

ISSUE 17

IMPOSSIBLE ARCHETYPE

A JOURNAL OF LGBTQ+ POETRY
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impossiblearchetype.wordpress.com

EDITOR'S NOTE
MARK WARD

I

I worry about where my heart is now, as Hershman said. Or I did. It was adrift, submerged, gasping. Now, it's floating, *slit open & drained*, as Russell said. *This is where it starts*, as Charles said. That's pretty reductive though, isn't it? *As if to make the party cool*, as Moore said. Overdramatic. Instead, I am a *curve / low light*, as Griffin said. The me I thought was lost *arrives imperceptibly*. *No alarm*, as Norris said. *You're the next best thing*, as McIntyre said.

II

Grief stalks up to you like a predator in an early morning cartoon trying not to be caught. It blindsides sometimes, less and less now, but still *what doesn't evaporate lingers*, as Babcock said.

III

A symphony of *men from Grindr*, as Strong said. They dance, euphoric, when the beat drops. *To hang on*, as Kiely said. *Your flesh not numb*, as Meischen said. *Focus on what is*, as Mann said, what's *still here*, as he continued. *My way home*, as Booton said. An unjudged refashioning. It's been a long year.

IV

I am sunlight, morning. I step out into *an audience of foragers*, as Kelley said. I *effervesced*, as Mohring put it. *All so friendly*, as Coyle said. Novelty will carry you a long way. Visual learning, eh? Tactile, *the world unspools / below you*, as Battis said. And you let it. You asked it to.

V

The *chord building*, as Maddern said. *The chord resolves*, as Maddern said. *You can't possibly / possess it*, as Shapiro said but you have accepted this; the mutual price of entry. & *I am alive*, as Freeborn said. Not that I wasn't, of course, but I look up and things have an ease to them, they are *suffused with a reflected light*, as Koh says. And the chorus sometimes surprises. A teenage giddiness, a clandestine evening, a fluttering.

VI

Old, unrelated ghosts claim the vacuum: *the universe / is testing // its own waistband*, as Nash said. I can't refashion *my identity*, as Baggett said, without taking in *the body's luxury*, as Smyth said. Is that what you're calling it, the voice asked? *I try to keep myself fed*, as Gibson said. *Do some press-ups*, the voice said. *Forgiveness / isn't for everyone*, as Wong said. Particularly when it's directed inward. *At least their victims know where they stand*, the voice mutters, echoing Harnedy.

VII

This – anything – can be placated. Time inexorably moves on. *There has been no time for repairs*, as Leis said, but there can be, there will – of the voice, or self; the perspective. But now, today, last weekend *the air was really mind-blowing*, as Luczak said. *An upward arc*, as Watts Brown said. *I thought of you the entire time*, as Cellini said, and I did but now it doesn't hit the same. It is a memory; recent, sure, but still, past. I am not wrenched *below water*, as Wiggerman said. I find that now, instead, I *open like a parachute*, as he also said.

VII

I wear my best clothes today, as Wong said. I look at my body as an investment, one that could foreclose on me, one that others wouldn't buy, but still *I can run no further*, as Wong continued. *Here I am*, as Wong summarised. *Do you hear it?* as Mc Kimm asked. I let myself be lifted by the wind, see where it takes me – not lost, but adventuring.

Postscript:

I don't usually include these but given the topic, and the graphic descriptions in the first of these two poems, I wanted to issue a content warning for sexual assault for pages 31-32 and 51-52.

Still Life with Octopus (I)
Tania Hershman

There is an octopus in my chest, trying
to give my heart to you. She will not listen

when I say I need it. I have to keep
prying her from my vena cava, the pulmonary

veins. I ask what makes her think
you'd want it anyway. She shakes her head, her colour

shifts to indicate disappointment, hope,
connection. Finally, I let her take it. Once

it's gone, she settles in its place, exactly the right
cardiac muscle shade. I worry about where my heart

is now, did it even reach you? Let go, whispers the octopus
in my chest. These things are not in your control.

gallery of blood hearts
Michael Russell

what Armageddon have i dreamt
opaque in the dark mirror
of the television my reflection
is a lie swollen & oozing
blood pus the stink
of a cauterized Insta smile
aggressively gummy & too white
like my skin after it's beaten
held down released
happiness is a cyst slit open
& drained
like a riff from the body
my phone hums an aria
every time i get a notification
the basement becomes a dancefloor
tiled with the face prints

of all my Instagram pics
& their fibs the toothy grins
manufactured in the factory
of a depressed body my phone
is a gallery of blood hearts
hemorrhaging with likes for everyone
who doesn't like me listen
i have a story where i built my father
into my best friend after he left
i slid into my own DMs with gifs
of bloodhounds & searched
for a trail of his breath cloudy
with lightyears of whiskey
i brought my nose to the air for him
sniffed the husks of all my friends'
followers in the cold draft
of the basement i listen
for his heartbeat
soundless

as a glaive of lightning

slicing into water

The Lot at Food Farm **Casey Charles**

I have lived here all my life and should have left a long time ago but couldn't.
- Hugo

This is where it starts. The black top outside Food Farm, the eggs you bought on sale. You can't remember where you parked. The bone you bought is wrapped in plastic. This is when it all comes back. His rusted Jeep pulls up beside your truck. His gray, his weight.

His beard reminds you of a gravel road near Cutbank, east of the Divide. You wonder why you let him fuck you on that train in Spain, why ten years ago he left the house you bought on time. He wouldn't say. You wonder why a slot, a stripe of white,

a lot on Orange Street could be the trigger. Could take you back to picking cherries with him up at Flathead. Your elbows on the sill those nights blue as de Chirico while he slept, dead to your thrusts. Why you stay here in this town that stares you in the face with strollers

and growlers and bikes that pass you on the right. With ten years of regret etched on foreheads as stolid as boulders in the Bitterroot, where you fish to forget, or try to. Then he pulls into a vacant space, then the Boxer you raised comes out to lick you on the lips.

Making Unfriendly
Daniel Edward Moore

Last night, I waited.
The waves arrived late.

As if to make the party cool.
As if having sex on a wilderness beach

under the moon's damaged disco ball
was how the estranged, dripping with lust,

dance knee deep in the crimson surf,
teasing sharks with love's fresh meat,

giving teeth the hope of biting.
If Poseidon makes the waves refrain

from predictable highs & lows,
making it risky to dry our clothes by a

driftwood fire at dusk, I can still see you
there in a cross-shape hammock, swinging

in the sparks like a rosary, my
fingers on every bead.

Wood grain
Seán Griffin

feather lines
this heathery board
ripples etched
from a pebble
thrown ages ago
stained slab
and cut in a curve
low light shines
white on ridges
like raised finger
prints this once
healthy tree felled
to be this death-
preserved bar for
elbows to lean for
drink rings to be wiped
away at the end of the night

Consciousness

Eric Norris

Arrives imperceptibly. No alarm.
No earthquakes. No roosters. No iPhone
To fumble for. Awareness of an arm
Folded beneath a plump pillow. My own?
I love that tingling sensation in
My fingertips: the rediscovery
Of numb capillaries as they begin
To flood with warmth again. I might be
Unwilling, or unable, to open
My eyes and see where I am and who
Possesses these five frivolous senses when
I say I do. It might belong to you
As much as it belongs to me. Like this
Last couplet. This experience. A kiss.

Portrait of My Wife as an Ordnance Survey Map **Vron McIntyre**

after Selima Hill

Careful and detailed, you plot tracks across hitherto uncharted wastes with not much more than lengths of string, lines of sight, and military efficiency, map 3D onto 2D, turn white paper into coloured wiggles and whorls, the wider blue of flowing rivers collecting narrower blue tributes, brown mountainous fingerprints in the forensic wilderness, but don't forget the phone box, the post office, the church and the pub. You like to get things exactly right, in fact you should be assumed to be right in the absence of sudden change. If you were the time, we could set our clocks by you. I can study your generous curving contours for hours. You love a good hiking trail, along a ridge perhaps, dropping down into a narrow valley, hinting at spectacular views but considerately leaving them to our imaginations. You are not the territory, but you're the next best thing.

Date Night with the Ghost of You
Joe Babcock

Anything with your scent
gets piled onto your chair next to me,
a pillow, a sock, a knock-around tee.
I laugh for us both at your favorite shows,
binging on microwave nachos.
Empty bottles swim in pot smoke,
as I succumb to the accumulation—
swiping through old photos,
us beaming in paper hats,
my arm around your shoulder,
yours around my then-waist.
If I'd been less drunk back then,
I'd have kept those ridiculous hats,
the glitter they left in our hair.
Shards of memory crumble like broken glass,
cutting arms unwilling to let go.
I post the photo.
Happy New Year, from years ago.
Hearts and cries pour in,
online friends stilled by the traces I keep warm.
Staring out from my reflection,
your eyes on the screen align with mine,
just on the other side.
Climbing out to the rooftop,
snow drops from the darkness.
What doesn't evaporate lingers, midway to sky,
glittering in my tears.
Maybe it's just me, left in the picture,
waiting to come home.
Wrapping my arms around the cold,
a weight less than clouds
kisses my face in the flurries.

paradox in which the poet is a boy
Liam Strong

hey guys
liam says
& everyone becomes confused.
liam wonders about their hips. tiny lemons.
liam daydreams about castration. trimming
of geraniums.
liam's ghost of a beard is revived. *hallelujah!* liam de-trans
-itions into a Christian again. whoops!
men from Grindr don't choke
him any more. his queerbody
stripped away like crab
meat from carapace.
when liam was a little
boy his father cooked the
heads of his stuffed animals in the backyard
bonfire. liam was born
a leo, a flaming
male sign. unalterable.
*men don't have breasts. they
barely have nipples!* liam
thinks. what would happen
if liam does
n't take his father's advice

of hating all trannies? will liam dream
of faulty chakras? how will his

Xvideos history change? maybe he
develops a new technique for pleasure.
maybe he

is procedurally generated. maybe he
talks like a boy talking

like a girl. maybe he
isn't what he says he is. since when
has he? who decided?

i am CERTIFIED male, liam
believes.
yes. correct. liam excels in

sports because of this achievement. he has
triumphed by carrying around his birth

like a torch or a plated class ring.
he has every
thing he has ever needed.

what else is there to want
when he fits into the mould

the world blessed him with?
what else?

The boy on the back of the scooter
Tim Kiely

doesn't know where

to put his hands. / Somebody has

to hold on here. His feet can't be / relied on anymore, he feels / his fingers, useless, seize
the air / in front of his friend's chest - the world / is running too fast around the bend
into Roman Road, the traffic / would never stop for him and / if he holds onto

his friend

then who / will hold the phone out at just the right angle / to take a picture?
If he holds on / is that gay? Are the arms gay? / Are the shoulders gay, but less gay
than the arms? / Can he safely lay hands on his friend's / heart, or will he just have

to hang on

to the hood of his jumper / and risk a crash? Could he at least swerve /
last-second, so they scattered themselves / together into the curbside
gawkers with their coffee-to-go? / Nobody told him he would need / to negotiate

with this body

when the wind is fucking up his head / and the perfect TikTok is on the line. The lights
at the pelican crossing by Medway / Road are rushing him, and someone / has a critical
decision to make.

The Procedure David Meischen

Relax, they say. *Hug your knees*
to your chest. They baby-wipe

a part of you that few have touched,
apply a gel that makes you hear

a word they are not saying. *Gently*,
they say. *Ultrasound probe*. *Spring-*

loaded needle. *Ten tissue samples*.
Your sphincter muscles grip,

the instrument rotating, each
time the impact of a power staple—

your flesh not numb
enough, the trigger clicking.

Nights later, little ribbons
bright as lipstick in your shit,

ejaculate a crimson splash,
one eye a burst of red, this alien

creature appraising you. *Hug*
your knees to your chest, he says. *Relax*.

Snowdrops
Jeff Mann

GALANTHUS NIVALIS

In Februarius, the month of purification,
inside Imbolc, life swelling in the belly,

the snowdrops light their fragile candles,
ooze their wax, exude their beads of milk,

while you sit— bearded absurdity, burly brute—
in the snowy driveway, waiting for your timeworn

pickup truck to warm up. Early evening
of your life, albeit hoary morning of the year,

try to rally compelling reasons to continue this
side of destined dwindling and flame-farewell.

How have you lived so long with so little
sated ardor, so much rootless rage, so much

thwarted ambition, inexcusable despair?
For an entire sun-wheel's cycle, no one's

touched your hairy heft, your would-be
warrior's brawn. *Forget hope, forget fear*, Seneca

expostulates as Eros decamps. Focus on what is,
warm breath still here, solitude fogging the cold,

and the snowdrops raising their porcelain bells,
ringing in spring, returning again as strength will not.

Ex
Dale Booton

I hear you in the bathroom pushing out what I had pushed in
as if clearing yourself of me in my entirety post-
love love-making affection drained
of its sincerity the body surrendered to desire basic
bitch of a form I can remember the last time
we made love the final attempt to patch our days already shredding
into *is this yours or mine* into *well I'm taking the-*
the bed feels different now the room unknown terrain
sweetness used to circle like common nighthawks
but now vultures wait impatient you flush
cackled curtain close no applause
outside I hear my name called like a warning from the wings
of the evening I will climb its back
slump my way home to solace and solitude no encore

The Quiet Boy at Camp
Robert Carr

A feathered vane of dark-tanned archers
flew in from the city. Quivers at young hips,
bowstrings drawn in the finger-tab of bare

forearms. The muffled bugle of reveille,
lake loons. Last night, lonesome for a friend,
he went wandering, took a skinny dip,

cracked against a solitary rock. Drowned,
the quiet boy prunes, minnows tickling ears,
no longer smelling familiar bacon, boys in the mess.

He would touch them all. In water, out beyond
tethered buoys, blonde armed swimmers
plunge and arc. His thin hand reaches for broken arrows.

Investigation **Yakov Azriel**

closet window closet door closet men
who spend a lifetime looking for a key
to open up their closet closet sea
 closet beach closet seagulls circling when
we walk along the shore and count to ten
 ten seagulls ten palm-trees ten blankets we
have spread upon the sand beneath each tree
 closet ink closet paper closet pen

closet midnight closet moon closet star
ten times ten shadows whisper, "*know thyself*"
ten times ten shadows help a closet sleuth
to solve the mystery of who we are
 closet fingerprints on a closet shelf
 closet magnifying glass closet truth

Nocturnal Omissions

JP Seabright

I am a ghost of a chance : a weeping husk of a human : scattered remnants of once-functional behaviour : barely grasped : longed for : no longer attainable : I am my own undoing : an unravelling : this unbelongingness : this : this unwarranted fuckering bliss : this sickening lurch : I play paper scissors stone with my memories : each trauma crushing : cancelling out the next : the act of obliteration : a removal of meaning : how joyous! : a negation and a revelation : a quivering flatline : cut down to the quick and the dead of our own true selves : whatever that is : this : skeletal kiss : embryonic kick : fuck the shame away : in the dark : on your own : your phone's flickering hiss : a faithful companion : outside : the city is on heat : your body a hot flush of mistaken identities : mixed media on rye : the city is a hex : your body a burnt match : fire flares the streets : your body stains the sheets : with thoughts of filth : nightmare ejaculate : lick your bones clean : and yet : it is darkest before the dawn : this : is a lie : sometimes the dawn never comes : sometimes the darkness is within us : some have darkness thrust upon them : the city is a hellscape : life is hard : don't let anyone tell you otherwise : the utter aliveness of it all : this : this relentless existence : sometimes I think about dying : peace for our time : go home and get a nice quiet sleep : looking back on this half-century : a battlefield : these scars : wars fought : sometimes won : mostly lost : losing : still : the slow decline to senility : I ask for pity : as I age : for despite all best intentions : I come to closely resemble : the man I most despise : tomorrow never dies : but this darkness before the dawn : this what if this is all there is : and yet : lighter days are coming : is a lie : I tell myself :

Five Days in LA **Collin Kelley**

Things I haven't done in LA:
met a movie star,
felt an earthquake,
had an easy commute,
been consumed by fire.

The whole city feels
make-believe, temporary –
and so do the men.
Does sex count in a mirage?
When they slip away
into the night and their faces
become memory blanks
the moment the door closes
behind them?

For five days, my rented
apartment had an open
door policy and yet
it always felt empty.
Outside the window,
an audience of foragers
and nightcrawlers
watched me take all comers,
grim and expressionless.

Any city can make you
feel anonymous, but LA
erases you.
But I always come back.
Waiting to be starstruck,

shaken, easy rider,
touched by flame.

Fool Me Twice **Ron Mohring**

*I didn't know until you mailed the translation**
that we weren't in love, despite my initial
misgivings at your strange turns of phrase:
Give to me the cheek seduced me with its saucy,

near-Biblical phrasing, and how I longed
to offer them both to be caressed. You made much
of my flannel-lined jacket, but refused to try
it on when I insisted. *I must warm you* sounded

so gallantly quaint to my tin ear. Of course
the seemingly random children in the square
looked up at you adoringly. Of course the shop-
keeper's murmured joke. I took it all in yet saw

nothing. I effervesced. I held no emotion in check.
Of course. That's what you meant. Not cheek.

*Roxanne Halpine, "Tanz" (*This Electric Glow*, 2014)

Whitmanesque **Derek Coyle**

A Mash-Up

Twenty-eight young men
bathe by the shore,
nature without check
with original energy.
Stop this day
and night with me
and you shall possess
the origin of all poems.
Nature without check
with original energy.

Twenty-eight young men
and all so friendly.
I breathe the fragrance.
The big doors of the country-barn
stand open and ready.
I wish I could
translate the hints.
This is the meal
pleasantly set,
this is the meat and drink.
Nature without check
with original energy.

Twenty-eight young men
bathe by the shore,
darker than
the colourless beards of old men.
Something I cannot see
puts upward libidinous prongs,
seas of bright juice

suffuse heaven.
If you want me
look for me under your boot soles.
Dash me with amorous wet.
Nature without check
with original energy.

Twenty-eight young men
and all so friendly.
Stout as a horse, affectionate,
haughty, electrical,
I and this mystery
here we stand.
The spotted hawk
swoops by and accuses me,
he complains of my gab
and loitering.
An unseen hand
passes all over their bodies.
I too am not
a bit tamed,
I too am untranslatable.

Twenty-eight young men
bathe by the shore.
This is the breath
of laws and songs and behaviour.
It is for the illiterate.
It is for the judges
of the Supreme Court.
It is for the Federal Capitol
and the state capitols.
I sound my barbaric yawp
over the roofs of the world.
Nature without check
with original energy.

Super Store **Jes Battis**

The world unspools
below you, bright baskets,
yellow cells dividing the aisles,
as you wait in the photo lab
to be seen or saved.

Tape negatives to leader cards,
letting their hooks snag
on rotating teeth. Do it wrong,
and memories snarl.

On slow nights, pry off
all the chemical lids,
pour the bright toxic bathwater.
Fumes make you forget
about your break.

Make zero moves on
possibly bi produce dude
with frosted tips. Hesitate
near the wet compactor, as he chucks
rotten avocados. Picture him
going home to a secret love.

Dust.
Face.
Repeat.
Read a contraband copy
of *Howard's End* for the prof
who writes on your essay: *I don't care.*

An old man
gives you a roll of film, saying: *It's all*

I have left of her.

The grad school letter is lost—
Hogwarts playing a trick.
You're a seasonal item
on a pallet jack.

On the last day, nudge a crystal
a fraction of an inch to the left
so all the memories
turn red.

The Firing Squad Dream

Timothy Robbins

I fall asleep sometime after 3:00 with all the lights on, in the middle of a description of the transformation of a dick from soft [sweet little accordion] to an ironwood battering ram [an irrational jackhammer], from a tequila worm to a swordfish. I pass through a long darkness, unable like an engine, to tell if I'm moving. Then there are achingly [supermarket] lit scenes where I stand in front of my class teaching a subject neither I nor the students have ever heard of. In my peripheral [perfecting] vision I'm sure [incredulous] I see the boys in the row furthest left masturbating [viciously winding up jack-in-the-boxes in their laps] under their desks. But every time I turn my head [my twin heads] in their direction I find them listening to me attentively (more than I can say of myself) taking notes or perhaps writing notes to each other [assinations/lavatory reservations]. But then I realize how out-of-date [reactionary] my thinking is. Kids don't pass notes in class anymore. They text each other on palm-sized [atomic] cell phones, the Word, as in the beginning, moving invisibly, silently through Time and Space. I'm awakened by a pain like a bright light that burns [opens and cauterizes] the brain. It feels like [my ass is being sealed with the sorcerer's apprentice's staple gun] something sharp repeatedly ramming into my entrance [center], my small intestine shaken by a creature not endowed with the faculty

to remember. I try to roll away and discover
 I can't move. I'm being held down by at least
 four forces [Sumo wrestler champions? novices?].
 Hands [C-clamps] grip my ankles [forbidden
 jewelry/accessories] and wrists. The light
 from the pain fades away and I'm in renewed
 darkness. I feel a pressure around my head.
 Boniness chafes the skin of my cheek bones.
 I've been blindfolded and sided. I beg to be
 released from that which is nothing like the
 fantasies in which rape [a fiery evangelist]
 spurs me to a euphoria of self [sperm]
 sacrifice [denial]. This [is pain in all its
 perfect simplicity] just hurts. And I don't
 know who is on top of me — likely someone
 disgusting if I saw [a gargoye-golem
 squatting atop a tombstone leering into a
 grave as open as an evil hymnal]. Also I
 have no way of telling whether he's using
 a condom [for anything but a ploy], whether
 he's as reckless with his life as he is with
 mine. That and the thought that I left
 the door open — added to the excruciation
 in my guts — cast me into hysterical, limp
 crying. I lose contact with every truth but
 the tears and the pain. I'm not aware when
 they switch places. I have no idea how many
 deaths [*Dirty deeds — Black Betty had a
 baby — and they're done dirt cheap — blam
 de lam — Someone left the cake out in the
 rain — The damn thing went crazy — Let
 the Midnight Special — That's the sound
 of the men — shine its ever-lovin' light on
 me — working on the chain gang — Wham
 bam, wham bam, wham bam*] they fire.

Serpent Alarm **Jamie Wyatt**

Once I wore a necklace
of fingerbones accepting lonely
bed spaces empty chairs baby's
questions and cries touched by
night fearing what is shrouded
in shadows serpent of alarm
constrictor crushing inside little
body clinging tight anyone
touches the fingerbone necklace
replays screams scratchy audio
worn out cassette tape old
duets the vision exists only as
a rerun

Carol
Paul Maddern

after Highsmith & Haynes

Here is a wife drawing back the silk cuff
from the wrist of another woman
in preparation for the daubing of perfume:
chord building on dissonant chord.

And here is the careful reapplication of lipsticks
and the wife's gloved hand lingering
on the curvature of her lover's collar bone:
chord building on dissonant chord.

And here is the damnation of these lovers
reduced to meetings in noir-lit cafés
and tawdry motels miles from Society:
chord building on dissonant chord

until the composition can build no more
and the wife surrenders her collateral child
for the attainment of harmony, with the lover
exiled to existence on the fringes.

But here is salvation, occurring in the time
it takes the lover to cross a restaurant floor.
Here, in the simple act of an ex-wife looking up
and smiling when the chord resolves.

Joe
James McDermott

for JM

I remember being thirteen and Joe
when your closet opened at school I was

the first to grab you like a rugby ball
to smoke you behind bins to mark your flesh

with fag I was the first to touch hairs on
your head as dark as shame as chocolate

I was the one who kept calling you queer
as I wanted to scream that word out loud

that word I was too clench fisted to brand
myself case I'm seen as disgraceful as

shorts in lost property I gobbled on you
to hide from lads who spat me out when I

emerged you had left us by then I can't
shake the taste of your hair out of my mind

Inherited
Gregg Shapiro

Here is the wind, but you can't possibly
possess it. It pinches and pinks your cheeks,
musses your hair wherever it finds it. Creases

fabric ever so subtly. Crawls into your lungs,
the wind's well-defined arms full of artillery
and demolition. The wind belongs to everyone,

so don't even think about putting your name
on it. The wind erases you more than once.
Slows you down when you're running late,

increases your pace when you'd just as soon
stand perfectly still. Don't feel sorry for
the leaves breeze-flapping on increasingly

bare branches, swirling on the ground.
The wind owns every season and isn't afraid
to post an eviction notice on a whim or a dare.

Don't test the wind's patience. You have nothing
to gain but a mouthful of air, gritty with virus,
stained and blistered, invisible to the naked eye.

Painting the Flower **Anne Myles**

Georgia O’Keeffe was adamant her flowers
were *not* vaginas—it was her husband said that.
A relief to learn, as I recall the amaryllis
I painted in my high school art class.
The photo torn from some garden catalog
was tacked up on my easel: full frontal,
flared crimson, huge petals barely cropped.
I see the glowing darkness at its center,
the stamen springing forth, a close spray
of filaments with fuzzy yellow anthers,
and the pistil with its white-tipped stigma.
For weeks I stood there, twirling
my brushes in the slick, reeking oils,
stroking light and shade onto the canvas.
Every hour I could find I worked on it,
heading back upstairs dizzy with turpentine.
What did I think of then? Never my own
petals curled underneath, tender,
bruised from the saddle. Nor of sex,
though of course it was on my mind,
and that Swedish boy one easel over
who always talked to me like a person,
but being touched by him was unimaginable.
I tried to coax the flower’s fire out of shadow
so its fullness would emerge, and the bright pang
of edges, the mystery of overlap.
All of it restraint, precision, and yet some rage
of beauty. My mind was a blown glass
of effort and desire. I see now I was painting
myself, but not my gender—or something
part of it yet stranger, mine. Or was it
a secret I wanted to discover, red carpet
to the innermost, a hidden door

and its golden offering arrowing out?
In the gap between the petals I put black
with a hint of green. Could paint say enough
about this lushness, this unspeakable?
For years the amaryllis followed me,
hanging over the mantel or my tossed bed—
beginnerish, but the boldest thing I knew.
I can picture it above me as I lay there
dying back to the bulb for my long slumber,
wondering what kind of woman I was
and what my flourishing was meant to be.

*I emerge from crying on the coats at a New Year's Eve party so
you give me a beer & put your hand on the small of my back*

J. Freeborn

white fog in white sky
over depthless water.
bright eyes, bird of prey
haunting the golden cross
above the train track
& I am alive. let us
count the lights across
the valley; lonely
sequins remaining
on a well-loved costume
cloak. hear the water awake
beneath the land but please
take me back to hell
(The City)
dig the sinew belly
from the pear for your tight
pink mouth—a video
played backward & I, alive
as winter's metallic taste
here in my good-enough dress
with my good-enough mother
at her father's funeral. vanish a little
in the bar's red light
in your brown Norwegian
sweater; how remarkable it is
that neither of us suffer
from unforgivable wrongs.

Ungovernable Bodies 60: Michael **Jee Leong Koh**

Went back to his apt, & he fucked me. Beautiful big shoulders and chest.

A tender strike, not yet through but need to,
and feathers broke the surface of his back,
like an Olympian coming up for air,
wheeling into the full refrain of wings.

Below the radiant chest, my offering,
raised like a trophy in an earlier age,
was darkened into suffering and soil,
and then suffused with a reflected light.

I put myself down in these abject words
to stop the hole in the dike holding back
the blow of a strong but unfigured flood.

When the divine diver through nothing there
spun out a light and twisted close a song,
I was overtaken by order, not chaos.

Snow drop
David Nash

Out
in breathless space
the universe
is testing

its own waistband.
This is where we have
got to:
at any given time,

a twirl-cum-hurtle,
still though
it might seem.
Arms of sun-

-fuss gesture
to the offshoots
circling, thus
blessing them

with light, though
really light is an
afterthought. A tangent –
mathematics

comes into it – skims
the Earth, and it's
winter,
since its back was

turned at the time.
Plates of air
hover over the world like

a gypsywoman's hands,

closer in more
like loose sastuma rind.
The sea
is water

that rides on the shoulders
of other water.
North-north-west
of Donegal,

it happens
to be warm over cold
ascending.
For these and other reasons

I don't get, snow
won't fall in
my part of this
country. I

see these ersatz
flowers now like hangovers,
above ground but still
ground-facing,

pangs of light,
like those pre-sleep
alarm-bells
that sometimes

ring: what might have
been, what might
have been, what
might have been.

The Concierge **Brooklyn Baggett**

How can I float in such treasonous pleasure?

Late night / early morning:
third day of no sleep,
sitting quietly in the building lobby.
There he stands, overnight concierge—
all bulk and blue tweed;
tongue sharp with stories of himself:
ex-MMA / ex-movie star / now rapper.

Pawing me with his eyes,
arms swinging and dark smiles.
He's fucked everything in the building
but me— I'm interested.

We've been flirting for a year.
It's time,
I think.
Maybe it's my time.
We talk / He talks
more about his conquests,
his greatness, his violence.
And finally, somehow, sex.

Watch me latch on,
leaning in,
chin in hand.
I mention my son.
He says,
"I can't believe
you gave birth
with a body like that." And me

so willing to betray my identity for him.

My Animal, My Age **Cherry Smyth**

'Be and bear' - Osip Mandelstam

Five days to the darkest
dock of orbit
we travel towards in trust.

The earth will turn.
Heat and light return.
The earth will.

There are other rims.
A phone ringing before daybreak,
sudden shutters around noon.

Think flower. Think new eyes.
Think amber for a girl
born on a warm island.

And the body's luxury
of health. Think bog walk,
mountain range, any clean sea waves.

Hold off your parents' sorrow.
You once knew a river,
its thundery spate, its muscled current,

the burly heat, sleeveless slow
walking, the sun leaving a white strap
on your shoulder.

Schoolchildren are laughing and yelling
in sounds from any century.
You watch the carry of the sky.

A Bowl
Victor Barnuevo Velasco

after Philip Larkin

Home is stillness. Halls settle the absence
Of those who promised to return
Against time & longing. In limp cadence,
Sunlight crawls to a corner. Forlorn.
A shadow waits for an audience.

Where a picture used to be, a hole.
Is it recognition of deliverance at last?
A dog rests on a sofa, staring at the wall.
A window frames a yard, mute and vast.
A shelf of books, an empty chair. Me.

Hunger
Elizabeth Gibson

Funny how I don't miss fish, when once I would yearn
over every box in Iceland, for familiar flesh, so smooth.
Now, that is all another lifetime, when I still felt a duty.
I don't crave much of anything, anymore, except water.
And chocolate, which is not what I need, but if offered,
I would sleepwalk back to her to lick it from stiff hands.
Or, I could wait out the return of nights of salty caramel
on a stranger's lips, each time a shock, the sweet-sharp.
I dream of ice-cream, offered from a cool belly or chest,
of finally resting, in a world of softness. I am so lonely.
I try to keep myself fed. I tell myself I am a noble tree,
a quiet orange cat, a river calling to be filled and filled.
I wish someone else were here, who could eat when I ate,
tell me they, too, taste, and then I would feel less delirious.

Facebooking the boy I first had sex with
Jaime Lock

'First squid of the year'
is the caption
his dirty fingers
squeezing its translucent neck
over the deck of the boat.
I wish my arms
looked so toned and muscular,
I should do some press-ups.

His penis when it went in me
was fine.
I think I was trying it on
like a dress, just to see.
Maybe now. Or now.
This time?
Does it suit me yet?

stop signs nat raum

Material Safety Data Sheet		Fireball Cinnamon Whiskey 375 mL bottle
MSDS No. 0001		
Section 1 - Physical Description		
<p>when you were four or five, you were obsessed with stop signs and the number nineteen, convinced you'd have it together enough by your last teenage year that you'd have seen as many different stop signs in that time. at some point, you also started counting the fence placards that bore their maker's names, long and pyle. despite obsessing over stops and walls, despite your cautious existence that told you not to drink until college, you forgot about boundaries or control the second you realized how good cinnamon whiskey tasted with dr. pepper.</p>		
Section 2 - Hazardous Ingredients		
<p>the full contents of the bottle you kept in the drawer under your bed and only pulled out once everyone who could hold the franzia bag for you went to their rooms to hook up on halloween and you called your best friend; the twelve or so drinks you took out of a handle earlier at the party and marked on your arm with a green sharpie; the bag of pinot grigio unboxed, passed around once uninvited guests arrived, settling in your stomach as you slide upright down the surface of the front door you're leaning on, avalanche of your weak black-nyloned legs splayed on concrete dorm floor.</p>		
Section 3 - Hazards Identification		
EMERGENCY OVERVIEW	<p>liquid somewhere between tawny and amber. low-proof but surprisingly sharp to taste, unless diluted with a chaser, in which case exercise extreme caution to limit exposure and consumption. corrosive to liver and sense of self-worth, as you may realize you're not getting enough attention and invite a stranger to cuddle in your bed.</p>	
EFFECTS OF OVEREXPOSURE	<p><u>ingestion of any amount with other alcohol:</u> it's likely you'll feel the exact shift in the way you're blacked out, the icy jolt from blur to static in your head when all of a sudden your stockinged legs don't feel nearly as nice between the sheets of your own bed, once you realize you're stuck here and not wasted anymore but you're not here either. you're elsewhere in the dark while your eyes bore into the polaroids taped to your wall and you try not to cry or even make a sound when he reaches under your bodysuit.</p>	
Section 4 - First Aid Measures		
INGESTION	<p>remember your childhood lust for barriers and seize the moment of silence after you hear the bathroom door close. throw his khakis and belt into the hallway and lock the door behind you. bite your lip and try not to breathe when he jiggles the handle and knocks again and again.</p>	

Lotus
Cyril Wong

His parents had to die before he could live
and love. I left home to lead the life I chose
and never looked back. Forgiveness
isn't for everyone. Both of us met
at a party and left with each other.
Or was it an orgy? Memory is a test.
Bitterness passes. In *Journey to the West*
when the Monkey King struggles to subdue
a fire-spewing foe and seeks the help
of Guanyin, her throne is either a lotus seat
or a bed of swords, depending on whether
the person upon it is the Bodhisattva
or a seething, flaming demon boy.

Death and Taxes

Denis Harnedy

1. I was so terrified during the maths test that I looked up the square root of four in the log book.
2. I took out house insurance in my dead brother's name. When the house burned down the judge said that it might, indeed, be the case that such people can't take out house insurance.
3. I could never sit still at school. Later, I kidnapped a princeling. I cut off his left thumb and posted it to his parents. It might, indeed, be the case that there is no other place for such people.
4. At least their victims know where they stand.
5. Another prisoner had imported growth hormone and sold it to farmers. He told me the hormone was legal in America. I felt the same disgust. But maybe he thought it was safe. Why would he have told me what he was in for otherwise?
6. You never cut off a thumb. Just smiled your watery smile.
7. One night I woke and the moon was big and full and amber. I smiled at the prisoner on watch. He smiled back awkwardly as if interrupted doing something unmanly.
8. I thought of a time, as I child, when I walked into the kitchen and saw my mother sitting, watching a kitten play with string. She was smiling. She looked up at me and smiled. I felt the moment end and regretted my existence.

Two stories without endings
Ed Madden

1.

It was a clinic. I don't remember exactly what I was asking about but he needed

to see it, so I pulled my pants down.

I was old enough to know. By then I'd had crabs. It was something that happened.

I wanted to know. He wanted to see

if there was discharge, he said, so he did what he did as he sat on the doctor stool

and I stood in front of him. I was beginning to admit I was gay, and trying

out what that meant with men I met.

I got hard as he kept milking it but nothing happened, nothing came of it. I've only

ever told two people about it. About him.

It wasn't that I didn't want it—though I didn't really want it, I didn't really

want it—but the body does what it does.

2.

He held his hand up to his mouth, grinned

like he was letting us in on some secret,
leaning in over bellinis and brunch.

Last night he was raped, he said. He wanted
to go home with a man from the bar,
but then the guy was rough, held him down,

fucked him without lube or condom. So
after the man fell asleep, he said, he got up,
got dressed, found his wallet and took it all

and left. He was only in town that weekend
to see some friends, to see us. He laughed.
The man would never see him again, he said.

He's paying for this, he said.

ad perficiendum
Richard Leis

Everything breaks down. During a season of harms,
every disaster looks premediated. You imagine things.

A slasher in your closet sliced the crotch of your last good
pair of jeans, left holes in the armpits of all your T-shirts,

separated the soles from your shoes. You don't have the money
for new clothes. Even in drawers, every article is thin and ragged.

From the broken bookshelf, the one book with all the answers
(starts with genesis, ends with revelation) drops, opens up

to the Parable of the Talents, the one you despise most. Pens dry up,
represent words being spoken in tongues elsewhere. Raise the temperature;

gremlins have broken the thermostat. Ghosts have stolen
the charge cable for your phone. Your laptop battery

swells and threatens to explode, so you'd better not use it.
The TV's audio won't work. The Weather Channel called for

light rain, but it's a deluge out there. Streets overrun with reckoning.
The garage door won't roll up. Your car won't start. Clowns have

cut the fuel line, slashed the tires. The wires. The bicycle seat
has broken off, left the rusted metal jagged at the end.

There's nowhere to ride in this storm, every place abandoned.
The garage smells of ozone and sawdust, the table saw drips

blade oil, the bulbs flicker, shadows chase you back
into the kitchen. The refrigerator has an expiration date

and the milk has spoiled. The eggs in the carton have hard
boiled, birthed marble-eyed fowl fetuses. Meat foams pink,

twitching. Rotting bags of salad and celery regenerate, too,
beget a new Garden in the crisper drawer where the animals

will roam. If you listen long enough, the slow faucet leak
is slow maddening. Shadow people have extinguished

the pilot light in the stove and the gas makes you drowsy.
You stumble into your bedroom, ignore the squealing door,

squelching carpet. The bare, lumpy mattress on the floor thirsts for blood.
You lie down, dream of *Final Destination*, *Mouse Trap*, *Operation*, evil doctors,

dentists, dark waiting rooms, the locker room after a football game.
Your high school crush says he feels the same way, reaches for you

with his sweaty quarterback hands. Can this be real? He oozes from his ears, eyes, nose,
mouth, down there, and everyone at school watches you stand naked and unprepared.

Running out, you sprint down narrowing hallways where metal locker doors
crash, bang, the cacophony of chase, the smell of defeat, methyl mercaptan

like rotten eggs, warning you, but you won't wake up to greet
the silent asphyxiation. There has been no time for repairs.

You feel the end times in joints arthritic, bones soft, skin sensitive,
sphincters released, body susceptible, failing, eager to be finished.

Enflamed

Raymond Luczak

Perhaps being born with fire in my veins had something to do with it.
Winter fascinated me because everyone wore long-johns and sweaters and jackets and boots.
I found those layers to be a niggling nuisance.
They always got in the way of my movements.
I was never cold.
I wore flip-flops and shorts at subzero temperatures.
I was annoyed that I'd have to wear thick socks inside my skates at the rink.
Scientists came to videotape me and marveled at the fact that I'd never suffered pneumonia.
I even went skinny-dipping for a few hours in the Arctic waters just for kicks.
Hyperthermia? What's that?
Doctors extracted my blood hoping for clues.
I didn't care at all.
I just loved being outside in the cold.
I could lie naked in my boxers on the snow in the sun and make snow angels all day long.
My skin never turned blue.
I loved the crispness of snow against my skin.
The whiteness of snow and sun soothed my tired eyes.
I learned how to dream beneath snow-capped barren trees.
Geneticists extracted my DNA and compared it against a million others: nothing different.
Then I went climbing up Mount Everest.
I wore only a T-shirt and jeans and a pair of really expensive mountaineering boots.
I had the lightest load of anyone.
I didn't even need a blanket for myself, so I carried a few for others in my group.
Even the Sherpa couldn't stop dropping their jaws.
They babbled shock and outrage in their tongue.
The view from atop was great!
Oh man—that mountain range was really something to see.
The air was really mind-blowing.
Fresh and invigorating.
I felt almost high.
But my phone had turned too cold for snapping selfies.
That was a real bummer.
I had wanted to tweet and mark the occasion, but y'know, reception wasn't great anyway.
When summer returned, I had to retreat.
Anything above 32 degrees Fahrenheit was too hot for me.
I was like an ice cube left on a plate to melt.
I felt cursed when all my friends left me to go swimming and barbecuing.

I slept in a room filled with frozen carcasses hanging from the ceiling.
My body felt closer to normal.
I couldn't wait for the leaves to turn fiery and the snow to fall again.

Pastel
Melissa Cannon

Pale face masks float through fear-infected air;
the aids ward's like a charnel, though pink trees
in bloom outside the window give some ease
when bone-lined stretchers block each hall and stair.

A scene too freakish for the eye to bear
that's what, the touring party soon agrees
as face masks float through fear-infected air,
the aids ward looks like. A charnel, with pink trees?

A Bosch pastel? Stripped limbs, odd-budded, wear
the tint of cherry blossoms; canopies,
despite long wasting drought and glacial freeze,
still open to survive another year
where pale masks float through fear-infected air:
the aids ward's like a charnel with pink trees.

Passer, Passerus
John Bartlett

after Catullus

Red dog, pet of my crush
with whom he often plays, holding
you in his lap or giving you
morsels to taste and to bite
provoking you to lick his face
 —whenever he, the source of all my
thoughts has a mind for some
other kind of play, he may
taunt me at last and play
with me instead of you,
let me too lie between those
legs outstretched and loosen
all hidden and secret parts
of you

Sometimes I Want To Brancusi You
Phillip Watts Brown

the way the artist
made a bird

an upward arc
of gold

wing
carving air

all swift
and gleam—

discover you
in one curve

the slope
of your neck

or tilt of your thigh
under my hand

your simplest
shape—

needing no title
to know

which animal
you are.

but I thought of you the entire time
Don Cellini

no Greek marble
could compete

a royal pharaoh face
his skin like caramel

onyx eyes
extinguished stars

belly sand dune-
smooth

lost in his labyrinth
I searched

for an exit
for an entrance

night crouched
beneath the window

listening
breathing hard

I remembered
the French toast

you made
for breakfast

sprinkled with
cinnamon

I thought of you
the entire time

the moon bobbed
like a kite on a string

it meant
nothing

Pink fur purr
Deirdre Maultsaid

I was sorry for the mercy sex,
but humans hunt humans.

You wished to be a lady with a parasol:
pure and ethereal. I was fiendish and real.

At 5, I had a cat doll with a wire hoop skirt
covered in faux black fur.

I could unzip her skirt and fold my pajamas inside.
Look at her stiff matron's smile. How I despised her.

At 5, I ran down the alley: the smell of hay,
the golden twilight. I found my body.

When we made love, you cried at finding your body.
The bridal princess is dead.

This is your body: your sweaty pelt.
You are hungry. You fiend, you fiend.

I will take you through the Rijksmuseum
Until you are blissful and spent and full.

You want it: demure naked ladies,
Cloaked virgins; Oh, that is the Milkmaid.

We will come upon van der Helst's "Adriana".
She wears orange ringlets, a cape and a bead broach.

Everywhere on her gown, in her hair,
on her ruffled sleeves, are rows of pink tufts.

I will tell you about my silly pajama cat.
We will giggle and laugh.

I will keep saying “fur”.
You will keep purring.

Here will be Fendi’s “WombTomb”, a 2-metre long chest covered in faux fur of cream and green.

It will pulse with a flamboyant power.
The vulva on the lid is thick plush pink fur.

If you could lift the lid you would see the paradox:
the womb tomb holds only one human.

I will say, “the tensions, the duality”.
You will purr and agree.

Tensions will bring on the great pink Queerness.
You will be safe and you will be undone by my caress.

Still Life with Shadow **Scott Wiggerman**

About our relationship, let me be open:
in times of drought, I increase my flood
insurance—just in case. When the groundhog sees its shadow,
I must suppress the urge to jump from a ledge.
I don't trust any memory or time frame,
so I'm not disappointed when daffodils fail to bloom.

You still recall verbs associated with Bloom's
taxonomy levels, instructional design models, open
classrooms. All you need is a frame
to follow, and a river of ideas will flood.
I have never possessed that kind of knowledge,
for you've clouded my mind in a smog of shadow.

I can't believe I once wanted to shadow
you. I wanted to be the pollen to your bloom.
But if you were a staff, I was a ledger
line, a sad key that would not open
anything, a trickle and never a flood.
I was a movie of only one frame.

You know perfectly well how to frame
me for your shortcomings, leaving me to shadow-
box with a ghost, awash in a flood
of muddled emotions. Others hear you bloom
at the podium, only I know that they never see you open
up. You are a crag hidden below water, a ledge.

But I am buried beneath that ledge—
how's that for a twisted frame
of reference? I can't remember the last time I saw open
skies, nothing but gray shadows
where I drown. No wonder there's no bloom

in my cheeks, pale as the day of the Great Flood.

You know where to find me but refuse to use a flood-
light, even a matchstick. You like to hold a real edge.
You tuck me away in a box full of letters like a bloom
pressed in a dried-up book, a broken bed frame
without a mattress in the shadowy
confines of a basement whose windows won't open.

Why do I believe a flood of warmth might stretch down my frame?
Across a window ledge your shadow might someday shrink,
and I, an anxious bloom, might open like a parachute.

10° above South-South-West
John F Murphy

I knew it was all over.

We stood in our planned–
unplanned garden, waited
for it to appear,
his clenched gloved hand suspended
at arm's length,
aligned with West–South–West,
resting on the horizon,
knuckles at 10°.

He had on his heavy coat,
Steve's military parka.
It had a Canada flag patch
stitched securely to its sleeve.

I considered the trefoil leaves
of maple trees,
how insects—aphids, psyllids, leaf–
hoppers and the rest—ingest
their sugars and egest
this viscous liquid: honeydew.
Honeydew goes absolutely everywhere.

I considered the scarab beetle,
how it rolls a ball of dung
away from the sticky bun fight
at the poo pile,
using the gradient of light to dark
across the spray of the stars,
to safely find its way.
The beetle keeps on moving in a straight line.

He talked me through
the stars, showed me
the International Space Station pass
and disappear—it shrugged off
the sun's reflection, left
our field of view—at
10° above South-South-West.

Eyes glued to the sky, he said:
'I've been on autopilot since he left.'

I knew it was all over.

Where Else Lee Patton

Late autumn can be a second spring.
The frost hasn't killed all that's green,
and a warming sun slants in to revive
pots of oregano and sweet basil.

We are sore from laughing in bed.
We're still flushed from the urgent
plush lost-to-the-world refreshment
of sleepy morning love. Boggled,

we're bound to slurp coffee after coffee.
I love this weekend slow-starting
sunny fuzziness, clarity's slow work
from heaped sheets to fully dressed

and ready, for errands, meetings,
garden beds to dig up and put to sleep
for a winter who knows how long,
how bad? Out in the yard, birds

squiggle around the dry fountain,
dive-bomb on the deck, scatter
under the junipers. Red cheeks
like love-flushed men, white side

feathers, long straight tails—before
you consult the bird book, I guess
thrushes. "Finches," you dispute.
I am willing to concede finch-ness,

but argue thrush for the hell of it.
"Shouldn't they be heading south?"
you wonder. I say, "Right now,
where else would they want to be?"

To the Ends of the Earth
Ryan Wong

I promised I'd wear my best clothes today,
that I'd go out to see the sun, pulling it close,
far, some clumsy dance of light. I said I'd go
for a run, so a run is where I went; past our place,
past the speck on the worn page, old journal and
a lighter in hand. There I sat, sifting the sand
through my teeth, and I thought it tasted just like
you. Soaked wet I stood, holding my hand out to
the burning sky. Dusk came, and I knew it was time.
We've always known we would never have enough.
I turn around, feet raw, lips tender, and the snake
in the hallowed bush flicks its tongue. Left, right,
left, right. They'll find us soon, my love. They'll find us
and tear our hearts in two. We can run no further. Let us
lay down, and let us breathe easy. We will kiss as the flames
come. We will let them watch. They'll see us, bundled sticks,
summer smoke, shining bodies bundled no longer by
bruised limbs. That night the moon looked like a house by the sea,
I promised you'd never have to walk through Hell on your own.
Here I am. Here we are. My love,

Let us be free

Love Poem with Heatwave
Michael McKimm

Rain in the night.

Comes with the wind like bucket
after bucket of shingle on the flat roof
you hugging me from behind in the half-sleep
“Do you hear it?” as if rain could warrant
such a question, awaken
us from dreams tautened
like stretched strings, cooling wires
could wash the knotted naked heat
that has kept us feverish for weeks, rain
remembered from childhood:
belting horizontally in draughts as if the sea
had slapped its hand across the window.

Sound is no proof: we have to look.
Silently we clamber from the bed
move the curtain like a hinge
through which we pull
the streetlamp’s showerhead, pavements
black as jet, creeks running kerbstones
frothing drains, early drivers
going slow, their wipers flicking seismographs.

We are close to the glass, hunkered down
to hide our nakedness. The rain thumps
off a wheelie-bin. It’s like one of those nights
when we started out, cold broke and up late
by the opened window, the font of the world
erratic and illegible, the hot new streets,
the silence and the strength we drew from it.
You light a cigarette. I sip a G&T

which was when I woke and saw that it

was dream, my buttress limbs
your solid sleep, your back to mine
my forehead thick with sweat. But not
entirely dream: I still feel your hug
and hear your question, slumber-drugged
with smiles, and know from the wet ground
how our two nights intertwined.

Contributor's Notes

YAKOV AZRIEL

Yakov Azriel was born in New York and came to live in Israel at the age of 21. He has published five full-length books of poetry in the US, the latest being *Closet Sonnets: The Life of G.S. Crown (1950-2021)*, which was published by Sheep Meadow Press in November 2017. Over 900 of his poems have been published in journals and magazines. In addition, his poems have won twenty-four prizes in international poetry competitions.

JOE BABCOCK

Joe Babcock's poetry has appeared in *A&U Magazine*, *MockingHeart Review*, and *The Night Heron Barks*. He is the author of two novels, *The Tragedy of Miss Geneva Flowers* and *The Boys and the Bees*. He lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with his husband, Dan Freeman, and their dog, Lucky, a.k.a. Little Missy.

BROOKLYN BAGGETT

Brooklyn Baggett (she/her/hers) is a trans poet and artist working toward her MFAW at Goddard College. Raised in Tupelo, MS, she escaped to St. Louis. After 25 years there she and her wife, Cora, moved to NYC. Transitioned at 42. Flawed human trying to do something positive in this world; constitutionally incapable of not being herself. She and bestie, Kae Winter, recently started *inBetween*, a queer-centered literary journal. Publications have included *The Pitkin Review*, *Big Muddy*, *Lucidity* and *The Prometheus*.

JOHN BARTLETT

John Bartlett is the author of eight books- fiction, non-fiction and poetry. In 2019 his first chapbook *The Arms of Men* was published and *Songs of the Godforsaken* in June 2020. *Awake at 3am*, his full collection, was released by Ginninderra Press. He was the winner of the 2020 Ada Cambridge Poetry Prize and Highly Commended in the 2021 Mundaring Poetry Competition. He reviews and podcasts at beyondtheestuary.com Twitter: [@beyond_estuary](https://twitter.com/beyond_estuary)

JES BATTIS

Jes Battis teaches literatures and creative writing at the University of Regina, where they also serve on the executive committee of their LGBTQ2+ faculty and staff group. They have published work previously in *Poetry is Dead*, *The Capilano Review*, *The Puritan*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *The Maynard*, *Ghost City Review*, *Eclectica*, *Strange Horizons* and *Plenitude*. They're also the author of the *Occult Special Investigator* series and *Parallel Parks* series, both with Ace/Penguin.

DALE BOOTON

Dale Booton (he/him) is a twenty-six year old queer poet from Birmingham. He is a teacher by trade and a poet by nature. His poetry has been published by Verve in their Diversity anthology, *Untitled: Voices, Re-Side*, and on Young Poets Network. Most recently, his poetry has been featured by *Ligeia*, *Queerlings*, *Fahmidan*, *Tealight Press*, *Dreich*, Selcouth Station Press, *Spelt*, Acid Bath Publishing, and Muswell Press. He is currently working on his first pamphlet.

MELISSA CANNON

Melissa Cannon is now older, still queer and, if possible, even more cranky. She lives in Nashville, TN, is retired and has new work forthcoming in the 2021 issue of *Slant*. She is at work, off and on, on two manuscripts—*The Mortal Coil* and *Scarlet Women*.

ROBERT CARR

Robert Carr is the author of *Amaranth*, published in 2016 by Indolent Books and *The Unbuttoned Eye*, a full-length 2019 collection from 3: A Taos Press. Among other publications his poetry appears in the *American Journal of Poetry*, *Crab Orchard*, *Lana Turner*, and *Shenandoah*. He is the recipient of a 2022 artist residency at Monson Arts, sponsored by the Maine Writers and Publishers Alliance, and lives in Maine with his husband Stephen. Additional information can be found at robertcarr.org

DON CELLINI

Don Cellini is a poet and translator. He has authored several poetry chapbooks and translated many books of poetry from Spanish to English. You can see more of his work at www.doncellini.com.

CASEY CHARLES

Casey Charles is a writer, teacher, lawyer, and activist who lives in Missoula, Montana and Palm Springs, California.

DEREK COYLE

Derek Coyle published his first collection, *Reading John Ashbery in Costa Coffee Carlow*, in a dual-language edition in Tranas Sweden and Carlow Ireland in April 2019, and it was shortlisted for the Shine/Strong 2020 poetry award. He lectures in Carlow College/St Patrick's, Ireland. His forthcoming collection, *Sipping Martinis under Mount Leinster* will be published in the Summer 2022. He has published poems in *The Irish Times*, *Irish Pages*, *The Texas Literary Review*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Orbis*, *Skylight 47*, *Assaracus*, and *The Stony Thursday Book*.

J. FREEBORN

J. Freeborn is a teacher and the anthology books managing editor at The Poetry Society of New York. They have recent work in *Dream Pop*, *Occulum*, *Voicemail Poems*, and elsewhere.

ELIZABETH GIBSON

Elizabeth Gibson (she/her) is a Manchester-based poet, playwright and performer, inspired by queerness, body image, mental health, city life, nature and folklore. Her work has been accepted by *404 Ink*, *Atrium*, *Confingo*, *Lighthouse*, *Magma*, *Popshot*, *Queerlings*, *Under the Radar* and anthologies from The Poetry Business and The Poetry School. She was awarded a DYCP grant from Arts Council England in 2021 to further explore queerness through poetry and performance. She debuted her one-person spoken-word play, *The Reason for Geese*, at Turn On Fest at Hope Mill Theatre, Manchester, in 2022. She is on Twitter and Instagram as @Grizonne.

SEÁN GRIFFIN

Seán Griffin (she/they) received an MFA from Manhattanville College. Seán's writing appeared in [PANK] Magazine, The Mud Season Review, and elsewhere. Seán contributed to the long poem, *Arrival at Elsewhere* (Against the Grain Press). Seán teaches creative writing at Mercy College and is an editor for Inkwell Journal. Instagram and Twitter @seangrifter

DENIS HARNEDY

Denis Harnedy is a barrister living and working in Dublin, Ireland. In his free time he likes watching films and reading.

TANIA HERSHMAN

Tania Hershman's second poetry collection, *Still Life With Octopus*, will be published by Nine Arches Press in July 2022 and her debut novel, *Go On*, by Broken Sleep Books in Oct 2022. Her poetry pamphlet, *How High Did She Fly*, was joint winner of Live Canon's 2019 Poetry Pamphlet Competition and her

hybrid particle-physics-inspired book *and what if we were all allowed to disappear* was published by Guillemot Press in 2020. Tania is the author of a poetry collection, a poetry chapbook and three story collections, co-author of *On This Day She* (John Blake, 2021), and has a PhD in creative writing inspired by particle physics. www.taniahershman.com

COLLIN KELLEY

Collin Kelley is the award-winning author of six poetry collections and three novels. He recently co-edited *Mother Mary Comes To Me: A Pop Culture Poetry Anthology* (Madville Publishing) and *Wonder & Wreckage: New & Selected Poems* (Poetry Atlanta Press) will appear in 2023. Find out more at collinkelley.com.

TIM KIELY

Tim Kiely is a criminal barrister and poet based in London. His debut pamphlet *Hymn to the Smoke* was a winner of the 2020 Indigo Dreams First Pamphlet Competition.

JEE LEONG KOH

Jee Leong Koh is the author of *Steep Tea* (Carcenet, 2015), named a Best Book of the Year by UK's Financial Times and a Finalist by Lambda Literary in the US. His second Carcenet book, *Inspector Inspector*, is forthcoming in 2022. Originally from Singapore, Koh lives in New York City, where he heads the literary non-profit Singapore Unbound and the indie press Gaudy Boy.

RICHARD LEIS

Richard Leis lives in Tucson, Arizona where he teaches workshops at The Writers Studio, helps organize the annual Tucson Poetry Festival, and works in planetary science. His poetry has been published multiple times in *Impossible Archetype*, as well as *The Laurel Review*, *Manzano Mountain Review*, and speculative poetry journals. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and was a finalist in the Tucson Festival of Books Literary Awards in 2018 and 2021. His website is richardleis.com.

JAIME LOCK

Jaime Lock is a queer poet living and working in London. Their recent work can be found in *Signal House Edition* and *Giving Room Mag* among others. Jaime also sings sea shanties.

RAYMOND LUCZAK

Raymond Luczak is the author and editor of many books, including *once upon a twin: poems* (Gallaudet University Press) and *Compassion, Michigan: The Ironwood*

Stories (Modern History Press). His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, and elsewhere. Three new titles will come out in 2022: *Lunafly: Poems*, *A Quiet Foghorn: More Notes from a Deaf Gay Life*, and *Widower, 48, Seeks Husband: A Novel*. Currently the editor of the literary journal *Mollyhouse*, he lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. [raymondluczak.com]

ED MADDEN

Ed Madden is author of four books of poetry. He is the poet laureate for the City of Columbia, South Carolina.

PAUL MADDERN

Paul Maddern was born in Bermuda and now lives in Ireland. He has four publications with Templar Poetry, the latest being *The Tipping Line* (2018), and he is the editor of *Queering the Green: Post-2000 Queer Irish Poetry* (Lifeboat Press, 2021). He has two Bermuda Government Literary Awards and his poem, 'Effacé', is included on the Northern Irish GCSE syllabus. He owns and operates The River Mill Writing Retreat, in South Down: www.the-river-mill.co.uk

JEFF MANN

Jeff Mann has published six books of poetry, *Bones Washed with Wine*, *On the Tongue*, *Ash*, *A Romantic Mann*, *Rebels*, and *Redneck Bouquet*; three collections of essays, *Edge*, *Binding the God*, and *Endangered Species*; a book of poetry and memoir, *Loving Mountains, Loving Men*; six novels, *Fog*, *Purgatory*, *Cub*, *Salvation*, *Country*, and *Insatiable*; and three volumes of short fiction, *A History of Barbed Wire*, *Desire and Devour*, and *Consent*. With Julia Watts, he co-edited *LGBTQ Fiction and Poetry from Appalachia*. The winner of two Lambda Literary Awards and four National Leather Association-International literary awards, he teaches creative writing at Virginia Tech.

DEIRDRE MAULTSAID

Deirdre Maultsaid (she/her) has been published in *Canthius*, *CV2*, *Filling Station*, *Pif*, *Prairie Fire*, *the Puritan*, *Riddle Fence*, *untethered*, *White Wall Review* and others. Deirdre Maultsaid is a white queer writer gratefully living in Burnaby, Canada on unceded traditional Coast Salish Lands. More information at <https://deirdremaultsaid.com/> and @deirdmaultsaid.

JAMES MCDERMOTT

James McDermott's spoken word collection *Manatomy*, longlisted for the Polari First Book Prize 2021, is published by Burning Eye. His pamphlet *Erased* is published by Polari Press. James's poems have been published in magazines including *Poetry Wales*, *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, *The York Literary*

Review, Queerlings and fourteen poems.

VRON MCINTYRE

Vron McIntyre is a queer, non-binary, disabled poet (she/they). Vron has been a peace camper, fat activist, do-it-yourself feminist editor and publisher, helped organise women's camps in the 90s and queer pagan camps in the 00s. Originally from the north east of England, Vron is a long time resident of Nottingham, a member of the DIY Poets Collective, and performs regularly at open mics. Her work has been published by DIY Poets, Poetry & Covid, anthologies *Geography Is Irrelevant* and *Spirit Of Fire&Dust*. Her debut pamphlet *Random Trail* was published by Big White Shed in 2021.

MICHAEL MCKIMM

Michael McKimm's publications include *Fossil Sunshine* (Worple, 2013) and, as editor, the anthology *The Tree Line: Poems for Trees, Woods & People* (Worple, 2017). His poems have most recently appeared in the anthologies *Arrival at Elsewhere* (Against the Grain, 2020) and *Queering the Green: Post-2000 Queer Irish Poetry* (Lifeboat Press, 2021). He lives in London, UK and is currently collecting swimming pool poems: www.michaelmckimm.co.uk/swimming-pool-poems/

DAVID MEISCHEN

A Pushcart honoree, with a personal essay in Pushcart Prize XLII, David Meischen is the author of *Anyone's Son*, poems of gay identity, winner of the John A. Robertson Award for Best First Book of Poetry from the Texas Institute of Letters (TIL). Meischen has twice won the Best Short Story award from TIL. Co-founder and Managing Editor of Dos Gatos Press, he lives in Albuquerque, NM, with his husband—also his co-publisher and co-editor—Scott Wiggerman.

RON MOHRING

Ron Mohring is the author of *Survivable World* (Washington Prize) and *The Boy Who Reads in Trees* (forthcoming, 2023). He is the heart and soul of Seven Kitchens Press.

DANIEL EDWARD MOORE

Daniel Edward Moore lives in Washington on Whidbey Island. His poems are forthcoming in *Notre Dame Review*, *Front Range Review*, *Ocotillo Review*, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *Steam Ticket Journal* and *The Meadow*. His recent book, *Psalmania* was a finalist for the Four Way Books Levis Prize in Poetry.

JOHN F MURPHY

John F Murphy lives in Norwich. He recently graduated from Liverpool John Moores University, with a BA in Creative Writing. He was also awarded the Edmund Cusick Avalon Poetry prize. His background is in social care and advocacy. He has lived in England, Ireland and Scotland, but not in Wales – though he has holidayed there, in a static caravan.

ANNE MYLES

Anne Myles's poetry has appeared in the *North American Review*, *Split Rock Review*, *Sweet Tree Review*, *Lavender Review*, *Ekphrastic Review*, and other journals, and was a 2021 Pushcart nominee. A recent transplant to Greensboro, NC, she is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Northern Iowa and recently received her MFA from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. She identifies as lesbian and demisexual but even at her age is still trying to figure it out.

DAVID NASH

David Nash is a poet and writer from County Cork, Ireland, who lives and works between Europe and Chile. His poetry has appeared in various publications such as *The White Review*, *The Stinging Fly*, and Pilot Press' Queer Anthologies series, and he has won several awards, being the first poet to win Goldsmiths' Pat Kavanagh Prize. His art texts have appeared in numerous exhibitions and art books throughout the UK and Ireland, most recently for Wolfgang Tillmans at IMMA. His first children's book, *Bajo Mis Pies*, was released in Latin America in 2020, as did two translations of books on the social and cultural history of Chile. He writes a column for *Harper's Bazaar Korea*, and other essays have appeared in *Elle* and *The Irish Times*. A book of poems written during lockdown is forthcoming in 2022/3, as is another children's book in Spanish.

ERIC NORRIS

Eric lives in Portland, Oregon, USA.

LEE PATTON

A native of California's Mendocino Coast, Lee Patton has enjoyed life in Colorado since college. His first poetry collection, *In Disturbed Soil*, was launched in 2021. Recent poems appear in *Global Poem*, *Heirlock*, *Impossible Archetype*, and *New Verse News*. His fifth novel, *Coming to Life on South High*, also came out in 2021.

NAT RAUM

nat raum (they/them, b. 1996) is a queer disabled artist and writer from baltimore, md. they hold a bfa in photography and book arts and are currently a first-year

mfa candidate in creative writing & publishing arts at the University of Baltimore. nat is the founder and editor-in-chief of fifth wheel press, a queer literature and art publishing space. past and upcoming publishers of their writing include *kissing dynamite poetry*, *en*gendered lit*, and *delicate friend*. find them online at natraum.com/links.

TIMOTHY ROBBINS

Timothy Robbins has been teaching English as a Second Language for 28 years. He has been a regular contributor to *Hanging Loose* since 1980. His poems have appeared in *Main Street Rag*, *Off The Coast*, *Bayou Magazine*, *Slant*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Cholla Needles* and many others. He has published five volumes of poetry: *Three New Poets* (Hanging Loose Press), *Denny's Arbor Vitae* (Adelaide Books), *Carrying Bodies* (Main Street Rag Press) *Mother Wheel* (Cholla Needles Press) and *This Night I Sup in Your House* (Cyberwit.net). He lives in Wisconsin with his husband of 22 years.

MICHAEL RUSSELL

Michael Russell (he/they) is the author of chapbook *Grindr Opera* (Frog Hollow Press). He's queer, has BPD, Bipolar Disorder and way too much anxiety. His work has appeared in *Arc Poetry Magazine*, *Heavy Feather Review*, *SICK Magazine* among other places. He lives in Toronto and thinks you're fantabulous.

Insta: @michael.russell.poet

JP SEABRIGHT

JP Seabright (she/they) is a queer writer living in London. Their debut poetry pamphlet, *Fragments from Before the Fall: An Anthology in Post-Anthropocene Poetry* is published by Beir Bua Press. Their debut prose chapbook *NO HOLDS BARRED* is out February 2022 from Lupercalia Press, as is *GenderFux*, a collaborative poetry pamphlet, with Nine Pens Press. More info at <https://jpseabright.com> and via Twitter @errormessage.

GREGG SHAPIRO

Gregg Shapiro is the author of eight books including the poetry collection *Fear of Muses* (Souvenir Spoon Books, 2022). Recent/forthcoming lit-mag publications include *The Penn Review*, *Exquisite Pandemic*, *RFD*, *Gargoyle*, *Limp Wrist*, *Mollyhouse*, *Poetic Medicine*, *Impossible Archetype*, *Red Fern Review*, *Instant Noodles*, *Dissonance Magazine*, *The Pine Cone Review*, and *POETiCA REViEW*, as well as the anthologies *Moving Images: Poems Inspired by Film* (Before Your Quiet Eyes Publishing, 2021), *This Is What America Looks Like* (Washington Writers' Publishing House, 2021) and *Sweeter Voices Still: An LGBTQ Anthology From Middle America* (Belt Publishing, 2021). An entertainment journalist, whose interviews and reviews run in a variety of regional LGBTQ+ and mainstream

publications and websites, Shapiro lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida with his husband Rick and their dog Coco.

CHERRY SMYTH

Cherry has published four poetry collections, one novel and art writing. She is Irish and lives in London. See www.cherrysmyth.com

LIAM STRONG

Liam Strong is a Pushcart Prize nominated queer writer and has earned their BA in Writing from University of Wisconsin-Superior. You can find their essays and poetry in *Impossible Archetype*, *Rathalla Review*, *Glass Mountain*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Chiron Review*, *Panoply*, *Prairie Margins*, and *The 3288 Review*. They live in Traverse City, Michigan.

VICTOR BARNUEVO VELASCO

Victor Barnuevo Velasco was born in the Philippines. His prose and poetry appeared in print in *The Philippine Graphic*, *Ani*, *Haliya*, and *Bicol Journal of Literature*, and in online journals *Softblow*, *Mollyhouse*, *Impossible Archetype*, *TLDTD*, and *Migozine*. He currently resides in Miami Gardens, Florida, with his husband.

PHILLIP WATTS BROWN

Phillip Watts Brown received his MFA in poetry from Oregon State University. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in several journals, including *The Common*, *Ruminate*, *Spillway*, *Tahoma Literary Review*, *Orange Blossom Review*, *Grist*, *Rust + Moth*, and *Longleaf Review*. His poems have been nominated for Pushcart Prizes, as well as Best of the Net and Best New Poets honors. He and his husband live in Utah, where he works as a graphic designer. He also serves as a poetry editor for the journal *Halfway Down the Stairs*.

SCOTT WIGGERMAN

Scott Wiggerman, a 2021 inductee to the Texas Institute of Letters, is the author of three books of poetry, most recently *Leaf and Beak: Sonnets*, and an editor of several volumes, including the craft books *Wingbeats I & II: Exercises & Practice in Poetry*. His work has appeared in several issues of *Impossible Archetype*.

CYRIL WONG

Cyril Wong is a poet and fictionist in Singapore. His last book was *Infinity Diary*, published by Seagull Books.

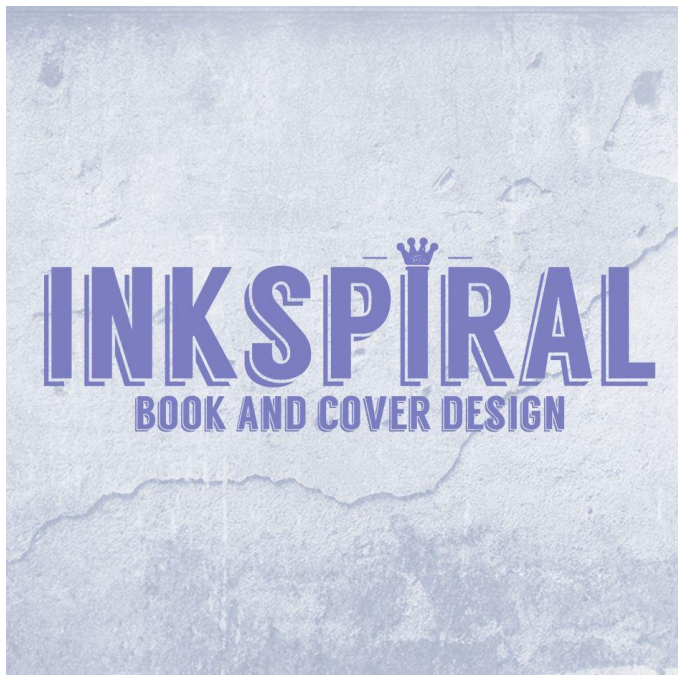
RYAN WONG

Ryan Wong is a queer poet and writer presently based in Malaysia. He is an editor for *Getting It Strait*, a bimonthly zine on creative arts, contemporary politics and youth culture.

JAMIE WYATT

Jamie Wyatt is a queer poet born in Anaheim, who has spent the last 25 years living & being inspired by the Pacific Northwest. She graduated with her BA in Professional & Creative Writing from Central Washington University, works as a high school library assistant, and spends all her free time writing. Her work has appeared in *Manastash*, *pour vida*, and *Handbasket*.

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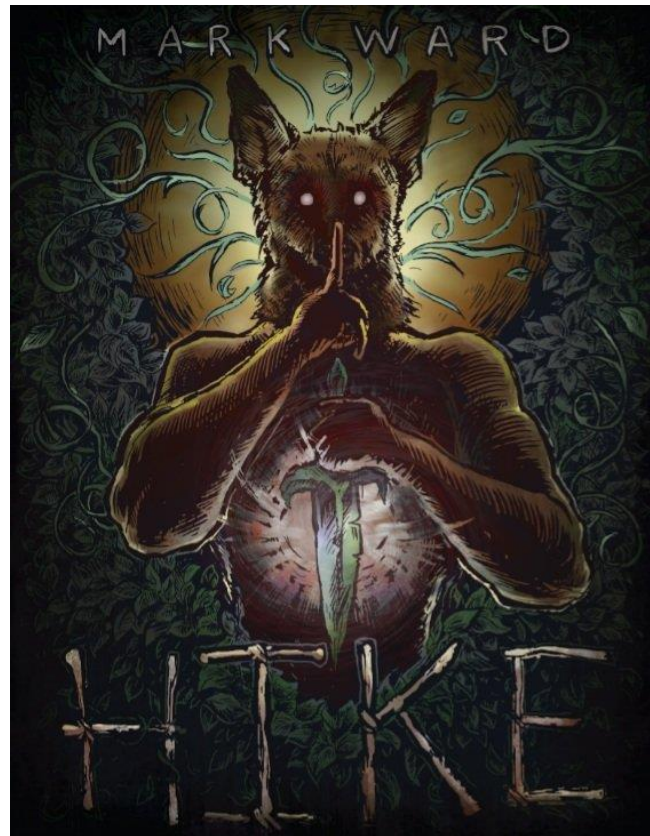


INKSPIRAL DESIGN

This issue was gorgeously designed by Matt at Inkspiral Design. You can find more of their work at <http://www.inkspiraldesign.com> and at www.facebook.com/inkspiraldesign.

MARK WARD

Mark Ward is a poet from Dublin, Ireland. He is the founding editor of *Impossible Archetype*, a journal of LGBTQ+ poetry. His poems have featured in *Banshee*, *The Irish Times*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Fourteen Poems*, *Southword*, *Skylight47*, *Softblow*, *Cordite* and many more, including anthologies, the most recent of which is *Queering the Green: Post-2000 Queer Irish Poetry* (The Lifeboat Press). He was awarded an Arts Council of Ireland Literature Bursary in 2021. He is the author of the chapbooks, *Circumference* (Finishing Line Press, 2018), *Carcass* (Seven Kitchens Press, 2020), *Faultlines* (Voidspace, 2022), the hybrid prose/haiku *Hike* (Bear Creek Press, March 2022). A full-length collection, *Nightlight*, is due out from Salmon Poetry in 2023. You can find more information about his work at: <http://astintinyourspotlight.wordpress.com>



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ARCHETYPE

**2022 FORWARD PRIZE FOR BEST SINGLE POEM
NOMINATIONS:**

Our nominees for the
2022 Forward Prize for the Best Single Poem are:

“Mr Jelly” by John McCullough
“Spliced: A Short Film” by Rebecca Sheridan
“The Dead Poet” by Eric Norris

Congratulations!

Submit to Impossible Archetype

Impossible Archetype is an international online journal of LGBTQ+ poetry. We welcome work from LGBTQ+ poets of all genders. We publish two issues per year.

SUBMISSIONS FOR ISSUE TWELVE OPEN 1st June 2022 AND CLOSE 1st August 2022. Submissions outside of this window will not be read.

What We're Looking For

Excellent poetry by LGBTQ+ folk. All styles and forms welcome, from page poetry, to experimental poetry, to slam poetry (although particular care here should be taken that it will work solely in a text format). We welcome submissions in English from all over the world.

Primarily, we're looking for poetry that is striking, beautiful, and musical. We are a journal that is not afraid of form neither are we afraid of unusual formatting or experimental work. We also like free verse. Basically, we like *all* poetry BUT what is crucial to all submitted work is that it grabs us, that it has a depth of craft, musicality and passion. Send us impassioned pleas, captured moments, and distilled emotions.

All contributors *must* identify on the LGBTQ+ spectrum. Work submitted does not need to directly identify this (although it absolutely can!)

How to Submit

Submit **1-4 poems** to impossiblearchetype@gmail.com (there is no upper line length and we welcome longer work. Generally, a good rule of thumb is to keep the submission to under ten pages total).

Please format the subject line as follows:

Submission: [INSERT NUMBER OF] Poem/s by [INSERT NAME}

Submit to Impossible Archetype

Submit as an attachment. Word files (.doc or .docx only). No weird file types.

Please pay careful attention to the formatting of your poem, and use a standard font like Times New Roman. Work submitted will be considered the *final draft*.

Within the submission, please make sure to include:

- your name (and, if different, your pen name)
- a biographical note (please keep this to 100 words or less)

We will respond to all submissions within two weeks of the submission window closing date (although work submitted earlier will most likely hear much, much quicker, on a rolling basis).

We are a journal that believes in responding as quickly as possible – we know whether we like work or not, and don't intend to keep you hanging. Given this, please no simultaneous submissions.

For more information on our guidelines, please visit <https://impossiblearchetype.wordpress.com/submit/>

SUBMISSIONS FOR ISSUE TWELVE

OPEN 1st June 2022 and CLOSE 1st August 2022.

Submit to 1-4 poems to impossiblearchetype@gmail.com.

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