

The Big Windows Review

Issue 32 Summer 2023



***The Big Windows Review* is a publication of the
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and short (500 words or less) prose.**

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Nov. 12, New England

A summer's green explosion half gone now, October's yellows and oranges a fallen, wind-blown memory, bulldozed by a bevy of browns, withered, weathered brown leaves dangling, dancing in the wind; trimmed brown stalks, rows and rows, chestnut, khaki, desert sand, a kaleidoscope of dying, drooping, decaying browns, yet still pricked with dots of green, somehow; among peeling light brown bark, the paperbark maple shedding, yet still sturdy and stark, amidst a graying, cold, looming sky; the common box, aka boxwood, aka *Buxus Sempervirens*, an anomaly, spindly branches, tear drop leaves, all green, forever, a contrast to the browning all around, the crumbling, the dying summer wave; the prairie dock, a now ugly duckling, a brownish, spindly oddity reaching skyward, yet somehow, somehow, hosting a single, green, leafy pancake, still thinking/wishing it was July; wilting, almost-wintering;

The moldering and soggy brown leaves, crumpled and torn and bug begotten, dotting the still-green lawn, a poor pastel pond amidst the browning shore, the rotting, the atrophying, yet still guarded by the giant forever greens, the spruces, the firs, the pines, the balsam and fraser firs, even the regal emerald green arborvitae, all standing tall, protecting the dicots and friends, still an orangy-brown polka dot presence, alongside the cross-hatched panorama, bare-boned branches, like an artist's thin-ink drawings, opaque, suggesting what could be, will be;

Yet buds present now (Really?), small reddish-brown-green triplets, adorning another dicot variety, it's spindly, gray arms pimpled with life; a star magnolia, from a distance, naked and gray, bare, shivering, jutting awkwardly N-S-E&W, yet upon close inspection, decomposing leaves, dried, putrified, brown-black, looking like large, shriveled dead bugs, alongside, yup, alongside, next summer's newbies, grayish buds, soft and furry, like a teeny-tiny baby chick, across the yard from a treasure flower, egg-yolk yellow, all 17 spidery petals, still erect amidst the coming

storm, alongside a single, solitary purple *Viola Wittrockiana*, aka a purple pansy, with a dot of yellow in the middle, hiding in a red bucket with dead brown leaves and twisted, decrepit, withering vines, flashing what was, what is, and what will be.



Again

Say it again
Those words you swore
You would never say again

During those late-night conversations
For years
When we would laugh
And say that it was a good thing
That we never tried to date
Because now
We could tell each other anything

During those conversations
When you told me about the ones
Who made your heart
What it had become
And I told you
That even if it wasn't going to be me
(Please let it be me)
You shouldn't give up
Cause she was out there

During the conversations
About what it all means
After you kissed my hand over brunch
And kissed my mouth
In the backseat of your truck
Like you had spent all of those years
Waiting for this moment too
Say it again
Those words you swore
You would never say again

Late on 38th

The bus is late on 38th.
I wait with two who clean houses,
our small umbrellas repelling
the rain from our heads,
our coats and shoes drenched.
One grips her handle with such force
the red of blood nearly glows,
an ember of her inner fire.
Her feet move as if organ pedals
to an unheard and lively tune.
The other stands straight as a pin
trying to hide from the squall
and wonders aloud if people
can smoke in the rain,
and I look at the first woman's hand,
fists like glowing embers,
squeeze my umbrella tighter
just above the rising hook,
and start a little shuffle,
feel my fingers burning, burning.

Lori Cramer

Forgetful

She forgot her keys, so she entered the house through the bedroom window she'd forgotten to close and, once inside, flopped onto the bed she'd forgotten to make and thought about a ballplayer she'd dated in her early 20s, contemplating whether, after all these years, he still remembered her.

You Are Here

Lately you don't remember where you are. Too many moves, too many miles. It's an endless cycle: Find a cheap place to crash, a diner with decent burgers, a local team worth watching for a few games. Don't bother unpacking. You'll soon be on the move again.



Shadrach

I say hip hop is dead
Shape it like an afro
Pull my teeth out
Ice cream truck in the neighborhood
A call for taking shots
Go down in the valley
Searching for my bid
Measure to measure
See through my eyes are believing
Getting dibs but I'm losing pay
Sniff it like glue

I'm the big fish theory
I hate myself
I create poetry that bakes
I can't be angry
I have a bodyguard
That's right I have a bodyguard
Swim in the Cadillac
Bring my camera around
Mind control over the world
See my body double
Give me a sweet kick



The people of tomorrow
The neighborhood knockers
A butterfly in the ring
Written to perform
I gave out the power
Pen and pad with a boombox
Can't live without my radio
Ride in the ship of fools
Dream the ghetto dreams
I quite fancy the oven
I'm here in the projects

Poem I Wrote While Zooming During a Poetry Session

I am
looking at Lenny D,
directly in the eyes. He's
in a Zoom box, in a poetry
session.

We chat in chat. But not long enough to be rude.

I offer words to submit.
He sends me a link because
that's what you're supposed to do.

I will send poems
that will cause mild blistering.

Perhaps he'll publish one.

Charles Edwards

The Hermit

Down an endless decrepit trail
In desolate covered mountainsides
Lie remnants and tales of self-imposed isolation
In my own mind, visioning his existence
I only see religious seclusion
Wrapped with a hint of perseverance
In a solitary life renouncing worldly concerns...

My perception of a mangy, gray, long-haired fellow
Something next to extremely weird
Deliberate, sensitive and mellow
Running dirty fingers about his beard
His intentions only of survival
Cultivated from a dark social past
Bushy eyebrows, eyes of fire, a heart of gold
Most certain, a communal outcast...

Basic instincts cultivating this land
Forging bonds with a higher power
Alone, not lonely, a spiritual stand
Existing solely in hushed silence
Communicating among sacred tones
Finding excuses for his disposition
Socially inept, chilling to the bone
Ghastly suffering years of dissolution...



Calloused strong hands carry the burden
Leaving little room for comfort
Desires for solitude overcome
Worldly and selfish aspiration
Somewhere between reclusive and torn
A creative creature is born
His heart is thirsty and yearning
For a life of super-natural conviction...



Joseph Farley

Ubi Sunt, Ubi Sent

The internet exists
To teach us
All things
Are transitory,
Posted today
And gone
Within
So many months,
Or edited,
Changed,
Along with our
Memories.

Was any of it
Ever really there,
Those words
And news stories?

Or was it all
Just another dream,
Vivid in the moment,
But impossible
To remember
Once the sun
Has come up?

Please call it life

To S.

Please call it life, this endless spark
Where God gives a bit of his time
To grass on Saturday morning,
And stares from a seething light
Force animals to silence-
Sure, but the thing is the moon is in shambles,
As no-one minds the days, that cyanotic blue breaking down
In a wrath sowing seeds of loss
While women smile and men hint to you that
Nights, or books won't give you shelter,
Nor will the sky, the sea, those wary right-wingers
Who frown on changes, always stay the same-
No problems, OK, if she goes on breathing
Among boulders or climbers you just stop her,
Stop gathering from the street the shreds
Of unfathomable lights, maybe chance it with God
To get a tent in the desert, and only then
Those seeds will show up,
Nevermind if she looks so frail,
Long gone are the days she would nick
Books, prophets, the underwood, and loss
Just to spicy up a life where her soul withdrew
From women going to ambush her-
Is that you, God, are you done yet?
Ok, but please stay in touch, stay tuned, God,
While she's sitting next to her, just rest your eyes
On that vibrant woman in love,



Maybe the grass in love, maybe her soul
Who can't trust summer, nor demise.



A Blessed May Day

So what day is it? May 3rd.
April showers are turned off at the faucet.
The sun is returning the blood to my cheeks.
The woman beside me is as lush
as new bloomed cyclamen, as hardy too.
My thoughts are busy, speedy, like interstates.

So we go for a drive.
Windows open, new corn fields
don't pass us but they sure do keep up.
Hair flying back, spines in concord...
grief, where did you go?
We pass farmers, cyclists,
a seventy year old jogger with leg veins like bones.

A crossroads. Which way?
Three choices... no make that ten thousand.

Left seems good enough.
Used to be the devil's path,
now it leads to a tiny village.
We buy jams from strangers.
And lemonade from a child's hand.
So what day is it?
A day when such eccentricities are allowed.
May 3rd it says minutely on my watch.
That's why it's strapped to my wrist and not my heart.



Too bad this has to end. Home now.
And the clouds are thickening, grow darker.
Rain is in the forecast though never in mine.
Still, it's May 3rd on the couch,
with the TV on, sprinkles down window,
bigger globs on roof.
It's May 3rd up to bed and soft sheets and pillows.
Don't sleep, I beg you,
until the last mile is done,
the jams put away, the lemonade
staggers senseless from the tongue.

The Perfect Woman

When in my company,
her eyes are only for me.

When I have to leave her
for another engagement
she is disappointed enough
for me to regret leaving
but not so much
that I'm obliged to stay.

Her cleanliness
gives godliness
a run for its money.

Her shoulders and her waist
provide for equal opportunity hugging.

She can beat me in some things
but not in everything.

She's sexy and comfortable
in the same breath.

Her sighs are restricted
to between the sheets.



She reads the sections
of the Sunday newspaper
that I don't.
Then we amiably switch.

She likes some music that I adore
and some that I despise.

Her perfumes have a sense of occasion.

She can love a man
even if he makes lists.

Bess

She was wearing a white button-down shirt with snap buttons, waiting for me to unsnap them. But I was shy and she was in the driver's seat. So she started unsnapping them herself. She was 18 and had her own car already, an old-fashioned Volvo named Bess. She had named it Bess because Bess was an old-fashioned name. I was barely 16 and didn't have my permit yet, but I had permission as far as the snaps. We were parked in Bess with the lights off idling in a green place somewhere in the twilight of my childhood. Its real name was the Volvo Amazon, derived from the female warriors of Greek mythology. But I don't think I knew that yet. And I don't think I knew she wasn't wearing a bra. She'd already unsnapped 2 buttons, to show me how it was done and to show me the little hollow between her breasts called cleavage, an old-fashioned word that somehow also applied to my busty grandmother living in Florida. I gingerly unsnapped the third button. Someone inhaled audibly. Maybe me. It felt like unwrapping a present that I'd only seen advertised in magazines. Suddenly she unsnapped all the buttons, impatiently ripping the wrapping paper right off. "Thank you," I whispered gratefully, then just sat there staring stupidly. Bess made a ticking sound that filled the silence. It could have been the spark plugs—you're supposed to replace them every 100,000 miles or so. Or it could have been the oil was low, or the valves were maladjusted, or the drive pulleys were worn out. What did I know about



what was going on inside of Bess, in that moment,
16 years old, stupidly staring, something like time, ticking.



Coffeehouse Poem #582

In a flower print dress, she
Is the belle of summer, a melody
That follows wistfully, as a scent
Along the streets of Paris
Her melody lingers like lilies
Monet painted her into dreams
Mozart made her into a song of
Night, and her smile, blooms as
Fireworks across a summer
Night

A flower of summer, she
Lives...

After

Your religion speaks
a different religion to mine,
yet they speak, they speak.

Surely, we can teach them
to learn those words
we don't understand,
those movements of hands
and mouths, of offerings
and imaginings?

And isn't that a thought
so foolish and childish
that only a religion could
shape it into being, or
even hold up into the light
and claim that it is not nonsense,

or, perhaps, a blasphemous mind
could do so too,
simply hoping to shock
their life into some meaning
that did not exist until
some meaning was needed,
as meaning is needed
in this suddenly quiet existence of mine?

“Art Invites Disaster”

—quote by Jack Grapes

I was born into the disaster of my parents' marriage.
How could it be otherwise; he merely twenty, she
merely a year older.

Thank the gods they waited until I was ten to have another
child, so I was able to take care of him. You've read
or maybe had the experience of a group of people

standing around an exhibition of rocks. That's right, rocks,
in a museum, and the artist calls them, “Meditative Art,
the entropic principles of order and decay.”

My mother gathered rocks and built a shrine in a corner
of our living room. Eventually, it wasn't enough
and she purchased a salamander thinking it a perfect home,

then forgot to feed it. We never found the poor creature,
and us children, we refused to die from neglect. Mother
sang a song no one understood, notes off key,

some haunting melody only she found harmonic.
We grew, walked the rough path of puberty,
finding our way between concepts of construction

versus deconstruction, and left to our natural forces,
we waited to tear down or tear ourselves apart.
Yet, here we still are, old by anyone's standards.

Maltese wine

a night like jewelry at a funeral (black, lights,
you get it, etc) and a bitter glass of red maltese
cabernet sauv – the last bottle, brought
from the airport from malta
because we thought what they sold there
would have to be good. turns out it's garbage:
quite light, and I don't hate a red
which lacks body automatically,
but you need a full mouthful
to detect any flavour – my wife took a sip,
made a face and retired to bed.
anyway, a kind of occasion to have it –
tomorrow their first daughter's christening!
(sorry – explanation: we bought the wine coming
home after their destination wedding six months ago
and since gotten married ourselves). I raise up a toast
by myself with a glass in the kitchen between
writing poems. I'm barefoot, my socks outside
dripping with piss from the dog who's gone old
and loose-bladdered. to saoirse,
celine and to thomas I say, and then with index
fingers I type out this poem. I try to get everything
relevant into it – talk mainly of wine though
and how I don't like it, and don't even mention
how sick the dog's been since the kennels.

There's a Nest in the Purple-Flowered Tree

Sore throats and ear infections, stomach
flu, dislocated collar bones, one broken arm,

chickenpox, a brain tumor, injuries on bikes,
skates, Flexi-flyers, car accidents, trampled-on

feelings, and from none of these was I able
to protect my children despite my vigilance,

so yes, I understand the mockingbird's
fierce guarding—his swoop from the roof

to nip the dog's ear, racing across the brick
fence when we open the gate by the tree—

those are his babies he's keeping safe,
and he has yet to find it's impossible.

I can send the dog out back, and we can
use our side entrance, but I can't help him

with the hawk crouched on top
of the lamp post or the crows circling the yard.

There will always be a cat
sitting beneath the purple-flowered tree.

Bittersweet Rain

When the sky
opens
it cries
for the ones
we've lost.
When the rain
pours
it releases
our hidden
pain.
Raindrops
mingle
with bitter
tears.
Rivers flow
from
our eyes
our cheeks
our souls.
It cleanses us
heals us
soothes us
in our grief.

Royal Rhodes

Mackerel

the sea gave up
its shadow makers,
the clumped groups
of darting silver and stripes.

their contours of skin
slip surface tones
like crumpled foil
holding Nova Scotia light.

arranged head by tail
they do not lose tints
that invented them—
why God created color.

the painter has made us
want to touch exposed
flesh, until we feel
the cold from existing depths.

that sea, being older
than us, held them fast
until they found the net
and were hauled up alive

into a different world,
the one we thought we knew.

I work

with those
who have
survived
war and I
have too,
but it's
important
that I do
not see

myself
in them,
because
I am not
there to be
counseled
but to
counsel,
to listen

to war,
how it
cuts from
this hurt
to that,
from this
loss to
that, from
this loss



of arm to
that leg
now that
is gone
and I find
the hours
are soon
gone and
the people

are gone
and I am
left alone
in this tiny
office room
where war
echoes so
soft and I
close my

eyes at
the end
of the day
and I send
out softer
prayers
to this
hard hurt
of world.

Sacrificial Stone on Mount Shaw

Either time has buried it, or no stone
was ever there, save in stories—
like the sasquatch reported to yowl away
each lonely night on slopes nearby.

Some still search, perhaps to feel
connection with older, better formalities
indigenous people knew,
to appease the Destroyer of Worlds.

Or else, at almost three thousand feet,
Shaw itself is the stone; ascent
a sacrifice of thanksgiving for heights
from which death looks a little thing—

down in the valley, where our miniscule
spires concede religion to be remote
from the terrain of hills, the enigmatic
code of the constellations.

Some would offer a flower they picked,
or a painted shell. Others might
just walk humbly out onto the summit;
show kindness upon return.

Five poems

in the black box of the plane is stored the black night of the soul
we are not born on this day
we are not dead this day
we are not alive today
we are in eternal night in a dispute with God and Lucifer

the bird became foliage and flew away
what can the human soul compare to a bird?
we were born in silence by the trees
we were born in the foliage of whitman grass
we were born in the same body
we were born for hope

bird on a wire
church for parishioners

temple of nature

without walls
without years



snow says goodbye to me
I am silent
I melt with
the snow

the city is hunting for my footprints
I run underground

I am running
I am underground

Teatime

Staring out the window
with a cup of tea pressed hard
against her cheek as if the heat
were an emotion she could feel,
she fixed her gaze upon a spot
of absence from her pain. A middle
distance where her eyes could rest
before returning to the chore of living;
to the housework and the children
and the dark inside the room.
I knew enough to let her be
but not enough to understand
how she could sit there
with that cup in hand
just staring; not until the
day still years away
I began to crave that
drink myself.

Allen Seward

even the TV static sounds like music to us now

the earth is in ruin
and my hair falls out.

good god, the line is so long!

the air smells like hot breath
and everywhere around me,
wherever I look, is just flesh flesh flesh.

we've turned a corner,

we've put a brick on the gas,

we've juiced the last dinosaur
and something is next.

we turn our eyes
toward a worried face
with
murderous intent.

"you there! yes! you!!"

they run. we run after.

this soup has all become slop,
and it's no wonder no one
wants to taste it.



eat from my ribcage. drink from my wrist.

good god,
we've been at this for what seems
like
forever!

even the TV static sounds like music
to us now!



Intimations of Intimation

The sky is blue.
The air is clear and cold.
The red tails are whistling across the lake.

I have the feeling that if I stand out here
long enough I will have the feeling
some great truth will make itself known to me.

It will not be the blue truth of the sky,
although it will also be that.
It will not be the clear cold truth of the air,

although it will also be that.
It will not be the whistling truth of the red tails
across the lake, although it will also be that.

It will be more than that,
this great truth I have a feeling
I will have a feeling about if I stand out here long enough.

It will be more than
these intimations of intimation,
more than this pale imitation of imitation.

i have postpartum depression

my newest child looks out from
a lotus of pillows

patiently waits for communion
promised to them by the cosmos.

i break from writing—
become mother

go to him, my body
a crescent over his,

making all the usual sounds,
we coo to each other in dub

the low slush of love
in this sopping orbit of ours.

his tiny clam hands
close over one of mine—

with my other hand i reach
for the black toiletry bag

that holds the pills i need
to continue feeling this way.

Contributors

Peter Aronson, a former journalist and still-practicing attorney, writes short stories, children's books, essays and screenplays. His most recent book, *Mandalay Hawk's Dilemma: The United States of Anthropocene*, about kids fighting global warming, was published in December 2021. His short fiction has been published by *Coachella Review*, *Commuter Lit*, *Shark Reef*, *Potato Soup Journal*, *Bright Flash Literary Review*, and *The Big Windows Review*.

Jodie Baeyens is a single-mother, poet and teaches to support her writing habit. When she isn't trying to find the pen, she was just holding, she can be found in the forest dancing beneath the full moon. Originally hailing from New York, she now considers herself a citizen of the world because she has never settled into one place. Her poetry has recently been featured in *Door is a Jar* and in *Peregrine's Fall Journal*. Her forthcoming chapbook, *Conversations We Never Had*, was the Winner of the 2022 Vibrant Poet Award. Follow her writing at www.Mylifeincoffeespoons.com or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Mylifeincoffeespoons.

Jeff Burt lives in Santa Cruz County, California, with his wife. He has contributed to *Willows Wept Review*, *Heartwood*, *Bluebird Word*, and *Gold Man Review*.

Lori Cramer's short prose has appeared in *Blink-Ink*, *Fictive Dream*, *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine*, *(mac)ro(mic)*, *Whale Road Review*, and elsewhere. Her work has been nominated for Best Microfiction. Links to her writing can be found at <https://loricramerfiction.wordpress.com>. Twitter: @LCramer29.

Jakima Davis writes, "I made my poetry debut in 2000 at the age of 16. I've been published in underground publications. I've been published in "The PEN," "Street Value," "Big Hammer," and "Full Moon Poetry," among others. Published three chapbooks; one in 2016 and two in 2021. As of now, I'm posting my poems on Facebook to gain a fanbase."

John Dorroh's first poem was scribbled in his mother's red lipstick on the bathroom walls. Perhaps his poetry has evolved since then. His poetry has popped up in over 125 journals such as *Feral*, *Pinyon*, *The Big Windows Review*, *River Heron*, and *Pif*. He had two chapbooks published in 2022.

Charles Edwards, born and raised in Chicago, a long-time Californian, retired/widowed, has been writing poetry for several years. His first two publications appear in *October Hill Magazine*, as well as *BlazeVOX*, *The Blue Nib*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Calla Press*, *The Voices Project*, and Vagabond Books.

Joseph Farley edited *Axe Factory*, *Paper Airplane*, *Cynic Book Reviews*, *Poetry Chain Letter*, and other literary zines. He has eleven books and chapbooks of poetry out there including *Suckers*, *Longing for the Mother Tongue*, and *Her Eyes*. His fiction books include *For the Birds* (stories), *Farts and Daydreams* (stories), and *Labor Day* (novel). His work has appeared in *Bindweed*, *US 1 Worksheets*, *Mad Swirl*, *BlazeVox*, *Crack the Spine*, *The Writing Disorder*, *LummoX* anthologies, *Horror Sleaze Trash*, *Schlock*, *Home Planet News Online*, *Wilderness House Review*, *Oddball*, *Big Window*, *Ink Pantry*, and many other places.

Born in Italy some decades ago, **Gabriella Garofalo** fell in love with the English language at six, started writing poems (in Italian) at six and is the author of these books: "Lo sguardo di Orfeo"; "L'inverno di vetro"; "Di altre stelle polari"; "Casa di erba"; "Blue Branches"; "A Blue Soul."

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *Sheepshead Review*, *Stand*, *Washington Square Review*, and *Floyd County Moonshine*. Latest books, *Covert*, *Memory Outside The Head*, and *Guest Of Myself* are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in the *McNeese Review*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, and *Open Ceilings*.

Paul Hostovsky's latest book of poems is *Mostly* (FutureCycle Press, 2021). He has won a Pushcart Prize, two Best of the Net Awards, and has been featured in *Poetry Daily*, *Verse Daily*, and *The Writer's Almanac*. Website: paulhostovsky.com

Erren Kelly writes, “I am a Two-Time Pushcart nominated poet from Lynn, Massachusetts. I have been writing for 32 years and have over 300 publications in print and online in such publications as *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Mudfish*, *Poetry Magazine* (online), *Ceremony*, *Cacti Fur*, *Bitterzoet*, *Cactus Heart*, *Similar Peaks*, *Gloom Cupboard*, *Poetry Salzburg*, and other publications. My most recent publication was in *Pyrokinecton Literary Journal*; I have also been published in anthologies such as *Fertile Ground* and *Beyond the Frontier*. My work can also be seen on YouTube under the “Gallery Cabaret” links. I am also the author of the book *Disturbing the Peace*, from NightBallet Press.”

Edward Lee’s poetry, short stories, non-fiction and photography have been published in magazines in Ireland, England and America, including *The Stinging Fly*, *Skylight 47*, *Acumen*, *The Blue Nib*, and *Poetry Wales*. His play *Wall* received a rehearsed reading as part of Druid Theatre’s Druid Debuts 2020. He also makes musical noise under the names Ayahuasca Collective, Orson Carroll, Lego Figures Fighting, and Pale Blond Boy. His blog/website can be found at <https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>

Stellasue Lee was a host of WordStream at WDVX, Knoxville, TN. She was founding editor of RATTLE, and is now editor Emerita. Dr. Lee received her PhD from Honolulu University. Winner of The Grand Prize of Poetry to Aide Humanity by Al Falah in Malaysia, she now teaches privately and has students all over the globe.

DS Maolalai has been nominated eleven times for Best of the Net, eight for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in three collections, most recently *Sad Havoc Among the Birds* (Turas Press, 2019) and *Noble Rot* (Turas Press, 2022)

Victoria Melekian lives in Carlsbad, California. Her stories and poems have been published in print and online anthologies. She’s twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. For more, visit her website: <https://victoriamelekian.com/>

Sarah M. Prindle received an Associates in English from Northampton Community College. She loves reading everything from historical fiction and memoirs to poetry and mysteries. She hopes to someday publish her own novels and poetry

collections and has already had her work published in several literary magazines and websites.

Royal Rhodes, poet and educator, taught courses on global religions and death & dying for almost 40 years. His poems have appeared in numerous literary journals, including: *The Lyric*, *Abandoned Mine*, *Sparks of Calliope*, *The Montreal Review*, *Dreich*, *Snakeskin Poetry*, and elsewhere.

Ron Riecki's books include *Blood/Not Blood Then the Gates* (Middle West Press, poetry), *My Ancestors are Reindeer Herders and I Am Melting in Extinction* (Loyola University Maryland's Apprentice House Press, hybrid), *Posttraumatic* (Hoot 'n' Waddle, nonfiction), and *U.P.* (Ghost Road Press, fiction). Right now, Riecki's listening to Stromae's "Formidable."

Seven-time Pushcart Prize nominee **Russell Rowland** writes from New Hampshire's Lakes Region, where he has judged high-school Poetry Out Loud competitions. His work appears in *Except for Love: New England Poets Inspired by Donald Hall* (Encircle Publications), and *Covid Spring, Vol. 2* (Hobblebush Books). His latest poetry book, *Wooden Nutmegs*, is available from Encircle Publications.

Mykyta Ryzhykh writes, "I'm from Ukraine. Winner of the international competition «Art Against Drugs», bronze medalist of the festival Chestnut House, laureate of the literary competition named after Tyutyunnik. Nominated for Pushcart Prize. Published in the journals *Dzvin*, *Ring A*, *Polutona*, *Rechport*, *Topos*, *Articulation*, *Formaslov*, *Colon*, *Literature Factory*, *Literary Chernihiv*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Stone Poetry Journal*, *Divot journal*, *dyst journal*, *Superpresent Magazine*, *Allegro Poetry Magazine*, *Alternate Route*, *Better Than Starbucks Poetry & Fiction Journal*, *Littoral Press*, *Book of Matches*, on the portals *Literary Center* and *Soloneba*."

Donald Sellitti is retired after a thirty-eight-year career in research and teaching at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, MD. He has published extensively in medical journals, and has recently had poems published in *Autumn Sky*, *Snakeskin*, *Better than Starbucks*, and others. A recent poem in *Rat's Ass Review* was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Allen Seward is a thirty-something poet-thing and mill worker. His work has appeared in *Scapegoat Review*, *DEDpoetry*, and *JAKE*, and his chapbook *sway condor* is available on Amazon thanks to Alien Buddha Press. He currently resides in WV with his partner and three cats.

Professor Emeritus of English at SUNY Orange, **J.R. Solonche** has published poetry in more than 500 magazines, journals, and anthologies since the early 70s, including *The New Criterion*, *The New York Times*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The American Scholar*, *The Progressive*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Salmagundi*, *The Literary Review*, *The Sun*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Poet Lore*, *Poetry East*, *The Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *Free Verse*. He is the author of several books, including *Invisible* (nominated for the Pulitzer Prize by Five Oaks Press); *The Porch Poems* (Deerbrook Editions, 2020 Shelf Unbound Notable Indie Book); *Piano Music* (nominated for the Pulitzer Prize by Serving House Books); *Selected Poems 2002-2021* (nominated for the National Book Award by Serving House Books); and *The Lost Notebook of Zhao Li* (Dos Madres Press, nominated for the Pulitzer Prize).

Tanya Tuzeo is a librarian and mother to two children and two collections of unpublished poetry, *We Live in Paradise* and *Miserable People*. Presented here is from the latter, a merciless observation of intergenerational trauma; a family wounded by mental illness in a post-war, post-truth society and yet continues to limp along, sustained by the vestiges of love and forged bonds. Her work appears in various literary publications, is a finalist in the *Atlanta Review* International Poetry Contest 2022 and longlisted in *Frontier Poetry's* Nature & Place prize.



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