



The Big Windows Review

**Issue 27
Spring 2022**



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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City Lights

Mind the wall not coming down
But something wrong
A gentle breeze
_____ Found all my seams
Climb; I climb beyond a crowd
To gain ground—the day's already over
I see city lights
_____ They don't betray me

Home, it's not far gone
Left and cold, a radio believes
The hunger belongs
_____ It all can't be a dream
Yesterday's rain still fogs the scene
An edifice an empty song relays
Those scattered city lights
_____ They don't betray me

A sun doesn't come this way
Can I love me not fall apart?
I can't be bereaved
_____ Unmanned belfry doesn't scream
Behind the toppled mountain I draw
Hear not a single call
But those city lights
_____ They don't betray me

Almanac (1)

Slacken uneasy laces.
Tilt off your beetle-crushers.
Recline on at-ease divan.
Block up tired-to-death eyes.
Still, the horror will come.

Almanac (2)

Underbreath a flapdoodle jingle.
Smarten haughty poses.
Manoeuvre noon undistracted.
Nobody knows
What's in the top drawer.

Almanac (3)

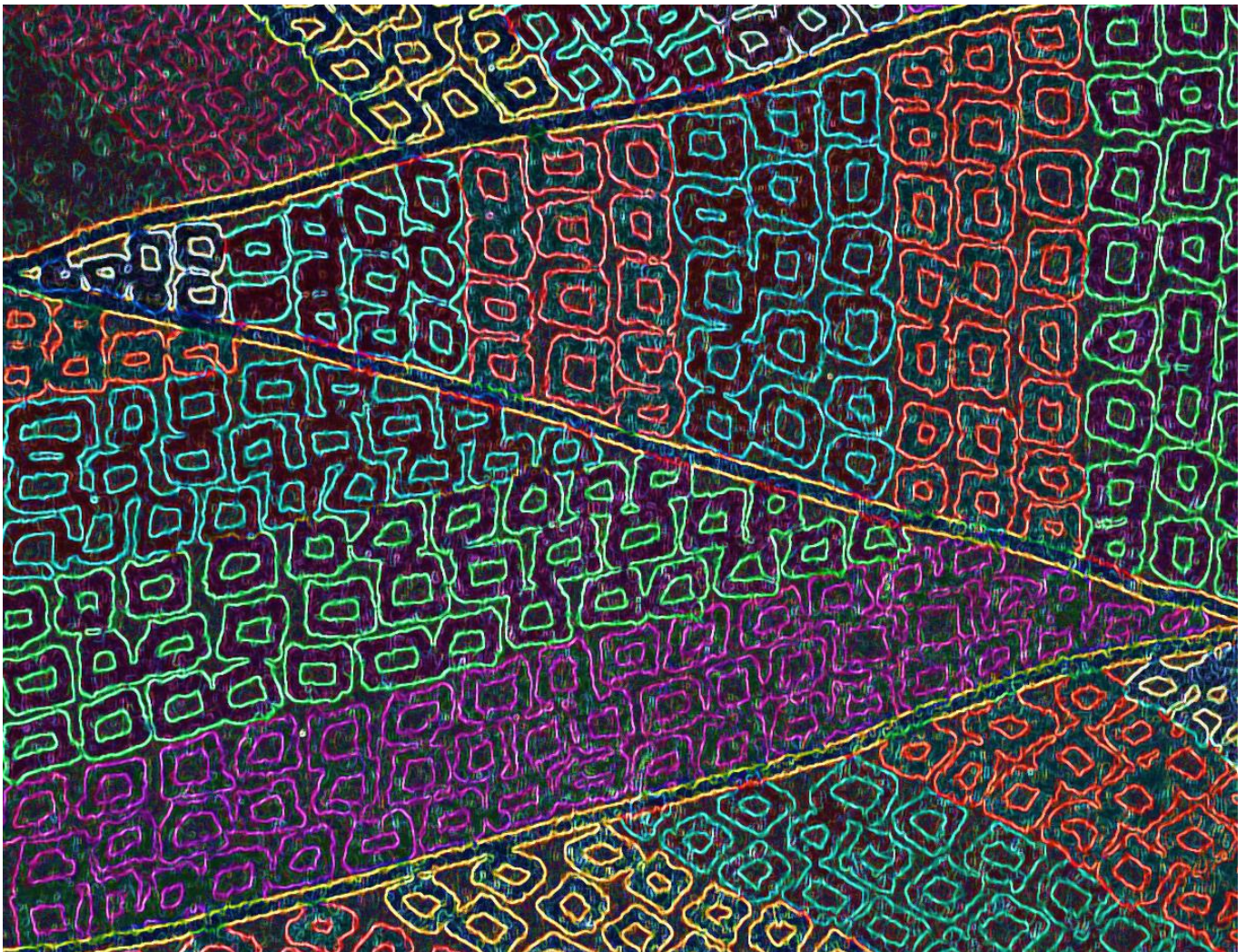
Souse tepid water, unlocking pores.
Mask yourself in foam.
Bar lucidly with nippy razor.
A disembodied face in the mirror
Twists its rawboned scream.

Almanac (4)

First-blush what's prospected.
Sham entertained as upright.
Categorical delights for the hereafter.
Annulment tags behind marriage.

Almanac (5)

Coax placid overtures.
Wrangle loose-fitting emptiness.
Inspect pass-muster bedding.
Long for good dreams, stretch -
midnight will devour you.



Sometimes, Quitting Is Winning

Alan and Sophie sit at a corner booth at the White Pony. Alan leans toward Sophie, hand cupping the flame which flickers brightly, warm and golden within its shelter.

Sophie reaches out with elegant fingers, the tip of her cigarette accepting the offering, momentarily flaring a bright cherry red.

The glow warms her features. The diamond on her left hand catches the fleeting light.

Alan's eyes search Sophie's. "How about Guatemala? There are ruins. Tikal. I've always wanted to go."

Considering, she peers at him, gray eyes obscured by heavy bangs. Freshly glossed lips puckered, she exhales. The hazy, pungent smoke surrounds him. He coughs, turns his head away.

Sophie's eyes narrow. Her lips pull into a thin, tight line. "Guatemala? Isn't it dangerous? I was thinking of some place tropical. Hawaii. A place with palm trees and coconuts. A spa."

"Guatemala has palm trees. And coconuts. Let's have a real adventure. Maybe we can sneak off in the ruins." Eyes shining, he raises his eyebrows, Groucho Marx style.

Sophie turns away, stares into the distance, her gaze cold and hard as sleet.

The ash at the tip of Sophie's cigarette has built up, is starting to tip toward the starched white tablecloth beneath. Alan pushes an ashtray toward her. Carelessly, she flicks the ash, which lands instead on Alan's hand.

Alan draws back, stares at the small burn. Massages it with his thumb. The skin there, once soft and pliable, has calloused, hardened by the years. The hardness begins to spread now, radiates out. To Alan's head. To Alan's heart.

Their eyes lock.

Sophie finishes her cigarette in silence, stubs it out, smashing the smoldering butt into the tablecloth. A charred hole appears. The smell of singed cloth rises, seeping into Alan's nostrils. Into the folds of his skin.

Sophie draws another cigarette from the cold, slim silver case she carries in her purse.

"Light?" She watches Alan, eyebrows raised.

He picks up the lighter, hesitates, twirls it momentarily between his fingers. Then, carefully, deliberately, puts it in his pocket.

"Time to quit." he says.



Valedictions

Final Exit

Dying, I've learned what no one taught me in drama class. Of course we're all actors. But then life is a colossal play directed by Chance, all our social roles are costumes, and shifts in fortune are little more than new acting jobs. Death, then, is just the act of hanging up your last outfit, relinquishing your final role, and re-emerging as a member of the anonymous crowd. —If my drama teacher had taught me this simple lesson, I might've been better prepared for the grand finale...

Ave

Typical. Nine months after I'm gone, my own mother comes to haunt me. "You think your parents trick you when you're alive," she'd smirk. "Just wait till we're dead." But sick jokes turn sour in crowded houses. And now out of the corner of my eye, I see her counting my old pills, rifling through papers, hear her *thinking* at the top of her lungs... Strange she never got the memo. If your children predecease you, you're always searching for them—especially in death. At least my ears no longer lie when she reminds me it's time to go.

Lorraine Caputo

On This Puna

Herds of llama graze
 upon the altiplano
 leached soil, low
 greened scrubbrush
laced with chill streams

Pale flamingos immerse
 their long necks into
 a lake silver
 slate-blue

Rippled by
 a black duck
 skimming its
 surface

Beyond the rolling
 rough-faced land
 the distant *cordillera*
 white-capped, camouflaged

By the clouds
 shedding rains across
 nearer hills
 lower scapes

On this higher *puna*
 snow falls, carpeting
 the pastures
 where herds of
llama graze

New Years Eve on the Q

Gregor decided he would ring in the New Year on the Q Train. It made sense, considering how much of his recent life was tied to that line. Years ago, right after he met Bethany, it was the 2 that linked their lives. He'd hop on at Atlantic and ride all the way to Wakefield, last stop in the Bronx. Sure, he still rode up there sometimes out of nostalgia, or masochism, whatever you want to call it. What was the best night of your life, he would ask her, and she'd always say that time we took the D to Coney Island and jumped in the ocean in the middle of the night. We were crazy, right? Crazy, she'd answer, crazy for walking around until dawn in wet jeans. Why'd we leave our clothes on, anyway? Hey, we didn't know each other that well! Yes, he could still take the D to Coney Island but the Q was where they lived their lives toward the end, from Newkirk Plaza to 63rd Street over and over, he couldn't even count how many times. Coming home after the infusions, they'd take the R to 8th Street and spend what was left of the day in Washington Square, looking for people they used to know.

Purple Sun

I am back where I started. You are walking
toward me with a glass of vodka in your hand.
I look downward at your bare feet in the grass.
I understand that there are shoes you have never worn.

I know that everything might have been different.
I might not have crossed the street. You might have told me
to go away. There might be two moons in the sky
or a purple sun. Nod your head if you agree.

Reboot: *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*

Hostage	Johnny Carson	performs come-on roves and chateaus with various celibates.
Hostel	Johnny Carson	performs comer rows and chattels with various cells.
Hostess	Johnny Carson	performs comet rowboats and chatters with various cellars.
Hostility	Johnny Carson	performs comfort rowers and chatterboxes with various cellists.
Hotbed	Johnny Carson	performs comforter rowlocks and chatterers with various cellos.
Hotel	Johnny Carson	performs comic royalists and chauffeurs with various cellophanes.
Hotelier	Johnny Carson	performs coming royalties and cheaps with various cements.
Hothead	Johnny Carson	performs comma rubbers and cheats with various cemeteries.
Hothouse	Johnny Carson	performs command rubbings and checkers with various cenotaphs.
Hotpot	Johnny Carson	performs commandant rubbishes and check-ins with various censors.
Hound	Johnny Carson	performs commander rubrics and checkmates with various censures.
Hour	Johnny Carson	performs commandment rubies and checkouts with various censuses.
Hourglass	Johnny Carson	performs commando rucksacks and checkpoints with various cents.
House	Johnny Carson	performs commencement ructions and cheddars with various centaurs.
Houseboat	Johnny Carson	performs comment rudders and cheeks with various centenarians.

Dressed in Blue

We don't fear death.
Only lips formed by weight and whisper.

We don't fear death.
Only weeping willows dancing to a youthful breeze.

We don't fear death.
Only our tongues, our violence.

We don't fear death.
Only fading light taut with desire.

We don't fear death.
Only dream-visions washed in white.

We don't fear death.
Only cactus blooms, yellowish pink.

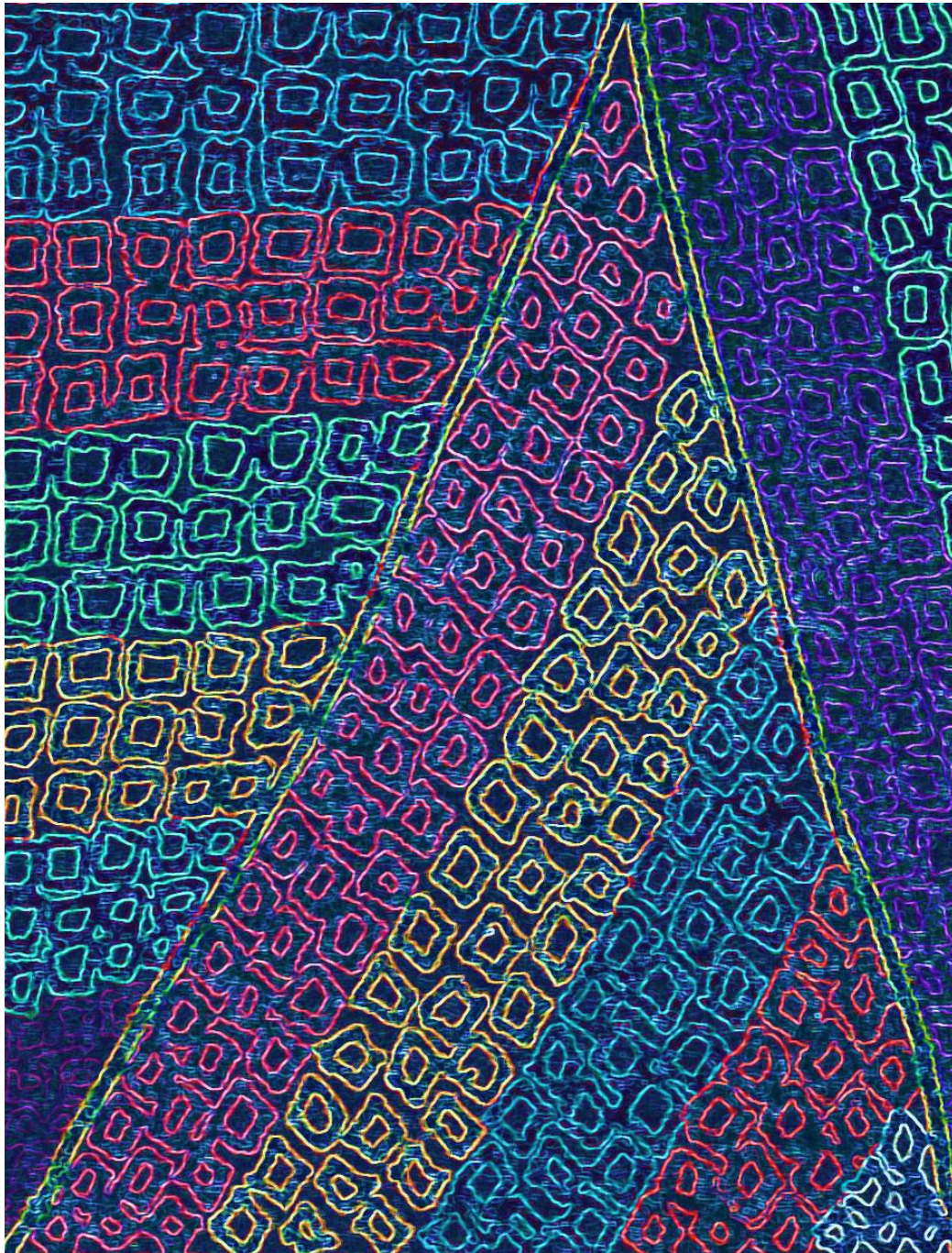
We don't fear death.
Only murals screaming from quiet streets.

We don't fear death.
Only the calm before the calm.

We don't fear death.
Only skin smelling of tv dinners.

We don't fear death.
Only phrases open and empty.

We don't fear death.
Only summer moons dressed in blue.



because I know who I am in spite of it all

I hate growing old, aching joints
fading eyesight and dimming memory.
But I fight it constantly –
 because I simply cannot go gentle
 into that good night.

I look in the mirror try to envision myself
in my younger slimmed-down condition
feeling stronger, healthier, more flexible, and energetic.
I have unyielding willpower so why the hell
can't I stick to a diet, any diet? –
 "Because you're a lazy fuck" barks the Devil
 his red eyes flashing from across the room.

Even though the mirror tells me that I am not
the same as I once was, oddly
I still feel young inside.
Thinning hair, age spots jowls, and crow's feet –
 all that evidence doesn't mean
 anything –

Enigmatic Variations (After Mei Yao Chen)

This night is bitter.
I sit alone in my room.
I rub my heavy eyelids.
I turn the pages of a book,
and try to read,
but quit after a brief look.
As the hours slowly pass,
moonlight drifts in
my opened window,
collecting as dust would
on an hourglass.
When I sleep,
I dream of my youth,
what I hoped to achieve,
but never began.
At least my wife is dead.
Her dreams are done.
She had faith in me.
She didn't live to see
what I've now become.

I Sometimes Ask Pointless Questions (After Tu Fu)

Clouds stretch from the sky
to the lake, as if they could
swallow it. Gulls circle,
then drift away, to disappear.
A chill is in the air.
Another summer has gone.
I look in a mirror. Suddenly
I look old. It seems all wrong.
I watch a woman walk
through falling leaves.
She looks at a darkening sky.
Is she thinking of the clouds,
or the heavens beyond?
Whichever it is,
her attention is on the sky,
and in a second
she's swiftly passed me by.

Thoughts on a Dreary Night (After Tu Fu)

How far is it to the nearest star?
The moon blocks such
improbable calculations.
Anyway, I'll never go there.
And the universe disturbs
my quixotic ruminations.
I return my attention
to things nearby:
a dry rose petal,
a wet hat in a field of grass,
the wing of a butterfly.
I hear a bird in a tree.
I look for it to no avail.
Was it an illusion?
Life is not what we
thought it was, or
we hoped it would be,
and death becomes
a necessary intrusion.

The Big Leap

Why shouldn't I
show how happy I am.
I leap into the air.
Not once.
Ten times maybe.
Anyone can see it.
And the winds can blow me around
if they see fit.
I don't care.
Not even if little children point and laugh
and their mothers pull them off
in a different direction.
I will defend my self-expression
like Voltaire standing up for free speech
except I'm too busy
jumping about like a mad man
to put anything into words.
No pretense.
No reticence.
I'm strictly sky-bound
and nothing and no one can stop me.
I've just been kissed
by the loveliest woman I know.
If you don't like it,
then be thankful that she didn't kiss you.

Skull and Shell

As a boy,
traipsing through the woods,
I found a bullet shell.
I rubbed it like a magic lamp,
I wore it in my shirt pocket,
close to my heart.
It was used to kill a bandit I reckoned,
That was my story
and I stuck to it
by telling no one.

A week later,
same forest,
I found a skull,
probably a bird's
but I imagined it to be
the bad guy's.
that evil-doer
shot in a fair fight
by a man who never took
a backward step.
I kept it in my pocket as a warning.

I was young enough to believe anything
but, when it came to instilling creeds
in my precocious but malleable mind,
my imagination always got there first.
The good guy took care of the villain
and not a mile from where I lived.
And I wore the evidence around with me.
It jangled. It clicked.

For a time, I truly pitied those
who had to take it on faith.
I had the skull. I had the shell.
And this meant, I had me.



I Stopped Getting Better

After "I Stopped Going To Therapy"
by Clementine von Radics

I stopped getting better.
I'm not sure it's worth it.
Never one to seek numinosity,
the process to wholeness
bores me. When I daydream,
I picture myself in a bar with no windows
hidden from a sunny afternoon,
slowly fading into oblivion,
holding on by a thin white line.
I have sewn myself together
by my wrongs and my wounds.
I remain ambivalent, grass forever blue.

That Strange and Well-known Place

in memory of William V. and Gertrud Eva Wood

I'm going back to a place
I've never been
travelling the distance of time
to faces half-forgotten
and much too young
in my waking dreams.

I've got a photo of my aunt's
house from the outside
but it could be any house--
except for the living room
that's vivid in my imagination:
with the Asian paintings,
survivors of the Vietnam War I despised,
and my folks I adored so much
on the couch right in front of them.

My cousin won't be there at all,
or will she,
and what about her old piano--
it doesn't really matter:
I know
I won't be able to talk to them,
or look at the pictures
without hearing her music, somewhere
in that strange and well-known place.

Gambier, Ohio

It started with dad saying "Mhmm" after everything I said to him, but I guess it all started even before that. Maybe it all started when dad started talking about euthanasia, and mom had a tumor in her knee, and Pete from down the road died. Well, maybe it even started before then, when I was in middle school and had my first kiss and accidentally stapled my tongue (both the events happening on the same day), and dad started going long hours to Gambier, Ohio, to meet a prostitute. Or maybe it started even before that, before the night my parents had sex to have me, before they went to the Netherlands on their first solo trip - two young people in love, so in love that they didn't know any better to spend an entire summer in a city where they didn't know a soul that they ultimately wanted to create one, where they made love before the sun blazed its light without permission. Where they ate poffertjes, stampot boerenkool, and other food whose names they could never get right - even if they practiced writing those foreign names for the rest of their life. That's when, that's when they wanted to have me, in a place that was too far away from their roots that they forgot where they stemmed from. That's when, that's when I was produced, bit by bit, like a piece of bagel seasoning I put on everything, like a water droplet evaporating, diffusing into the air like pixie dust, like the obscure, native sky. That's when that's when I was fit into a suitcase, the size of my head so large that I came out sooner than anyone expected. That's when they transported me without all the other luggage they never took a chance at, the other luggage a maverick thought staring in vain through coveted blankets, pointed shoes, pearl necklaces, and soft cashmere. That's when that's when dad glided his Toyota Camry into the South Street like a sleek saucer pan, and our "house" laden with bricks stared at other "houses" in uncanny after the door behind us was shut and where we came to a place called "home." So that's where I rooted, at home, right here, where my dad now sleeps in a frenzy, and my mother is dying from cancer. I was an average rhapsody. My dad will no longer go to Gambier, Ohio.

The homestead of my youth (haiku sequence)

homecoming
hugs me even tighter
the scent of a tea

house threshold
patiently waiting to enter
today's sunshine

bringing summer
into the room--
a bee

late afternoon
having lunch together
me and bird sounds

Dad Bod

I wipe the ash from my thighs,
shake the dust from my t-
shirt, shed my skin and redress
my bandages as redness,
the redeye ridden to some final
destination. My destiny
arrives as a matter of fact, a murder
of crows, screwballs. Swerve
with me, wise-cracker. I'm lonely.
Tired of finishing my own sentences.
I wipe the water from the droopy
corner of my mouth. Company over,
my own inescapable company.

Extra Person

Curbside television I surveil
myself shuffling, dragging my left leg
through dry leaves. Omi
pocketing acorns, goes down
on her knees, tripping. *When you can't see
your steps it helps
to shuffle a little bit.* I've got an extra person
beside me. *Left side!* Headstrong,
not yet two-year-old daughter
bathed in blue late morning
shadows scuffle, fount of refreshment,
cleansing—*That's a dirty mask,
dirty gauze—*above I-70:
Sunrise askance. *Stick to the sidewalk.*

Eighteen

Ruth was eighteen, in Cardiff now and struggling.
She's just homesick, they all said. She's a farm girl.
She'll settle down.

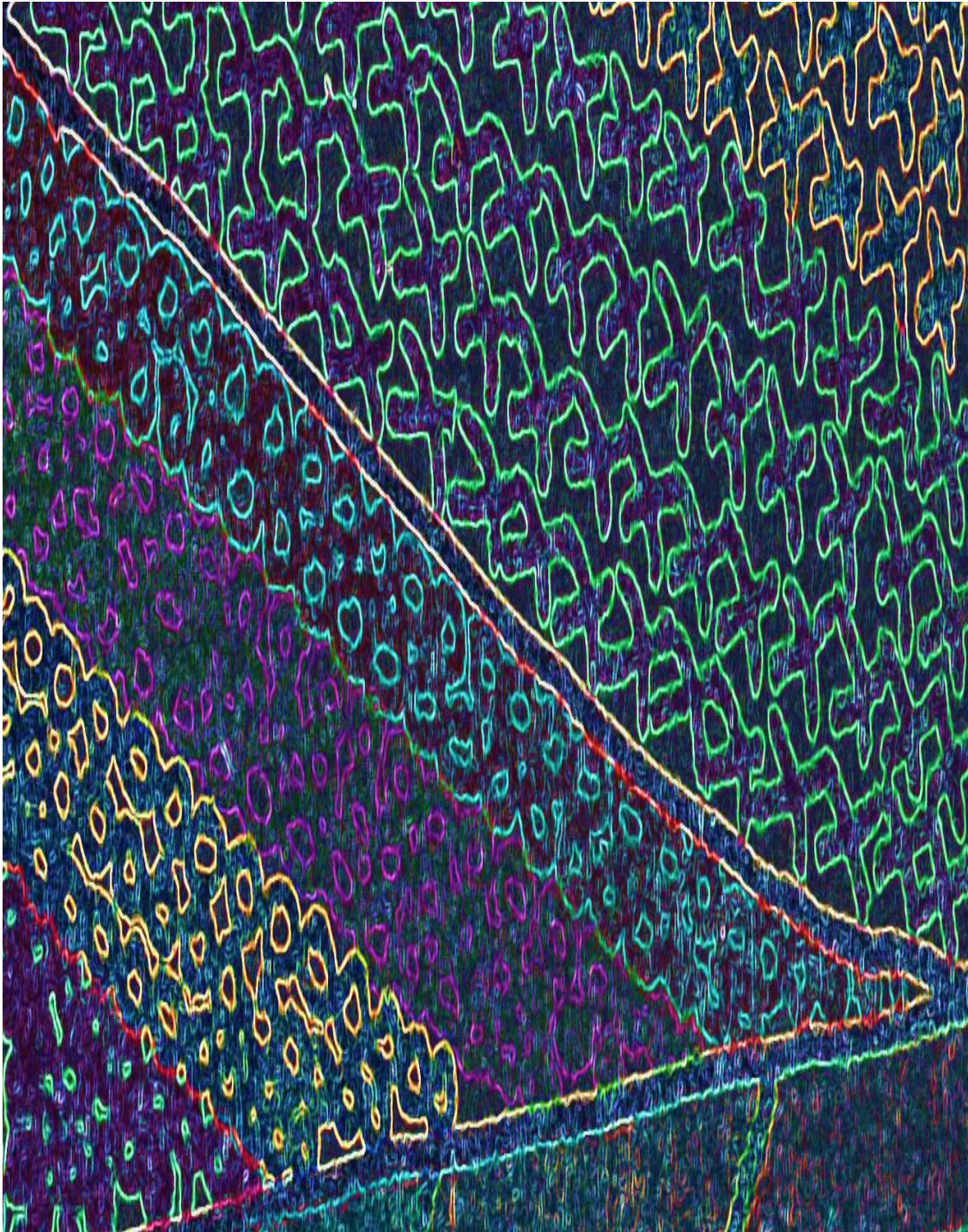
She did things by the book. Made friends. Got out.
That evening, she'd been out with a boy,
stood waiting for a bus back to the college,
when a flashing ambulance howled through,
its aural ricochet cannoning
between the banked and brilliant shopfronts.
She clutched at the bus stop's stanchion,
and for several seconds, gazed at the abyss.

There'd been times like that before, Christmas,
back in the village, with another boy, watching
the Magical Mystery Tour, the psychedelic stuff.
He'd felt her sweating, for a few seconds hoped
it was desire, then realised, checked himself,
walked her home later down the quiet lane.

Drugs, said her Uncle Ivor and the minister.
I really doubt that, said her mother,
and the teacher in Ruth's junior school.
The child has always had imagination--
sometimes some awful fears.

Howbeit. The ambulance siren
and the strawberry fields, the panics
and the demons, are history now.
She got through much of it in time,

but would never disregard, not even now,
the pit beneath our daily pavements.



Bold

The shock of green grass not so
unusual but the green stands out
like peeling paint around a stained
glass window this little shoot of bright
bold green upping its way into the world
all sparkling and green and hopeful
shooting up from the dirt below a hole
that's holding a hitching post and a
stationary horse pounded into
boards on pavement but the horse is
not attached no need it isn't
going anywhere much like the
grass upping its way into this
amusement park world
at the edge of winter
it won't survive long
most people wouldn't
here on the mountain high enough
where the trees are bare
the air frozen breath cold
but the grass is still radiant green
at least for a little while longer.

Jane Doe

Today, my heart feels like it's breaking in

two

My chest

has a dim aching.

Like my insides are in a pot,

Simmering on

l o w

on a burner of the dopemans old chipped

stove

The wood floors
creek under my feet.
As if they were asking to be cleaned.
Clean.

•
•

I can't remember the last time I felt the syllables of those words

Wrapped
Around
my b
o
d
y.

if you shined a blue light
on the skin of my bones,
it'd look like white paint splattered

a c r

oss

me.

.....

I never asked to be
Someone elses canvas

I want to scream.
Scream at the top of my lungs on the roof of a brick building,
Stretch my arms
W I D E
and let the curdling aches of my hurt be known
Because it has been too long
Too long
my mouth has been cloaked
by some
cruel impersonation of a
[mans]
hand.

My identity feels

shriveled up

Like a piece of lavender

^

Cut from the very fields it was grown in

And Slammed between the pages of the keepers

Chosen book

.....

The Spanking Lady

*Bad boys carted off to the Spanking Lady never return:
a Shanty Creek Road Urban Legend.*

Her brain cavity is an empty
five-gallon bucket. But she can body

slam a black bear. She looks a bit
like Alice the Goon from Popeye cartoons:

broad shoulders, thick feet, flat black eyes,
bald head, plump nose that swings

from her face like a swollen link
of boiled bratwurst. But she has wiry

hairs like rusty barbs of tetanus
that protrude from the moles

on her chin. Her false teeth were extracted
from a maggot-infested woodchuck

she found dead in a ditch. She wears
ragged bib overalls worn through

at the knees from creeping
up on coydogs—her meat of choice

for soups and stews. She smokes
poison ivy leaves in a corncob pipe.

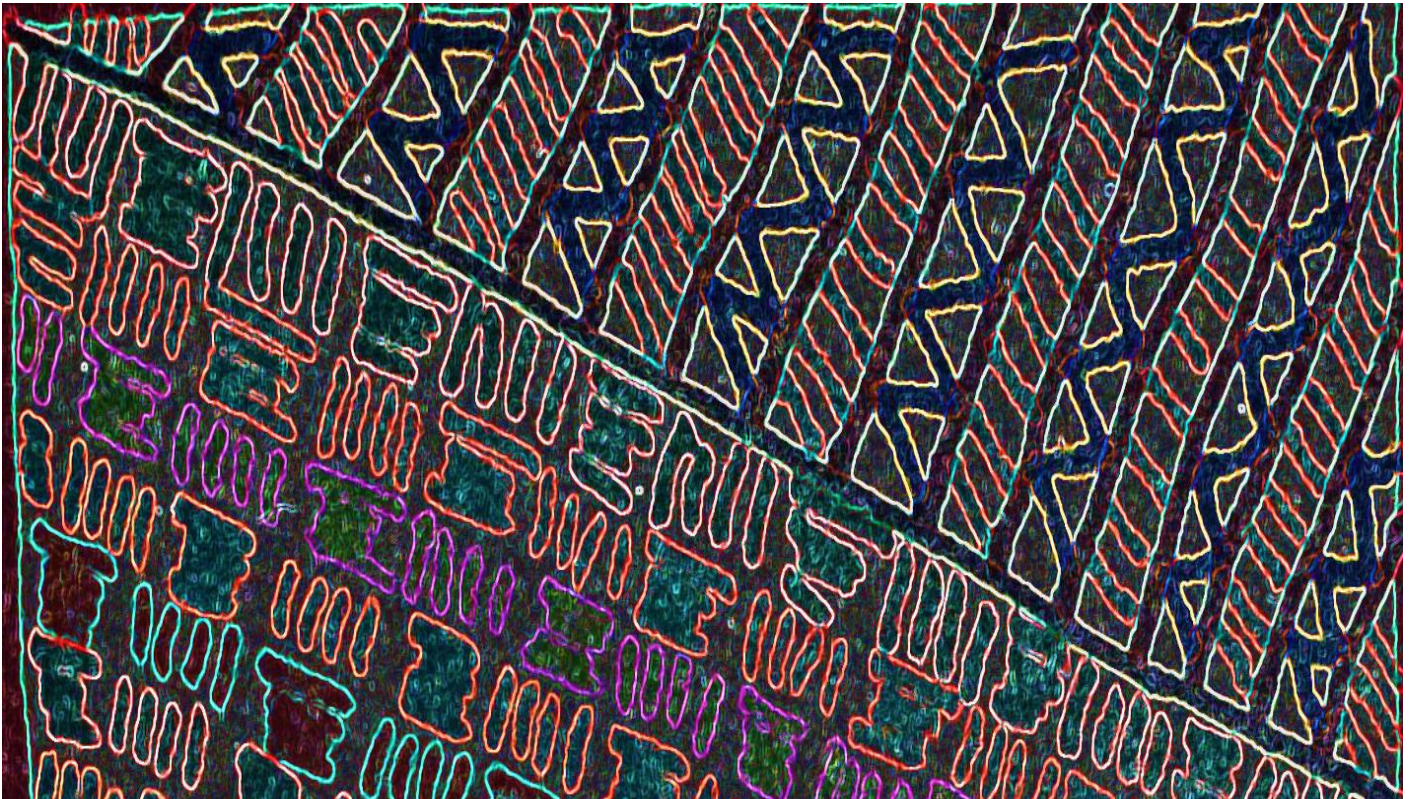
She lives someplace beyond
the old posted landfill

in a shack built out of discarded
pallets and wind-shredded

tarps near a toxic creek occupied
by two-headed muskrats—

twisted critters she whacks, whacks
with her spanking stick for practice.

A rabid bobcat is her best friend.
Delinquent boys a delicacy.



Ode to the Stars

Burning brightly, yet the coldest of lights,
Twinkling from far above our little world.
Ancient and undying, yet some long-dead
Even as their light continues to shine.
Engulfing more space than one can fathom;
To us small pinpricks on a black blanket.
Though solitary within the vast void,
They come together to form images
That leap, dance, and crawl across the night sky.

Desiderata in Autumn

My other senses jeer at the audacity of sight.
Whitman's "sniff of green leaves and dry leaves"
Is acrid smoke from leaf piles
Set aflame by old men defying the burn ban.

The crunch of leaves on the sidewalk
Under my son's shoes vexes the peace of silence.
He searches for the largest, driest leaves
That make the loudest sounds.

He crushes a prized sycamore leaf and howls.
The debris of memories raked into the corners of my mind
Will not be the piles he heaps and jumps into,
Gathering and scattering, over and over.

For now, he stomps and laughs.
I smile and say, "That was a good one!"

The Other

splashes in the pond
acknowledging my presence,
as close as it will come to saying
I once was one of its own.
The long silence accepts what I am
and what I may become.
We translate one another
without challenges; respect
a tongue rarely shared
or spoken, an unwrapped gift
celebrating the worn marks,
the edges of possibilities
returning, flowing, rising
and returning, gathering again
and flowing beyond.
One beyond the other.

Reading the Lips of the Dead

When the page does heal
there is a blue hand

emptying thimbles of blood
into a river dry once a year.

The smell of death,
the inarticulate sound,

become a white rose
in a coroner's lapel.

The stench of history.
A cold dank memory

cast off without a shudder.
Years from now

a farmer might turn his land
only to find a body

with yellow eyes,
parchment skin,

lips shaped defiantly
into a final parting word.

She's Probably Still There,

living close to the land
and the borderline, riding
her tractor, and knowing
the seasons as well as she
knows the cry of the barn
swallow and the tracks of coyotes.

She's probably still there,
fussing around her kitchen,
canning and baking pies
for the hospital fund,
her hair in ringlets,
wearing the apron that I know really
well, the one with a pattern of blue jays
and robins.

And perhaps she is so busy that I'm not
only out of sight and out of mind,
but gone completely, like the first frost
that leaves when the sun rises, and sneaks
away with the coming of the day.

Contributors

Joe Albanese is a writer from South Jersey. His fiction, nonfiction, and poetry have been published in 12 countries. Joe is the author of *Benevolent King*, *Caina*, *Candy Apple Red*, *For the Blood is the Life*, *Smash and Grab*, and a poetry collection, *Cocktails with a Dead Man*.

In 1998, **Christopher Barnes** won a Northern Arts writers award. In July 2000 he read at Waterstones bookshop to promote the anthology *Titles Are Bitches*. Christmas 2001 he debuted at Newcastle's famous Morden Tower doing a reading of poems. Each year he read for Proudwords lesbian and gay writing festival and partook in workshops. 2005 saw the publication of his collection *LOVEBITES*, published by Chanticleer Press, 6/1 Jamaica Mews, Edinburgh. In August 2007, he made a film called 'A Blank Screen, 60 seconds, 1 shot' for Queerbeats Festival at The Star & Shadow Cinema Newcastle, reviewing a poem . . . see www.myspace.com/queerbeatsfestival. He has also written Art Criticism for *Peel* and *Combustus* magazines.

Kelli Short Borges writes, "A former reading specialist and forever reading enthusiast, I enjoy hiking the Arizona foothills, photography, and traveling the world in search of adventure. My work has been recently published or is forthcoming at *Across the Margin*, *WOW! Women on Writing*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, *Bright Flash Literary Review*, and *Drunk Monkeys*, amongst other journals."

Gray Campbell has published drama in *Phantom Drift: A Journal of New Fabulism*, an illustrated poem (with the artist Julian Witts) in *Glint*, and poetry in *Screen Door Review: Queer Voices of the New South*. He works as an adjunct professor of English at Baruch College (City University of New York), St. John's University, and anywhere else he's lucky enough to find a teaching gig.

Poet-translator **Lorraine Caputo**'s works appear in over 300 journals on six continents; and 19 collections of poetry – including *On Galápagos Shores* (dancing girl press, 2019). She has been nominated for the Best of the Net. Ms Caputo journeys through Latin America, listening to the voices of the pueblos and Earth.

Michael Cooney has published poetry in *Badlands*, *Second Chance Lit*, *Bitter Oleander*, *Big Picture Review* and other journals. His short stories have appeared recently in *Sundial Magazine*, *Bandit Fiction*, and *Cerasus*. He has taught in NYC high schools and community colleges and currently facilitates a writing workshop on Zoom.

Larry O. Dean was born and raised in Flint, Michigan. His numerous books include *Muse*, *Um* (forthcoming), *Frequently Asked Questions* (forthcoming), *Activities of Daily Living* (2017), and *Brief Nudity* (2013). *Product Placement*, the sophomore album from his band, The Injured Parties, was released August 2019. For more info: larryodean.com. Larry writes that this poem was "edited/manipulated/modified from public-facing summaries of the shows employing Oulipian techniques utilizing systematic, self-restricting means of making texts."

Laine Derr, who currently lives in a landscape – free and quiet, holds an MFA from Northern Arizona University and has published interviews with Carl Phillips, Ross Gay, Ted Kooser, and Robert Pinsky. Recent work appears or is forthcoming from *Antithesis*, *ZYZZYVA*, *Portland Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Prairie Schooner*, and elsewhere.

Michael Estabrook has been publishing his poetry in the small press since the 1980s. He has published over 20 collections, a recent one being *The Poet's Curse, A Miscellany* (The Poetry Box, 2019). Retired now writing more poems and working more outside, he just noticed two Cooper's hawks staked out in the yard or rather above it which explains the nerve-wracked chipmunks. He lives in Acton, Massachusetts.

George Freek's poetry has appeared in numerous poetry journals and reviews. His poem "Written At Blue Lake" was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *Sheepshead Review*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, and *Hollins Critic*. Latest books--*Leaves On Pages*, *Memory Outside The Head*, and *Guest Of Myself*--are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in *Ellipsis*, *Blueline*, and *International Poetry Review*.

Lucy Jayes has fostered a love of writing since she was old enough to hold a pen. She graduated with a degree in English Literature from the University of Kentucky in 2014. During college, she interned for *Ace Weekly* magazine with a primary focus on covering local events and happenings in the food and beverage industry in Lexington. Upon graduating, she moved to Denver, CO, and worked in nonprofit fundraising and event planning and as a conference manager and journalist for a trade magazine covering the legal cannabis industry. She is a firstyear MFA student at the University of Kentucky and focused on Creative Nonfiction writing.

Frank Jousen is a German teacher and writer. His publications include five book projects, published in India, Germany, and Romania. His poems and short stories have also been published in literary magazines and anthologies in India, Australia, G.B., Eire, Germany, Romania, Malta, the U.S.A., Canada, India, China, Thailand, and Japan.

Harsimran Kaur is a seventeen-year-old author of *The Best I Can Do Is to Write My Heart Out*, *I am Perfectly Imperfect*, and *Clementines on My Poetry Table*. Currently a senior in high school, she is a record holder under the India Book of Records and Asia Book of Records for her first publication at fourteen. She is also the founder of Pastlores, an online club dedicated to literature, and an arts organization called The Creative Zine. When she's not writing or reading, she can often be seen teaching invisible students. You can know more about her ventures at www.harsimranwritesbooks.com/.

Samo Kreutz lives in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Besides poetry (which he has been writing since he was eight years old), he writes novels, short stories, and haiku. He is the author of ten books in Slovene and one in English (a haiku book titled *The Stars for Tonight*, which was published by Cyberwit.net from India). His recent work has appeared on international websites (and journals), such as *The Big Windows Review*, *Taj Mahal Review*, *Ink Sweat & Tears: The poetry and prose webzine*, *Haiku Commentary*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *First Literary Review- East*, *Dwelling Literary*, *Ariel Chart*, and others.

Cameron Morse is Senior Reviews editor at *Harbor Review* and the author of eight collections of poetry. His first collection, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best

Book Award. His latest is *The Thing Is* (Briar Creek Press, 2021). He holds an MFA from the University of Kansas City-Missouri and lives in Independence, Missouri, with his wife Lili and (soon, three) children. For more information, check out his Facebook page or website.

Robert Nisbet is a Welsh poet whose work has appeared widely in Britain where he was shortlisted for the Wordsworth Trust Prize in 2017 and in the USA where he has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize (twice) and a Best of the Net award.

LB Sedlacek has had poems and stories published in a variety of journals and zines. Some of her poetry books are *Swim* (Alien Buddha Press), *I'm No ROBOT* (Cyberwit), *Happy Little Clouds* (Guerilla Genesis Press), *Simultaneous Submissions* (Cyberwit), and *Words and Bones* (Finishing Line Press). Her first short story collection, *Four Thieves of Vinegar & Other Short Stories*, came out on Leap Day 2020 from Alien Buddha Press. She also served as a Poetry Editor for *ESC! Magazine* and published the free resource for poets, *The Poetry Market Ezine*, from 2001-2020. In her free time, LB likes to swim, read, and attempt to play the ukulele.

Norsa Shkud is a survivor of human trafficking. She is currently working on her memoir. Shkud is a pre-med student.

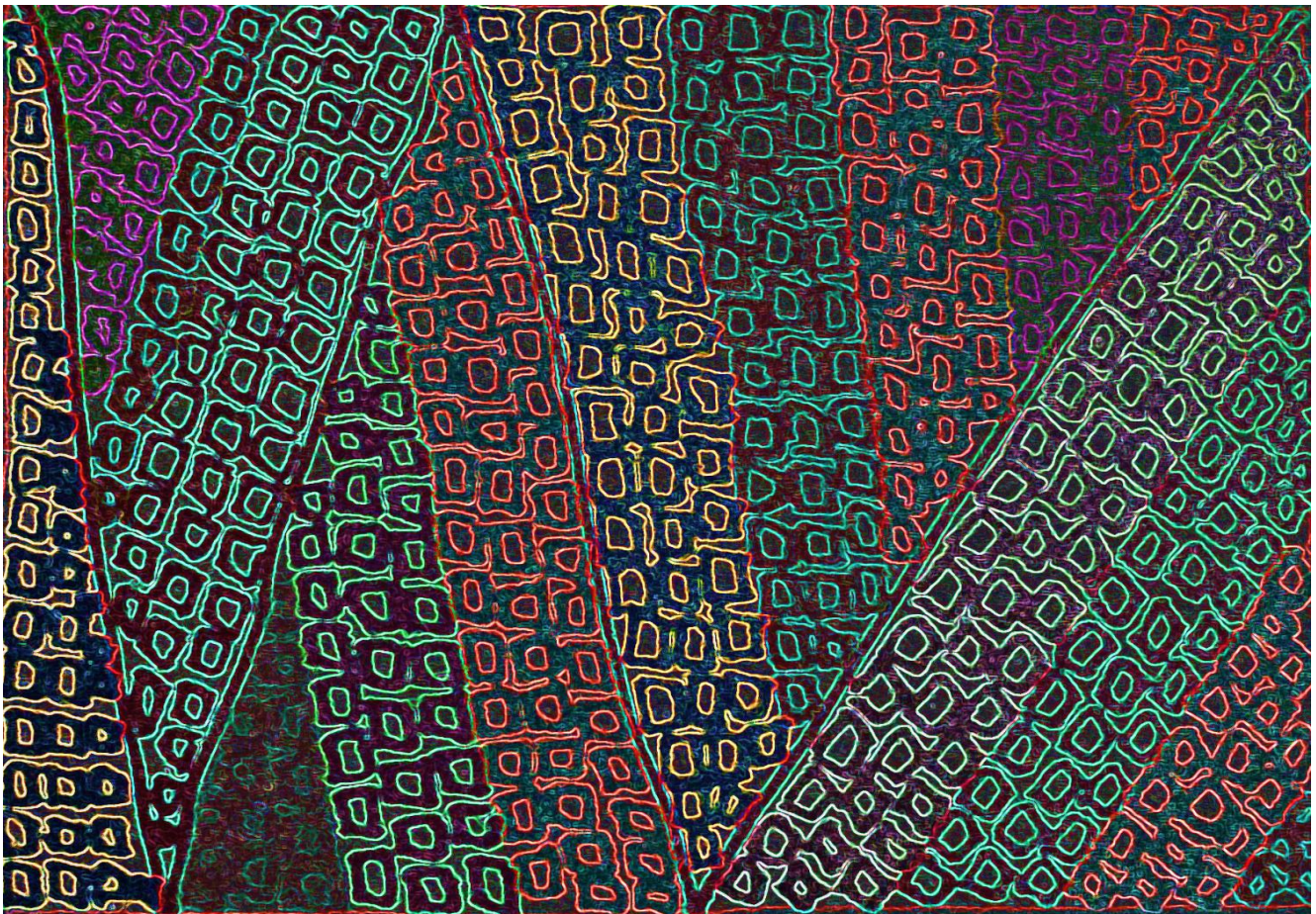
Steven M. Smith is the author of the poetry collection *Strongman Contest* (Kelsay Books, 2021). His poems have appeared in *The American Journal of Poetry*, *The Worcester Review*, and *Rattle*. He is the Writing Center director at the State University of New York at Oswego. He lives in North Syracuse, New York.

Jessica Spaeth is a poet and college student from the Chicago suburbs. She has a passion for reading, bubble tea, and writing, and she uses poetry as a means of escaping the stress of her classes.

Stephen Spencer is Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Shepherd University. In his thirty-year career in higher education, he has served as an English professor, Fulbright Fellow in Spain, and administrator at four institutions. He has always been passionate about teaching literature and has published creative and scholarly work in numerous journals and books.

Richard Weaver hopes to once again volunteer with the Maryland Book Bank, CityLit, the Baltimore Book Festival, and return as the writer-in-residence at the James Joyce Pub. Other pubs: *FRIGG*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Mad Swirl*, *Southern Quarterly*, *Adelaide*, *Dead Mule*, *Magnolia Review*, and *Elsewhere* (now defunct). He's the author of *The Stars Undone* (Duende Press, 1992), and provided the libretto for a symphony, *Of Sea and Stars* (2005), performed 4 times to date. More recently, his 150th prose poem was published.

Neal Zirn has been published in numerous journals in the United States and Canada, including *Blueline*, *Mudfish*, *Nerve Cowboy*, *The Dalhousie Review*, and *Main Street Rag*. He has placed seven times in the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Contest. His chapbook, *Manhattan Cream*, was published by MuscleHead Press.







Joe Albanese
Christopher Barnes
Kelli Short Borges
Gray Campbell
Lorraine Caputo
Michael Cooney
Larry O. Dean
Laine Derr
Michael Estabrook
George Freek
John Grey
Lucy Jayes
Frank Joussen
Harsimran Kaur
Samo Kreutz
Cameron Morse
Robert Nisbet
LB Sedlacek
Norsa Shkud
Steven M. Smith
Jessica Spaeth
Stephen Spencer
Richard Weaver
Neal Zirn