

ISSUE 15

# IMPOSSIBLE ARCHETYPE

*A JOURNAL OF LGBTQ+ POETRY*  
**EDITED BY MARK WARD**

[impossiblearchetype.wordpress.com](http://impossiblearchetype.wordpress.com)

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*EDITOR'S NOTE*  
**MARK WARD**

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I

Sunlight, brightening the day and everyone with it, disappeared as quickly as it arrived. A wall of rain flattens me. *I need to suffer*, Patton says. Panic rises in me, spreading like liquid into every crevice. Japan in low, forbidding light. He walks until the city admits defeat, until water laps at his feet. *All you'd have to do is lie back*, Castro whispers. Every man in the distance looks like The Conductor, bridling. *When he ultimately nosedives, / naivete will be his parachute*. This is not the day to write this but here we are, the compartment trundling along. Kyoto in the distance. A new life.

II

Becoming *cored out*, as Mann describes (DSM-IV? There must be some sort of answer?). My brittle skin is left *asking for more flesh*, as Strong does, in all its meanings. A pound of. New skin. A body beside me. A muscle, twitching. A meal? *Prospects worth dipping and diving for*, as Wiggerman said at that meeting I didn't return to. Sometimes you must approximate. *Becoming him*, as Reiter says. Who? Someone else? The Driver, full 1940's uniform, tells me things are underway already and my stop is the natural conclusion. He is beautiful. Luminous. There is a *precarious hope*, as Jennings felt. This isn't the day to be writing this. Perhaps instead *this is how we survived another country*, Nicholl asked in that magazine you swiped from the dentist's office – they took thousands from you, why not take something of theirs. A two year old National Geographic. The driver smiling softly, as if not to spook me. *How comforting to have a witness*, Enszer insists like a hand holding another, for emphasis. *Sorry. Sorry*. Worrallo's lyrics in my headphones, coming out of my mouth like echolalia. The Driver asks why I am apologising. He tentatively reaches out to my bare arm – *the fuller skin* that Freeborn talks about – and touches it.

*Today is the best day to ask for a favor*, Roberts' almanac says, in an advertisement pullquote. I start to pray. My sister, on the phone, says *prayer?* And I explain, Oh, not a religious one. Just a focussing of intention. Expecting nothing but asking anyway.

### III

Somewhere in central Europe, the train tracks become submerged over time with water. It seeps in around them until they are well-below the water level. An announcement that there will be a boat replacement service with a promise that everyone will be there on the other side. *Your swimmer comes at night encircling you*, as Azriel has experienced, and tells me as we board the ship – a series of dinghies presided over by a large team of trim, moustachioed men in the whitest of whites. I feel a lightness I didn't expect. The hamster wheel evaded. *Step into me slowly like the sea*, Borland says, but as a flirt. Our dinghies float closer and further away. The ropes get patiently untangled by the sailors, who are so happy. Impossibly happy. They sing a song of a mermaid that *pushed oceans into my mouth and I drowned* – Quirke's song – but they are smiling, beaming, as they sing. The Conductor and The Driver nowhere to be seen. I ask the man in my boat where we are. He says *just outside the city limits, close enough*, reading the sign that Cartland erected. But what city? It looks like *waste land* or at least *its boundaries*, as Maddrell had charted. I lie back in the dinghy and allow myself to be rocked to sleep.

### IV

*Let's stay for a while*, he whispered, echoing Velasco on the tv. The day's heat bit through the room like a feral child, as the ceiling fan desperately tried to shoosh it away. Colombia? Bogota? *The sea will turn calmer the longer we stay*, he says, lip-synching Velasco. He waits until the world gives him the words he needs, and he uses them. I think it's despicable – say what you mean in your own words – but I cannot stay angry. He is *a tide I cannot stop*, as Farthing says, and one I would not want to. It has been weeks now and he is still not bored of me and our elopement from life. *I am hungry*, as Handley is, his lips seemingly everywhere. Like *hunger is a pattern carnivorous as change*, as Moore warns, but I don't care. *The heat today is stifling*, as Holland knows, and his mouth, his tongue, his lips are wet and refreshing. *How adept your hands*, I say, and he

smiles. His uniform draped over the room's solitary chair. The fourth wall missing.

## V

*I had been standing under the shower sobbing for a couple of minutes, not realising I was echoing Norris. It barely housed me and I had to queue up for it, whilst holding my valuables, scared to leave them in the couchette. I stare at my duffel. The tat of living, Little says, in one of those overhead advertisements, commonly seen on the tube. We are passing through somewhere mountainous. I gaze out the window and automatically move up a space every ten or so minutes without thinking. Forget what you know, Little continues. The Conductor blocks my way and repeats those words. He has seen my ticket already today. Anger flares through me but I've tried before, I've played and lost before, so it falls from me like the tumble from a cliffside, as Stewart knows. You're a fickle ghost, I tell him with the energy I have left. He puts my hand on his wrist and I feel a pulse. All night, all day, all day, all night, he whispers, using Cannon's words, in time to it. I am tired of this. And worse, I'm not surprised, as Howdle also isn't. I pull up my sleeve and show him again.*

## VI

Sunlight. Morning. *The same, the same, as Robbins knows. I tighten my lips and look away, as Harnedy does. I check my route, my travel insurance, if my phone has charged. Somewhere nearby, a bridge collapses, Foley reports, but it is unclear if our route will be affected. The Driver runs past my cabin. When you touch me, I'm solid and real, I say out loud, as Blair does, to the empty corridor. I lean against the pearled wood of a sealed door, as Russell described. It is locked. The train is stopping. Air whips through the cabin's small window. I feel so brittle, as brittle as Mohring's him. Goodbye was not easy on me, as Leis knows. I'm only poisoning your ghost, as Costa shares. We have the hardest time letting go, as Bertolero knows. The Conductor, with mock-sorrow, announces that everyone must disembark. To shun any paradise, as Wakely knows, is an awful thing to do. I don't want to go. The Driver is nowhere to be seen. The Conductor's hand ushers me to an open door, which leads to a sheer drop.*

# The Pear Tree

## Lee Patton

No matter how much I need to suffer,  
the pear tree rebukes me. Other trees  
stand stark in the garden, ashamed  
of their nakedness, their skeletal  
branches clawing at drama-queen,  
relentless needs, “I’m so exposed,  
won’t you please, please  
re-cloak me in green?”

Wait until April, suckers.  
I’ve got problems of my own,  
your leaves to dispose of,  
conservative majorities,  
an incipient bum knee.  
A keen sex performance  
now involves long-range  
planning, self-deprivation,  
and the kind assistance  
of a little ganja—  
never easy to score,  
and scoring’s never easy  
at puffy, crepey, crinkly  
fifty-three.

But praise the pear tree.  
It holds out every November,  
seizing its leaves tight  
through blizzard and bluster,  
growing more lovely, more golden  
as we devolve toward winter,  
until near Thanksgiving,  
it’s the only living thing  
bearing beauty and fecundity

high into icy skies—okay,  
pearless, maybe, but peerless  
in its determination to excite—  
like a forgiving lover  
squeezing my sagging ass  
throughout the much, much  
too early drop of night.

# Miss America

## Guillermo Filice Castro

Dennis, blond hair with frosted tips, in white pants and a Hawaiian shirt.

My slight surprise the first time he answered the door. We had crossed paths before, each on our way to work,

Dennis to a hair salon near the beach, I to a spa hotel on human-made Belle Isle.

The second bedroom he'd advertised was a sofa bed tucked in a corner of his living room with a view of the parking lot under palm trees. Next door to my job, I took it.

He said he'd sleep much better knowing someone was there.

\*

He had been Jackie Bouvier's hairdresser, producing the photo of a young man with his hands above Jackie's perm, a feat of coiffed immobility. He said she was dumb.

Dennis woke me up every morning with a spirited *Buenos días, mi amigo!* that I found grating.

He liked to report supermarket workers to management if they seemed idle in the produce aisle. He said I was one of the nice ones. *Why don't they let in more people like you?*

Forty-one, Dennis shot back when I asked his age.

\*

I accepted the coffee, the homemade dinners, the dining out with his friends. I accepted the tickets for *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Playing with my toe until I stopped his hand—nudging, probing snout—from creeping up my leg.

I declined to watch *Bigger Than Life* from his collection of Jeff Stryker videos. I called my family instead, which made him furious.

He thought Argentinians were cold.

Dennis sent soiled condoms to his estranged brother. Sent back our Big Macs to be reheated every time.

On the highway he asked what the sexual barrier between us was. *You*, I thought.

\*

He did all the work, he said. Hated being touched. So, all you'd have to do is lie back.

His visitors: 1) A Puerto Rican hunk who worked the butcher counter at Epicurean. 2) A green-eyed Colombian who told me he was molested by his soccer coach at age nine.

I brought over a young Cuban man who gave me lice and a torn penile frenulum.

More of his friends: 3) A Peruvian with a handicapped wife and two teen boys. 4) Mystery guy whose moans and screams of *Hold me hold me* could be heard through Dennis' bedroom door.

Never told him I made nameless friends under the boardwalk at night.

(Dennis claimed to have hooked up with Tony Danza and Greg Louganis. About the latter, "he stood right there where you stand" on the carpeted living room-cum-bedroom.)

He sobbed in the kitchen after I told him we'd never be boyfriends.

\*

He called me at work one morning—We got broken into! The door pushed in, they took his VCR, some money. Dennis suspected a former trick, something retaliatory.

He told the cops his real age: Sixty-one. What did he do to the guy, I wondered.

He who had taught me about the Three American Lies, of which stuck out, *Nobody cares if a black family moves next door*.

He'd gone out as Miss America in a borrowed fur coat and tiara one Halloween long ago.

He liked to pretend we were a couple after consuming a large pizza pie with everything on it, our propped-up feet swaying to Frank Sinatra's *Love and Marriage*.

\*

Dennis did all the work. Later he called the news station to complain about the announcer's hair.



## The Fool Card

# Michael Montlack

Is it a bottomless reservoir of hope  
that drives him to the cliff's edge?

Is it a childlike will to capture joy  
or his sense of entitlement to it?

Whatever it is, it's not bravery.

Perpetually perched, one step  
away from his clueless demise—

wouldn't anyone choose to be  
as unabashed and refreshingly gay  
in his tunic and bell sleeves,  
holding a decorative white rose?

When he ultimately nosedives,  
naivete will be his parachute.

And he'll be so gleeful as he glides,  
some may relish the *snap* of bones  
he's bound to break upon landing.

All of us know-it-alls watching  
from our own jagged cliffs,  
realizing the true suckers  
are the ones who see it coming.

# Marigold

## Jeff Mann

*Tagetes* spp.

That odd child climbing into the marigold patch,  
devouring the flowers, petals clinging to his lips

like herbivore fur on the fangs of a carnivore?  
Beware! He's hungry for more than healthful

phytochemicals. Year by year, he'll become  
a perverse and ravenous adult, cored out

by appetite, day by day reining in what is  
fevered, feral, rabid, ogling dark beards,

thick biceps, soft mats of chest hair,  
the besotting curve of buttocks,

trying in vain to escape the self,  
to incorporate loveliness,

take every human  
beauty inside.

slurred fag sonnet  
**Liam Strong**

rosacea as kaleidoscope, ripped  
jeans on the eyelid, pickled

flowers on your bannister. Spotify  
says you listened like a feast for

closure. tones run deaf, notation  
pungent on the fingertip. the one

appendage that our control takes  
from us. we wrap each other up in

bows & cartilage, milk & glacier.  
please. teeth want to be teeth, not

bones, because the act of biting needs  
music. illicit sounds from each lung,

language butchered from rhythm,  
our empty skeletons, asking for more flesh.

Cruising  
**Scott Wiggerman**

*golden shovel based on a Buson haiku*

Skies deepen into evening.  
From somewhere swallows

appear, find prospects  
worth dipping and diving for  
in these hours toward tomorrow.

But none  
come near, for  
midnight shadows me.

## Subtext

# Jendi Reiter

*for Jessica Pegis*

How English pirates wear their hair.

The first St. Teresa, but not the second.

A best friend at a boys' boarding school who died young.

Looking at her across wave-pounded rocks, then when she turns toward  
you, looking away.

A torso shot full of arrows, obviously.

Don't marry, let's pretend to be girls forever.

Murdering him, becoming him.

Greece for people who are not from Greece, and to a lesser extent, Italy.

Any villain monologue that rhymes.

Burning.

Flaunting your eyes, your breasts, your tongue, after and because they've been  
pulled from your body.

Ice skating, except for women.

A man who dresses like a shadow, with a loud nemesis.

That little twist in the hips on the crucifix.

In Which *We Both Laughed in Pleasure* Forgives You for Not  
Reading It Despite Sitting on Your Bedside Table Since June  
**Callie Jennings**

don't worry, babe,  
I'm happy to provide a vibe +  
impress your date but not so much  
you feel you gotta extrapolate  
from my first eight pages.

you're gonna do great, hon,  
believe me, I know that close  
dread + precarious hope:  
before someone opens you  
you might say anything.

## The Parrot

# Suzanna Fitzpatrick

needs a home –  
and you are kind, find  
a space amongst the dog, cat,  
daughter. She is thrilled

with its ash-soft plumage, flash  
of red at the tail,  
its knowing yellow eyes. You read  
these birds can think like children.

Something shifts –  
even your brother turns up  
to a family lunch, brings  
the girlfriend no-one's seen

to meet the bird. *Hello*  
it says, in a voice  
none of you recognise. *Why?*  
Chuckles when no-one answers.

All night you hear it downstairs,  
interrogating photos. *Why?*  
*Why? Why?* Laughing  
a stranger's laugh.

## A Cocktail for Dietrich **Carolyn Thomas**

Not for her a femme martini glass:  
she favours a lowball, plain not cut.

Mercedes, expert, measures out  
exactly  
    two fluid ounces of  
Canadian Club,  
    a half of orange  
curaçao,  
    counts three dashes of  
Angostura bitters over ice.

The silver shaker sweats with cold.

Absently, Marlene toys with a table lighter,  
replaces it without looking.

Hooded eyes narrowed, she watches,  
cat like, intent, Mercedes' every movement,  
forensically precise; watches  
amber liquid rain over three ice cubes.

Mercedes adds the citrus, sweet and sour.

Satisfied, she holds the drink towards her guest.  
Against lightly chilled glass, warm fingers meet,  
delicate, fleetingly.

Breath held, Mercedes waits 'til she can touch  
the lips imprinted on the empty glass,  
a scarlet slash of Rouge Dior.

The room is dizzy with the scent of roses.



# After Learning There's a Deposit on Beer Glasses at the Club

## Greg Nicholl

The bartender never looked at me,  
just slid the coins across the counter.

Still, there's no shame in dirtying your knees  
on a floor of congealed beer and sweat

to collect what someone was too lazy or drunk  
to return. What did he care? He had other things

to do. And I? I had saved him from another  
filthy chore. Darkest corners were always best.

Each unbroken glass money abandoned.  
My first attempt at a freelance career, scavenging

enough to pay back the cover and three rounds  
of shots. This is how we survived

another country. How quickly we students learned  
to master the *thank you* whenever a stranger

offered an invitation of dinner. "Free" became  
essential. So what if we had to answer

the same questions over and over. *Because  
I wanted to truly experience a different culture.*

*Because my finger just happened to land  
on Germany when I opened my eyes.*

*Because they say each time you agree to go  
home with a man, you learn a new vocabulary.*

A small price for a bowl of asparagus soup  
and a glass of Riesling that I sipped

on a Friday before heading back to the club  
and another night collecting what was never mine.

# Electra

## Julie R. Enszer

I.

Orestes did not kill Klaetemnestra

Have you ever seen a son

with the capacity to kill his mother?

That grotesque fascinates dramatists

but in the world where people live

where families rot from the inside

only daughters cultivate that intense mother hatred

only daughters harbor the desire for vengeance

for days for weeks for months for years

only daughters take the knife

shiny and sharp into their hands

drive it through mother's flesh

cold emboldened harsh smiling.

II.

I chafe at the cult of the father

What if Agamemnon deserved to die?

Gone all those years after the sacrifice

be real—call it murder

of Iphigeneia how we weep for you

Iphigeneia how we mourn

I understand why Klaetemnestra killed the king

Then turned a blind eye to Cassandra the concubine

The story is Electra rescued Orestes

sent him to Strophius of Phocis to become a man

to plot revenge

but Electra?

Electra started seeking vengeance as a child

III.

I thought I married Orestes

child exile

vengeance burning

as he waits to return

I wanted focus anger righteousness

the strengthen of conviction

the seething burn of justice

the commitment to family

For years I thought I married

Orestes but when the crisis hit

it was dithering, sniveling

Chrysothemis in my bed

IV.

How comforting to have a witness  
to failure to insecurity to loss  
when democracy is not effective

Women speaking in unison  
The Greek Chorus witnesses

errors  
injustice  
and speaks of them

Protagonists blind  
to human fallibilities  
Antagonists blinded

by perverse desires  
but the chorus  
the women see it all

I want a chorus  
my own set of witnesses  
speaking singing on my behalf

V.

I killed her

then emboldened

by the smell of blood

on my fingers

by the flesh

that dangled

from my knife

I killed Aegisthus

I avenged my father's death

## Common Finlay Worrallo

You don't want me here  
in your communal shower, lads.  
No, really. Nothing to do with me  
being a prude. *That* ship has sailed.

It's just that I can't look at you  
without uploading you into a dozen  
future dreams. You deserve a private  
space, and this one has eyes in it.

I'm not an invasion. I just want  
to get clean – but there are windows  
in my face, and light is shining  
through in both directions.

If I'd brought a torch, I could  
cast rainbows in the steam and truly  
show you myself – don't assume  
nudity means I have nothing to hide!

Sorry. Sorry. I'll close my eyes now,  
scrub down my foreign body,  
and try not to remake the space  
any more than I already have.

# Bēste

## J. Freeborn

Slick black twig  
praising spring sky

chartreuse bud  
lilac pale

give a good heart  
heōrte bloodflush

round which to wrap me  
hale and soft

Give a fuller sun at nōntide  
hold we as you wōld a rabbit

furrowed down the fuller skin  
inbreathe bifore þou snap þe spine

Burst springskēu  
Bend nou greenbough

Marchcloud shot  
fresh insplitten

Yenyelden mōuth  
tonge þou fairshape

biwhich we bearen  
ēt þe cost



fuck / *groping*  
**Kat Dixon**

*after Inua Ellams*

if my reflexes had been quicker / that night / strobe lights / stranger's hand cupped  
inside my skirt / if I had understood how to breathe / half-moment / fleet-footed  
second / bodies swarmed in bass / I would have grabbed that disembodied arm /  
from blackness / disconnected palm from knickers / opened up his face / shock  
pinging his eyes / surprised / at my strong grip / I would have dragged him  
through crowd / sweet scent of fake tan / spilled beer / Marlboro Lights / outside  
/ I would have made him sit / cigarette butts / gravel-palmed / I would have asked  
/ about his father / who his friends were / who laughed at him in school / who  
built this distance / who created this resistance / I would have stroked his sweaty  
shoulders / rocked his wounded hurting ego / tipped his head back / watch the  
tears collect / night sky / distant galaxies / regret / pulled knife from sequined  
handbag / fleet-footed second / wrist in hand again / watched five knuckles /  
bounce against the drain

# Almanac

## Kim Roberts

Today is the best day to ask for a loan.  
Wear red on Sundays. Castrate farm animals  
in autumn under a waning moon.

Wednesdays are most auspicious  
for starting new endeavors.  
Plant bulbs before the first snow.

The first snow comes six weeks  
after the last thunderstorm in September.  
Be cautious under a waning gibbous moon.

Lightning can strike in the same place twice!  
Blessings to spouses who make love  
on the Sabbath, as “Friday” shares a root

with Aphrodite. Saturdays  
are water days. “Winter” has a German  
morphology. Let’s get under the covers.

Today is the best day to ask  
for a favor. Honey, please:  
would you do me a favor?

Bridge  
**Cyril Wong**

This afternoon I danced  
with my younger self. We danced  
to Adele's 'Water under the Bridge'  
because. Just because. Crows of  
loneliness leaving our shoulders  
when we whirled, embracing. And you  
weren't there. (Do you mind?  
Can you still love us; I mean, me?)  
We healed each other. The world  
could fuck itself. I'm writing  
to restage our little number. So you  
may watch us disappear into me.

# A History of Closets

## Yakov Azriel

1.

The history of closet starts anew  
each time a boy begins to sense he's not  
the same as other boys — that what is hot  
for him is cold for them, that what is true  
for them is false for him, that what is blue  
inside their dreams is red in his, that what  
he speaks is Greek to them, that what he's got  
to do is something other boys don't do.

The history of closet is a book  
that rumors claim might be rewritten by  
a shadow who has come to understand  
a closet's not a home, that boys can look  
outside, beyond a starless closet sky,  
beyond a closet beach that has no sand.

2.

You wake up in the morning and you see  
your underpants are wet and sticky — wet  
but not from urine, from a dream that let  
you swim with someone in the sea. And he  
embraced you as you swam. His memory  
returns each time you dream; each time you set  
your eyes upon this swimmer, you beget  
another shadow-man, entrapped, yet free.

Asleep but dreaming, you engender men  
who populate your closet's rivers, streams,  
lagoons and bays. Your swimmer comes at night  
encircling you, embracing you again  
— and afterwards, begotten by wet dreams,  
your shadow-men beget the words you'll write.

3.

Your underpants are wet and damp again.  
Embarrassed by your dreams, embarrassed by  
your underpants' sticky stains, you try  
forgetting who you dream about: young men  
your age who strip themselves of clothing when  
you greet them on the beach, or when they lie  
upon the sand. And even though you sigh,  
you run to join them in their pirates' den.

Your underpants were wet like this, two nights  
ago. Last week three times. You change them and  
you wash yourself — but can't forget the rum  
you drank inside the pirates' den, whose lights  
are dim, whose music — loud, while on the sand  
your fellow-pirates wait for you to come.

4.

In school, they showed you how to punctuate  
a paragraph and how the calendar  
evolved. They stressed a pencil sharpener  
is your best friend and that you've got to wait  
for lunch. They taught you how to calculate  
an atom's mass, why Swift sent Gulliver  
to Lilliput, just what a polymer  
consists of and the House of Habsburg's fate.

But other things you learn all by yourself:  
to tiptoe in the twilight till the stars  
come out. To make and wear a mask. To play  
a game of ping-pong on a closet shelf  
with shadows from your dreams. To fly to Mars  
with paper and a pen. To know you're gay.

5.

Once upon a time, a long time ago,  
a sixteen-year-old boy would dream at night  
of other boys his age who'd wrestle, fight  
or run — but all the while, from head to toe,  
without their clothes. He dreamt they'd sometimes throw  
a ball to him — or swim with him — or light

a bonfire on the beach. He had the right  
of choosing: eeny, meeny, miny, moe.

Eeny, meeny, miny, moe — who would be  
the lucky boy, the chosen one, the boy  
who'd share the night with him, the boy who'd lie  
beside him, dream by dream, flame by flame, sea  
by sand, wave by surf: Russel? Roger? Roy?  
Eeny, meeny, miny, moe: moon, star, sky.

6.  
You've learned a lot of things in life, like one  
plus one is two, or how to play a game  
of tic-tac-toe. You've learned to write your name.  
To cut your fingernails. To jump. To run.  
To leap. To tie your shoes. You've learned a gun  
is dangerous — like truth. Like lies. Like shame.  
Like pride. At night you've learned you can't disclaim  
the moon, by day you can't disown the sun.

You've learned the words which you erased were not  
erased, and all the pages you had burned  
survived the fire. You've learned there is a bar  
of soap you cannot use. You've learned to dot  
an "i" and cross a "t." You've also learned  
it's hard denying who you really are.

7.  
Let's say you're seventeen. Let's say you are  
aware you're different from your friends — let's say  
you dream they're naked, as naked as the day  
that they were born. Let's say you dream that far  
away and far above us is a star  
that keeps on flashing, showing you a way  
to reach a tranquil, isolated bay  
where you could sail a boat across the bar.

Let's say you're older now, let's say you're old  
enough to tell yourself the truth, yet you're  
afraid to use a word like "gay." You hide  
inside a closet, but your closet's cold

and much too dark. Let's say there is a door  
you could unlock, to see a star outside.

8.

June 6<sup>th</sup> — Today I pushed against the door  
but still it didn't budge an inch. July  
18<sup>th</sup> — Today I tried to glimpse the sky  
that shines outside the closet, but the more  
I tried the less I saw. And then before  
I knew it, night returned. I hope to try  
again. September 27<sup>th</sup> — I  
encountered shadows on the closet floor.

October 31<sup>st</sup> — Last night I tried  
to push against the closet door with all  
my might, but like before, without a key  
it simply wouldn't open up. Inside  
the closet other shadows come; they fall  
asleep and dream of unlocked doors, like me.

9.

Let's count how many times I shook my head  
until I nodded yes. Let's count how many pies  
were never baked, how many butterflies  
were moths. Let's count how many loaves of bread  
were thrown away, how many hues of red  
were pink, how many times I closed my eyes  
instead of looking up, how many lies  
I told, how many needles pulled no thread.

Let's count how many closets I would hide  
in, year by year. Let's count how many locks  
I placed on closet doors, how many birds  
were never fed, how many knots I tied,  
how many rock I threw which weren't rocks,  
how many words I said which weren't words.

10.

A ladder to a star                    a ladder to  
the moon                    a ladder to a cloud                    to rain  
to sleet that pounds against a windowpane

of polished glass, a kind of mirror you  
 thought cracked            a ladder to a shadow who  
 is not afraid to see his face, or stain  
 a white shirt red            a ladder to a train  
 that brings you to a steamship and its crew

A ladder to a dusty closet shelf  
 on which you find old photographs you can  
 identify as yours, and dreams which are  
 as real as glass            a ladder to yourself  
 a ladder to the man you are, a man  
 who dreams he climbs a ladder to a star

11.

Sometimes a shadow drinks black wine. Sometimes  
 a shadow drinks black milk. At midnight he  
 may sit inside his closet and not see  
 a star outside. In Shadowese what rhymes  
 with 'truth'? What rhymes with 'yes'? A shadow climbs  
 a ladder, but a ladder might not be  
 his cup of tea. Sometimes he drinks black tea  
 that's sweetened by black lemons and black limes.

Does Shadowese have words that rhyme with 'star'?  
 With 'midnight' or with 'ladder' or with 'wine'?  
 With 'milk'? With 'cup'? With 'tea'? In Shadowese  
 is there another word for 'black' and are  
 there idioms which help us to define  
 precisely what are closet locks and keys?

12.

How many times do shadows gather in  
 the darkness, waiting for a man like me  
 to climb aboard their raft and cross a sea  
 of dreams with them? How often have they been  
 left stranded on a wind-swept shore, thin  
 and hungry, lonely, cold? So who will be  
 their navigator, if not me? How free  
 we are in dreams, my brethren and my kin.

How free a raft can be, unburdened by



a rudder or a steering wheel. How warm  
it is at sea; above our heads — a sun  
that never seems to set, a cloudless sky  
all blue! I take a shadow by his arm  
and point out passing dolphins, one by one.

13.

He should have told her all the facts before  
he went and married her, like two plus ten  
makes twelve, or oxygen and hydrogen  
form water, or the fall of Singapore  
in World War Two was a disaster, or  
how every single night he'd dream of men  
who'd swim with him in narrow bathtubs when  
he locked himself behind a closet door.

He should have told her who he was, he should  
have told her that he'd never be the kind  
of husband she had dreamt about. Would she  
have married him if she had known? Or would  
their children have been born? The heart, the mind,  
the soul are vaster than the vastest sea.

14.

He would prefer you not to talk about  
what happened, not to talk about the fur  
he stroked or how a cat began to purr  
one night. He would prefer to go without  
a drop of water, thirsty in a drought  
that seems to have no end. He would prefer  
you not to speculate what might occur  
if he should raise his voice or even shout.

He would prefer you not to take a key  
and open up his closet door, to tell  
his wife the truth. He would prefer to hold  
his breath for hours on end beneath the sea,  
for days, for years, or fall into a well  
where he could die a shadow's silent death.

15.

Along the shore, I built a little hut  
in which my wife and I now live; I built  
it from dried driftwood that I found, from silt,  
from broken shells, from palm-fronds that I cut.  
I hoped this shack would last a lifetime but  
an earthquake has occurred at sea; through guilt,  
through shame, strong underwater tremors tilt  
tectonic plates and cause the truth to jut.

A tidal wave is coming to destroy  
the flimsy hut I built; I'm helpless, though,  
as helpless as a boy who cannot swim,  
as helpless as a frightened teenage boy  
who struggles hard against the undertow  
yet dreams his closest friend is kissing him.

16.

It's clear the York of Yorkshire is older than  
New York. It's clear a bat, a whale, a deer  
are mammals, not reptiles, as are a bear,  
a monkey and a mouse. It's clear that Ken  
is short for Kenneth, Pete for Peter, Ben  
for Benjamin. It's clear we breathe the air  
in order to survive. What isn't clear,  
however, is the fact you dream of men.

It isn't clear at all a married man  
like you should dream of men; you lie beside  
your wife, but all you see are men. Although  
when daylight reigns and you're awake, you can  
pretend you're blind, asleep you cannot hide  
the truth that closet shadows clearly glow.

17

Don't talk about the man you really are.  
Don't talk about the way you daydream you  
caress another man, a lover who  
becomes a butterfly of light, a star.  
Don't talk about the door you leave ajar

in hope this butterfly will enter to  
illuminate your darkness and subdue  
wild spiders which attack you from afar.

Don't talk about desire, don't talk about  
your secret yearnings and the blazing fire  
you know you're not permitted to ignite.  
For years you've taught yourself to live without  
a word of truth — don't talk about desire,  
don't talk about a butterfly of light.

18.

A man who lives a lie, what does he own?  
A broken telescope — a bit of sky  
behind a cloud — a star the naked eye  
can't see — a window shattered by a stone  
as sharp as candor he himself had thrown  
to hit that star. A man who lives a lie,  
what does he have? A flashing firefly  
inside a bell jar and a stingless drone.

A man who doesn't live according to  
the truth, what does this man possess? A stitch  
of silken thread he can't unstitch — a nail  
he hammered which he can't extract — a screw  
he can't unscrew — a clasp he fastened which  
he can't unclasp — a letter he can't mail.

19.

If I had known what I know now — if I  
had known you cannot stop a basketball  
from bouncing up and down, or stop a wall  
from standing where it is, perhaps the sky  
might not have crashed. No matter what you try  
to do, the spring remains the spring, the fall  
remains the fall, and even if you call  
a lie the truth, a lie remains a lie.

My children might have been unborn, my wife  
without a wedding ring, and I, without  
their memories. But shadows who must bow

before the darkness might have lived a life  
beneath a sunlit sky and talked about  
the sun, if I had known what I know now.

20.

I'm sixty-three. I made my choices long  
ago — like locking closet doors at night  
and plugging earplugs in my ears, in spite  
of shadows who once argued I was strong  
enough to smash down doors and hear the song  
brave centaurs sang in praise of Athens' light  
and Sparta's fire. But were my choices right  
or wrong? What do I know of right and wrong?  
I'm sixty-three. My grandson loves to play  
with me, his sister brings me storybooks  
to read to her — in English, not in Greek.  
I chose to make believe I wasn't gay;  
but was this choice correct? My grandson looks  
for me — why not, I'm great at hide-and-seek.

## Threesome Polaroid

### Bryan Borland

Thrilling then to have four hands upon me, two throats  
to swallow my shadows. What was left but light  
& in that light three imperfect bodies in imperfect rhythm,  
clumsy confidence, a thirst satisfied by the spit of  
one near stranger & one near self & then one  
self without any judgment. I'm taking note. In  
the morning, slickness upon slickness, a good  
boy rising in praise. This was all I ever wanted,  
& then more, & more. One said *look*  
& one said *watch* & the other said *step*  
*into me slowly like the sea*. Learn to swim  
together & if not swim then float & if not  
float then sink, & if nothing else hold on  
to the deep of all things, the very bottom  
night-black in letting go, of even breath  
so that after nothing comes everything  
& then flash & fade to nothing again; sink to drown  
& drown to die & instead of guilty boys come  
back a photograph of strong & handsome,  
kind & compassionate,  
happily married,  
grown & loving men.

## Antiphon

### Liz Quirke

*Grant us, with all who have died in the hope of resurrection —*  
 we licked each other's hands like prayer —  
*to have our consummation and bliss —*  
 on the floor of the living room, both of us high —  
*in thy eternal and everlasting glory —*  
 and rising as stars burnt out the night —  
*which thou dost promise to all —*  
 and morning revealed itself behind the curtain —  
*for ever and ever —*  
 on the floor of the old Georgian in Edinburgh —  
*remember that we are but dust —*  
 in a room of stacked mattresses —  
*for he knows where of we are made —*  
 her eyes incendiary, as my hair transformed to lion's mane —  
*Let us pray —*  
 we weaved through sober air, molasses thick —  
*The days of man are but as grass —*  
 we saw into each other's bodies —  
*and the place thereof shall know it no more —*  
 she pushed oceans into my mouth and I drowned.

# The Lovers, Upright / in Reverse, in Reverse

## Xochi Quetzali Cartland

Somewhere between Newport, Rhode Island  
and Mizzoula, Montana lives a billboard that reads  
“LARGE LOSS RESPONSE COMPANY:  
LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED.” That was what I wanted,  
even if I had to pretend. I called the toll free number  
and a calmhearted woman asked “How can I help  
you?” like that was an easy question.  
She was so earnest, I had forgotten kindness  
could be both unassuming and unexceptional.  
I was in love with a woman who was both assuming  
and exceptional. She was a sculptor, and when she worked  
her clay dusted fingerprints stained every surface of my life  
as if to say — this too is mine. We lived in a town with  
a collection of windmills just outside city limits,  
close enough that their mechanic heave was comforting and familiar.  
I used to want to reach out and hug them, convinced  
that their cold metal arms would reach back.  
Maybe that was the real trouble. We were birds together.

The peonies in our front yard close back up like a  
fist. The lilac paint in the kitchen strips itself nearly  
into the gallon buckets that return themselves to the  
store. The cookies unbake themselves, just some  
chocolate chips and possibility. Leaving her is not  
a thought I've had yet, or had to shake out of my head  
like salt. The lease is still unsigned, our bills still  
not late, our future a whisper we only talk about  
with the lights off. She inhales the words I love you,  
I dress her like I am wrapping a gift. I drive  
backwards down 495 and the sunset gets bigger  
until it's just the sun. We have never met, two  
magnets pushing away from each other, while rain  
floats back up into the sky, not yet heavy enough  
to fall.

communal garden  
**Simon Maddrell**

*for Jonathan Blake*

after facing death, bearing its witness, my  
sanctuary is our mirrored world. the garden's  
rising from dust waste land, its boundaries  
co-op homes, forming an edge of edges that are  
imbued with paths, symbols, flora that scent the  
ever-evolving drift toward my stretched horizon.

Golden Shovel from Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature*

*"My garden's boundaries are the horizon"*

[written above the entrance to Prospect Cottage,  
Dungeness]





## Morning in Contadora

# Victor Barnuevo Velasco

He says let's stay for a while  
the bay will reveal itself in time.

We pick a rock leveled by centuries,  
suspended by breakers. Fishermen  
returning from a night at sea think  
we are lovers. As I do when he wraps  
his arms around me. It is morning  
in Contadora, tender and tentative  
still. Like his lips on the blades  
of my shoulder. Each a boat mooring.

The shore shifts restlessly.

He says the sea will turn calmer  
the longer we stay. As if on cue  
the fog lifts then lay down a silk  
of green and blue. My heart swells  
years later. I wonder how a morning  
can crash rocks into pebbles, where  
I sit, my arms around me: watching

the same sky, sand, an ordinary sea.

## Snow Fight

### Sophie Farthing

The wind settles me against the side of the house,  
arms and legs stumbling clumsy in snow clothes  
and too-big pink hiking boots. I'm safe  
in the shadow of the evergreen shrubs  
that face the empty road. It's a snow day,  
so no one will call CPS to ask why I'm not in school.  
My breath blasts Extra spearmint on my tongue,  
and I hold it in a little too long,  
let my eyes prickle.

I let out my breath in a burst,  
a wild white dragon. By the feeder,  
a chickadee shouts a warning.

You are on top of me before I understand what's  
happening. You hurtle into view,  
a semi-truck on the freeway.  
You run faster than freight trains,  
rumbling in your heavy brown coat,  
an inevitable avalanche. You thunder  
around the side of the house, a tide I cannot stop,  
first silence, then a wall of sound, an unfleeable  
pestilence.

Your huge, black-gloved hand collides with my shoulder.  
I am too frightened not to smile. "Tag!" you cry  
triumphantly. All six feet of you are radiant,  
beaming boy. My mouth stammers out  
a laugh. Inside, I float up and away

and Daddy, I know you say life isn't fair,  
but I wish just once  
you'd let me escape you for the fun of it.

## Anatomically Correct Angel

### Jonathan Everitt

If they were real, they'd have no arms.  
That's always been the trade life makes for flight.  
Even da Vinci must have known a wing was simply  
a limb before it lost its power to levitate  
and learned instead to clutch a pen.

I've always dreamed of flight. The scene begins  
in an open field with a leap that settles slow  
enough to earth—descent controlled with modest flap.  
Like treading water until I get the motion right, and then  
a butterfly stroke takes me high above the pines.

Sometimes after huddling for hours at my desk,  
I straighten up my spine and stretch my arms,  
a crucifix in sacrifice to the preposterous exchange  
of all my clocks for coin. And late into evening,  
the space between my shoulder blades will ache—

as if something has been broken off.

## Portrait of mom

### Seán Griffin

in the way i care for strays, the crow with the broken wing that perched  
on my shoulder, pitbull who bit my hand until she saw i took the broken chain  
from her neck, and vita crashing again and again until i let them stay

for good. It's in the way i tend my plants, the peace lilies, oxalis, snake plants,  
and all the greenery within these rented walls that i can name because of you.  
It's the way i please, the inability to shape my mouth, like almost

a kiss, to say no. The way i'm so slow to get angry. i once told you,  
i haven't written a poem about you because you didn't fuck me up, but  
that's not true. It's the way, i carried that secret for over twenty years

because you told me how important family is. It's the way my hands  
and feet get cold and the skin on my fingers raises in a pucker

She is devoted/but then time riots/and  
**Deirdre Maultsaid**

*On Kubla Khan*

I dream about a barefoot woman with braided hair in a long sleeveless green nightgown standing in the dale in the sunshine, near willow trees, beckoning me to climb ancient marble stairs away from the lake, leave it, leave them, for, nearby, floating in the lily pads are dead bodies, faces caved in, skin mottled and in the ceaseless seething sloshing sunless water, at the marshy grass shore, they rise and sink again, while horror churns in my chest—beware!— and I jerk away but the woman near the willow doesn't know about the terrible seething, so I follow her and when we arrive at a wide sunny verandah, I smell mint and lemon and pause at the set table where waits an avocado, halved and sacred, on an ornate white plate and I

*Time shivers and judders  
 Wounded shapes lunge from chasms  
 I have no weapon*

The woman sits, gently pulls up her green nightgown— now teal, now silvery, now cream, a floating marquee—and smiles and says in her throaty voice that *it is a delightful afternoon* and with the thick braid glossy over her shoulder and small rare freckles on her open thighs and her consent enduring, the woman ensouls me and I am a bell pealing and I am a rill trilling and I understand my own secret: I need to kiss those freckles as my heart unwraps and greener dreams unfurl and yet, where am I? what?— I was a lonely child, a clock ticking in a dim room, the horror of empty days— wait, now something is shadowed and lurking, something rumbles and sizzles just out of sight and it is wrong and oh, I feel such holy dread, and also pity for her but she is fey and in the garden I write to her, my new lover, letters on thick, creamy paper, edged in vines, which I have pulled like a vision from an unfamiliar bag at my feet, devoted letters that croon, letters that pant *yes, oh yes*, stately letters that say, *Dearest, I wish to sire a moss child with you* and I

*Time riots and flares  
 Oh, beware, her flaming braid  
 I write on old ash.*

Ribcage  
**Rachel Handley**

First, you feel secrets in the chest,  
a kind of blood, a bright blooming,  
a strange kind of thicket, ousting  
the ribcage. I could let them go,  
I am hungry enough. Prying  
open each opening, fingers  
twisting for a strange kind of switch.  
I wrestle the blood out of me,  
handfuls at a time and you look  
at me exactly as if I  
had blood on my hands, as if I  
am guilty, denying myself  
a woman. While I congratulate my truth:  
No longer a sister. A them, they, their.  
A not-usually-her and you'd  
look at me bright with red and turn,  
quick to not have blood touch your skin.

## You Watch Because You Love to Watch **Daniel Edward Moore**

Naked, in my office at night, with  
legs spread wide on the altar of my desk,  
a scissoring gospel makes the moon blush.  
The exhibition is titled, *angels' despair*  
*at what they could have been.*

If hunger is a pattern carnivorous as change,  
like Jesus having take-out with friends  
before the sweaty thugs arrived  
and cut off Peter's ear, is there anything

more powerful than a goblet of blood  
to hijack the moral compass of lives,  
drunk on redemption's dizzy belief  
we're all just precious fluffy white lambs

singing our way to slaughter?  
Give me a voyeur's vision of change  
to rattle like thirty pieces of silver,  
watching you watch me with love.



## Conservation and Survival

### Walter Holland

By the harbor front, the flowers appear like the colors  
of a crowded imagination, like my mind  
feels now as I write, a mind blazing  
with anxiety, ruminations, resentment.

This small garden tucked  
beside Portsmouth Bay is  
somehow unsettling,  
vividly enclosed. My whole life  
seems limited today,  
and there's doubt about  
what comes next.

I'm afraid  
of the last stages of living, seeing us  
and seeing the children on the lawn over there  
who listen to a reader—a teacher—I guess, who is over-  
enunciating and feigning his forced amazement  
as he instructs them in the science of the trees and then a bed of flowers,  
and why they grow, and their conservation and survival.

You've returned, and you sit on the bench beside  
me. We sit like two tired tourists  
finished with a tour.  
When will we part for good,  
one without the other?

The heat today is stifling.  
We get up, make our way through the narrow  
row of purple and yellow, the dark  
stalks one after another, the red clusters  
exposed like chambered hearts.

# Jack-O'-Lantern

## AJ Saur

The candle expired sometime  
after our breathing steadied into sleep—

eyes dimming to darkness, the face  
slightly squished by time, carved out

days ago by sure hands before the mulled wine  
and love-making. I remember

the paring knife entering the flesh  
to angle an ear, a square tooth, the flair

of attempted eyebrows. How adept your hands  
at hollowing—the pulp and seeds emptied

on spread newspaper. *Yesterday's headlines*  
*have guts*, you said, and I laughed

at how the mind opened can let in so much  
light. The squirrels agree—eating through

the lid overnight, sometime  
after the wick was lost

to the hardening wax.

# A Thing of Beauty

## Alex Carrigan

*After Anna Suarez's "Sea Glass"*

I want to be a thing of beauty a traveler collects from the sea.  
I want to be laid out on a pillow of foam for an appraiser to find.

I want to be found with salt dusted in my hair and with  
dulled colors that still stand out on the dampened sand.

The sand will caress me as I continue to be polished and reshaped  
each time the waves come in to offer me to the patrons passing by.

If a patron were to pick me up, I would want them to find me  
smoother than their skin, but slightly chilled from the water.

The water will dry off me and reveal a translucent sheen you  
can pat off with a silk cloth, if you brought one to the beach.

The beach will offer many treasures like me to transient collectors,  
but I truly want to be the one most peculiar to the eye.

The eye of the savior that sees my charm through tinted sunglasses.  
I want to be a thing of beauty a traveler collects from the sea.

# Final Thoughts

## Eric Norris

I was extremely tired and surprised to realize I had been standing under the shower sobbing for a couple of minutes. I shave my head at the gym, so I could hardly blame the shampoo. The truth is that I haven't been sleeping well. I have been thinking about those I am leaving in New York—one in particular—someone I am just getting to know.

I should have whispered something lasting last night, when we were lying there together in your plush cool bed, in such a frolicsome, ridiculous mood. Wouldn't it be nice to know who is in charge of our destinies? Are ours related? How are we fated? Who arranges these outbursts—cloudbursts—sunbursts—in our lives?

You are too sweet, so I don't think it's you, mixing joy and pain together, like that. It can't be me either. I am not so sweet, of course, but I hate tears. I hate crying. I really hate crying alone. And crying alone and naked and standing up is the very worst—a hideous and humiliating experience. You would almost welcome a Soviet firing squad in the basement of the Lubyanka, you feel so exposed. You can't tell where your glands begin and the gutter ends. Everything goes down the drain, and out into the ocean, mixing with farm run-off, manure and phosphates, causing the red algae to bloom along the coast. Which is great for the red algae, I guess, but horrible for the clams.

Back in the shower, my forefinger and thumb began to gore an innocent amber bar of glycerin soap out of pure frustration—when I felt a sudden scalding pain—a 10,000 degree fluctuation in the temperature of the water up above. “Somebody flushed a toilet upstairs,” my senses screamed, “Tears are not that hot!” I jumped back and reached through the searing cascade—past my shadow on the shower curtain—my secret sharer, so to speak—to turn off the water. I didn't stop crying, nor did he—I mean, you—my shadow. We had too much to be sad about just then. And too much to be happy about, too. We were together again. As we had been last night.

We stepped out of the shower together. We stepped onto the icy floor together. We stepped into the future together. We almost slipped and broke our necks

together. We shivered together, exposed to each other, if not a firing squad. We dried our faces on identical gray towels.

We smiled at one another in the love befogged mirror as our faces faded.

And we survived.

At 4am  
**Karen Little**

love asks to be alone to know how silence feels. In the rising of ribs, of panic, the way life demands to follow the scent of missed trains—missed opportunities—love needs to dissolve.

The tat of living, enemies, the cascade of memories hammering the throat, the liveliness rushing through arteries—must find another route to feel immune, immortal.

Forget what you know. Thin as a cue, plucked as a goose, like a tabby cat washing it all away—react like seaweed; slip through fingers. Leave, have a cigarette, hug a whisky and yourself, close.

## First Sign (or Stone Man)

### Thomas Stewart

I see the moon: quiet above our table at the restaurant on the seafront.  
I think of the ocean quivering when my father coughed and very suddenly  
went down, his head hit the table and it seemed everything froze  
like dust in sunlight.

I hear the wind returning after my mother steeled in her terror stood  
and brought my father back from the dead, after his breath came thick  
like the tumble from a cliffside.

Just like something that ancient and invincible my father waved off the incident  
*fine all fine* sipped his beer. Everyone was quick to forget.

But the blood in my veins had changed direction.

I stood on the beach and watched the ocean devour the moon  
went back to the villa and lay beneath the fan cutting the air  
and felt my body ring with stone.

# The Lost Mother

## Melissa Cannon

### Six Preludes to Sleep, Six Dreams

*You're a fickle ghost. I'll find you in a dream—  
or find and lose. Unsummoned, you arrive; on a whim,  
you'll vanish. An image I can never hold,  
like the errant scarf you'd wear ("Or I'll catch cold!"),  
even to bed. Like a scarf the wind takes. My fist  
will grasp at the dissolving silk, but it's spun of mist.*

We're stranded at the airport after we've missed  
our connecting flight and I've parked you with the bags,  
exhausted. Why in the world did I insist  
on this reunion? When the family reminisced,  
it left you lost. I'm the parent now who nags—  
I have to tell you twice, "Just stay right there."  
Tickets exchanged, I glance at your bolted chair,  
but like luggage in the wrong city without its tags,  
not a single trace of you remaining anywhere.

*All night, all day, all day, all night, the rain  
lashes and batters, regrouping, streams and spills.  
Somebody's tears flood the streets, splatter the pane  
with regret or sorrow. I can hear it on the ledge  
of sleep and, as I'm falling, the cataract fills  
my pillow. Water, water under the bridge.*

The main story on the local news: the bridge  
across the Duck's west fork, though structurally sound  
for years, has been washed out. You've been found  
before many of the unnumbered casualties, your car  
implanted, nose-first, in the mud at the water's edge.  
You shouldn't have a set of keys. Or be driving so far  
off-course. I imagine you trapped—the metal cage,  
the sudden drop, the helpless fear, the jammed door.  
You couldn't swim. Though every swimmer drowned.



*Detoured by chance, no valise, no history,  
I'm a blank page, unbound and content to be  
anonymous. Not booked for any meet-and-greets,  
a stranger in a strange city and alone,  
I luxuriate on cool soft creamy sheets,  
turning a deaf ear to another suite's unanswered phone.*

It's two a.m. when I wake to the persistent phone—  
a nurse from the hospital saying, "Please come soon,  
your mother's dying, she won't last long." For a brief  
heartbeat, I'm numb, frozen with sleep and dread  
until I remember the thing I've already known:  
This is a bad dream. You've been a decade dead.  
I can sleep again, can sink deeper in the bed.  
Oh, the comfort of it. Strange, feeling such relief  
because you're gone. Strange, how it feels like grief.

*An evening in the attic, sorting dust.  
An evening sifting scraps, an old woman's hoard  
of buried stuff. Should that be kept, this tossed?  
My attempts at salvage provoke more dust to rise.  
Dust coats my throat, dust lies heavy on my eyes.  
Are you among browned papers, stacked and stored?*

It seems a miracle—look how you've been restored,  
a misdelivered gift I'll eagerly reclaim.  
Healed by my attention, fixed and absolute,  
you're living proof of its power to transmute:  
now ready for the office, dressed in those same  
mid-heel pumps and smart tailored navy suit.  
Not stumbling uncertain along a shadowed road  
through the narrowing maze of the locked dementia ward.  
At the check-out desk, I'm forgotten, a foreign name.

*My body's weary, tethered to a restless mind:  
a problem to unravel or some nit to pick.  
Since lack of sleep can make you ill, I'm worried sick,  
but the mind niggles over and over while I roll over,  
twisting the blankets, kicking the spread, resigned  
to a knotted bed unyielding as a cruel lover.*

You haven't called. So is this what it's like for a lover  
betrayed or abandoned? Away "on business." The pact

we entered (you'd be the wrist and I, the pulse)  
is severed. Returned to your mad ex-husband? I hover,  
a desperate moth near an unlit wick, until I've tracked  
you. In touch, we don't connect: a note that's false,  
an absence in your voice. I can't uncover  
the magician's trick to this disappearing act  
or the secret life you're living some place else.

*Against the dark, suspended, the moon's white face  
plays hide and seek: snagged in the warp and woof  
of weaving branches; released as storm-gusts blow,  
untangling the cross-threads; free until clouds encase  
her with their veils. I, too, suspended, go  
adrift, blurring towards sleep, and I see myself*

I'm a girl watching at the window by myself,  
waiting for you, watching until you come  
back to me. I've stood hour on hour in my room.  
An only child with an only parent must look out--  
any passing car could have you, still does not.  
You went to the symphony. So why such doubt?  
You might be just around the corner. But what if?  
It's getting late. This spinning room's unsafe.  
Where are you? Are you ever coming home?

## Uncovering Andrew Howdle

How much of childhood did we not behold  
Because it happened in the wings, off-stage,  
And we were raised to draw the curtains on  
The sun each day and know he simply stirred  
To hear our tragi-comic scenes and clap  
Our shining monologues? How strange, if not  
Irrelevant, that seems to one who now  
Is more concerned with unregarded life:  
With threadbare clothes and their unravelled tales  
And yellowed stories found in dusty drawers.

And so, I'm not surprised at 3 a.m.  
To find myself with Mishima *once more*,  
Observing how a cover's floodlit mouth  
Directs its bite into a rose, whilst thoughts  
Run back to teenage days and when I read  
This book before ... It was a sudden loan  
From him, the fast-maturing boy next door,  
And came well-soiled by football boots, with tops  
Of pages firmly creased. I gave the book  
Short shrift ... his half-undressed confession, missed.

## The Embrace

# Raymond Luczak

So yeah, I'm sixty-seven years old.  
Hard to believe that I've made it this far.  
My beard dye job is ridiculous.  
I can't get hard like I used to.  
Sure, I can cum, but it's nothing like before.  
I still watch some porn out of habit.  
So I don't make any effort to ask anyone out.  
Who'd want damaged goods like me?  
By this point I'm non-returnable.  
My baggage weighs a lot more than me.  
So don't worry if you're not for me.  
You already are.  
You're probably thinking, *Is he bat-shit crazy?*  
I don't care if you're twenty-three or eighty-two.  
Doesn't bother me any at all.  
I can tell you're in recovery, struggling to quit.  
The scared look in your eyes is unmistakable.  
You must've had to deal with a lot of shit.  
Come right here.  
Let me be your daddy.  
Who cares if we're a few years apart?  
Even daddies need daddies.  
Let me take good care of you.  
No, I don't want your money.  
I don't care about any of that stuff.  
But you know what I really want from you?  
Your terrible loneliness.  
It means you've had to understand some ugly things.  
I want to squeeze that loneliness out of you  
so that the only thing left between us is pure beauty.

# And if there are no monuments

## Tim Kiely

*after W.H. Auden*

And if there are no monuments  
to all that we have overcome,  
then it will be for us to scrape  
the wreckage into place; lift from  
the shattered cities rudiments  
of resting places; in the plain  
that we saw burn in our escape,  
raise up in some exalted art  
the fallen, so the frenzied heart  
need never cry for them again.

Or better yet, we won't. We'll be  
too busy living, and the young  
and almost-young will have no pause,  
as every day they guard us from  
our ever falling back. Say we:  
*"there are no ballads singing what  
we did those years. When we had cause  
to sing, it was so nobody  
forgot the loss; a threnody  
and then release. No more than that."*

## O Persimmon Way

# Timothy Robbins

1.

What he taught me about snow he taught me about gravel. “The same, the same,” he said.

And I want to say he spoke as stubbornly, as angrily as a new judge’s gavel. Really he said it just once — with the serenity of an empty checkbook.

“Listen,” I pleaded as I shoveled and raked. “Not the same sound, nor muscles moving like gophers under my skin, nor the effect on the ground.”

*Last weekend we had a big birthday party — lots of people of various genders and sexual orientations. And Saturday night and all day Sunday, my lover John and I watched our mother Abyssinian cat sicken and die.*

We found this in a drawer that was frank about its desire to evict it.

2.

The house was as small as a fairy tale. It hid in the alley of an alley — no porch, no stoop, no address, no mail.

But there was a persimmon tree, the first and last I ever saw, and he fed me from it and I ate the fruit raw and I knew I was eating crime and digesting the Law.

And there was a ladder to the loft  
 nailed in place, the angle  
 my arms made when I gripped his hips,  
 and climbing it was the same as climbing him,  
 from the mound of his feet  
 to his man-root, to his face.  
 “The same, the same.” I said it many times,  
 stubborn, angry, serene.

3.

*John remembered the many kittens  
 that came out of her over the years,  
 one of them stillborn. I said,  
 “Each delivery is a piece of my soul  
 and death is just the climax of a puzzle.”  
 This is what’s on my mind, and the “piece  
 of my soul” part, my retired father  
 said about newborns  
 he found in Florida: dew heavier than rain,  
 mocking birds, cranes  
 that knew not how big they looked  
 to a dyed-in-the-snow New Englander.*

I often climbed back down that ladder  
 in the middle of the night. Once I opened  
 the oven and saw its walls and floor  
 ripple, alive with roaches,  
 alert like my affection. “The same, the same,”  
 I said, slamming the door up twice.  
 “Not so, not so,” screamed the hinges.

4.

He taught me nothing about gravel, nothing  
 about snow. He helped me  
 get used to the pain, but it was someone else  
 years later — someone I could bed but not love —  
 who taught me to organize my life around the hurt.

5.

But surely it takes more than one teacher.  
 I mean it’s a hell of a feat to learn,

right up there with sword swallowing and  
walking on hot coals. Snow and gravel  
and their relationships to my skin  
were the great learning's groundwork.

6.

Ron and John, their names rhymed for a good  
reason and for no reason at all.

They rhymed in each other's mouths in bed,  
enacting all the dull, all the thrill that belongs there.

John rhymed in Ron's mouth  
when Ron read John's eulogy,  
when he wrote a slender volume on midwifing  
John's death. I read parts of the book to you  
under a persimmon parasol.

In my mouth, all rhymes stalled.



## Month's Mind

### Denis Harnedy

I knew in advance the operation would kill him.  
Sometimes, I feel the urge to swerve into oncoming traffic.  
I never loved him but I didn't say no.  
I could have helped him to get out, but I didn't.  
I was there to listen;  
I liked the ritual of sympathising.  
I deliberately severed two of my fingers –  
it wasn't an accident.  
I watched the pool of blood expand in a delirious stupor –  
I felt close to God.  
I don't give change to beggars.  
Sometimes I take my purse out,  
and then put it back in my handbag.  
After he died, I hardly thought of him.  
People tell me they are sorry for my trouble  
and it takes me a moment to realise what they mean.  
I feel like laughing.  
I tighten my lips and look away.

## Translation **Jessica Foley**

You whisper in the half-light,  
bodies knotted, stitching neat  
words I only part-understand.

A thread unravels, stretching between  
what you say  
and what I follow.

It hums, taut, fine.  
I run a finger along it. I draw blood.  
You draw a future.

It's simple: sever or spool.  
I pluck it instead,  
watch it tremble. Hear the whine

of a note unbound, arcing aimless,  
searchlight resonance that splinters to silence.  
Somewhere nearby, a bridge collapses.

## Sonnet for Explaining Why I'm Touch Adverse

### **K. Blair**

I watch whippets in fleece pyjamas trot past the window  
That's how I feel most days, a loping nameless animal  
Not fit for cold weather, dressing for protection  
Or else, how you cannot tell when the invisible man  
is present, without the elaborate construction of bandages  
The glasses perched in mid air, played for comedy  
I don't believe I am able to be seen until I construct  
the self through highly curated pieces  
From the ground up build someone who can withstand  
commuting, stage lights, heartbreak, poetry  
Amazing what a turtleneck and string of pearls  
can do for a whippet used to fleece pyjamas  
When you touch me, I'm solid and real  
I guess that's terrifying

escape  
**Michael Russell**

carpeted knots  
of dog hair  
the cancer of a hidden tumor  
budding spleen    liver

beyond the cigarette-stained  
hallway    stairs  
spill like oil  
into blood-rusted concrete

a waft of august sweat  
swept with mozzarella & vinegar

i collapse

hammer my knees into the floor  
press my left ear into the closed door  
& discover    sam smith & normani  
dancing with strangers    ballet  
to moses sumney's doomed  
falsetto    their toes    dug into the rotting  
soil where serpentwithfeet performs  
a séance    seed to halo  
the wingless angel of a body  
when it sprouts out of song  
weeps    shins splintering in the cold  
tongue of refrigerator water

listen

the apocalyptic premonition of my left ear as it swells    crumbled stadium  
headliners    artisan perfumers    spritz    anonymous sex filling the  
basement    flickering like a horror movie cliché    my fists    pulsing against

the pearled wood of a sealed door

poltergeists  
screeching

*now sashay away*

## Sea change **Lue Mac**

We are made by moonlight  
you and I -  
the strange affiliation  
we do not admit to in job interviews  
or on first dates -  
the lift and fathom of our blood  
in accordance  
with unchosen gravity -  
the luminosity we hold  
inside our throats  
opening for an instant - at high tide - and then -  
what a blast  
what silver blessings  
pour from us like prodigies!  
Other times - blackout,  
the suck of something hollow  
in our irises. A portent.

## Her Brother Phones

### Ron Mohring

It's not the hand on the sidewalk, flung free

of its missing body. It's not the way  
the planes sound now, or how the boot—

orange-laced, brown suede—still held its foot.  
It's not the crushed ambulance, the fat

smoke wafting this way and that  
for weeks. Not the rubble, nor what little

is found in the rubble. *I feel so brittle,*  
he says in a dull monotone. The trashed

apartment, the dust and ash  
that blew through the open windows,

coated furniture and floors, sifted into  
the computer keyboard. *It'll never come out,*

he says. *What I breathed. They're inside me now.*

## You, Photographed

### Richard Leis

In a recent photograph  
I found online, you're  
losing your hair.

I'd be unrecognizable  
to you, too. Goodbye  
was not easy on me.

In an old photograph  
I keep, you beam, lean  
back in your chair

hold up a beer.  
Your face is blurry.  
I only just noticed

that. You took a candid  
of me that night, all teeth  
and cheek, green sweater

favorite suede jacket.  
I photograph well  
through your eyes

soft eyes gone  
steel. For a beer  
with you, perfect again

I'd be willing to meet  
before we wear thin  
our reunion.



## deliverance

### Luís Costa

it's three in the morning, I'm on my fourth whiskey, attempting to buy these cashmere sweaters to make me feel: better, something, you again warm against my waist // it's three and one minute, I'm way too drunk to finish purchasing, too sad to masturbate, too proud to send you a long text message, or instead to show you this sorrow neatly disguised as my favourite cat videos of the day // it is now past my bedtime, I'm only poisoning your ghost, mercury is in retrograde, sleep seldom arrives, what's your excuse? // hands are feeling kind of lonely, kind of bored, kind of I'm checking out who is up so I can offer a stranger a drink, kiss lips that aren't yours, or imagine he is you and it's your smell that will linger in my sheets in lieu of sweat and Marlboro reds // but back then it wasn't nearly dawn, I was happy, I was shaved, our monstera was alive; and with your arms around my chest, you just slept next to me.

## Halcyon Lodge / Winter Guests

### Kevin Bertolero

& so I knew when I woke to blue  
light on some cloudy day that when  
you said *I'm happy, but would be*  
*more myself if you were here,*  
you might have meant it, you  
beside me while I nap sometimes  
on terry cloth in direct sunlight.  
You're in the vineyards—I am  
on the jetty writing another poem  
I think you should likely never read,  
even if you are a careful reader  
/ my best & there are steps  
down to the water where chips  
of ice slosh in a mossy patch  
of eelweed & I want to draw it  
/ have never felt so present.  
Some couple has rented out  
Old Charlene across the lake  
& when the lights are on in their  
cottage at night I see a steady bridge  
& again more of the same in  
graveled puddles as we say good-  
bye in a cold rain beyond the  
stone carport we have  
the hardest time letting go.

## Weeds (for David)

### Dave Wakely

Michaelmas daisies once stood here in stiff-limbed regiments,  
patrolling the border with a thousand beady eyes.  
Chrysanthemums and tulips, lashed to canes like criminals,  
silently awaited the rapid-fire judgments  
of suburban etiquette's sergeant-majorettes.

*Away with that, we thought. Enough.*

Nowadays Japanese acers drape their colours,  
dappling the azaleas' bright spring rainbows.  
Aquilegias wave purple heads on stems  
as slender as the most expensive stilettos.

*Self-seeding*, as mother used to sneer.  
The sheer vulgarity of it, daring to flourish  
with so much colour and such little restraint.  
To raise broad smiles on two bristle-chinned faces  
that would shun any paradise with no lavender or pansies.

Each nightfall now, the honesty shines its silver moons,  
as natural as their sister in the skies.

## Contributor's Notes

### YAKOV AZRIEL

Yakov Azriel has published six books of poetry in the USA, the latest two being *Closet Sonnets: The Life of G.S. Crown*, published by Sheep Meadow Press in 2017, and *Shadow in the Closet*, published by Seven Kitchens Press in 2023. In addition, over 900 poems have been published in print and online magazines, and his poetry has won twenty-four awards or commendations in international poetry competitions.

### KEVIN BERTOLERO

Kevin Bertolero is the founding editor of Ghost City Press. He earned his MFA at New England College and his poems have appeared in *Olney Mag*, *Fourteen Poems*, *The Cortland Review*, *Malasaña*, and elsewhere. He lives in Portland, ME.

### K. BLAIR

K. Blair has been making their way through The Expanse series and confirmed that she does not want to live in space ever. She has been published in The Bad Betty Press *Book of Bad Betties*, *HAD, en\*gendered lit*, *Carmen et Error* and elsewhere. Their microchap *Jesus Loves You, God Hasn't Decided Yet* is available as part of Ghost City Press's Summer Series 22. Find her in your local independent cinema or on Bluesky @kblair.bsky.social, Instagram: @urban\_barbarian, and their website, [www.kblair.co.uk](http://www.kblair.co.uk).

### BRYAN BORLAND

Bryan Borland is founding publisher of Sibling Rivalry Press and author of *DIG*, a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award in Gay Poetry.

### MELISSA CANNON

Melissa Cannon has been writing poetry since the age of 10. At 78, she is still at it and hopes to be for a few more years. Her most recent publications are in *Impossible Archetype*, *Last Stanza Poetry Journal*, *Sinister Wisdom* and *Sheila-Na-Gig*.

## ALEX CARRIGAN

Alex Carrigan (he/him) is a Pushcart-nominated editor, poet, and critic from Alexandria, VA. He is the author of *Now Let's Get Brunch: A Collection of RuPaul's Drag Race Twitter Poetry* (Querencia Press, 2023) and *May All Our Pain Be Champagne: A Collection of Real Housewives Twitter Poetry* (Alien Buddha Press, 2022). He has appeared in *The Broadkill Review*, *Sage Cigarettes*, *Barrelhouse*, *Fifth Wheel Press*, *Cutbow Quarterly*, and more. Visit [carriganak.wordpress.com](http://carriganak.wordpress.com) or follow him on Twitter @carriganak for more info.

## XOCHI QUETZALI CARTLAND

xochi quetzali cartland is a queer & latina poet, seamstress, and transformative justice practitioner. she graduated from brown university with a ba in literary arts & has since moved to washington, dc, where they are rekindling their love of trees & learning to make pretzels. Her work has been featured in *apple in the dark* & supported by national arts strategies & Brooklyn poets.

## GUILLERMO FILICE CASTRO

Guillermo Filice Castro is a queer poet and photographer, born and raised in Argentina. He's the author of the chapbooks *Mixtape for a War* (Seven Kitchens Press) and *Agua, Fuego* (Finishing Line Press). His work appears in *Best American Poetry 2023* and journals such as *Allium*, *Big City Lit*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Court Green*, *Fugue*, *Mudroom*, *The Normal School*, *Pine Hills Review*, and more. He lives in New Jersey with his husband.

## LUÍS COSTA

Luís Costa (he/they) is the author of *Two Dying Lovers Holding a Cat* (Fourteen Poems). His poems are available or forthcoming in *Queerlings*, *Stone of Madness*, *Roi Fainéant*, *Visual Verse*, *Boats Against The Current*, *Anthropocene*, the anthology *He/She/They/Us* (Pan Macmillan), and elsewhere. He holds a PhD from Goldsmiths and lives in London, but you can find him on social media @captainiberia.

## KAT DIXON

Kat Dixon (she/her) is a queer writer living in London. Her poetry has appeared in *The Rialto*, *Butcher's Dog*, *Queerlings*, *Msllexia*, *fourteenpoems*, *ReCreation Anthology*, *Spectrum Anthology* and various journals. She has an MA in Writing Poetry with Newcastle University and The Poetry School. Her first pamphlet, *Eat the Glitter*, is forthcoming with Broken Sleep Books. You can find her on Instagram @dixon\_kat

## DAMIEN B DONNELLY

Damien B. Donnelly's poetry & short stories have appeared in numerous journals. The author of two pamphlets, a micro-collection and a full collection published by Hedgehog Press, his second collection arrives with Turas Press this spring. He's the host of Eat the Storms podcast and editor of *The Storms* journal.

## JULIE R. ENSZER

Julie R. Enszer, PhD, is the author of four poetry collections, including *Avowed*, and the editor of *OutWrite: The Speeches that Shaped LGBTQ Literary Culture*, *Fire-Rimmed Eden: Selected Poems by Lynn Lonidier*, *The Complete Works of Pat Parker*, and *Sister Love: The Letters of Audre Lorde and Pat Parker 1974–1989*. Enszer edits and publishes *Sinister Wisdom*, a multicultural lesbian literary and art journal. You can read more of her work at [www.JulieREnszer.com](http://www.JulieREnszer.com).

## JONATHAN EVERITT

Jonathan Everitt's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Laurel Review*, *BlazeVox*, *Stone Canoe*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *Small Orange*, and *Ghost City Press*, among others. His poem, "Calling Hours," was the basis for the 2015 short film, *Say When*. Jonathan has also led a workshop for LGBTQ poets and co-founded the long-running monthly open mic, New Ground Poetry Night. He lives in Rochester, N.Y., U.S.A., with his partner, David Sullivan. Jonathan earned his MFA in creative writing from Bennington College in Vermont.

## SOPHIE FARTHING

Sophie Farthing (she/her) is an emerging queer writer living in South Carolina. Her work is forthcoming or has appeared in outlets including *Impostor Journal*, *Beyond Queer Words*, and *Anti-Heroine Chic*. Her poetry is also featured in the horror anthology *It Always Finds Me* from Querencia Press.

## SUZANNA FITZPATRICK

Suzanna Fitzpatrick (she/her) is a bisexual poet who is widely published in magazines and anthologies in the UK, US, and Canada. She was Commended in the 2022 Hippocrates and 2021 Ginkgo Prizes, shortlisted for the 2023 Aesthetica, Hexham and Ver Poets Prizes, 2022 Yeovil Literary and Wigtown Prizes and the 2019 Bridport Prize, longlisted for the 2018 National Poetry Competition, won third prize in the 2023 Shepton Snowdrops Competition, second prize in the 2016 Café Writers and 2010 Buxton Competitions, and won the 2014 Hamish Canham Prize. Pamphlets from Red Squirrel Press: *Fledglings* (2016), and *Crippled* (due 2025).

## JESSICA FOLEY

Jessica Foley is a PhD student working on the brains of tropical butterflies. She is not so much of an expert on the human mind, but maybe the writing will help with that. Her work has been published in *Icarus*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, and *Púca Magazine*.

## J. FREEBORN

J. Freeborn is a poet and editor from New York.

## SEÁN GRIFFIN

Seán Griffin (she/they) is a PhD student at St. John's University and received an MFA from Manhattanville College. Seán's writing appeared in *[PANK] Magazine*, *Mud Season Review*, multiple issues of *Impossible Archetype*, and elsewhere. Seán contributed to the long poem, *Arrival at Elsewhere* (Against the Grain Press). Seán's plays *Solitary* and *Late Late Night* will be staged at two NYC festivals in April and June 2024 respectively. Seán teaches writing at Pace University.  
Instagram @seangrifter

## RACHEL HANDLEY

Rachel Handley is a disabled, queer, non-binary poet, writer, and academic based in Dublin. Their poetry has been published by *Poetry Ireland*, *Arlen House*, and *The Liminal Review*, among others. Their poem, *Dear Daughter*, was shortlisted for the South Dublin Libraries Poetry Prize in 2022.

## DENIS HARNEDY

Denis Harnedy lives in Dublin. He has been published or is forthcoming in *Impossible Archetype*, *Shearsman Magazine*, *The Winnow*, *Mollyhouse*, *Abridged*, *Skylight 47*, and *Red Rock Review*.

## WALTER HOLLAND

Walter Holland is the author of four books of poetry *Reconstruction* (Finishing Line Press, 2022), *Circuit* (Chelsea Station Editions, 2010), *Transatlantic* (Painted Leaf Press, 2001), *A Journal of the Plague Years: Poems 1979–1992* (Magic City Press, 1992) as well as a novel, *The March* (Chelsea Station Editions, 2011). His poetry credits include most recently *The Cape Cod Poetry Review*, and *Impossible Archetype*, as well as formerly *About Place Journal*, *Cutbank Journal*, and *Mollyhouse* to name just a few. He lives in New York City. For more information visit [walterhollandwriter.com](http://walterhollandwriter.com)

## ANDREW HOWDLE

Andrew Howdle is a retired teacher and educational consultant. He lives in Leeds,

England. He studied literature at the Universities of Manchester and York. Poems have appeared in *Ekphrastic Review*, *Impossible Archetype*, *Nine Muses*, *Singapore Unbound*, *Words for the Wild* and *Lovejets: Queer Male Poets on 200 Years of Walt Whitman* (2019).

### CALLIE JENNINGS

Callie Jennings (@aporianautics) received the 2023 Bennett Nieberg Transpoetic Broadside Prize and has work in *x/y: a junk drawer of trans voices*, *Troublemaker Firestarter*, *Fifth Wheel Press*, and forthcoming in *manywor(l)ds*. Her newsletter is at [threemachineexpression.substack.com](http://threemachineexpression.substack.com), and chances are she's dancing.

### TIM KIELY

Tim Kiely is a criminal barrister and poet based in London. He is the author of three poetry pamphlets, including most recently *No Other Life*, which was a joint winner of the Brian Dempsey Memorial Competition 2023.

### RICHARD LEIS

Richard Leis's poems have been published in *Impossible Archetype*, *The Laurel Review*, *Manzano Mountain Review*, the Adult Children anthology from Wising Up Press, and speculative poetry journals. He has been recognized for his work with multiple nominations for the Pushcart Prize and as a finalist in the Tucson Festival of Books Literary Awards in 2018 and 2021. His website is [richardleis.com](http://richardleis.com).

### KAREN LITTLE

Karen Little (kazvina) has been published many times in magazines and books. She trained as a fine artist at Camberwell College of Arts. Her paintings, prints, and sculptures have been exhibited internationally, including solo shows in Spain.

### RAYMOND LUCZAK

Raymond Luczak is the author and editor of over 30 books, including twelve full-length poetry collections such as *Far from Atlantis* (Gallaudet University Press) and *Luna-fly* (Gnashing Teeth). Titles forthcoming in 2024 include *Yooper Poetry: On Experiencing Michigan's Upper Peninsula* (editor; Modern History Press) and *Animals Out-There W-i-l-d: A Bestiary in English and ASL Gloss* (Unbound Edition Press) and *Oh Yeah: A Bear Poetry Anthology* (Bearskin Lodge Press). His work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, and elsewhere. An inaugural Zoeglossia Poetry Fellow, he lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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## LUE MAC

Lue Mac (they/them) is a queer, rural writer from the South-West of England. *Murmurations*, a collaboration with the photographer Billy Barraclough, was published by Besides Press in 2021, and their poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Clarion Poetry*, *Anthropocene* and elsewhere. They write about mental illness, weird nature, and the compulsions of joy.

## SIMON MADDRELL

Simon Maddrell's poems have appeared in numerous publications including *Acument*, *AMBIT*, *Butcher's Dog*, *Poetry Wales*, *Propel*, *Sand*, *The Gay & lesbian Review*, *The Moth*, *The Rialto*, and *Under the Radar*. In 2020, Simon's debut chapbook, *Throatbone*, was published by UnCollected Press and *Queerfella* jointly won The Rialto Open Pamphlet Competition. In 2023, *The Whole Island* and *Isle of Sin* were both Poetry Book Society Selections. *a finger in derek Jarman's mouth* marks 30 years after Jarman's death (Polari Press, Feb 2024).

## 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 four volumes of short fiction, *A History of Barbed Wire*, *Desire and Devour*, *Consent*, and *The Sagas of Mann*. 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*, *Impossible Archetype*, *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 and @deirdmault.bsky.social

## RON MOHRING

Ron Mohring's newest poetry books are *Relative Hearts* and *The Boy Who Reads in the Trees*. He is working on a new collection, *Line of Damage*. He lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he manages Seven Kitchens Press.

## MICHAEL MONTLACK

Michael Montlack is author of two poetry collections and editor of the Lambda Finalist essay anthology *My Diva: 65 Gay Men on the Women Who Inspire Them* (University of Wisconsin Press). His poems recently appeared in *Poetry Daily*, *Prairie Schooner*, *North American Review*, *deceember*, *Cincinnati Review*, and *phoebe*. In 2022 his poem won the Saints & Sinners Poetry Award (for LGBTQ writers). He lives in NYC, where he teaches Poetry at CUNY City College.

## DANIEL EDWARD MOORE

Daniel Edward Moore lives in Washington on Whidbey Island. His poems have appeared in *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Phoebe*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and others. His work is forthcoming in *Sugar House Review*, *Action*, *Spectacle Magazine*, *The Meadow*, *The Chiron Review* and *Delta Poetry Review*. His book *Waxing the Dents* is from Brick Road Poetry Press.

## GREG NICHOLL

Greg Nicholl is a freelance editor whose poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Best New Poets 2023*, *Gulf Coast*, *New Ohio Review*, *Nimrod*, *North American Review*, *River Styx*, *Smartish Pace*, *Sugar House Review*, *West Branch*, and elsewhere. He is the winner of the 2021 *River Styx* International Poetry Contest selected by Adrian Matejka and was a finalist for the 2022 Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry from *Nimrod* and the 2021 Patricia Cleary Miller Award for Poetry from *New Letters*.

## ERIC NORRIS

Eric lives in Portland, Oregon, USA.

## LIZ QUIRKE

Liz Quirke is a poet from Co. Kerry, Ireland with two collections published by Salmon Poetry, *The Road, Slowly* (2018) and *How We Arrive In Winter* (2021) which was a Poetry Book of the Year selection in The Irish Times. She has a PhD in Creative Writing (Poetry) with a focus on Queer Kinship in Contemporary Poetry from the University of Galway and is a lecturer in Creative Writing at University College Cork with a particular interest in queer literature. Her poetry explores queer kinship forms and focusses on her life and work as a queer woman raising two children and exploring ideas around love and relationships, chaos and recovery.

## JENDI REITER

Jendi Reiter is the author of five poetry books and chapbooks, most recently *Made*

*Man* (Little Red Tree, 2022); the story collection *An Incomplete List of My Wishes* (Sunshot Press/New Millennium Writings, 2018); and the novel *Two Natures* (Saddle Road Press, 2016), which won the Rainbow Award for Best Gay Contemporary Fiction. Their novel *Origin Story* is forthcoming from Saddle Road Press in 2024. They are the editor of the writing resource site [WinningWriters.com](http://WinningWriters.com).

## KIM ROBERTS

Kim Roberts is a queer Jewish poet and literary historian living in Washington, DC. She is the author of six books of poems, most recently *Corona/Crown*, a cross-disciplinary collaboration with photographer Robert Revere (WordTech Editions, 2023). Roberts edited the anthology *By Broad Potomac's Shore: Great Poems from the Early Days of our Nation's Capital* (University of Virginia Press, 2020), and is the author of the popular guidebook, *A Literary Guide to Washington, DC: Walking in the Footsteps of American Writers from Francis Scott Key to Zora Neale Hurston* (University of Virginia Press, 2018). <http://www.kimroberts.org>

## SCOTT-PATRICK MITCHELL

Scott-Patrick Mitchell is the author of *Clean*, a poetry collection which explores their lived experience with addiction and recovery. *Clean* was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards for Poetry, the 2023 Western Australian Premier's Book Awards Book of The Year Category and named in Australian Book Review's list of Books of 2022. Mitchell was the 2022 Red Room Poetry Fellow.

## TIMOTHY ROBBINS

Timothy Robbins grew up in the 60s and 70s in rural Indiana. He lives with his husband (they met in 1998) in Wisconsin. Between IN and WI he was a denizen of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Ann Arbor and Strasbourg France. He has been teaching ESL (and loving it) since 1991. He recently published *Florida and Other Waters*.

## MICHAEL RUSSELL

Michael Russell (he/they) is the queer, mad mother monster behind two chapbooks, *gallery of heartache* (forthcoming from 845 Press) and *Grindr Opera* (Frog Hollow Press). They are the coauthor of chapbook *Split Jawed* with Elena Bentley (forthcoming from Collusion Books). He has a heart full of rainbows, unicorns and chocolate chip pancakes and they want the best for you. Insta: @michael.russell.poet

## AJ SAUR

AJ Saur is the author of five books of poetry from Murmuration Press including *Particles in Motion*, *Set A Flame*, *Say the Word*, *Odds n' Ends*, and *Of Bone and Pinion*.

## THOMAS STEWART

Thomas Stewart (he/him) is a Welsh writer, a New Writers Award recipient, the author of two poetry pamphlets: *Based on a True Story* (fourteen poems, 2022) and *empire of dirt* (Red Squirrel Press, 2019) and the forthcoming book, *Real Boys* (Polygon, 2024).

## LIAM STRONG

Liam Strong (they/them) is a queer neurodivergent straight edge punk writer who has earned their BA in writing from University of Wisconsin-Superior. They are the author of the chapbook *Everyone's Left the Hometown Show* (Bottlecap Press, 2023). You can find their poetry and essays in *Vagabond City* and *new words {press}*, among several others. They are most likely gardening and listening to Bitter Truth somewhere in Northern Michigan. Find them on Instagram/Twitter: @beanbie666

## CAROLYN THOMAS

Carolyn Thomas is from the Neath Valley in South Wales but has lived on Tyneside since her days as a student at Newcastle University. Now retired after teaching in Further, Higher and Adult Education, she has published poems in *Impossible Archetype*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *A Pride of Lines* and *HaikuZine* (Coin Operated Press) and the UK Places of Poetry project. She has reviewed for *Stand magazine* and her stories have appeared in the Honno Press collections *Lipstick Eyebrows* and *Painting the Beauty Queens Orange*.

## 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 Poemic*, *Heirlock*, *Impossible Archetype*, and *New Verse News*. His sixth novel, *Fresh Grave in Grand Canyon* came out in early 2022.

## VICTOR BARNUEVO VELASCO

Victor Barnuevo Velasco read a lot, writes a little, and occasionally curates art exhibits. A photo exhibit he curates on Philippine martial law under the dictator Ferdinand Marcos Sr. currently tours the U.S. Born in the Philippines, he resides in Miami Gardens, Florida, with his husband.

## DAVE WAKELY

Dave Wakely has worked as a musician, university administrator, librarian and editor in cities across Europe. His writing has been shortlisted for the Manchester Fiction and Bath Short Story awards and has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. Online Programme Manager for Milton Keynes Literary Festival and one of the organisers of the Lodestone Poets, he lives in Buckinghamshire with his husband.

## SCOTT WIGGERMAN

A member of the Texas Institute of Letters, Albuquerque poet Scott Wiggerman

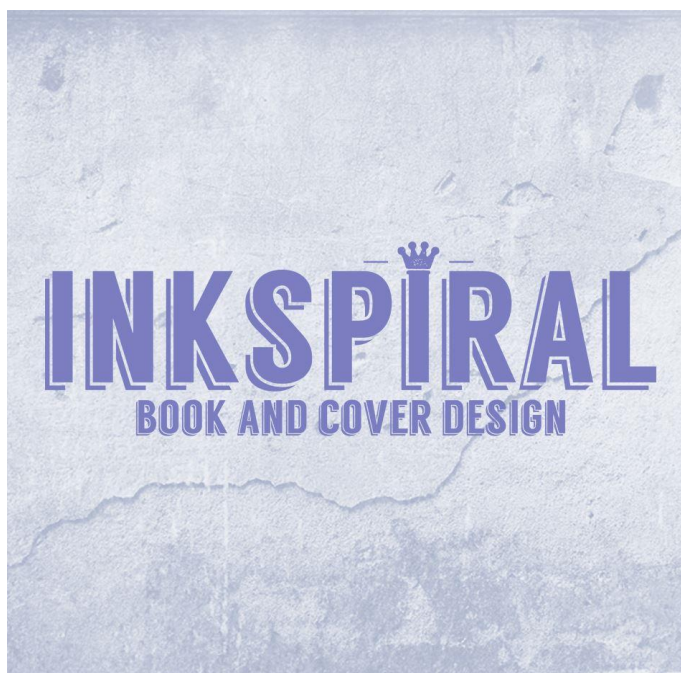
is the author of three books of poetry, *Leaf and Beak: Sonnets, Presence*, and *Vegetables and Other Relationships*; and the editor of several volumes, including *Wingbeats I & II: Exercises & Practice in Poetry*. In recent years, haiku and art have become more central to his work as an artist of both the page and canvas.

## CYRIL WONG

Cyril Wong is a poet and fictionist in Singapore. His last book was *Beachlight*, published by Seagull Books in 2023.

## FINLAY WORRALLO

Finlay Worrallo is a cross-arts writer studying Modern Languages at Newcastle University. He writes poetry, prose and scripts, and his work is published in *VIBE*, *Queerlings*, 14, the Braag's speculative fiction chapbook *Unfurl: Portrait of Another World*, and the Emma Press anthology *Dragons of the Prime: Poems about Dinosaurs*.



## 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](http://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.

He is the author of the full-length collection *Nightlight* (Salmon Poetry, 2023) and the chapbooks, *Circumference* (Finishing Line Press, 2018), *Carcass* (Seven Kitchens Press, 202), the hybrid prose/haiku *HIKE* (Bear Creek Press, 2022) and the interactive branching sonnet, *Faultlines* (2024, voidspace).

His poems have featured in *Banshee*, *The Irish Times*, *The Irish Independent*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, *fourteen poems*, *Southword*, *Skylight47*, *Softblow*, *Cordite* and many more, including anthologies, the most recent of which is *Masculinity: an anthology of modern voices* (Broken Sleep Books, 2024).

You can find more about his work at: <https://linktr.ee/markwardpoet>

Faultlines \_

Mark Ward

# 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 SIXTEEN OPEN 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024 AND CLOSE 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024.**

**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](mailto: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).

Simultaneous submissions are fine, but please mark them as such.

For more information on our guidelines, please visit

<https://impossiblearchetype.wordpress.com/submit/>

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