

BURNINGWORD

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Elizabeth Curley

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PAUL RABINOWITZ



Searching Our Muse

The Gristle of Love

POETRY

Months after I had cleared her clothes from our apartment and delivered them to a homeless shelter as was her wish, I drove to our cabin in the mountains to gather her last shirts and sweaters, socks and tights, sneakers and slippers. I was weary of all the searching, finding, sorting, folding. Weary even of the touching. I could not stomach one more trip for charity. Death, you see, had made me a coward. I just jammed everything in three thirty-gallon black plastic bags, which I tied off tightly, left for next morning pick-up at the end of the driveway, flanked by six-foot banks of ice-skinned snow. An hour's nap later I saw through the window that crows had come, torn open the bags, dragged their contents all over, confused perhaps by wisps of sweat and perfume, thinking who in his right mind would put anything but chicken bones and pizza crust in such beguiling sacks. One had her lace panties in its beak, shaking it like a battle flag. Another was chewing the sleeve of her pineapple tee shirt. A third was back at the bags, manically scrounging for more. I walked out calmly with a shovel. The birds flew away. I had visions of leaving it all for a next storm to bury, re-collecting the debris after spring thaw and burning it into a biblical pillar of smoke, soaking the ashes in the stream out back. Instead, I climbed the crusted banks, roamed the neighbors' yards and snowbound streets, picked up the pieces, placed and cinched them in new bags, left them as before. The birds came again and again. Again and again I gathered, each time working more slowly, each time the pieces smaller. Until the sun was gone and I stood by the last bags I owned, slightly less full. I stood there all night, the crows laughing and I laughing back, their amber eyes flashing in the new moon dark, neither stupid nor cruel, though I had thought them both. At first light, men with boots and gloves came in a green truck. One said Good Morning. Another took the bags away.

Night Blooms

POETRY

Dig down deep enough and you'll find night blooms—
blue-dusked petals casting runes under forgotten

garden reaches, ink-black petals spooning clotted soil
into ever-shrouded stars, an ever-blackening sun

wheeling through dark spines and peat-stained teeth.
Lift dirt-caked, delicate slips. Lift mold and root.

Their voices promise neither clarity nor opacity,
offer only a clearing aside of what's given, what's

taken away. Their faces mirror each other and yet
are never themselves, never others buried further

down the road. Dig them up and take them home.
Sit on moon-filled porch steps cradling ochre and

vermillion pooling on your skin, and they'll bloom
the simple hierarchies of heaven—untouched

and unseen, tasteless and silent, back to the deepest
shadow under the loam, back to the first still breath.

The Last Remaining Deity Speaks

POETRY

Having ousted all rivals, I take possession
of suburban hostas and road-running squirrels,
and strike rare birds from recorded histories

of ponds. It is time to decommission causeways
now that the marshes have flaked. I design
the cities higher and higher on softening

foundations. I stack the insecurities of wealth,
and endorse both its guardians and armed
intruders. Whenever I like, I lift the streets

to patch the gas lines. I manage a land of millet
ground under a thumb into flour deflowered
by wind, and reroute buckets of effluvia

to a shrinking lake. I pilot the riverboats
that navigate waters between snipered cliffs,
and transport every iteration of spoiled fruit.

I standardize dejection marooned on a rugged
portage, and refit the ships that lost the Pacific
to microscopic plastic. I host a ceremonial dance

of cleats and hatchets that blends ecstatic worship
with the infant mortality rate. I beset the ancient
temples with mudslides. I put minor holidays

up for auction, and unclasp obligations so they fall
like fistfuls of worry beads. I am default, the very
last god who speaks the vernacular language.

LENA N. GEMMER



Perspective in Trees

Piano

POETRY

You moved in that summer—
a trial period, small room with a bed,
window. Ribs of black steel
pins of twine pulled taut
your hammers poised to strike
stretched strings a wide field of grain
lid a mink coat laid flat, its prop
a carved brown totem, releasing sound.
I worked on you five, six
hours a day—scales, etudes, and
Rachmaninoff's Elegie. My big-bosomed
Russian teacher pushed me to drill down
and extricate from you the purest wails
of sorrow and you let me. One day
looking out the window, I was drawn to
the tennis courts, where I met the tuba
player from the pit orchestra,
never looked back, no matter
how many times you called me Eurydice.

0 The Leaving

POETRY

I listen to U2
while the MRI machine clinks into action
and Bono croons

I still haven't found what I'm looking for,

his voice muffled by the hygienic sleeves
covering the headphones,
his words far away,
poltergeist from the past.

Eyes closed,
I see myself riding in the Mercury Sable,
traveling from Bakersfield to the Bay Area,
Santa Ana winds whipping
my hair into a frenzied halo,
the setting sun gilding
the hills on Pacheco Pass--
their curves round as sea lion heads--
the highway a gash,
the murky reservoir just one of many
promises that won't be kept.

The road ahead winds serpentine

as we sing

I still haven't found what I'm looking for

out into the night,

my restlessness the persistent backbeat

pushing us away from here,

the only place

we'd ever really feel

was home.

I can tell you now

I'd never felt so free, so alive,

ignorant of all

I was leaving behind,

though the valley below flatlined,

and the Harris Ranch cows

lowed a mournful warning

I never fully understood until

much later:

don't leave don't leave don't leave

J A H I N C L A I R E O H



Cart To Cart

RICHARD HOLINGER

featured author

RICHARD HOLINGER

Governing the Western Field

NONFICTION

Mowing the field west of the train car my grandfather bought in 1935, a retired Pullman, the “Constitution.” It perches above Rock Creek, overlooking a floodplain of thick woods where bluebells carpet the floor in spring.

I’ve waited too long. The grass, two or three feet tall, hides mounds of dirt and winter-downed branches dropped from oaks fringing the field’s perimeter. My right foot rides the Deere’s clutch continuously, my right hand on the mower’s lever to raise when hearing the blade hit wood or hillock. Duck out of the way as brambles and branches the vertical exhaust pipe catches then sweeps back at me. The first pass goes slowly, in first gear, gas levered high to speed the mower’s revolutions, my path a snail’s coil into the center, throwing what amounts to hay bubbling out like a wake behind the five-foot blade, the right front tire treading on previously mown grass. The fuzz of dust and seeds build on my naked back. Something briefly blinds an eye. The knuckles on the index finger of my left hand turning the steering wheel burns like it’s been macheted. The mower lowers to kill what poison ivy it can. I swing as close as possible to the trunks of outlying trees to cut the flora around visible and invisible roots.

There used to be beef cattle here. We’d climb the fence, the top wire barbed, and walk with our hardballs, mitts, and Louisville sluggers to the open area of the field from which we’d chase any cattle grazing there back into the woods and ravine beyond left field. We’d pitch and hit, run to first while the outfield ran down the ball, no one not stepping in cow pies, their crusted shells squished open to gooey yellow filling spreading onto the rubber bottoms and up the canvas sides of Keds. Rules were Main Man out, right field closed if not enough players, at-bat team pitches to itself, and any ball thrown to home plate

for an out can't be intentionally dropped.

Now the fence is down, the farmland's sold, and the floodplain where my brothers and farmers on horseback herded cattle up to the barns for feeding has been given to the town for a public park. Our family owns only the five acres around the train car.

A third time around mulches, somewhat, the long, bunched, pale green clumps of stems, thistles, and occasional early wildflower. The field needs raking. I'll wait for people to help me with that. It's illegal, but we'll burn the piled grass, the gray smoke giving us away. No one will bother to come. It is, after all, early spring, and nature needs to be governed.

J . V . F O E R S T E R

A Thousand Pieces of My Heart

POETRY

One morning, I found two
Varied Thrush dead, laying side by side
outside the greenhouse.

It was as if they dived into love and it killed them.
That glass house, was the only place that
felt like home to you.

I'd watch you through the window tenderly
bed broken leaves of succulents into pots
the size of your thumbs.

I believed in signs, warnings of things to come.
At its door overnight sprouted
translucent Indian Pipes.

They rose out of the crumbly soil
like alien question marks or ruffled
ended shepherds staffs.

It was as if they asked, do you know who I am,
will you love me like you loved the rose or lily,
will you pick me, vase me,

or will you discard me wary that
I may poison you
with my strange ways.

One night you came through the door
with a waltz playing on your phone.
You placed it on the coffee table,

taking me up into your arms,
dancing me around the living room
and time felt infinite, this yes, this.

Later you stood at the foot of the bed
and announced like a school boy
that you wanted to sing a song for me.

When you did, a thousand pieces of my heart
gathered together for the first time in my life,
stirring you into my forever.

Sometimes at night, I still want your back
your hip, freckled shoulders, sandy colored skin,
the way you'd say 'tuck in tight'

and I'd place my face into the warmth
between your shoulder blades wondering
if you were starting to turn

away, if you had met her, someone better,
if you were dreaming of her younger landscape
not the old desert of me.

I was a child in a fairy tale believing if you left
and came back, left and came back then you'd realize
I was the best and that you were for me and I for you.

You told me the first time you saw
my photo you fell in love
with my sadness.

When you loved me all my sadness disappeared.
When you would leave me it returned.
How many times did you create my sadness

to love me again? I did not count.
I only know you finally found someone else
who's sadness was more beautiful than mine.

Shrinking

POETRY

*Why must everyone mumble?
I read lips, but peering at a soft-talker*

*across a cave-dark room, his mouth
concealed by a jungle of facial hair...*

I feel like a doomed glacier— shrinking.
My husband tosses his stained shirt on a chair.

I glance at him in the bathroom mirror, remind him,
You aren't alone, as I pluck gray hairs

from my comb. I shed like a Persian cat.
Bones as brittle as yesterday's toast.

I've shrunk three inches in height,
lost core-strength, grip-strength, memory.

Not just names—even simple words,
common phrases. Has my brain gone soft

like some worn-out bicycle tire?
Ten years from now, will I recognize

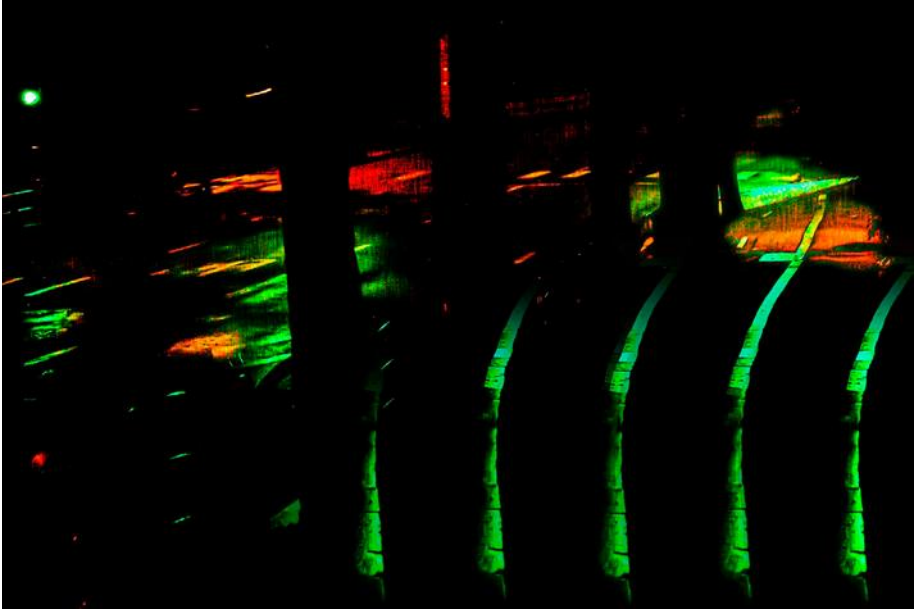
my own children, recall where I came from?
If you call my name, will I look up?

For decades I made hand-thrown pottery,
pressed my fingerprints onto vases, teapots, mugs.

Fired to white heat, my pots emerged from the flames
dressed in colors of sun-baked canyons, moon-lit lakes.

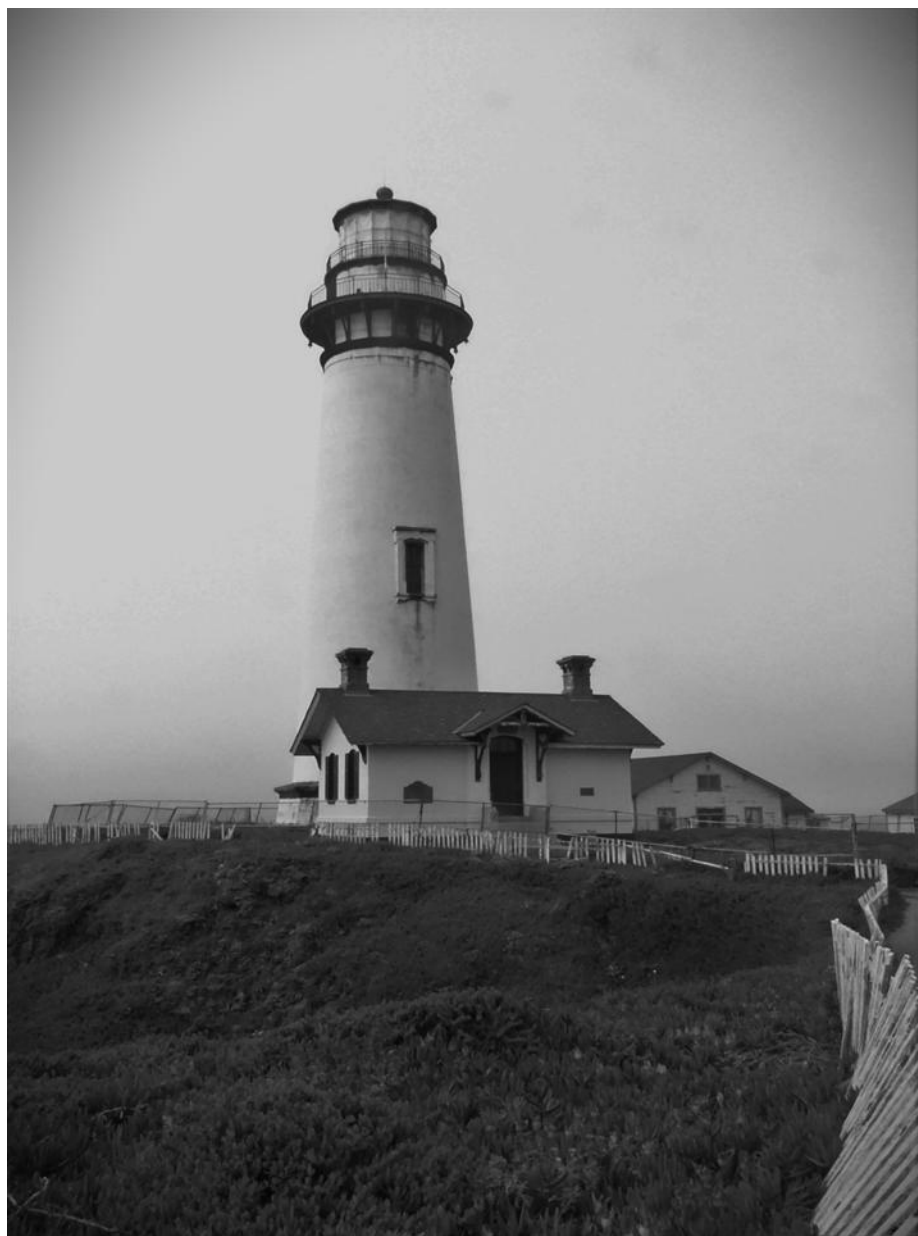
Historic artifacts, our pottery outlasts us.
Now I work at my keyboard— archeologist

on a dig into my buried past.
My future...?



Bus Stop

L E N A N . G E M M E R



Pigeon Point Lighthouse

Do You Have an Accent?

POETRY

This town has a rusted roof gas station,
a store shelf where you would find
charm and shame sitting side-by-side,
as inseparable as lovebugs,
buy-one-get-one for the last 50 years.

You can still buy a scratcher ticket - or twelve,
and sit, welcomed, on the sidewalk
with your dreams of a less-debted life,
or watch as barefoot beauties walk west to work,
carrying babies bulging with
Dollar General budget-nutrition.

Don't forget your manners if you're just visitin',
one proper and polite nod to say,
"just like my daddy did,"
to all those with their collars blue
just like the sky-paint on the gulf.

"Poor, rural, and southern",
is meant by most
to sound scary and scabbed
just like the shallow intimidation
of pitbull pups scratching and slobbering
against their chain-link boundary lines.
But to me it sure looks a lot like
lovin' and learnin' that the things
worth having take the most time,
saturating slowly like sun tea
brewin' in the porch-pitcher.

ELIZABETH CURLEY

I spent a decade patting makeup
onto the warm red tones of my neck
to conceal a crime of culture,
instead of questioning
why moving up
had to mean moving away.

These memories had a lesson for me,
like a neighbor pulling my ear
back to my mother for new wisdom,
chastising me for talking to strangers,
forgetting my manners,
and not listening to my father.

These memories are like mangrove mud,
hugging my ankles until I am stalled,
anchoring me to mindfulness of a moment
tinged with something sour,
like that sulfuric smell across the marshes,
that is hard to romanticize - yet still cues a smile,
when its rotten earthiness tells me that I am home.

It is only in this pause,
the stillness before a shifting tide,
when I can clearly recall and recite
the scripture -
the allegory of me,
and where it was written.

It was composed here;

In the nimble thank you wave,
at a neighbor kind or neglectful enough
to turn an eye as I swiped citrus slices
from yard overhangs,
to rub into my vulgar mouth,
with dirty hands.

On the sweet-wind steeped from
magnolia blooms and orange blossoms,
the perfect perfume to compliment
a blushing heat-sick face.

It was spoken over the rumble of thunder,
during the can't-miss primetime storm watch,
hurricane season 2004,
sung with the intoxicating breaths
of the gulf stream,
scented with pheromonic petrichor.

They say that one man's white trash
is another's treasured upbringing,
and through the catharsis of return,
a lowbrow renaissance,
I know both to be true.

My only infallible faith is in the
beauty visible from the gutter,
and I will celebrate each day
in the midst of a perennial
impoverished holiday,
like the Christmas lights draped
on fences, roofs, and trailer tops,
hanging on with staple-gun hugs,
all year 'round.

J I M R O S S



Siam Splash



Biltmore Ballgown Triple 2

J I M R O S S



Parakeet Flower

Kitchen Table Lament

POETRY

I miss the black wrought iron fire escape with its steps
that rattled outside the kitchen window on its way
up to the tenement roof top.

I miss the twin bed next to the kitchen table, where
my mother slept and tried to convince me (and herself)
that it was just like the sleeping alcove in an old Irish cottage.

I miss the washing machine next to the sink
that she camouflaged with a pretty table runner
and a vase of plastic daisies whenever it wasn't in use.

I miss the contact paper behind the stove that my mother changed
every now and then to convert the cracked plaster walls into
brickwork or wood grain depending on her mood and what was on sale.

I miss it all except the roaches. Not even through nostalgia's
gauziest lens could I ever miss them. Even now, fifty years later,
I would still tell those roaches to go straight to hell.

The Day Earth's Gravity Changed

POETRY

Tombstone, AZ, 1884

Beneath a black wool hood
the hanged man grins, his breath
hissing through clenched teeth
like steam from a waiting locomotive.
When the trap door dropped
he'd felt his weight plunge. Yet here
he is, hovering between crossbeam
and dirt, the day earth's gravity changed.
He wonders if he's dreaming
until he hears frantic whinnies
of horses outside the saloon
floating where they were hitched.
He feels a weight has been lifted,
that the trap door opened on a new life.
A startling moment for anyone, no doubt.
To be relieved of the reflux from long
festering regrets, the memories that
nail your shoes to the floor. Imagine
never being tormented by your
personal stage coach heist, whatever
it might be. To be cut down from
the gallows and walk away. To slap
the past's dust from your jeans.

Assessment

After "Litany" by Billy Collins

POETRY

I'm a broom and its dustpan, the sharp tip
of a long knife, watermelon, cool side

of the pillow on a muggy night. I'm the red
squirrel scrambling up a screen door, a dandelion.

I'm not gingerbread or lace of any kind;
not on collars, tatted doilies. I'm not the ocean,

prick of a cactus, a long-stemmed glass, bottle
or carafe of red wine. I fancy myself Egyptian

turquoise, a Paul Klee painting—geometrics
in soft pastels, hung on a plastered wall.

I've never been whiskers on cats, gerbils.
Not an apron—clean, maybe, never smeared

with flour, tomato sauce, greasy anything; not
the moon, though its craters are my thoughts.

I would love to be, but sadly not, the sounds
of Thelonious Monk, Johnny Mathis' croon, Barbra.

I am a branch scraping a tin roof, fall from
a skyscraper, never hitting ground, a ripe

banana turned brown overnight, coffee without
enough cream. I am, in my dreams, a queen-size

bed in the center of a room—impeccably made,
four crisp corners, blue cotton spread, a throw,

mattress firm enough to hold a life of secrets,
soft enough to burrow in, fall slowly apart.

Obviously, This Dreams Means I'm a Bad Mother

POETRY

It rains and rains and rains.
Bodies and tea pots, couches and beds, hammers and dishes
washing up in town. When it stops, I'm busy drying out,
busy shoveling out, busy salvaging what I can. So busy
I don't notice, at first, my kids' long absences from home.
I think they're afraid to stay indoors, afraid they'll again
be trapped by water, that they don't want to linger in a house
where so much was lost. Books, games, stuffed lovies,
the dog, two cats—all gone, swept away by flood waters.
I follow the kids down the dirt road, across the bridge,
up the ravine still muddy from the storms. I can't see them,
but their voices carry through the woods. They stop in a clearing
and I creep across a felled tree, drop to my knees and crawl
closer and closer to peek through the leaves. The children
are circled around a stump, focused on a green mossy nest
of miniature babies, maybe four or five of them,
three-inch wriggling squeaking tiny human beings swaddled
in torn bits of blankets from our linen closet. My kids
are holding and shushing and rocking. I feel dizzy, afraid
they'll see me, afraid they'll turn to me for help, afraid
they'll ask to keep them, and I stumble back over the log
and I run, and I run, and I run.

Falling

FICTION

A crack of thunder jolted Sarah from a dream as lightning flared, casting shadows on the bedroom walls. She blinked. A fleeting thought: secure the unfurled patio umbrella and outdoor cushions, or the storm would ruin morning brunch with her parents. Beside her, Nick snored. She slipped out of bed and left the bedroom. After living with her family in the two-story colonial for over twenty years, she navigated by the storm's light with confidence.

She descended the stairs, her bare feet sure-footed on the carpeted steps, her hand gliding lightly on the staircase rail, smooth from years of Murphy's Oil Soap buffing. Rain pelted on the roof while the wind howled through a downstairs open window. Quickening her pace, a series of lightning bursts illuminated a view of the kitchen below.

Flash.

At the counter, a side view of Powell, her nineteen-year-old son, naked. When was the last time she had seen him naked? He stood hunched behind a nude woman, her bent torso sprawled face-down on the kitchen island, his flesh pressed against hers, his large, bony hands gripping her hips. The freckled pallor of his skin contrasted against Serita's complexion as he banged her from behind, his face contorted, eyes closed.

Flash.

Long dark hair cascaded across pale granite swallowing Serita's face. She panted the softest of moans. Waifish arms extended beyond her locks. Serita's fingers gripped the opposite edge of the counter. Silver nail polish shimmered. Was metallic in fashion?

Flash.

Powell uttered a low cry, squeezed a final release as his eyelids fluttered. A tympani drum of thunder rolled. Sarah's hand broke from the railing to cover her mouth. She stopped herself from gasping, but she was unable to stop the downward, automatic motion of her feet, and when her eyes connected with her son's, she stumbled, tumbling down the last steps.



Twisted

C R I S T I N A T R A P A N I - S C O T T

Trying to Reconcile *Nurture* and Nature by the St. Vrain River

POETRY

I thought this poem might be
about children, but I found

Maxine Cumin's collection *Nurture*
as I sifted through piles of books,

the title which implies children
but isn't about children at all

and anyway, I keep calling the book *Nature*
because I do that. I see a word

and read it as another,
change one letter in my mind,

superimpose what's not there,
and let's be honest, what's not

in the title is here as I sit
on a deck that overlooks

the St. Vrain River, the sound
of water caught somewhere

between its potential of thunderous
rushing and the quick patter

of rain falling from the edge of the eaves,
the latter the only sound of water

this girl might really know,
and I *do* believe I must have changed

one letter somewhere, must have
superimposed this place over cracked

pavement, superimposed the dogleg
bend in the river, over water that flows

around curbs into storm sewers,
and while this all seems real enough,

a black plastic bag is caught
in a nearby tree. It hangs,

expanding and contracting
like a loose lung.

M I C H A E L H O W E R



Pharmacopia

M I C H A E L H O W E R



Hospital for Contagious Diseases

Instructions for a Life

POETRY

unfurl the gravel road as a tablecloth, a bedsheet
drifting low towards horizon, stars spiriting upward
into the gloam. tug on the string of night, open
the door of birds blown from muddy fingers
their songs like sermons, like recipes. suds
buds bulging knots on limbs, massage
into being with fingertips dipped in wine. you
are halfway there. now comes the wait
weight of it all, trucks ticking time along
the highway hauling burdens to & fro
in shutter-speed time.

sleep. when the breadbox of morning lifts
it's time to water the grave, excited as you'll be
to untangle the fathomless frog of your throat
in the cattail bog harboring fairies in the marsh.

Blind in One Eye, Can't See Out of the Other

POETRY

according to her story / a woman, blind in one eye / didn't tell her parents / she
couldn't see / until she was twelve. / Horrifying, but / she made it funny / and
tragic because / obviously. / Got me thinking / what I'd kept quiet / not as cool
as a blind eye / but a good story / like Dad's wooden leg / trophy of a motorcycle
crash / one he never talked about / not even at the dinner table / us kids quiet and
still / not rapt, terrified / because wrong moves went noticed / no one wanted to
be guinea pig / for whatever reproach / Dad delivered that day / eyes fixed on our
plates / eating dinner with his gun / to our heads. / He could have said grace /
could have bared his teeth in smile / could have seen us / two good eyes and all.

Beasts

POETRY

I killed the boar above the low rise with strewn sagebrush.
The breath in his punctured lungs continuing to wheeze out
as his feet kicked into the earth looking for an escape.
A tidy murder. *Clean*, they said, *not bad for a first time*.

They tore into our bellies with a buck handle knife.
Fistfuls of tacky fat dumped on the dirty scrub. Bloody meat
produced from the cavity. Membrane and muscle cut away.
The knife occasionally glancing off my ribs as they cut away
the last parts of me.

Villaraigosa looks over to me, blood specks like fine pins
tattooing his face and he asks how I'm feeling...

How can I tell him that I have ascended a stairway,
making sure not to look back to the landing
below that is being consumed by the pillar of fire.

MIN SUNG PARK



Contaminated Laboratory Treatment

D B J O N A S

Moon in Daylight

POETRY

Palely the residues of evening coalesce
to form this faint ablation sailing over head,
this lustrous oculus in daybreak's alabaster dome,
this remnant of the jeweled dark that wanly
drifts across the dawn's triumphant light.

O fading psychopomp of evening's gaudy glitter,
priestess of our midnight signs and assignations,
in morning's scant attire you prophesy the vacancy
of noon where thought hangs heavy in the mind
and yearning looms like smoke in sunlit haze.

Yet how much nearer now in gauzy negligée you seem
than in the incandescent robe you wore last night,
how menacingly close do you appear and closing fast,
as though some furtive faintness hurrying after us
lay almost in our reach but too remote to grasp.

Curating

NONFICTION

I shift a pile of books on my desk, and dozens of slips of paper shower to the floor. They're wrinkled and torn, some no larger than one square inch, each decorated in my dad's shaky cursive—noting an idea, a page number, the name of a theologian long dead.

My dad threw away nothing. His home office was uninhabitable, full of faculty meeting agendas from the 70s; sixty years of tax returns; yellowed articles about canning tomatoes and pruning apple trees; tattered lecture notes for every class he ever taught; a lifetime of letters from his mother.

During his final year, I pressed him to go through boxes—"What do you want to keep?"—and he would grow quiet, brow furrowed. I scolded him as I sat on his living room floor, sorting bag after bag of junk mail. "Why don't you just throw these away?"

Going through his things, I sometimes discovered a treasure: the letter written to his congressmen when he was twelve years old, imploring them to help the people of Finland and China; the curled black and white photos of him at eighteen on a San Diego pier in his Navy uniform; notebooks from his first year at Yale, thanks to the GI Bill. Each provided a glimpse into an earlier version of my dad, before I knew him.

But why keep the departmental minutes from 1982? The dozens of church bulletins? The wrapping paper scraps and flyers from neighborhood handy-men he never hired?

Now that Dad is gone, it's up to me to parse what has value and what does not. But now, of course, everything holds more value than it did before—each item or paper or Post-It note a tether back to him.

So, I have become a curator of his things: the faded red tape dispenser and the heavy lead stapler that sit on my desk; his unfinished manuscript, which I emailed to myself for safekeeping; hundreds of his notated books that populate my shelves; his Martin Luther bobblehead perched on my dining room window sill; his prize tangerine tree, which I carefully rotate into the sun. And those many slips of paper decorated in his shaky scrawl—the physical manifestation of his mind at work—those I hold in my open palm like wilted blossoms so that they, too, are not lost to me.

L I S A R I G G E



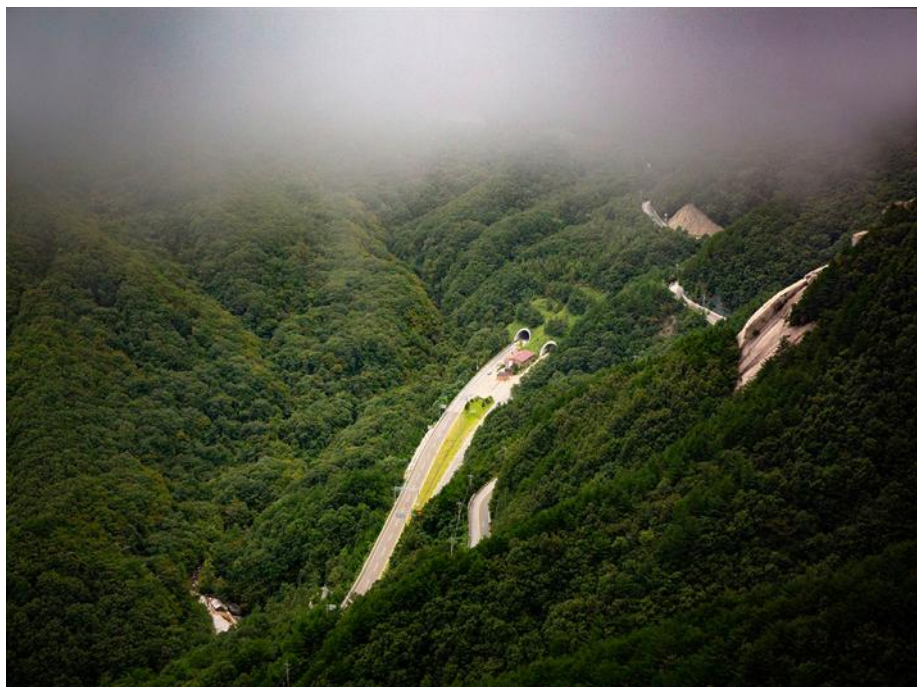
Mission Cellar

L I S A R I G G E



Spiraling Staircase, Scotland

Y U J I N S U H



Mountain Tunnel

A conversation with Sophia's Universe

POETRY

I navigate this world,
kneading dough for company
as I swirl about memories
like tea
in a delicate chipped cup—

I move through the stars
spheres rotate between seconds
and I whisper to crystals when you are gone:
for the closets were just emptied of camping gear—

and when I sleep through the sleet and snow
the umbilical cord is released
before I rush into my own ravine.

Cosmic scissors unchain my feet:

I scribble secrets within the sacred box
and wait for cherubs to rush before me,
fluttering scents amongst the ripening seeds.

K I M B E R L Y G O O D E

A Google Search of a Caregiver's Mind

POETRY

Hey Google
Search for Wordle.
Search for five-letter words that begin with s-l-o.
Search for ways for this day to begin with a win.
Search for the name of the black-feathered birds
with flaming red and yellow wings
perched outside the window
whose call vibrates the air
and shakes something loose inside you.
Search for the length of cherry blossoms blooms.
Search for meditation apps.
Search for quiet moments before
the world begins to stir.

Hey Google
Search for resources for aging parents.
Search for nourishing meals during chemo.
Search for protein shakes.
Search for your father's will to fight.
Search for activities for people with dementia.
Search for large-print puzzle books.
Search for recognition in your mother's eyes.
Search for quick dinner ideas.
Search for shrimp scampi recipes.
Search for Medicare.
Search for bedside rails for seniors.
Search for home-health aides near you.
Search for help.
Search for a deep breath.
Search for air.
Search for more.
Search for time.
Search for more time.
Search for the strength
to keep searching.

Hey Google
Search for presence.
Search to connect.

Search to hold onto the love that gives these moments weight.
Search for your mother's hand.
Search for the tender palms your tiny fingers
would get lost in as a little girl.
Search to be lost in her again.
Search for the way time has carved countless new lines
but the soft, fleshy creases of her grip
feel the same.
Search for your father's laugh.
Search for the way it catches in his throat before rushing out,
a whisper before the roar.
Search for the sound of his laughter reverberating through the room
settling heartbeats with its joy-filled rhythms.
Search to be filled by this communion.
Search to lay down your exhaustion
and be resurrected by effortless togetherness.
This sacred togetherness.

Hey Google
Search for highly rated weighted blankets.
Search for NPR book reviews.
Search for the best time of year to plant sunflowers.
Search for garden gnomes.
Search for a season when you can tend to seeds
and watch life come into its prime.
Search for oil pastel drawing ideas.
Search for natural hair tutorials on YouTube.
Search for why fireflies flicker.
Search for bioluminescent fish.
Search for light.
Search for reminders of the world outside these walls.
Search for glimpses of yourself.
Search for tiny moments
between searches
that are yours alone.

Search for wonder
again.

J O A N M . W H I T E

Small Histories

For Ellie

POETRY

You say you caught yourself wondering if
the world would be
when you were gone.

Rumpled bed sheets rumpled bedsheets.
The sound of a small brass bell to ring for help
the sound of a small brass bell.

Hair comb in hand at the ready
to fix the damage from hands patting your head.

I wonder why
the vase of ranunculus and baby's breath
sits on the kitchen counter.
You ask about images of a woman
floating behind me.

We spend the hour reciting small histories.

I ask about the light. What color.
Gold, you say,
pointing at the carpet of gingko leaves
falling throughout the day.
Grateful we don't rake them up.

About the Contributors

E L I Z A B E T H C U R L E Y

elizabethjcurley@gmail.com

Elizabeth Curley lives a dual life as both a poet and a social work researcher. Elizabeth received a Silver Medal from the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards in 2012 and is still writing a decade later. Elizabeth's time is spent consuming, collecting, carrying, crafting, and quantifying the human experience.

J O H A N N A D E M A Y

jdmy@comcast.net

Johanna DeMay grew up in Mexico City, the bilingual child of American parents. In love with the power of language, she began writing poems to bridge the gap between her worlds. Resettled in New Mexico, she made her living for forty years as a studio potter. Now retired, she divides her time between writing and volunteering with the immigrant community. Her poems have appeared in numerous literary journals and two anthologies. "Waypoints," a full collection of her work, was released by Finishing Line Press in 2022.

A L A N E L Y S H E V I T Z

alanelysb@gmail.com

Alan Elyshevitz is the author of a collection of stories, *The Widows and Orphans Fund* (SFA Press), a full-length poetry collection, *Generous Peril* (Cyberwit), and four poetry chapbooks, most recently "Mortal Hours" (SurVision). Winner of the James Hearst Poetry Prize from North American Review, he is a two-time recipient of a fellowship in fiction writing from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

J . V . F O E R S T E R

jufoerster@hotmail.com

J.V. Foerster is a three-time Pushcart nominated poet. Her work has appeared in many literary magazines including *Cirque*, *Amethyst Review*, *Quartet*, *The Field Guide Magazine*, *The Bluebird Word*, *The Fiery Scribe*, *Eclectica*, *Furrow* edition from Green Ink Press, *Loch Raven Review*, *Agnieszka's Dowry*, *Midnight Mind*, *Premiere Generation Ink*, *Fickle Muse*, *Oak Bend Review*, *Fox Chase Review*, to name just a few. She has work in *Orchard Lea Anthology*, and in a *Rosemont College Anthology*. She was a finalist in an Oprelle Poetry Contest and received a First Honorable mention in the Oregon Poetry Association Members Only contest. She has a book, "Holy Mess of a Girl" forthcoming from Kelsay Books. J.V. is also a published painter and photographer. She lives in Ashland, Oregon.

L E N A N . G E M M E R

lgemmer97@gmail.com

Lena Neris Gemmer is originally from the quiet foggy town of Montara CA where she began her love of writing on her grandfather's Remington Rand typewriter. Before deciding to pursue her MFA in Creative Nonfiction at UNH, she received her BA in English and History at Allegheny College in Meadville PA. As a nonfiction writer, she believes in connecting to her readers on a visceral human level by experimenting with structure, form, and voice. When she is not writing essays, you can find her taking photographs, teaching First Year Writing at University of New Hampshire, or scolding her Norwegian Forest cat Mitchy.

K I M B E R L Y G O O D E

kimberlyrbrown@gmail.com

Kimberly Goode is a writer based in Seattle, WA. When she is not creating, she enjoys listening to the songs of birds and the sounds of rain. Her work has appeared in *River Teeth*, *Crosscut*, *Dilly-down Review*, and *South Seattle Emerald*.

K E N H A A S

haaskb@yahoo.com

Ken Haas lives in San Francisco where he works in healthcare and sponsors a poetry writing program at the UCSF Children's Hospital. His first book, *Borrowed Light*, won the 2020 Red Mountain Press Discovery Award, won a 2021 prize from the National Federation of Press Women and was shortlisted for the 2021 Rubery Book Award. Ken has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has won the Betsy Colquitt Poetry Award. His poems have appeared in over 50 journals and numerous anthologies. Please visit him online at <http://kenhaas.org>.

J O H N R O B E R T H A R V E Y

magicfishbones@gmail.com

John Harvey's poems have appeared in *Cleaver Magazine*, *Ghost Ocean Magazine*, *Gulf Coast*, *The 2River Review*, *Weave Magazine*, and others. He received his doctorate in Creative Writing and Literature from the University of Houston (UH) and taught in the UH English Department and Honors College. He lives near Stockholm, Sweden with his wife and son.

G L O R I A H E F F E R N A N

gloriac225@msn.com

Gloria Heffernan's *Exploring Poetry of Presence* (Back Porch Productions) won the 2021 CNY Book Award for Nonfiction. She received the 2023 *Naugatuck River Review* Narrative Poetry Prize. She is the author of the poetry collection, *What the Gratitude List Said to the Bucket List*, (New York Quarterly Books), and three chapbooks including "Peregrinatio: Poems for Antarctica" (Kelsay Books) which was a finalist for the 2021 Grayson Books Chapbook Prize. A Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, her work has appeared in over 100 publications including the anthology *Poetry of Presence* (vol. 2) and *Without a Doubt: Poems Illuminating Faith*.

K E N H I N E S

khinesonline@gmail.com

You'll find Ken Hines' poems in *AIOTB*, *Psaltery & Lyre*, *Vita Poetica*, *Rockvale Review* and other magazines. A Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee, his poem "Driving Test" won Third Wednesday Journal 's annual poetry prize. He lives in Virginia with his wife, the painter Fran Hines.

R I C H A R D H O L I N G E R

rholinger@att.net

Richard Holinger's books include the essay collection, *Kangaroo Rabbits and Galvanized Fences*, and *North of Crivitz*, poetry of the Upper Midwest. His work has appeared in *Southern Review*, *Witness*, *ACM*, *Ocotillo Review*, and *Boulevard*, and has garnered four Pushcart Prize nominations. "Not Everybody's Nice" won the 2012 Split Oak Press Flash Prose Contest, and his Thread essay was designated a Notable in *Best American Essays*, 2018. Degrees include a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a M.A. in English from Washington University. Holinger has taught English and creative writing on the university and secondary school levels and lives northwest of Chicago far enough to see deer, turkeys, and foxes cross his lawn. He's working on two collections, creative nonfiction and short fiction, many pieces already appearing in journals such as *Iowa Review*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Chicago Quarterly*, *Hobart*.

K A T E H O P P E R

katehopper@msn.com

Kate Hopper is an writer, editor, writing coach, and the founder of Motherhood & Words®. She is the author of *Use Your Words: A Writing Guide for Mothers, Ready for Air: A Journey Through Premature Motherhood*, winner of a Midwest Independent Publishing Award, and she's co-author of *Silent Running*, a memoir of one family's journey with autism and running. Her writing has appeared in a number of journals, including *Brevity*, *Creative Nonfiction's True Story*, *Longreads*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The New York Times* online, *Poets & Writers*, and *River Teeth*. Kate has taught creative writing for over 20 years, and lives in Minneapolis with her family. For more information about her work visit www.katehopper.com.

J E N N I F E R R A N D A L L H O T Z

jenhotz@protonmail.com

Jennifer Randall Hotz is a poet currently living in Pennsylvania. She holds an M.A. in English from San José State University.

M I C H A E L H O W E R

MEHower@comcast.net

When Michael Hower began digital photography ten years ago it was founded upon a fascination with abandoned buildings and landscapes. His work focuses on historical themes, portraying human objects/structures in modified environments now devoid of human activity with a particular interest in places of industry, prisons and graffiti. Mike's work conveys themes of wear, deterioration, and nature's reclamation of manmade environments via architecture and landscape. He has taken dozens of place-seeking journeys across the Mid-Atlantic states showcasing a whole range of forgotten, other worldly and bizarre places, including the pieces in this series of the abandoned Hospital for Contagious Diseases on Ellis Island.

D B J O N A S

juliedancarlson@gmail.com

DB Jonas is an orchardist living in the Sangre de Cristo mountains of northern New Mexico. Born in California in 1951, he was raised in Japan and Mexico. His work has recently appeared in *Tar River*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Whistling Shade*, *Neologism*, *Consilience Journal*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *The Decadent Review*, *The Amphibian*, *Revue (R)évolution*, *Kairos*, and others. His first collection, *Tarantula Season*, is scheduled for release in 2023.

E U N S E O K I M

info@orangeheart.com

Eun Seo Kim is a junior attending North London Collegiate School in Jeju island, Korea. She collaborates fine art with philosophical themes, presenting personal stories or opinions with her painting. She developed her art skills into mixed media forms by learning photography and computer software tools such as Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. She recently won a competition in 2022 EarthX dealing with environmental issues. As a finalist, she exhibited her artwork at the EarthX expo in Texas. She is planning to expand her creativity, perspective and interests by applying and approaching various themes and aspects of art and continue to pursue her passion.

C Y N K I T C H E N

cynkitchen@hotmail.com

Cyn is an Associate Professor of English at Knox College where she teaches creative writing and literature. She is the author of *Ten Tongues*, a collection of short stories and also writes nonfiction and poems, some of which appear in such places as *Still*, *Fourth River*, *American Writers Review* and *Poetry South*. Cyn makes her home in Forgottonia, a downstate region on the Illinois prairie.

M A R Y D E A N L E E

marydean.lee@mcgill.ca

Mary Dean Lee's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Best Canadian Poetry 2021*, *Ploughshares*, *I-70 Review*, *LEON Literary Review*, *Broad River Review*, *Sepia Quarterly*, *Event*, *The Write Launch*, as well as other journals. Her manuscript, *Tidal Bore*, was recently a Finalist with Trail to Table Press and The Inlandia Institute's 2022 Hillary Gravendyk Prize. She grew up in Milledgeville, Georgia, studied theatre and literature at Duke University and Eckerd College, and received her PhD in organizational behavior at Yale. She lives in Montreal, Canada.

P A U L M A C O M B E R

pmacomberwrites@gmail.com

Paul Macomber earned his BA in Literature from Cal State San Bernardino and his MA in Management from the University of Redlands. He currently teaches at a public high school in Redlands, California. Outside of the classroom, he loves to travel with his wife anywhere that has buildings older than the ones in California. His poetry has previously been published in *The Pacific Review*.

V I C T O R I A M E L E K I A N

vmelekian@gmail.com

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>

J A H I N C L A I R E O H

info@orangecubeart.com

Jahin Claire Oh is a ninth grader at Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose, California. She likes to code and takes an interest in media art for fun. She prefers warm tones over cool tones and generally likes calming imagery with naturalistic depictions. In her free time, she likes to spend time with her friends and occasionally goes to local art exhibits.

H A R I B P A R I S I

haribkk@gmail.com

Hari B Parisi's (formerly Hari Bhajan Khalsa) poems have been published in numerous journals and are forthcoming in *Thuya Poetry Review*, *The Blood Pudding*, *Two Hawks Quarterly* and *Inklet*. She is the author of three volumes of poetry, most recently, *She Speaks to the Birds at Night While They Sleep*, winner of the 2020 Tebot Bach Clockwise Chapbook Contest. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband. Website: <https://haripoet.com>

M I N S U N G P A R K

info@orangecubeart.com

Min Sung Park is a junior attending Deerfield Academy in Deerfield, Massachusetts. Min Sung has been working on product designing in the past and he wishes to continue working on product designing, and art as well as his interests on world issues and making new ideas.

J U L I A P O O L E

juliapoole80@gmail.com

Julia Poole is a writer and former speech-language therapist who worked with a variety of patients, including incarcerated youth. Her writing has appeared in *The Sheepshead Review*, *Hypertext Magazine*, and *Dunes Review*, among other publications. She's received a Pushcart Prize nomination. A Midwesterner at heart, she has lived on both coasts but prefers the wooded tranquility of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

PAUL RABINOWITZ

info@paulrabinowitz.com

Paul Rabinowitz is an author, poet, photographer and founder of ARTS By The People. His works appear in *The Sun Magazine*, *New World Writing*, *Evening Street Press*, *The Montreal Review* and elsewhere. Rabinowitz was a featured artist in *Nailed Magazine* in 2020 and *Mud Season Review* in 2022. He is the author of *The Clay Urn*, *Confluence* and *Limited Light*, a book of prose and portrait photography, which stems from his Limited Light photo series, nominated for Best of the Net in 2021. His poems and fiction are the inspiration for 5 award winning short films. His first book of poems called *truth, love and the lines in between* (Finishing Line Press) is due out in 2023. paulrabinowitz.com

CAROLINE REDDY

carolineemilyr@gmail.com

Caroline Reddy's work has been published in *Active Muse*, *Calliope*, *Clinch*, *Clockwise Cat*, *Deep Overstock*, *Grey Sparrow*, *International Human Rights Arts Festival*, *Star*line* and *Tupelo Quarterly Review* among others. In the fall of 2021, her poem "A Sacred Dance" was nominated for the Best of The Net prize by *Active Muse*. Caroline Reddy was born in Shiraz, Iran and participated in Mohammad Barrangi's exhibition-Playing in Wonderland. Caroline Reddy also performed her poetry and presented an artist talk with VALA Gallery pertaining to the events in Iran womenlifefreedom-Zan-Zendegi-Azadi.

LISA RIGGE

lbrigs202@gmail.com

Lisa Rigge is an artist living in Pleasanton, CA. She is a photographer whose photographs and/or collages have been published in *The Sun Magazine*, *LensWork*, *Passager Books Pandemic Diaries*, and *3Elements*. Her articles, poetry and/or journal writing have been published in *Passager Books Pandemic Diaries*, *Dream Time Magazine*, and *The Rose in the World*. Along with being passionate about doing artwork, she enjoys hiking and taking road trips with her husband and her dog, Sheeba.

JIM ROSS

jamesross.355@gmail.com

Jim Ross jumped into creative pursuits in 2015 after a rewarding career in public health research. With graduate degree from Howard University, in eight years he's published nonfiction, fiction, poetry, photography, hybrid, and plays in 175 journals on five continents. Photo publications include *Barnstorm*, *Bombay Gin*, *Burningword*, *Camas*, *Columbia Journal*, *DASH*, *Feral*, *Stoneboat*, *Stonecoast*, *Typehouse*, and *Whitefish*, with *Glassworks*, *Peatsmoke*, and *Phoebe* forthcoming. Jim's text-based photo-essays include *Barren*, *DASH*, *Kestrel*, *Ilanot Review*, *Litro*, *NWW*, *Sweet*, *Typehouse*, and *Wordpeace*. He recently wrote/acted in a one act play and appeared in a documentary limited series broadcast internationally. Jim and family split time between city and mountains.

YUJIN SUH

info@orangecubeart.com

Yujin Suh is a 11th grade student at Seoul Foreign School located in Seoul, Korea. Her major focus in art relates to painting with social aspects. She uses her fine arts skills into using various media such as watercolor, oil painting, acrylics and more. Her recent accomplishments are Innovator Award at the Conrad Challenge and High Merit award at 2021 Celebrating Art Fall. Yujin plans to continue her work in art and literature to build her future.

R O N T H E E L

ronaldtheel@msn.com

Ron Theel is a freelance writer, mixed media artist, and photographer living in Syracuse, New York. His writing and/or artwork has appeared in "The RavensPerch," "The Bluebird Word," "Open: Journal of Arts & Letters," and forthcoming in "Beyond Words," and "Pithead Chapel. Many of Ron's photographs capture partial images from the natural world; bits and pieces that are often overlooked as we get caught up in the frenzy of everyday life.

C R I S T I N A T R A P A N I - S C O T T *cstrapaniscott@gmail.com*

Cristina Trapani-Scott is a writer and artist who lives in the foothills of the Colorado Rocky Mountains with her partner. Her work has been published in the *Paterson Literary Review*, *Hip Mama Magazine*, *Cleaver Magazine*, and *Orca: A Literary Journal*, among others. She also holds an MFA in writing from the Naslund-Mann Graduate School of Writing at Spalding University. In addition, she teaches creative writing online and serves on the leadership team of the Writing Heights Writers Association. She also is a contributing editor at the *Good River Review*.

J O A N M . W H I T E

hoveywhite@gmail.com

Joan White lives in Vermont where she spends her time with plants and language. Her work has been published in *American Journal of Poetry*, *Cider Press Review*, *Abstract Magazine*, NPR's *On Being Blog*, among others.

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