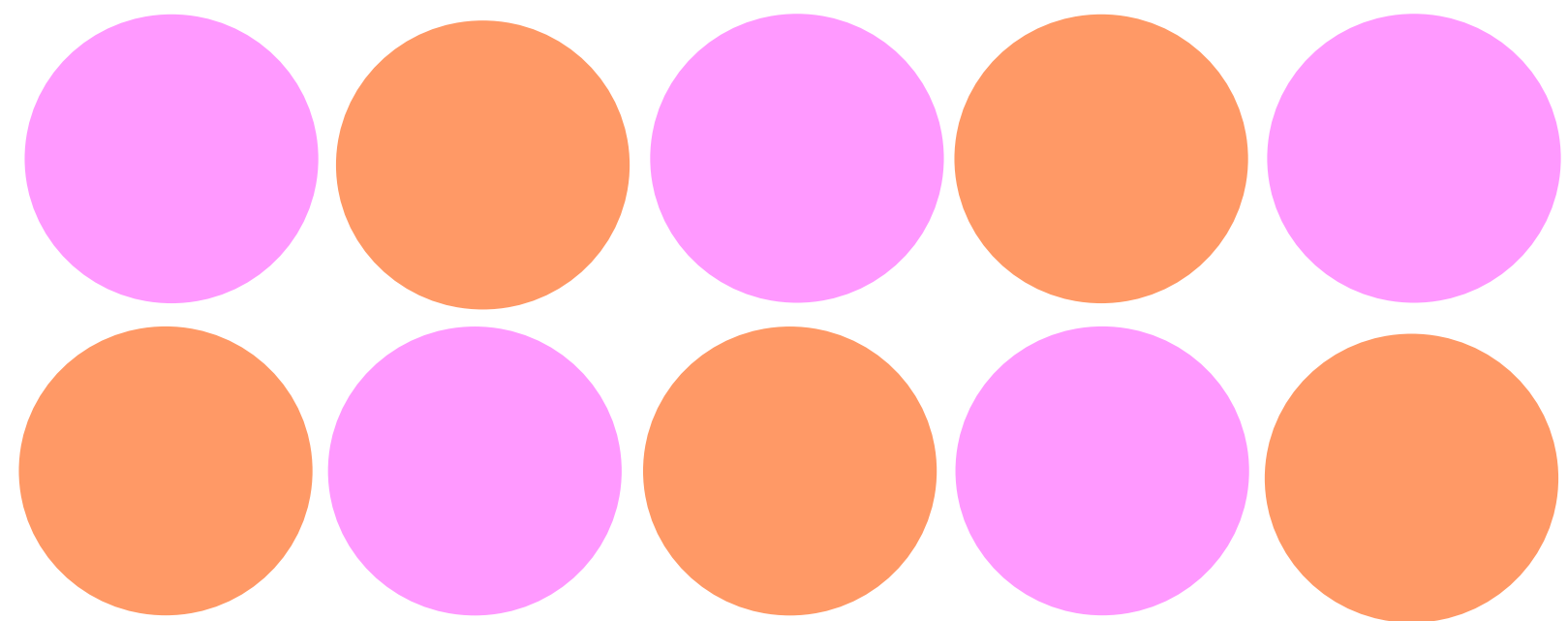


The Big Windows

Review

Issue 19 ~ Spring 2020



The Big Windows Review is a publication of the Writing Center at Washtenaw Community College, Ann Arbor, MI, USA. We publish poems and short (500 words or less) prose.

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The Big Windows Review

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Reflections of the 1967 Detroit Uprising: White Upriser on Griswold

Cops? The common enemy.
A cop who cuffed my brother
beat him back to '63
for the nickel bag he stuffed in his pocket.

Race riot? It was
a race
to the untouched liquor stores and pharmacies.
No one messed with me.
I was just one of one hundred
grabbing hands.

All my long hair,
mirror shades,
blowing through stoplights.

All my give-a-fuck stuffed in a Rambler
with three Zeniths, five shotguns,
eight cases of who-knows-what
clinking with each bump.

Every cop I passed just stood,
slack-jawed, watching me
give him the finger,
the peace sign,
clenched fist and jaw.

everybody's autobiography

keep reading this poem because
it's about you - choose this life carefully,

be bold, and breathe in only the air that
suits you. do not let any man convince

you that emotions are not the most
beautiful thing to inhale and witness.

that's gendered. I will hold your hand,
squeeze it as the monsters jump out of

screen. it is ok if you'd like to close your
eyes. I'll be waiting for you to lift lids

and begin to take in the world again.

Bakersfield

Stuck outside of Bakersfield at a truck stop
at night with the temperature at ninety-nine
with a few coins and a broken credit card
facing into the wind because turning my back
made my shirt like a sail, the smell of parched earth
and sere grass so strong I fought even the thought
of a match and words like ignition, passion, or strike,
saw a snake come to the asphalt on the dark side
of the lamppost, stretching as if to cool, and a crow
that landed a few feet away spreading its wings
for a brief moment of air conditioning.

I tried to sleep standing, waiting for morning
and Shell to authorize my card, but when dawn came
found myself sprawled on the pavement
like a drunk or a victim of a drive-by,
snake missing, crow coming closer,
more beginning to land.

Holly Day

Poise

She walked away from the room numb
oblivious to the days that would come after, there would be consequences
to letting them touch her, she
there would be some. There would be

voices in the dark for years, flashbacks of hands
the sink of dread at the click of a door latched shut
sleepless nights. If I could have been there
I could have told her that even this all goes away

tell her about the better men she would meet
the children she would have, the way her husband would
hold her in his arms while they slept
years into their marriage. I would tell her

not to worry, not to regret
the singular, awfulness of that one short afternoon
that all roads, for her
would still lead to perfection.

At the Great Library

Amid the guards and neoprene
I studied a holograph copy
of *Waiting for Godot*
transcribed in unreadable
scrawl. But instead of placing
my hand on each page and briefly
closing my eyes, I should have
grabbed the book and run—
for I was hungry, and no one
was waiting for me.

Four trees

frozen tree
traumatized trunk,
unmoving
my stationary sticks
iced over hard
but shining.

camouflaged tree
so many layers of green
whispering life,
distracting eyes from
my scarred stems,
broken branches,
that would not bend.

floating tree
rootless,
ever hovering
over the crystalline water,
laughing
as she laps my layers.

flaming tree
blazing oranges,
fiery yellows and reds
burning heart, soaring mind
scorching
all that I caress.

Witch Three

Afterwards, locked
behind glass doors
and packed between
clean linen sheets,
she frees me
to wander her weed
grown yard. I discover
emblems nestled
in cleared patches.
She constructed
stick figures from dead
plants, her children
that watched her pass
short shadows in late
afternoon. She created
wonder from their
fragility, not meant
to last, her hands
a bridge from her
ever more brittle mind
to these brief reminders
of what it is to bring
life into this world.

Kai

Your voice quivering
and full of unfounded doubt
splits the air too quietly
for the force of human
that lives inside your skin

Inferno
Tsunami
Tornado
Earthquake

They have
nothing
on you.

Frank Stella

Moultonboro II, 1974

We are fitted together
irregular in our natural
being, yet we find
those spaces allowed,
those crevices of wonder
that make us whole
despite the unevenness
of our edges. We blend
lives, our seams bleeding.

Animal Crackers

Situational awareness is just so important. Even a momentary lapse can result in a 9-year-old in a black-and-white striped Halloween costume being mistaken for an actual skunk and shot. Now crime scene technicians in full-body coveralls are photographing the bloodstains on the front walk, dusting for prints, scooping shell casings into evidence bags. As the shooter gets dragged off in handcuffs, his wife collapses on the ground, convulsed by sobs. What is inside is going to come out despite the efforts of a nice neighbor to calm her. And the moon? It looks exactly like the blade of a scythe.

&

The old woman who told fortunes in a booth on the boardwalk turned the last card over. King of spades. She frowned at the card. Then she predicted I would die screaming, but screaming in the voice of the opera star she called Placido Domingo. Nowadays the more that is reported, the less everyone actually knows. Ninety-nine percent of humans have been inducted into the bedlam of complex systems. When machines operators are overcome by fatigue and confusion, the machines are capable of operating themselves. Anyone can get a gun. It takes a white whale with a grudge to use it.

&

Mother died in the “nuthouse,” as people called it then. I might be better known today if I didn’t have such difficulty talking about it in something other than code. All these years later, searchlights are still probing the sky, supposedly for a ghost squadron of kamikaze pilots, but who really knows what’s going on? It could be the government is afraid every airplane flying overhead will crash. I lost my faith in portable electronic devices when missionaries went looking for souls to convert among horses and dogs. I imagine it was a strange time, too, to be a poodle.

The Last Church

A radio playing loud then soft
allegro melting to adagio
as its batteries wither

as particulate clouds redden
when the evening comes seeking a shadow
under yellowed leaves

as smoke rises over what once
were glowing coals
before the rain fell

as a bard recites poetry from the pulpit
and lovers leave their graves
to be buried in pews.

Toll the bell in the steeple.
Man has lived his day
and the sun sets.

Back Seat Talk

Now it is the great-grandsons,
years after sons and then granddaughters,
always excited talk and song,
now video game updates
and online consultations,
and always such youth
is cheering, each moment offering
a promise of adventure. We did not,
in our day, spend much time
being transported, except for
rare trips to visit relatives.
No one ever listened to us.
There were two worlds . . .
ours of us outside
and theirs of them inside
or in the garden
or on the front porch.
Houses were two-storied
you might say. But still,
I was a listener in their world, too,
choosing to sit at the edge
of the grownup gossip, ignored.
Nor did they pay much attention
to our doings. Ours was
the little world, full
of our own "sound and fury."
My 11-year-old great-grandson's voice,
the other night, came from behind me.
"You never cry." And when I disagreed,
he wanted to know when and why.
The four-storied universe of our ancestors

—heaven, earth, Hobbit Land and hell—
has been breached, but to understand,
we still need a translator.



Theo and Autumn

Theo left the window open,
She ran in together with autumn,
Took over the walls with her trembling voices,
Throwing a threatening gaze.

Ran up the roof and looked again softly,
And then left,
as if sleepy,
leaving dry leaves on the stairs.

a Typhoon in April

The scent of a foreigner's potpourri decorates the young dolls whose excessively tattoo shoes mark them as impossible housewives. These grateful and guilty onyx tinted officers of excess melt inside a conclusion of access to modern prescriptions and jealousies.

Their hostess, Yui, suspects the compulsory motives of beauty, lust and job – scabs from lost letters now burrowed epidermal deep by half-eaten loves. “Everybody is a mistake, a victim, a ghost but with us girls a suspect is underground.”

Warm tea melts the bias patterned dream of a Sunday in Yokohama, “No, it won't stop, inconsistencies, after-parties, vacations.”

Relaxed and excessive, Miyumi's dangerous tears collapse a second wall and the whole peeks at rope persuasions and disproportionate motives of struggle and compulsive trust in a remodelled kitchen house.

Yui's clothes scream future but are jaundiced by art, “Quit watching and arrange a mistake.”

Miyumi mulls access to a horrible act, a goblin of a storm that lashes to rip, to lacerate and to expel the second suspect in her house.

Somebody gratefully lassos her fancy, “No one loves the job of an immigrant harp.”

Overpass

Near	By
an	the
overpass	
a young	where the
girl begs in	deer lies splayed
the cold but	the red-brick ghost stands
no one's	debased by graffiti
stopping	w/ all its windows broken

notebook
with the poetry
of my long walk
slips off the
outhouse shelf,
disappearing
down the round hole...
when I tell her,
she states, laughing,
“now, they’re holey poems!”

standing silently watching
a passenger train rolling by...
passenger train rolling...
passenger...
should I be on it?

come, sacred footsteps,
and gather up this world’s
original voice, reaffirming
the sanctity of origins
within the song of
morning doves,
reaffirming the
newborn innocence
and necessary decency
of our decision
to be human

and, finally,
never again.
maybe.



The Singular Plural

Life in smithereens, the studio rental
crooning the acoustics of loneliness.
Blame genetics: no way could I master
the mechanics of dating, the politics
of romace, the logistics of sexual
physics. But I yearned to be in cahoots
with someone. First date, full of jitters,
trying to decide what clothes
to wear, putting my pants on one scissors-
kick at a time, glasses new and cool . . .
it was all shenanigans, this suffering
the semantics of desire. Until now,
the good news. Thanks, my love,
for enduring my poetics, for making
the singular plural.

Accident (for Jibanananda Das)

A new poet. By accident.
He was in a shadow
dragged across
continents, eating up a
tiny part of them,
hugged in a stiff
envelope that bore
my name
and whereabouts. Still,
an accident. As
with any new poet,
whether it's wisdom
or sin, I begin
with his face. Broad —
a wooden bridge
gently curving over
a gully. Picante and soft —
an overripe sock. I
read three pages. Come
away with the sense
that growth and decay
are not different
stages. That this poet
and I grew up
in identical villages at
the dying ends of
sundered ages. That
he too wanted to know
everyone —
yet knew the
real tally would
be zero plus none.

An Apology

I am sorry we argued.
We mime our morning ritual
of coffee, burnt toast and honey.
I don't want to leave like this.

When I return,
you grip me like a glass of Beaujolais
that could slip through your hands.
You get drunk on me.

René Saldaña, Jr.

From Behind the Postmaster's Window

(an internal monologue, bored to death these last 32 years)

I can hear those fishes
calling out my name.
Oh, to be out on that lake
right now on this pretty day,
this pretty pretty day,
out there on that lake—
me, my rod and reel,
and those fishes,
instead stuck here
behind this counter
asking would you like
a book of stamps with that like
the kid does at the McDonald's
asks would I like fries with that.

If walking

over the fractured ridge
of Camel's Hump

even at mid-day the cold
of shifting cloud shadows
on the dense green

below the summits
distend space
Be there

Crowds may invade
the black-lichened rocks
or no

maybe you're alone
in the wind

In any case
your loneliness
which means nothing

will assume a
significance to you
beyond thought

under the domination
of a hawk
or whatever is near

Quaint Mournings

In shivers of pain we paint our nails bright
To conceal the arching, skin-fused beauty
Of translucence that mirrors and pools light
To crunch and strew in shards

As we drift through the deserted doorways
Falling in love with sweet melancholy
That grants us the right to languish and gaze
Inwards, backwards, homewards.

The Argument

Let's have an argument,
embellish our stances
with golden tongues and defiance.

Climb up the tattered fence
of history and say trite phases
like *the truth of the matter is*.

Make reference to statistics
and research-driven articles
from academic journals and the *Times*.

This is the same game we once played
at recess. Go ahead, jump over

two ropes swinging in opposition
until you trip over your own feet.

Uniforms Interview

(With thanks to SM Chianti)

The old-timer said, the Salvation Army band played here on Friday evenings opposite the Palace Hotel, known in earlier days as The Bloodhouse for its brawling patrons after the six o'clock swill when they lined up full glasses before last drinks were served at six p.m. by law. Those Salvos, a small group in uniform, the lasses wearing bonnets with chinstraps, brass, tambourines, sweet voices brave in belief, sang hymns of redemption in the face of drunken obscenity while I sought pleasure with the publican's daughter in an upstairs room overlooking this same Burke Road tramline. Our lustful antics, and believing we are happy, are things that haven't changed. Other familiar uniforms suggesting stories were seen in public then: nuns, nurses wearing capes, scouts, policemen on foot, soldiers in slouch hats, sailors, including merchant seamen, the blue-grey of air force personnel. Now, everybody's dress, though gaudy, seems anonymous, the mysterious niqab, which resembles nuns' garb, one of few exceptions although xenophobes' reactions to these back then would have been more widespread, even uglier than today's.

At night we sometimes climbed a narrow stair like a priest hole to the roof where we heard the paperboy cry, *Late Extra*, looked down on all the glittering lights, green trams whirring and rattling to Camberwell Junction, Silver Top taxis whisking people into their futures, that great pulse of what was to happen. We saw a satellite. People talked about these then. *Up on the Roof* became our song. Keenly argued sport filled the following afternoon, football, horse racing – yet more uniforms – after some of us worked overtime Saturday mornings. All sport on the same afternoon, except boxing at the House of Stoush on Friday nights which was also card night for older people. Can you imagine that? Everything is so much more diversified now but here is where the magical whispering of my heart returns to, these echoes of memory spread out like those dealt cards, a ruin of nostalgia. Have you written this down? It'll soon be history.

Clubbed into Submission

Clubbed into submission with the buzzing
Of the alarm.

Clubbed into submission applying soap
In the shower,
Applying toothpaste to the toothbrush,
Looking in the mirror,
Trying to comb my hair.

Clubbed into submission gliding along I 70,
All of us on our way to another soon forgotten day.

Clubbed into submission with the taxes taken out,
The child support, medical, dental.
Eating the shit and climbing those steps
Ever upward to nowhere,
Forced to grin and bow.

Clubbed into submission eating a sandwich.
Not even tasting it.

Clubbed into submission
Sitting in the same chair,
Hearing the same music near the same shuttered window,
Drinking the same beer with the same books stacked
High, reaching up and up
To the same ceiling
That seems to lower a little
Every night.
I am nearly bent in half.

Clubbed into submission at the keyboard
Remembering the few good times.
The phone call unreturned.
The doorbell unrung.
Remembering the few good times,
Sitting alone with this bloody face,
Bruised knuckles,
Kicked-in heart.

Clubbed into submission,
Lying in bed, thinking,
Thinking,
Turning out the lights.

Clubbed into submission in the total darkness,
No one to see the bruises
Much less soothe them.



Does Dad Dream?

Mom comes to him at night
like the picture hung on his wall.
Her image massages his brain,
tosses ice cubes down his shirt,
spills coffee in his lap,
flips mashed potatoes on his glasses,
flies a paper airplane into his cheek,
spits a watermelon seed at his ear.
He wakes up anonymous
and looks at the picture on his wall.

I Remember

I still remember Dad's old sayings:
"Drinking coffee
will put hair on your chest."
"If you can keep your tongue out of the lost
tooth's hole, it'll grow back gold."
"Swallow a watermelon seed,
and you'll end up pregnant."
"If you scratch your arm,
spit on it. It'll heal faster."
I still remember, Dad,
even if you can't.

Contributors

Paul David Adkins lives in Northern NY. In 2018, Lit Riot published his collection *Dispatches from the FOB*. Journal publications include *Pleiades*, *River Styx*, *Rattle*, *Diode*, *Baltimore Review*, *Crab Creek*, and *Whiskey Island*. He has received five Pushcart nominations and three finalist nominations from Central NY Book Awards.

Anna Antongiorgi is a writer, choreographer, and dancer originally from Redondo Beach, California. A member of the Harvard Class of 2019, she graduated *cum laude* in English and Theatre, Dance, and Media. She is currently working toward her MFA in Creative Writing at the New School.

Jeff Burt lives in California with his wife amid the redwoods. He works in mental health. He has work in *ucity*, *Eclectica*, *Rabid Oak*, and *Williwaw Journal*. He was the featured 2015 summer issue poet of *Clerestory*, and won the 2019 Heart Poetry Prize.

Holly Day's poetry has recently appeared in *Asimov's Science Fiction*, *Grain*, and *Harvard Review*. Her newest poetry collections are *In This Place, She Is Her Own* (Vegetarian Alcoholic Press), *A Wall to Protect Your Eyes* (Pski's Porch Publishing), *Folios of Dried Flowers and Pressed Birds* (Cyberwit.net), *Where We Went Wrong* (Clare Songbirds Publishing), *Into the Cracks* (Golden Antelope Press), and *Cross Referencing a Book of Summer* (Silver Bow Publishing), while her newest nonfiction books are *Music Theory for Dummies* and *Tattoo FAQ*.

After a rather extended and varied second childhood in New Orleans, **Matt Dennison's** work has appeared in *Rattle*, *Bayou Magazine*, *Redivider*, *Natural Bridge*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, and *Cider Press Review*, among others. He has also made short films with Michael Dickes, Swoon, Marie Craven and Jutta Pryor.

Esme DeVault writes, "I am a newish poet at 54 years old. I have been writing poetry for six or seven years. I live in Rhode Island with my husband and son. I have been an English teacher and an academic reference librarian. I am currently a staff attorney at the Rhode Island Supreme Court."

Richard Dinges has an MA in literary studies from University of Iowa and manages information systems risk at an insurance company. *River Poets Journal*, *Stickman Review*, *Hurricane Review*, *WINK*, and *The Cape Rock* have most recently accepted his poems for their publications.

Aleathia Drehmer was the one-time editor of *Durable Goods* and *In Between Altered States*, co-editor of *Full of Crow* and *Zygote in My Coffee*, and art editor of *Regardless of Authority*. Her work has been published in print and online for poetry, fiction, and photography. <https://theforkedroad-ajourney.blogspot.com/>.

Howie Good is the author most recently of *Stick Figure Opera: 99 100-word Prose Poems* from Cajun Mutt Press. He co-edits the online journals *Unbroken* and *Unlost*.

Barry Green is retired and lives in Ashland, Virginia. He had a number of poems published in the 1970s, ceased writing for 40 years, and is now back at it.

Carol Hamilton has recent and upcoming publications in *San Pedro River Review*, *Pinyon*, *Sandy River Review*, *Commonweal*, *Bluestem*, *Southwestern American Literature*, *Pour Vida*, *Adirondack Review*, *Broad River Review*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Poem*, *The Sea Letter*, *Abbey*, and others. She is a former Poet Laureate of Oklahoma.

Meer (Anastasia Osoianu) is a multimedia artist born and grown up in Moldavia—on the eastern fringes of Europe, from where she roamed across Germany, France, Netherlands. Her words come from the deepest archaic, voicing the cultural and political dissonance of the East-West crossroads, evoking and trying to resolve the tensions between the masculine and feminine, between the reality and the anatomy of the soul. www.meer.al

By early morning **Geoffrey Miller** is a writer of flash and science fiction, some of which has appeared in *Crack the Spine*, *Midway Journal*, and the *Ilanot Review*. By night he is the editor of *NUNUM* and a very slow jogger.

Karl Miller's writing has appeared in numerous periodicals, including *RE:AL*, *Portland Review*, and *Cold Mountain Review*. His play, *A Night in Ruins*, was produced Off Off Broadway in 2013; "Elena," a novelette, was published in 2018. A 2016 Best of the Net nominee, Miller lives in Coral Springs, FL.

ayaz daryl nielsen, veteran and former hospice nurse, lives in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Editor of *bear creek haiku* (30+ years/155+ issues) with poetry published worldwide, he is online at: *bear creek haiku: poetry, poems and info*. Among other deeply appreciated honors, he is especially delighted by the depth and heart of poets worldwide whose poems have a home in *bear creek haiku's* print and online presence.

Barry Peters lives in Durham and teaches in Raleigh, NC. Publications (some forthcoming) include *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Best New Poets 2018*, *New Ohio Review*, *Poetry East*, and *Rattle*.

Timothy Robbins teaches ESL. He has a B.A. in French and an M.A. in Applied Linguistics. He has been a regular contributor to *Hanging Loose* since 1978. His poems have appeared in *Three New Poets*, *Slant*, *Main Street Rag*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Off The Coast*, and others. His collection *Denny's Arbor Vitae* was published in 2017. He lives with his husband of twenty years in Kenosha, Wisconsin, birthplace of Orson Welles. Check out Timothy on YouTube.

Marjorie Sadin is a nationally published poet with poems in such magazines as *The Little Magazine*, *Blaze Vox*, *Big Windows Review*, and *the Jewish Women's Literary Annual*. She has five books of poems in print including a chapbook, *The Cliff Edge*, and a full-length book, *Vision of Lucha*, about struggle and survival, love, death, and family. Recently, Marjorie published a new chapbook, *Struck by Love*. She lives and reads her poetry in the Washington DC area.

René Saldaña, Jr., is an associate professor of Language, Diversity, and Literacy Studies at Texas Tech University. He is the author of several books, among them *The Jumping Tree*, *A Good Long Way*, and *Heartbeat of the Soul of the World*. René writes that "From Behind the Postmaster's Window" is a found poem, a conversation he eavesdropped in on.

Peter Schneider is a poet and psychotherapist who lives in Brooklyn, NY and Rochester, VT. His poems have appeared in *AMP: The Journal of Digital Literature* (Hofstra Univ.); *The Buddhist Poetry Review*; *Mobius: The Journal of Social Change*; *The Shot-glass Journal*; *Kairos*; *Better Than Starbucks*; and in the broadside collection, *A Midnight Snack*. His debut collection, *The Map is Not the Territory*, was published by Anaphora Literary Press in April 2018. His MFA is from Columbia University, and his Ph.D. is in clinical psychology from New York University.

Hibah Shabkhez is a writer of the half-yo literary tradition, an erratic language-learning enthusiast, a teacher of French as a foreign language and a happily eccentric blogger from Lahore, Pakistan. Her work has previously appeared in *Petrichor*, *Remembered Arts*, *Rigorous*, *Lunate*, *With Painted Words*, *The Dawntreader*, 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.

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Maureen Sherbondy's poems have appeared in *The Oakland Review*, *Prelude*, *Calyx*, and other journals. Her forthcoming book is *Dancing with Dali* (February 2020—FutureCycle Press). *Lucky Brilliant*, her first young adult novel, will be published in September 2020. Maureen lives in Durham, NC. www.maureensherbondy.com

Ian C Smith's work has appeared in *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Antipodes*, *cordite*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Southerly*, and *Two-Thirds North*. His seventh book is *wonder sadness madness joy*, Ginninderra (Port Adelaide). He writes in the Gippsland Lakes area of Victoria, and on Flinders Island, Tasmania.

John Tustin is currently suffering in exile on Elba but hopes to return to you soon. fritzware.com/johntustinpoetry contains links to his published poetry online.

Diane Webster grew up in Eastern Oregon before she moved to Colorado. She enjoys drives in the mountains to view all the wildlife and scenery and takes amateur photographs. Her work has appeared in *The Evansville Review*, *Philadelphia Poets*, *Better Than Starbucks*, and other literary magazines.



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