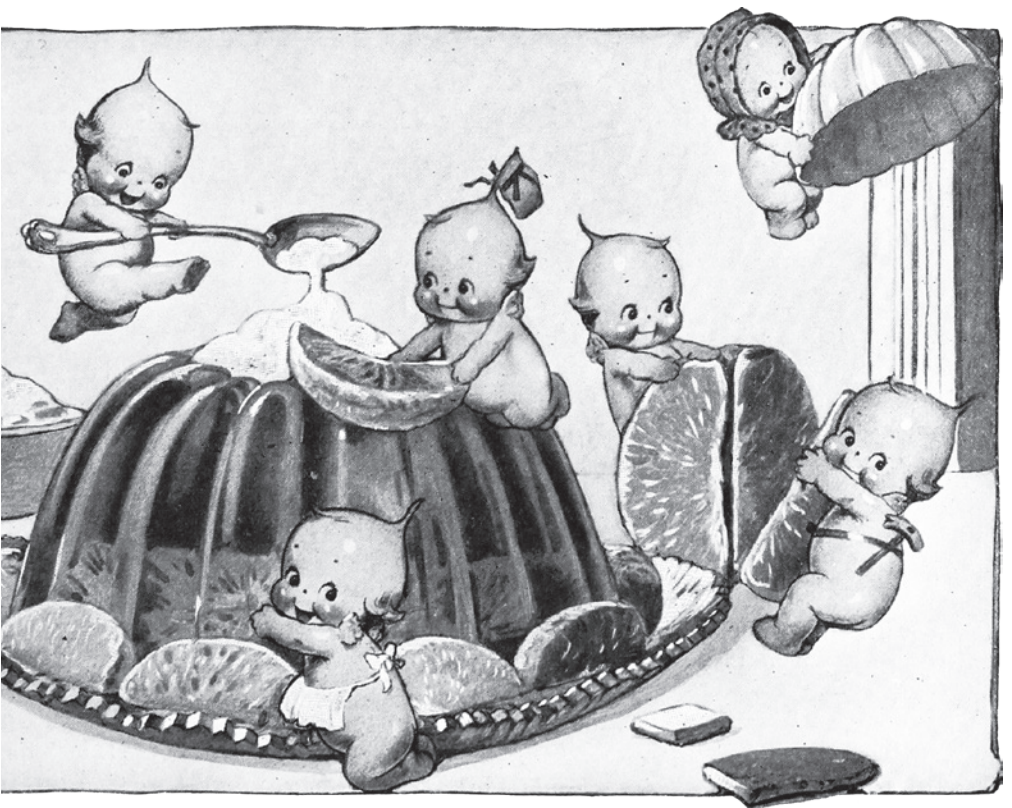




SUGAR
HOUSE
REVIEW

#28

SUMMER 2024 | POETRY



SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT POETRY MAGAZINE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

CHRISTY PRAHL	
still life	1
ERIK BROCKBANK	
Andersen's Pea Soup	3
DEBORAH J. BENNETT	
On the Rocks	4
STEPHEN KAMPA	
Come Back	5
Variations on Justice's Variations on a Text by Vallejo (with a Little Stephen Crane)	6
LYNN KILPATRICK	
My Sisters Transform into Small Birds	8
Jackson Pollock Paints a Self-Portrait	9
CHRISTINE A. MACKENZIE	
Golden Flower	10
ABBIE KIEFER	
Commencement Exercises	11
CHRISTINE BYRNE	
On the Corner of Hoyne & Le Moyne	12
ALEX AVERBUCH	
the shadowy is eternal	15
[I don't know...]	17
SAMUEL BURT	
Serenade	18
When We're Speaking Again	19
DEREK GRAF	
Personal Effects	24
Interface	25
SETH HAGEN	
One of Us	26

MICHAEL CHANG	
Heaven.zip	27
Unrepentant	28
CYNTHIA BARGAR	
Snake Duplex i	29
Snake Duplex ii	30
Snake Duplex iii	31
Snake Duplex iv	32
Snake Duplex v	33
TERESA CADER	
Bird's Nest with Ribbon	34
Lunar Eclipse, Waterville Valley	35
JIM DANIELS	
The Deep End	37
The Opening and Closing of Caskets	38
KAREN EARLE	
[roses multiflora]	39
dead twin to her sister who is alive	40
J. P. DANCING BEAR	
Trap Teop Trap Flow	46
RICHARD ROBBINS	
Music	47
SUNNI BROWN WILKINSON	
I Drive Past the Cemetery	48
HANNAH MARSHALL	
Call It Peace	51
KATHARINE COLES	
Family Snaps	52
Beauty	54
If my father dreams of me,	55
ROMANA IORGA	
Pep Talk	61
KURT DAVID	
Feeling It	62

CYAN JAMES	
From: Visa Interview to Become a Full Human	
Q: What is happiness?	63
Q: Are you concerned about diabetes?	64
Q: Is there a benefit to forgetting you have dementia?	65
BETSY MITCHELL MARTINEZ	
Building L: Los Danzantes	66
Colossal	67
ANN-MARIE BLANCHARD	
Fidelity Is Not Dead	68
NATALIE SHAPERO	
Capacity Crowd	69
JOHN VURRO	
Childhood	70
DENISE JARROTT	
Swimmer's Itch	72
NELL SMITH	
Moving Poem	73
BRENDA SIECZKOWSKI	
Wasted Elegy	78
JOSHUA ST. CLAIRE	
19 Haiku	81
SANDRA MARCHETTI	
Mollusk	82
JOSHUA GOTTLIEB-MILLER	
Superhero Movies	83
MICHAEL MARK	
You Can't Make Friends with a Butterfly	86
LILA CUTTER	
Plan B/lank Bloom	87
GENEVIEVE PAYNE	
Instead of Ghosts,	88

Voicemail from a Trucker	89
KATHLEEN MCGOOKEY	
At Miner Lake, Again	90
Asking and Asking	91
Temporary Charm	92
MARY BUCHINGER	
Life with Stones	93
SUSANNA BROUGHAM	
Long Green Rowboat	96

BOOK REVIEWS

DION O'REILLY	
<i>What Small Sound</i> by Francesca Bell	20
DAYNA PATTERSON	
<i>Seraphim</i> by Angélique Zobitz	42
STEVEN BARFIELD & ALAN ALI SAEED	
<i>Women's Voices from Kurdistan: A Selection of Kurdish Poetry</i>	97
edited by Farangis Ghaderi, Clémence Scalbert Yücel, and Yaser Hassan Ali	
SUGAR SUGGESTS	
Mini Reviews from Sugar Staff	76
BOOKS RECEIVED	101

INTERVIEWS

SHORT 'N SWEET: THE BOOK SPEAKS

LINDSEY WEBB	
<i>Plat</i>	56
PATRICIA CASPERS	
<i>The Most Kissed Woman in the World</i>	57

SUGAR SUITES

BURGI ZENHAEUSERN	
House on Nacotchtank and Piscataway Land	103
SARAH ANN WOODBURY	
what can a body be, or, great salt (lake) dreaming	104
BENNY CAUTHEN	
Mistranslation	105

SUGAR ASTROLOGY

SHARI ZOLLINGER	
Illustrations by Holli Zollinger	58
CONTRIBUTORS A-Z	106
MISSION, VISION, VALUES	114
STAFF & BOARD MEMBERS	116

SUPPORT SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW
WITH A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION HERE:



SUGARHOUSEREVIEW.COM

STILL LIFE

There is a lemon.
There is a dachshund.
There is a broken board.

Consider the lemon,
yellow as the sun,
primal as the origin story of food.

Enter the dachshund,
squat and disproportionate circus
clown of dogs.

And now the broken board,
an accident in waiting.

What does that have to do with anything?
asks the new sweetheart,
a literalist, but strapping enough
to keep around for entertainment.

Have you never played the game
of lemon, dachshund, broken board?

Dachshund beats broken board.
Broken board beats lemon.
Lemon beats dachshund.
(*The sour tongue, you ninny.*)

It might surprise you to learn
that they all made me cry.

The dachshund for dying of bloat
after I let myself love her.

The lemon for a spray of citric acid in the eye
while brightening up the flounder.

The broken board for my sweetheart's twisted ankle,
the fear that he would leave me.

But somehow, he stays.
He writes me a song called
A Lemon, A Dachshund, A Broken Board.

It is a song about none of these things.
It goes like this.

ANDERSEN'S PEA SOUP

August saves its charm for the San Joaquin Valley
outside the passenger window
miles of fruit trees and in the distance
burnished hills like sandy knuckles.

In a stand by the road
almonds and honey for sale
turkey vultures swaying overhead
dry leaves in a river of hot air.
I pass open-bed trucks
full of summer tomatoes
and when I stop for gas
the heat is a color of its own
like tasting liquor for the first time.

The highway makes lonely miles
of the hours. Here is a place
with room under the sky
to carry all your sorrow—
you can plant it in the earth
and watch it grow
a field of golden apricots.

ON THE ROCKS

I always wanted to say that. My marriage, my drink, the steel tanker hull of my heart. But to say it, what has to be true? There was that time when I thought I could run up the river like a water strider, drowning my scent in rapids and pools. No one would chase me to the source. Another time I crossed a border, ate local delicacies, walked a shore limned with trees similar to my own, further along the path of dormancy, and tried to think. To think words, to not think of illness, to think of culture with a capital C. When I did order a drink, the ice went fuzzy with sugar and alcohol. The bartender looked at me like the sad lady I was. I couldn't even drink two. Was anything really on the rocks at that moment? What did I know? A friend told me it is good to not see what lies ahead. To not know when Rachel's legs would stop working. When the mountain would cloud with ash. When my dog would die. When the wave would rise like a skyscraper. When my mother's lungs would swell with poison.

Today the sun pelts
trembling fronds, my new dog tills
fetid soil, the wind makes music
out of leaves, and I cannot see
what will destroy me.

COME BACK

Once, and only once, he separated
All the birdcalls
Backgrounding his backyard

Into their constituent effusions:
The cheeps, the creaks,
The cheer-cheer-cheers, the hinges,

The diesel brakes, the horns, the passing basslines,
The trains' long groans,
The jet drones, the satellites

That made no sound in space, the Pentecostal
Roar of one star
Burning itself for eons,

And maybe under that, or over it,
The muttering
Of whatever dreamy god

Left coffee cooling in the microwave
While downloading
The raw code for the virus

He hoped would save the world. A tanager,
The man thought.
That's a summer tanager.

VARIATIONS ON JUSTICE'S VARIATIONS ON A TEXT
BY VALLEJO (WITH A LITTLE STEPHEN CRANE)

I will die in a fast food restaurant, surrounded
by pickle chips and ketchup packets,
the last earthly words I'll ever hear delivered
by a panicked and polo-shirted
cashier shaking me with minimum-wage vigor
and repeating, "Sir! *Sir!* Would you like
fries with that? *Would you like fries with that?*", unshriven
of my decades of unrepentant
indulgence in bacon cheeseburgers and double
quarter pounders with cheese and fried cheese
and tofu—just kidding! cheese! plus hot wings and beer!—
because in a universe of near
infinite complexity, unpredictable
variables, India pale ales
and kale, we pretty much end up choosing the world
we want, and in mine, kale will kill you
faster than truckloads of bratwurst, although I know
in some persuasive unfun versions
what *I've* chosen will kill me, all of it having
bypassed my guts and gone directly
to my heart, where it will have reconstituted
itself exactly in a double-
quarter-pounder-with-cheese shape, so when the crusty
coroner performs my autopsy,
he will holler, "Good God, Tweaksberry, this man's heart
looks like a burger!" since our choices
form our habits, which form our characters, which form
our destinies, at which point his young
apprentice or towel boy or dismemberment
engineer whose name is really Jones
will ask, "Is it still warm?" since he had to skip lunch,
and I, Stephen Kampa, hereby in
these lines—and perhaps in that future in a last
postmortem spasm, in a final
neurological fizzle and wisp—will bellow,
"Eat it!" being no longer partial
to my poor belarded heart, ever the center

of me, ever the disappointment,
the upshot of my lifelong downslide, the outcome
of my insolence, this fat nuisance
that I fed and fed on all the livelong day while
God—in kindness, maybe—glanced away.

MY SISTERS TRANSFORM INTO SMALL BIRDS

That's my sister out on the lawn. You see?
She's fluffing her feathers and trying to be
a robin. No, she *is* a robin, spreading her
wings and then pretending to be dead. Where
are the others? There, arranged among the leaves,
one to a branch. See how each behaves
as if she were the only bird? But how can all
be best? My mother says her love is equal,
spread evenly among us. But one bird squawks,
one sings softly, the third's a hawk
eyeing others for signs of weakness. And me?
Well, I'm here in the kitchen. How can I be
a bird to match their beauty, song or eye?
I know. I'm the blackbird, concealed in a pie.

JACKSON POLLOCK PAINTS A SELF-PORTRAIT

If the brushstroke embodies representation,
let this drop of paint be the thin membrane
between being and seeing. Let the exact gray
of my eyes become nothing more than gauze
through which I see the canvas, darkly. She
said, *show me the exact yellow of light,*
and I said, *I don't paint that shit.* I said,
every canvas is a self-portrait, every
drop of paint is a whiff of the world
that can't be unmade. I am painting
the world in my image, one giant white
mistake at a time. I said, *stand back.*
I said, *look at this.*

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

We wore gold gowns
with thin ribbons pinned

at our hearts, crossed
into dark loops. Small twists

of tribute. Our bodies full
to the camera, arms flung

around shoulders, each friend
clutching. Our mouths

ah-ed mid-ask:
What's next, what's

next?

The collision

had happened that spring
where the road left

the pond. Cornered itself
around a clutch

of pines. People blamed dark
& speed. Her inexperience.

Or deer—that town's one
surplus. How often they'd screeched

our cars into stillness. We all knew
the heartstop,

the animal
body's bolt. Blazing splay-

legged into pines or gold-flung
field & whatever came next.

ON THE CORNER OF HOYNE & LE MOYNE

I am breaking in-
To my own apartment
In that late night floodlight sense
Of judging neighbors, trying to outsmart
These locked glass windows
This bolted door
Which I check & recheck at night
Now that Philip's gone
This isn't even really
My home, my old
Phone number is from a different city
And belongs to nobody
Which I know after drunkenly
Ringing myself
Up as if someone from my past would answer
And know me by my breath
 In this operating distance
I am naked
Under my raincoat
And cannot pick a dead bolt—
 I will tell you about this
Later, as you dip my hand in hard, numbing, medicinal things
That you've got functionally
Stored in cabinets—asking
Why didn't I call the landlord
Why would I
Break my hand through a window
Instead of just calling
 This predicament this sentiment
Is why Philip used to call you
A gorge—
But to measure gorgeousness
Seems like trying to wring childhood out of someone's neck
Like a wet towel
Like we've got all this time

And I've already seen it done:
Wrapping a hand, the will it takes

To force yourself through glass:
 When my parents were
 Renovating, debilitating,
 Locked & then shattering:
 My father picked me up & angled me:
 Careful, step on the toilet—
 Through the bathroom window
 But my feet fell & swallowed
Glass if I'm being honest here
I too will wait
Too long trying to nurse
My broken window with miscellaneous
Bandages losing heat money they will call me
The neighborhood
Eyesore
When Philip used to live here:
 The man who told me, rocking teeth against his fingernails—
 I won't leave Washington without you
 The man who left
 Washington without me
We had no spare
And we fought & he packed up &
I sat setting up new internet
On the floor with his
Boxes & even though
It all belonged to him—
Furniture, the coffee
Maker, bath mats, he
left me

Some silverware
And what was left of the olive oil
Hovering in the door frame—
 You've got to get this lock fixed
And I of course at the time I was
Pretending, upending my
life which has been so
Escape route yet nervous on highways little buoys

I sculpted for him which he
Did not take

Look I don't want you to think—

Now that

I live alone

And the parking spot's

All mine

And the white sheet walls are

All mine

That you can't call me you know

And the hinged brown cabinets,

The floors—which make noise,

The people upstairs—which make noise

You can always call me

Working up my nerve,

Teetering, remembering

Just because I won't be here doesn't mean—

What he once told me about making a fist

Taking practice swings

The thumb, weight of body,

Sucking in air

How all I've got left are my hands,

What I can carry or open or break

THE SHADOWY IS ETERNAL

*Translated from Ukrainian by Oksana Maksymchuk and
Max Rosochinsky*

*

to wake up without any hope of a return

to make sense of the new space by touch

the shadowy is eternal

and to breathe out all
that's been dreamed

to flinch
how did you find me

those who were dead yesterday
are so close today
cautiously
looking in
out of the darkness, out of the voicelessness

glances, bows
half-smiles...

sharp whispers, touching

as the morning recedes bit by bit
and the heart returns to itself

what use am I to myself like this?
if day doesn't roll on like a wave

and everything becomes evident
solemnity of death
it is rising!

and my destitute village

every morning returns to its own hell

bewildered, I stand up
against the day
over the blue of Aidar

with the lamentation of a deserted beach
our locked-up houses
like bound prisoners
year after year
reach out to us—

[I DON'T KNOW...]

*Translated from Ukrainian by Oksana Maksymchuk and
Max Rosochinsky*

*

I don't know
ssian language
inian language I do not know
keep my own awkward silence

not a word comes to mind
nothing spreads
on the inner side of this memory
doesn't roll off the tongue
tightly doesn't fit
sweet talk doesn't take off
no dance in a roundelay
over there in the west
nobody takes us
by our little hand
nobody talks to us
shooting letters
mash in our mouths
doesn't mumble, lisp
just a moment and we'll talk
finally say it all
we'll stitch up Dnipro
see our wound now
flows into your wound

waterfall wailing
won't find words
in ssian
in inian
spins
on the tip of the tongue

a drop of poison

SERENADE

Will loss soften me, or is it
that I lose if I soften? Reluctant blinds

bleed light across your sleep.
I drape you in worry. I'm weakest

when I wake, apartment walls
drummed by wooden fingers,

a pitiless moon peering
into the unfurnished corners of my heart.

I dreamt a house of mirrors.
I dreamt you kissed the tallest me.

I still think myself a child, wondering
at the forbidden shelves

of your body. You sleep beside me
and dream alone. Let us both be lost,

but let your arms' span
define the distance I can cross.

When I reach for our water glass
it reaches for the moon.

WHEN WE'RE SPEAKING AGAIN

I'll tell you about the kitchen window,
the animal dramas and backyard
minutiae. How grackles hold court
in a copse of dogwood to condemn
an intrepid cat, sprinting
for the porch each day, her hackles
up for hours. I'll tell you
how the clouds swelled, shaming
the birds to silence. I'll apologize
and mean it. I'll tell you about
the double batches of crêpes, why
I eat the first half with lemon and sugar
while the other piles up.
Today, like our best days, passed,
the kitchen thick with browning butter,
and the quietest gestures of shared life—
citrus humming in the fingers
lifting hair from my eyes, as clouds
unwound down a crowded sky,
fast as smoke, heavy drops shatter
against the glass.

WHAT SMALL SOUND
BY FRANCESCA BELL
(Red Hen Press, 2023)

REVIEW BY DION O'REILLY



What Small Sound: Francesca Bell's Radical Acceptance

Francesca Bell, who has been writing luminous poems for decades, published her sophomore poetry collection, *What Small Sound*. As in her debut, *Bright Stain*—also from Red Hen Press—Bell studies the complexities of womanhood, motherhood, violence, loss, sex, and beauty. Bell's speaker grapples with varieties of loss as her hearing fails and her children struggle. At every step, she plumbs depths of grief, often framing it with excruciating beauty, bringing her losses into sharp relief. Finally, the speaker appears to sit quietly, to breathe into her mix of pain and pleasure, to accept what she cannot change.

The text opens with a tough poem with a lovely name, “Jubilations.” The first line tells us, “Every two minutes, an American woman is raped.” Sexual assault happens in the time it takes to “tear / this organic tomato to its pulpy center and bite in, / letting juice run down my chin, stinging.” For five more stanzas, acts of violence are braced against moments of joy and appetite, but the final image, with a nod to Whitman, settles the argument: “OMG. OMG.” says the speaker, “*Thank You for this world of green grass and suffering.*”

“Jubilations” sets the book's tone, a kind of radical acceptance, an existential openness that is acutely aware of both trauma and ecstasy. Often, the final lines of her poems enact this acceptance, as in “Proofs,” where another mother contemplates her helplessness to save her son:

*No woman who had lain after fullness and felt love tickle out of her
could have said, Let it be done to me according to your word.*

*Had she felt life unfurl inside her, or a child tear its way out, and then waited,
a wide wound, as her body closed, she would never have said,*

Give me the child already nailed in place, destined to run with the scissors of His life

pointed up. Let Him breach like a great whale beneath the dome of my stretched-taut skin and force His way out of this slit husk. Behold.

I am the handmaid of the Lord. His strange carapace.

The useless shell that cannot save him.

In this poem, awareness of parental helplessness is brought into the archetypal, the mythic, zooming out to wider history and culture, which is not only poetry's great work, but also a way to grapple with unthinkable loss. As always, the speaker acknowledges physical pleasure—if not god-like awe—that may precede or exist alongside hardship. Despite the mother's archetypal suffering and ambivalence, she has "lain after fullness and felt love tickle out of her."

Other poems in the collection are more focused in the first-person voice of the speaker. As in "Right to Life," which appears shortly before the poem above and is in conversation with it:

It's like hiring a hitman
—*Pope Francis on abortion*

*I know what you are,
 little hitman, little cherub,

sneak up into me,
 swum past my barriers,

implanting like a movie mobster who
 takes a person hostage from the inside.

You merely tap your unformed foot,
 and my body bursts into symphony,

blood volume cranked dizzingly up
 breasts swelling in fiery crescendo.

Nausea slams me forward,
 just like your father liked me:

a body bent double to take him.
 I'm on my knees, little one, surrendered,*

*vomit heaving out of me like prayers.
I know, O, I know the life you've come for.*

Of course, the central idea is philosophical. The pope sees abortion as murder, but becoming a mother—as we have seen with Mary’s “carapace”—is also a kind of death, a kind of possession, a taking, even from the moment of conception. Many women acknowledge the joy of sex and the glorious aspects of pregnancy, how the body “bursts into symphony,” yet still sense a parasitic possession, similar to the “implanting like a movie mobster who / takes a person hostage from the inside.” Seen that way, abortion is a form of self-defense. Here, still, there is a brand of acceptance, perhaps a lack of agency in the face of deific fate, as the speaker is on her “knees ... surrendered, // vomit heaving out of [her] like prayers.”

This speaker relents to harsh realities, finding ways to express the difficulty (and sometimes joy) of being shoved against the immutable. Whether it is facing hearing loss in the titular poem “What Small Sound,” where Bell exquisitely compares approaching deafness to the spectral moons of Jupiter, and “bears witness to this deafness / that expands imperceptibly, the way the universe, they say / is expanding.” Or when discussing her daughter’s return from the mental hospital in “Taking Your Place,” the speaker admits she is irrevocably altered—perhaps possessed—by her daughter’s illness and suicidal ideation, saying, “But though you’ve returned, / I’m not coming back.” This helplessness and openness in the face of what works well when contemplating the realities of motherhood, aging, illness, and death. As devastating as it might be, we understand we often cannot change our children’s suffering, cannot stop them from doing their worst. Indeed, constructing incisive metaphors and narratives from such experiences is a way to wield some control through deeper understanding.

At one point, Bell’s narrator wields this acceptance, this lack of agency, while contemplating stereotypes of social-justice culture. In “Containment,” a syntactically masterful one-sentence prose poem, the speaker enacts a fragile inner narrative in the face of imagined, tweet-like accusations of her white culpability.

When the man sat down next to me at Starbucks, need coming off of him like a pheromone, I was quiet, having read, more than once, God save me from the well-meaning white woman, for he was a person of color—I wasn't sure which color, but not a fucking white person like me—and maybe I was profiling him, maybe I was an asshole and had already offended the black woman who said I could share the table but packed up her things when I sat down, leaving me to chew my dry, multigrain bagel thoroughly like the stereotype it was ... until the man asked quietly, from his place to my side, if I could buy him a cup of coffee, his

face open the way a wound is open ... I worried he was hungry, my son is always hungry ... I had an appointment to get to and handed him twenty dollars from the stack in my purse and heard him order coffee and his bagel with cream cheese, and the black woman came back and sat down just as I walked out, my tears overflowing like clichés.

Perhaps this could be an opportunity to challenge or explore social containment, the speaker's feelings of helplessness in the face of it. It can feel like people are defined by their mistakes, ostracized, more than ever, and that is terrifying. After all, all of us—caught in a racist system—are more than clichés, but the speaker's fears combined with the current divisive milieu have transformed a seemingly benign situation into something nefarious.

It is easy to see how the poems in *What Small Sound* speak to each other as the speaker grapples with accepting what happens to her and the ones she loves. The speaker comes to terms with different modes of nurturing, the marks that giving leaves on the giver, and how we are shattered by life and reformed. Perhaps my favorite moment of radical acceptance occurs in one of the final poems, "Perimenopause," where the aging female speaker shaves her chin—as many older women do—while contemplating her changing mind and body, both of which are increasingly prone to break open, her "tears / unchanneled and at the slightest provocation."

*Last week, in the produce aisle, a man
I've never been drawn to hugged me,
his hands warm the way a pilot light
is warm, its staid flicker merely dependable
in the dusty window of a hot water heater,
but I danced to life like a kerosene
slick touched by the sweet carelessness
of a match and stood there, helplessly burning.*

Francesca Bell's speaker is often 'helplessly burning' in the fires of life; in the heat of pleasure; and in the unthinkable pain of death, aging, sexual violence, or a child's mental illness. These poems are a lesson in crafting the "sweet carelessness of the world" to remain, despite everything, completely alive to it.

PERSONAL EFFECTS

Trees chandeliered with snow. An eruption of rain.

She waves goodbye to Long Island.

We listened to the windstorm on her gramophone,
unstitching our first wounds. It is the city inside the city
we fear most. She describes her life as one long *soon*.

This is how you cremate a year: the sky feasts on itself,
the sun abandons the parts. Fake snow clings
to a child's forehead. She waves goodbye. It's a start.

INTERFACE

Experts agree that the valley is rarely singular
and never plural. At dawn I threw the history
of my divorce down a well. Suppose we took
a voyage through landscapes verdant as thyme.
Look: a condom falls from the mouth of a bird.
Emptied of linguistics, my tongue's plied twine.
Love, experts agree I meant you no harm. None.

ONE OF US

One of us is drunk, and one of us is lying—
if love is a temple, it's got spiders and a curse.
Maybe we won't work it out, but we're trying.

Us still swims luminous in my mind,
an embryo in its egg, canded and obscure—
OK, one of us is drunk, and one of us is lying.

You said, "Hold that thought. I'm buying,"
pleated a twenty you plucked from your purse.
Were we working it out? Were we even trying?

You swung on the surface in the glass of wine.
"I remember our first bed. Now there are no more firsts."
Someone must be drunk. Someone must be lying.

You asked me if love was just crust, salt rime
on rock when the lies burned off from lust—
so maybe we won't work it out, but I'm trying.

Let us kneel to its Form in faith or in science:
the voice of a virgin, black holes, a fifth force.
What if one of us is drunk and one of us lying?
Maybe we won't work it out, but love is trying.

HEAVEN.ZIP

i recognized u by the swoosh on ur shus
& what for anyone else would constitute
clouds of musk
u are for me 命根子
my lifeblood
the root giving life
i want to chase, squabble over u
u are, shall we say, hen-pecked
meeting most overtures w/ such unvarnished cruelty
u have everybody's full attention
yet are torn between the ham hock
& the big-breasted coquette
muses, i am not "led by the nose"
there is no leading
there is no nose
the beleaguered executive resigning in disgrace
became a den mother to a local sorority
[not one of the better houses]
& downed too much red wine
before operating heavy machinery
as the chief regina would later sheepishly admit
joke's on u, the apricot-plum & casablanca tagines
taste exactly the same
yes, this froth tells me
it's not the same ocean as before
i'm sorry ur kind is dying out
red hair is so nice
ur head looks like a raging fire
dusk touching unsullied roof
the sounds of an amateur musician
disappearing into evening
who am i to judge

执迷不悔 UNREPENTANT

What can I do but shine / in memory

—John Wieners

●

racing down a beach may reap uncommon rewards
a simple gift, one a ghost could give
when all's said & done, what have we got left
ghost nuts, a whole wad
[something to share]
ur breath on my chest
AG standing for “aspiring governor”
u will surely hate growing old
the constant yelping in the yard
followed by extended periods of pain
my mood depending upon the fireworks
i derive no pleasure from fantasies
indecent lips, carnal skin
unwholesome, vulgar
buggers to be awoken
ppl who disappear into side streets w/o warning
& never look back
on a day like today
remind me how the sunroom filled w/ ferns
over our protestations
the trip to echo park being unnecessary
it was the first good party of the season [some say the only]
baubles & balls
snow that keeps melting
after u shake it off
three bees on a shield
shiny headgear lifted from a learned man
reciting the dimensions of a dream

SNAKE DUPLEX I

Not in a Tinder-ish way, but let's meet up.
Think magician, but suspect ghost. Quiet ghost.

Minus magic rabbits, the quiet ghost keeps
Busy collaging incongruity.

Busy busy incongruity:
Like a snake wrapped around a damsel's neck.

Snake-wrapped (not shrink-wrapped), sacred choker.
Weeds in my garden shouting *you'd better come*,

You'd better, as they weed-wrap the cosmos, but
I crave more sleep. Want to linger, to burrow.

I want you to know, when I crave, I burrow,
Scratchy blanket from which no exit.

Scratching at the blanket, I unlatch quiet.
Not a hint of Tinder. Let's meet up.

SNAKE DUPLEX II

Ghosts laze & loll in scraggy corners having
Ditched their despair in the grave, their careworn brows.

Devoid of despair, no brows on their backs,
These ghosts, free to seek a bathhouse, douse.

Wrestle each other when wet. Plovers
Nest nearby. The crouch of soggy ghosts.

Crouch to not disturb the nesting birds.
What happens when talk of god is in the air?

God talk reverberates. Snakes proliferate:
Sunning in a creche beneath the canopy.

They bask & preen in the nativity.
Befriend their cunning, revere their history.

Like ghosts, they mean you no malice, no harm.
Lolling in scraggy corners, staying warm.

SNAKE DUPLEX III

Hunting for the sacred in the attic
He finds a blue kimono in a hatbox,

Dons the silky robe & parades while he prays
My gold-plated circle pin will keep me safe.

Even a solid gold circle won't save me.
I shimmy my mother's blue convertible

Into a too small space—wild Chevy—
Conjuring catastrophe in advance.

Catastrophe in advance like the snaky
Old boyfriend starring in the bad husband dream.

As if I ever would have married him who
Plays holy in the first scene to fool me.

I stop the dream before scene two. Impostor!
Pretending to care about the sacred.

SNAKE DUPLEX IV

Why are we hooked, my love & I? The gore?
The moon a lemon slice over the drive-in.

The lemon-moon slices the drive-in
As bloody organs uncoil. Screen stars faceless.

Faceless stars, their bloody organs uncoiled.
Their lost limbs in lake bottoms, backyards, dumpsters.

Some limbs found, others lost forever.
It's the dying. Who's ready. Who's not.

An arrow through the chest. Are we ready?
Not for the miracles. But for the mishaps.

Mishaps trump miracles every time.
See hearts like veiled drums float on bamboo.

My heart like a veiled drum floats on bamboo.
My love & I are hooked. It's the dying.

SNAKE DUPLEX V

She steals slumber in a lightless cell. A thief.
Pearls fall onto the bed like hail, white on white.

Not all pearls, all hailstones shine white. Whiteness of
Eyes, they whisper. Of mouths, milky opals.

Infants prefer eyes, not mouths, in their first months.
Infants in the house where gravity collapsed.

Nothing grave in that house other than singing.
Strange neighbors, voices like flies buzzing.

Folk songs. Unfamiliar language. Buzz, buzz.
Her platonic nap with a singing neighbor.

Purely platonic, their troubled sleep.
Both ground down by the North Shore's gray gloom.

The gloomy North Shore fosters exhaustion.
They slumber in a lightless cell. Like thieves.

BIRD'S NEST WITH RIBBON

I thrive in late autumn, when my yard shuns color for musty brown,
buttons down its reckless blossoming, and the city folds up

its red patio umbrellas. Summer is a daytime nightmare—
beachgoers in flip-flops, kids with tennis rackets, women in white—

far from the asphalt heat on blue-collar stoops, haze of factory smoke
that left me morose as a child, waiting for evening's first breeze.

A day with high humidity, high heat, plunges me into isolation.
I want to protect my body from the memory of heat—

if I go out on days like that, I see the man who pushes his wealth
in a grocery cart, black garbage bags shining in harsh sunlight,

his water bottle strapped to the handle—I don't always say hello.
Just now, I noticed yellow leaves fluttering from a river birch,

the last few, and a nest in the bare branches outside my study window.
A blue-and-white-striped parade ribbon dangles from the twigs.

LUNAR ECLIPSE, WATERVILLE VALLEY

At the cusp of the road winding into a field of stars,
I focus my small binoculars.

Wind whips the back of my neck, hisses
at my need to find you out here,

where no one can find *me*.

I hope the crimson shadow will look
like the cut I planted in your cheek

with my pencil when you chased me
up the basement stairs, enraged,

the coal furnace behind us like a red dragon—

or the jagged bite in your left hand
when you saved me from a cornered racoon.

I trip on ice mounds, welcome deer tracks,
coyote howls, the scat of squirrels—

all signs of you waiting for me.

~

I'm here to confess: I didn't get to you in time,
a magpie grabbed my voice on the phone.

A wolf pinned me to my kitchen floor,
two white leopards blocked the doors.

And the ghost of Mom sang an eerie song
about Emma crying all night if I left town.

Your nurse said, *He's 95, he'll stay
on oxygen forever.*

Dad, I know it happened fast:
the oxygen mask you refused:

Take it off. I won't live like this.
I hear you took it off yourself.

Bring that animal spirit to me now,
while I'm still open to it,

before some numbskull tells me
I should go inside, or I'll freeze.

THE DEEP END

My father found my mother, ninety, crawling
on the floor near her bed twice this week.

I think she is trying to sneak away from death
but death is having none of it.

Or she is trying to crawl toward death
but death is playing hard to get, elusive

given her blindness and inability to walk.
Death isn't even giving her the old Marco

for her Polo. Or maybe she's the one
saying Marco. In her rarer lucid moments

she's busy apologizing to other lucid moments.
Me, I'm trying to picture her swimming,

or forgetting to swim.

THE OPENING AND CLOSING OF CASKETS

It depends on how you count them—the family drunks—blurred distinctions, a family trait, thus we're an amorphous blob of drinking, leaking from an unknown source, a collective source, and sometimes somebody dries out on the gritty sands, at least for a while, and sometimes permanently, though covered with invisible scrapes, and the rest of us find them suddenly boring and pat them on the shoulder and tell stories of when they weren't, booze like a plinko game, ping pong balls bouncing down through generations, the bad burials—the dry and the wet and the musical chairs and what would they have wanted, the dead drunk one, we cannot say, so argue about endlessly, filling our glasses, emptying our bottles, culling the herd down to nothing—and let this be a lesson to all you kids in the parking lot doing drugs, then coming in all glassy-eyed to kneel and say a prayer.

[ROSES MULTIFLORA]

roses multiflora
field and farm only

forest remains
unencumbered fern

green-feathered swans all
fanfare and lamentation

I listen too long
foxes screech-haunt

the Hudson red
river-of-light summer

solstice comes goes
moon decrescent

day reinvents
darkness

DEAD TWIN TO HER SISTER WHO IS ALIVE

do you catch me
corner your eye

a shadow
play across an icy scrim

translucent field fenced in
in flurries crocheting the 'scape

hooking titmice at the feeder
needling flickers foraging

wind-seeded snow
no I wild interrogate

each sunstruck dusty mote
each shadow in decline fretful

moon its ceaseless
cycle I envy at

houses windows
light-fractured you think

in your hands rose-stained
I imagine in mine

sister: winter
bluster pages sheets

so white every line
cottons you clean

baptized ordinary
and alive

SERAPHIM
BY ANGELIQUE ZOBITZ
(CavanKerry Press, 2024)

REVIEW BY DAYNA PATTERSON



Angelique Zobitz’s debut poetry collection *Seraphim* is a singing, searing book. It centers on the experience of Black women in the US, weaving an intergenerational text of suffering transformed, of survival, and of sanctity. In a white supremacist society bent on regulating and subjugating women’s bodies, especially Black women’s bodies, Zobitz affirms that what is deemed profane has been sacred all along: Black women’s lives, their words, their desires, their sexuality, their spirituality. Her work actively combats Misogynoir, a word coined by Black feminist Moya Bailey in 2010 to describe the combination of misogyny and racism aimed at tearing down Black women. Zobitz’s poems dismantle Misogynoir by

depicting, again and again, the complexity and multidimensionality of Black women, and by following bell hooks’ proclamation that self-love and loving Blackness are radical, revolutionary acts. Zobitz gives her readers the gift of a poetics of love and praise for Blackness, particularly the Black women who raised her and whom she is in the process of raising (i.e., her daughter, a.k.a. “The Revolution”).

From the opening pages of the book, readers quickly gather that the seraphim in the book’s title is a metaphor for Black women. Zobitz dedicates the collection “to the Seraphim,” but especially to her mother, Katrina Page, who passed away last year. In the epigraph to the book, we learn from Dionysius the Areopagite that seraphim are a very particular kind of celestial being, one known for “their heat and keenness, . . . their intense, perpetual, tireless activity, and their elevative and energetic assimilation of those below, kindling them and firing them to their own heat, and wholly purifying them by a burning and all-consuming flame; and by the unhidden, unquenchable, changeless, radiant, and enlightening power, dispelling and destroying the shadows of darkness.” Seraphim, then, are angels of fire who elevate others and purify them through a kind of burning, which destroys darkness. Heat, light, fire, and burning are recurring themes throughout the book—from a cold winter with a stingy landlord, to the heat of burgeoning sexual desire, to the pyrescence that releases seeds from their cones—and the epigraph prepares readers to be on the lookout for these themes, this particular temperature of holiness.

The collection is divided into four sections, following a loose chronology, from the birth of the central speaker in these poems, through her childhood, young adulthood, and into adulthood and motherhood. The first three poems, “Sister/Seraphim, Inextinguishable Light,” “Angelique, an Origin Story,” and “Love Letters to The Revolution No. 1,” introduce readers to the main characters of the collection: the seraphim, the central speaker’s mother, the speaker herself, and the speaker’s daughter, “The Revolution.” We also get a sense of the questions at the heart of this book: who/what is holy, and who gets to decide?

The first poem readers encounter seals the notion that Black women are the seraphim to whom this book is devoted. In “Sister/Seraphim, Inextinguishable Light,” the speaker describes “Black Barbies backlit by gas station fluorescence // stunning—singing holy, holy, holy.” Here we see Zobitz unifying the ordinary—or what has been labeled ordinary or profane—with the holy. The speaker in the poem not only describes the gas station seraphim as sacred as they dance in a sensual way, but also her own desire. She observes:

She—her—they—they blazing.

*This could be worship.
Loud and exuberant as every light-*

*leached club where I once got hot and sweaty
to reggae, rubbed underneath some body
as vigorously as kindling before catching fire.*

*It could be easy to forget how
good adoration feels (I can't forget),
what good feels like (paradise).*

They so flame and I see it.

In this first poem, not only do readers meet the seraphim, but we’re given to understand that the “elevative” purifying fire they bear is exuberant, joyous, musical, and sexual. Their fire is powerful enough to spark a reaction in the speaker, but also bears destructive potential. The speaker continues:

*It could be heaven.
This lot of half-leveled bumpy concrete
glittering full jeweled with bottle shards and
wrapping paper confetti.*

*They could burn it all down.
But—Glory.*

They invite us to join the chorus.

We as readers are invited to join the chorus, too, invited into this maybe “heaven,” this potential “worship.” We’re invited into Zobitz’s enactment of Black love and anti-misogynoir.

Zobitz invites
readers into
revolutionary/
revelatory
Black love.

Subsequent poems “Angelique, an Origin Story” and “Love Letters to The Revolution No. 1,” introduce the reader to the central speaker, “Angelique,” and the speaker’s daughter, grounding the collection in the speaker’s literal and figurative ancestry. In “Angelique, an Origin Story,” there is a sort of Black Mary in the speaker’s mother, but this Mary “didn’t need divine / messenger to convince her of what she carried, knew immediately // that I didn’t need to be brought into this world by virgin or conceived // as sacrifice. Didn’t need a sign—she knew a good thing coming.” Even though the mother is a teen “nearly as young as Mary,” she recognizes divinity in her child: “My mama said, a punk // girl can dream of angels and know when one

manifests. / She said she looked into an angel’s eyes and claimed it as her own.” Thus, we have a central speaker named after angels in a book about angels. Her young mother’s fierce love and act of naming and claiming holiness reverberates in numerous poems in which Zobitz names, claims, and pronounces holiness: from family members to memories of former lovers, from pop culture icons like Wendy Williams and Whitney Houston to the ambrosial delight of Big Ma’s buttermilk biscuits.

Another crucial figure in this poetry collection is the speaker’s daughter, “The Revolution.” In “Love Letters to The Revolution No. 1,” and in a companion poem that appears at the end of the collection, “Love Letters to The Revolution No. 2,” Zobitz establishes a literary ancestry for herself and her daughter (and, by extension, all Black women). In both poems, she braids together, cento-style, the words of Black feminist writers and thinkers into what reads as advice letters to a young Black woman, representative of a future generation of Black women. Zobitz draws lines from poems by Gwendolyn Brooks, Toi Derricotte, Nikki Giovanni, Margaret Walker, Sonia Sanchez, Rita Dove, bell hooks, Ntozake Shange, Lucille Clifton, and Audre Lorde—powerhouse matriarchs. These poems remind us that, in the words of Rita Dove, “If you don’t look back, // the future never happens.” Zobitz affirms, by look-

ing back herself, that she is built on the words and ideas and love and community that came before her, and she extends that love and community to her readers.

Throughout *Seraphim*, Zobitz offers poems of Black love, including self-love. In “Sermon: On the Sanctity of the Beauty Shop,” the speaker declares:

*I'm a whole broken woman. And just because I came in one way
don't mean I'm not God-made woman, don't mean I can't be
transformed, don't*

*mean I don't sit at the right hand of the Father—look at this
crown on my head.*

In “Aide-Memoire,” the speaker echoes this same affirmation of worthiness, of sacredness: “the body is flesh imperfect yet unbroken / here now made for slow soft worship, good and worthy as gospel / resilient as negro spirituals sung next to the one you love.”

As a white woman reading Zobitz’s work, I acknowledge that I will never fully understand what it’s like to be a Black woman, especially in the US in the era of #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName, where police violence and brutality disproportionately affect Black people; where hate speech and discrimination are common, even celebrated in some parts of our country. That said, reading and rereading the poems in *Seraphim* move me closer to empathy and compassion, and help deconstruct my received notions of divinity and the sacred. Through the pyrotechnics of her poetic voice, combined with her wisdom to name, claim, and pronounce holy numerous aspects of her life and history, Zobitz invites readers into revolutionary/revelatory Black love.

TRAP TEOP TRAP FLOW

for Ruth Awad

Today on your birthday,
I told several people seeking advice
to read your work. Not because,
but because I didn't know, at the time,
it being your anniversary howl.

My people dreamed of stately swans
floating across dreamcatcher
ponds who were themselves ancient people.
When I was a child, a bear came to me,

and in my sleep it nudged me awake,
and breathed into my mouth. Now I confess
my words, my words, my tongue are hers.
She still comes in between worlds, comes

and looks down at me, much as you do,
in that photo, the one where behind
you, on swan-white paper, float the words,
traP
toeP
traP
floW

Yes. It is the look of one who knows
this world is a forest trail, cutting,
winding its way down to water, down
to a face made of tears.

MUSIC

The clouds today
shred later in the wind.

The flat water
fills with chop by evening.

Before we ever
visited the ocean, we knew

a thin creek,
pine and willow and sage,

a grandfather
on the porch, whistling.

I DRIVE PAST THE CEMETERY

wrapped in ordinary days.
Like a bird in a nest
you're there: wild and airy
not buried so much as hovering

somewhere between the leaves
of the oak that's grown six feet
since we said goodbye to you.
Oh little cloud, little lark

I drive past you longing for you
but tethered to the world.
I'm tapping on my steering wheel
to "Sweet Thing." *It's me, I'm dynamite*

and I don't know why. Or gently swaying
my whole body like some mystic to
"My Sweet Lord." You know I love songs
with the word "sweet" in the title like

a prayer to tenderness.
I drive past with mountains of brown
paper bags from WinCo, inside:
buttermilk bread soft

as a baby's foot, toothpaste tubes
with Star Wars and cartoons,
strawberries and blueberries huddled
in their plastic cases,

their faces plump and eager.
I drive past Tuesday and Thursday
late morning after class when I feel
so bright alive

after long talks about Chekhov
and that cherry orchard,
after undergrad epiphanies and acne,
and the day that quiet student in the back

said "I saw my first play
last night it was so good"
like her whole world just started
and she knew it.

I drive past with your dad
and brothers from Grandma Jo Jo's
Sunday dinners, smell of her roast
steeped in our clothes, bowl of leftover

salad on my lap, all of us laughing
at your dad's Chewbacca impersonation.
I drive past riddled
with appointments, bad radio, roadkill,

the kilt of that guy who walks
to the tech school.
You love him for that too
you who are bodiless but watch

from somewhere in the trees what bodies do
all day with the current of their blood
like electricity that never shuts off.
Oh tiny god with a tiny rose mouth

invisible to me now, we love
the world together: me with my aging tired
wired singing breakable body
and you without yours, watching me pass

your kingdom of quiet, my whole life aflutter
with color and noise and smells, your world
this mystery I lean into for a moment.
Every day I wave to you with my breath

and my heart and you wave back in a breeze
through oak leaves. Above the leaves
even the clouds in their amorphous
shapes play our game:

here a horse running toward
another horse or there a hand
for one moment holding
another hand.

CALL IT PEACE

when was it
 all the Apple River's cows
 would low evening
 over the hillcrest and into my bed

crack open the north window

 all the day creeps in
 the sound of corn growing

grain trucks and a semi full of sows
 who will speak for the Midwest

 flyover plains
 my driftless corner
I would dream into farms

 come to the milking
 hides of mist and hoarfrost
the bank-mud hooved deep

 make a childhood
 from nitrogen-green fields
the lullaby of pasture oaks

FAMILY SNAPS

1. Too many show small
Figures walking away
Into cliffs and skies over
There. A distance beckons

While a man and woman
Naked under a waterfall
Lose their faces in foam

And tumult—or someone
Squeezes sideways to chimney
A slot canyon, knees and elbows
Strategically deployed, eyes

Turned not our way but toward
The problem. These people
Knew the limits of posing

2. And aiming, so devoted
Themselves to a body's
Dynamics and every science
Engaging locomotion,

Friction, geometry, how
Fast they would become
Weightless. Given

You can't tell them
Apart by how they threw
Or carried their lives
Away, you never will

Know them. Look: the camera
Cuts her off at the knees,
Casts his shoulder and arm and

3. Half a face into some
Other dimension—blame
Not the machine but
A human eye, its focus

On distractions out
-side the frame. Here, a
Crease and blur; there,

A tear. We thought
We might see all the way
Back to find them, then
Send them forward, but

We can't even say where
These bodies, caught
Up and still, have gone.

BEAUTY

Say my mother was
One absolutely, camera
-caught in the mirror holding

Lipstick to her smile or scaling
A sheer cliff with that guy
She never trusted belaying

The rope, though he wouldn't
Let go and she can't fall
Now. The photo reduces

Her to palm-size, so
You might take her in
Hand. Later, some other fellow

Will pose her for the news, coiffed
And already lipsticked, holding
Her rock hammer to her face

As if she wants to kiss it. Such
A strange idea. When instructed,
She smiles cold-eyed as any

Gas-station calendar girl. See her
Pretending she won't use
The pick end if she has to.

IF MY FATHER DREAMS OF ME,

I am the lake diminished to
Its farthest point and lowest,

He the salt left on a late
High shoreline drying, just

One marking the foothills
Where for 30,000 years the lake kept

Lapping as it fell. Are
You there? May as well

Ask does a dead sea keep
Imagining—it does

When I imagine it. Dead
Meaning every place

Left to go, while
Generations of birds fly in one

Long moment then light among
The reeds and rushes, so

Constant, calling one to another
I am coming in, still coming.

for Jamie Smith

SHORT 'N SWEET: THE BOOK SPEAKS



PLAT

BY LINDSEY WEBB

(Archway Editions, 2024)

How would you, Plat, describe yourself in two sentences or less? I am a series of poems that are trying to be a grid, and a grid that is trying to be a perfect city. I am also a house, haunted by the death of a close friend, trying to break the laws of physics in order to see her again.

Where would you go on your dream vacation? Somewhere theoretical, ideally a non-place. Can one vacation on a map? Or in an entryway?

What is your favorite color? Rose madder

What is your favorite movie? Maybe *Last Year at Marienbad*, or *PlayTime*. But if I'm being honest, it's *Ordet*.

What advice would a therapist give you? Install an ad-blocking software, stop chasing ghosts, and touch real grass. And don't worry, for now, about whether it was planted by a developer to sell condos.

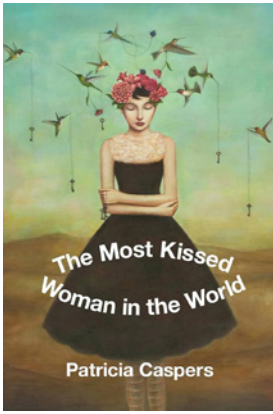
What is your favorite smell? Ionones: the nullifying blast of a violet flower. These temporarily extinguish the scent receptors in the nose, and can only be re-detected when the nerves have recovered. This leads to the perception of a very strong smell, because it is not allowed to fade away slowly, desensitizing the nose to its presence over time; it reasserts itself anew every few moments. It is an insistent and recursive scent.

Do you collect anything? Pressed flowers and herbs, news of the stock market, pianos, firewood, ancestors, city plans (especially divine ones), doors, spirals and lattices, silos, manticores, coyotes. I pile these up and they speak among themselves. Maybe they'll decide together how to mean.

What is your favorite snack? Roseate squash, tasteless plums, sprigs of rosemary, gum.

If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be and why? I would love to have dinner with an angel, and ask them to pass the salt. What would they eat—sunlight?

SHORT 'N SWEET: THE BOOK SPEAKS



THE MOST KISSED WOMAN IN THE WORLD

BY PATRICIA CASPERS

(Kelsay Books, 2024)

How would you, *The Most Kissed Woman in the World*, describe yourself in two sentences or less? I am a question asked inside an ongoing conversation about the divine feminine, asking who or what is allowed to see herself reflected in god's image—and why. Within this, I ask about human nature, climate chaos, the colonization of discovery, as well as grief, mothering, beauty, and marriage.

Where would you go on your dream vacation? In a dream, I would sit below the branches of an autumn ginkgo, swim in the sea beside mermaid manatees and one lonely whale, listen to the blues from a place on the cusp of heaven, and float across Lake Merritt in a gondola rowed by a ghost.

What is your favorite color? How could I choose one? My favorite color is every color of sky. Plus, hummingbird green, pollen gold, and the burgundy of a red onion.

What is your favorite movie? *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret.*

What advice would a therapist give you? My therapist tells me to drop the god complex—or she would if she stopped being so damn polite. I tell her god is complex.

What is your favorite smell? Being made of paper I am particularly wary of fire, but I do love the sweet scent of a charred forest—the surprise of devastation holding the scent of comfort.

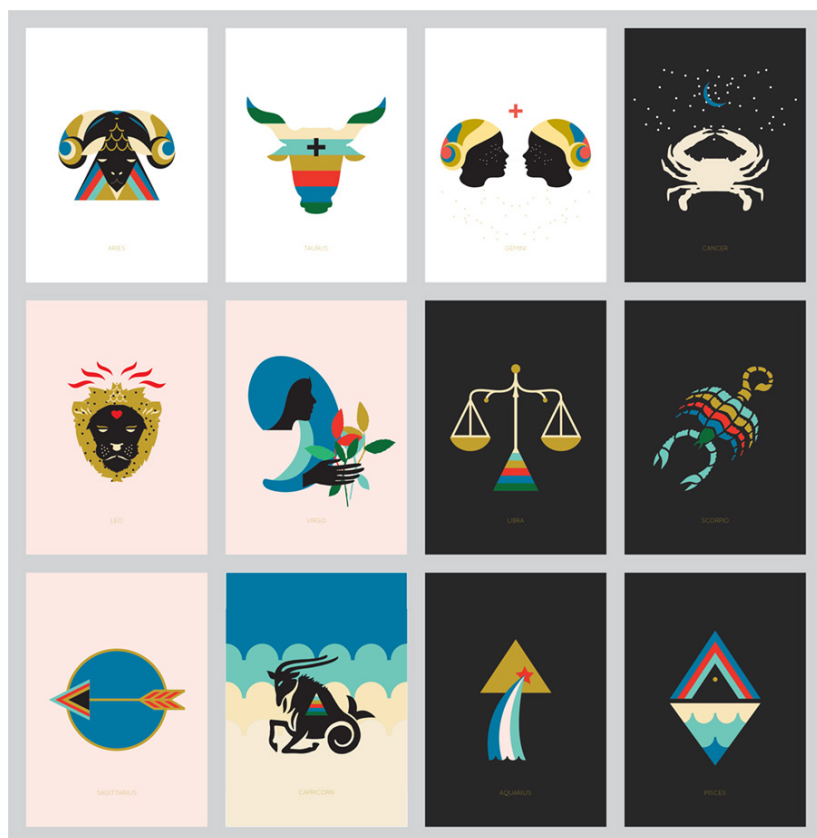
Do you collect anything, and what do these items mean to you? Lost wedding bands, broken teeth, the word for *dove* in every language, dead and brittle honeybees, skeleton keys, Bonnie Raitt lyrics, death masks, and first kisses. I suspect what I think they mean to me is not what they really mean to me—as does my therapist.

What is your favorite snack? If you read me, you'll understand why I don't prefer popcorn—even if it is a reflection of god. Figs are my favorite, fresh from the tree, still warm from the summer sun.

If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be and why? Octavia E. Butler, Ntozake Shange, Rumi, and Pema Chödrön. We might discuss ideas of the divine and I hope it would include big-god laughter.

SUGAR ASTROLOGY

BY SHARI ZOLLINGER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOLLI ZOLLINGER



QUANTUM ENTANGLEMENT: A ZODIAC SYNASTRY

Quantum entanglement is the phenomenon of a group of particles being generated, interacting, or sharing spatial proximity in such a way that the quantum state of each particle of the group cannot be described independently of the state of the others, including when the particles are separated by a large distance.

In astrology, every sun sign has its opposing sign. These opposing signs might reveal inherent compatibilities, paradoxically, between two signs wholly different from each other. This could explain a lover-ship available to two contraindicated planets. We do not recognize our opposite only for the purposes of romance or

domesticity. We might challenge our opposite to find us, wherever and whenever. If I present soft, will you show me strength? If you are direct, may I wrap around you circuitously? If you need a comrade, might our skill set command what we need for success?

You'll find your birthday opposite in the sign of your half birthday: Aries/Libra, Taurus/Scorpio, Gemini/Sagittarius, Cancer/Capricorn, Leo/Aquarius, Virgo/Pisces. The Zodiac below confesses a message from your other side.

ARIES: March 21 to April 19

Libra lures as Stendhal. Do not worry if the syndrome causes loss of consciousness. Beauty is worth tachycardia and diaphoresis. This is not a fight. This is art.

TAURUS: April 20 to May 20

Scorpio comes as Everest, gritty point, and sharp end—rope-wrapt. All the way up to the top, you'll ask. For what? The ground down below is safer. This is not about safety.

GEMINI: May 21 to June 20

Sagittarius emerges like plot points: hook, pinch, resolution. Does your protagonist need help moving A to B? Swapping distraction's bee-buzz and belly swim for arrow-rhymed bullseye.

CANCER: June 21 to July 22

Capricorn paints clay and mineral into rivulets of black, gray, and red. This is a river invitation—maybe pigment premonition. Earth ochre mixed with oil and water, the only way along.

LEO: July 23 to August 22

Aquarius gathers through osmosis. Acquires data by fell-swooping. Air presents as the medium—invisible acquisition knowable only through breath. All mechanisms learn how to in and out.

VIRGO: August 23 to September 22

Pisces threads through a vintage projector, showing you the wild images of other minds. These offer you rest from internal screens. Let your subterranean figments lie.

LIBRA: *September 23 to October 22*

Aries asks you to trust instinct and intuition. Where is your center of gravity? Listen for a different kind of language that rolls up through the viscera, verbs replacing nouns. Learn how to speak from here.

SCORPIO: *October 23 to November 21*

Taurus prepares a place to thaw. You, icemaker with a bag of ice flung up on the shoulder. You've carried frozen water for too long. Deicing readies the skin for melding.

SAGITTARIUS: *November 22 to December 21*

Gemini affectionately invites you to play. Ahead there will be long horizon-arcs, jungle gyms, and summer nostalgia. Reminiscences dot the grassy field.

CAPRICORN: *December 22 to January 19*

Cancer delivers one day in history. Moon-landing when footprints made circular impressions. Opaque brail walks you through firsts. Where will you land and how will you handle that much space?

AQUARIUS: *January 20 to February 18*

Leo rises as a point of light, dandelion up through green. Why do you fear color? Yellow itself, the pattern of your future. Mimed sunlight. Expressions essential breath.

PISCES: *February 19 to March 20*

Virgo presents scaffolding upon the water. Potential bridge where you may walk upon wave-motion to the other side, safely. Solidity as boon, steadying the intricacies.

PEP TALK

Because today is the day all rivers
flow backwards and it snows in July,
I will be seen for the first time
the way the sun is seen for the first time
by a newborn lamb. I will be the sun.
I will be the lamb. I'm not confused.
I will have a lamb of my own,
white as snow, and a Mary to carry me
wherever she goes. I will be
Eeyore. I will be Eeyore's tail.
I will be the look on Eeyore's face
when I'm found. I will pin
the tail on Eeyore myself, pin
something of me on me so I'm finally
glad. I will be a balloon. Not
Eeyore's sorry-ass balloon.
As far as balloons go, I will be
the furthest from an empty honey pot.
The farthest-going balloon, the one
that never pops. The unpopable balloon.
The unstoppable balloon. I will be
Christopher Robin. I will be
a boy someone writes books about.
I will be a fly on the wall in Pooh's
lair of the bear. Who always
looks at a honey pot the way I once
looked at God.

FEELING IT

What else but Sunday afternoon
to skewer language. Pathetic, shit-
eating adjectives. Adverbs miserably,
inexpertly grasping at metaphor.

I'm always begging my boyfriend to love me
with words. Worse, imagine me on top
a mountain, fog worthy of speechlessness,
and I'm saying, *It's like a fog machine up here.*

Sunday we sit with our backs to the TV.
Breeze on our skin. Leaves in the trees.
Sunlight, apple slices. I expect more
even from nouns. Also, everyone

should stop wearing so much black.
The punks, the poets. Too funereal.
Isn't lavender prettier than a simile. Isn't it
true we're not dead yet.

FROM: VISA INTERVIEW TO BECOME A FULL HUMAN

Q: What is happiness?

A: Happiness might be the name of the next stray dog I keep

you want what you don't have / I want a trestle table groaning with potluck offerings

of pomegranates, spiced cider, mushroom pies / the decadent silverware choir clatter

I want to emanate fresh-scored sourdough / I want all my friends and more ready

to tear into me / I want to be crumbs that tumble over their fronts / I want salt

even in the scraped-raw places / let's hang fairy lights, let's / not leave unless bells

ring like bits of shell / flickering from hard-boiled eggs / around the biggest bite

that goosebumps our arms / so piercing / this alpenglow, this / herd-of-elk fellowship

when we rub antlers to feel / how plush the velvet / how easy to row beyond blisters

burst / steam from crust / why doesn't it happen more often / a perfect normal afternoon

that leaves us panting / rhubarb-tongued / tambourine-spined / reaching when asleep

for whatever cracks the smile egg / against the teeth / internal yellow gush: delight

Q: Are you concerned about diabetes?

A: Sugar is more bam per gram than gunpowder but that's only a fact not a feeling

Kinds of sugar: confectioners', granulated, pearl, cane, demerara, turbinado, muscovado. Sounds like bachata song titles. Juicy entanglement. Ever smelled a cane field on fire? Piccolo note of sweet among the whirling pillar of smoke, hawks up high to pierce all the mammals on fire rushing the field's edges

It kills kills kills even though it purrs so loud it fills your mouth it's still a tiger in your kitchen. Possible to imagine people as the personified causes of their deaths, such as corpses like a row of frosted cakes in frilly white wrappers

We make it at seven ounces a day per person, 160 pounds per person per year, enough to bury us all. How often we say 'I love you' or 'I'm sorry' or 'let's celebrate' with the slow poison of custards, pecan pie, butter biscuits with tea

Basterdsuiker: what the Dutch called adding molasses. Sugar so prestigious when pure, colonists gobbled it until they got black teeth. If they couldn't buy it, they blackened their teeth to appear rich enough (to be giving themselves gum rot), and that's just about everything you need to know about my people

Q: Is there a benefit to forgetting you have dementia?

A: I never said memories were all that in the first place

Memory—so sticky. Not always the finger licking, the honey. The other stuff, the drip, the stain, the hot fruit stench. Alzheimer's: nearly terrifying as Ebola but like measles vaccines and certain poisons, maybe good for you in miniscule amounts. Microdoses of forgetfulness—what a pleasure to slip the neurological traces; what an enjoyable glitch, to *not* send pulse energy crackling through the squishy, three-pound organ over every little thing. Scratch that, I mean, yes, it's the little things that are worth glucose and electricity, the researchers assert, molecules of happiness. Remember the first pom-pom bee that crawled into the hut you set out? Remember the lemon on your courtyard tree inflating over months from green nubbin to yellow globe? The chocolate cake, the friend smile, the terrier who caught a Frisbee in the park. Someone playing trumpet upstairs. I guess that's the joy. So much else, just, as they say, let it go. Like the phone forgotten in your pocket when you jumped in shrivel-cold lake water deeper than your mind. Like the water bottle tumbled over the lip of the canyon. The memories: grains of sand gritting up your mechanism. Doesn't it feel better when a memory is not a leech? When you don't clamp it in Tupperware in the storage unit part of your brain? Anyway, they're nothing to build a house or a personality on. Unwatched, they keep licking themselves, doing cocoon things in the dark, but what comes out is not a butterfly, not even a moth, just, more often than not, a crumpled-wing thing that makes you want to slap and smash. Keep a brain more like a sieve than Fort Knox, I think; leave all the memories unbuttoned so age can take them easily. Space on your clothesline for whatever comes along next. A minimalist brain, a place you can actually bear to be inside of, cradled, licked clean by the many waving years.

BUILDING L: LOS DANZANTES

I'm tired of speaking the language
of my dreams, with its childhood rhymes
and tide pools, its bulbs exploding
on schedule into clusters of grape
hyacinths. Let's order brides on the internet
and shape our mouths into fruits
or kitchen utensils. Isn't the weather
fine today? Would you like some sugar
in your coffee? When we visited
the ancient Zapotec city, we crouched
in the temple of los Danzantes and studied
the curves of naked men presumed
by early anthropologists to be bent
in dance. We now believe them to be
corpses, genitals replaced with
flowery scrolls. This is what I mean
when I talk about dancing.

COLOSSAL

On a boat somewhere, you've got a red
idea in your cooler. Cameras roll and you
put a crumpled Pepsi can in its beak,
watch it punch clean through. You call it
by my name. The holes are shaped
like diamonds. Every year I dive
a little deeper, wrap my shell
in pressure till it disappears. I'm larger
than you think. My thoughts
are roly-poly bugs the size of dogs.
Sometimes I eat them. Sometimes
I leave them behind, where sun
can filter in. Are you still trying to guess
how big I'll grow, cutting beaks
from the stomachs of sperm whales,
measuring the circle of my
chitin? Your algorithm's off. My eyes
are basketballs that see you
through the dark. When you get the call
that I've washed up in Antarctica,
when you stand in a freezing bathtub
and address the camera, smile, drag a knife
through a jellied brain, I'm biting
diamonds in the ocean floor. My mantle's
full of rain that hasn't fallen yet.
I'll never be seen alive.

FIDELITY IS NOT DEAD

Fidelity's baby is dead. She named him Bruce
and he said goodbye, slipped into the toilet,
stingray resplendent. It hurt. Fidelity scooped

his jelly body out the bowl and buried him under
the camelia, placed a brick over his head; a Virgin
of Guadalupe candle too (even though she's had it

with the Virgin). Some women don't bury their jelly
babies. Some don't give them names. Some don't
tell anyone they birthed a jelly baby on the weekend.

Fidelity is not some women. Fidelity tries to trust
her body again—invites it out for coffee, asks what
it does for a living; doctors tell her body to try again.

Fidelity tries to chart her surges, tries to make love
even though love makes death. People say her dead
baby is the shade of hope. When did they last birth

a stingray? Don't tell Fidelity about hope. Don't tell
her about fish oil. Don't tell her about mystics. Don't
tell her to stick needles in her body at strategic points.

Don't tell Fidelity she's thirty-eight, daily. Don't tell
her about prayer beads, holy water, wine fasts and
running fast. Fidelity knows a thing or two about

quackery. Fidelity prefers boa constrictors to babies,
falcons to friends, lizards to lovers, horn sharks to hope.

CAPACITY CROWD

I'm sick of waiting for this city to work
me out of itself like a splinter. I'm sick
of producing my own subsistence
as a way to literally express my being alive.
I'm sorry to have died and not really
noticed, but I've been so busy loving
what you're wearing and pouring
my paint right into the dip in the street
that drains to the sea. I never saw myself
represented in art until that movie
where the one guy is fed to the wood-
chipper: bye! I was so proud I cried.

CHILDHOOD

at fourteen we lived
for death, flirting

with the fence
that hemmed the cemetery

of Fear City, Queens.

bored, we slung sneakers
onto phone lines or

shot bottle rockets
at clumpy-haired strays.

for pocket change
we collected vials for dealers

a quarter a pop in '80s money,
a lot of jingle and

we needed change.
but mostly we zombie

swayed among the graves,
sweats tucked into socks,

as we traversed the wilds
for the eldest headstone

until we found death
sprawled on a ragweed mattress.

we tapped at his xylophone
ribcage with a snapped stick.

Vinny stole a holy stone
off the granite stele and bounced

it off the addict's slicked forehead.
we warned Vinny of hexes

but he said that no kind of luck
haunted this neighborhood.

but Vinny later died
over neighborhood nonsense

when he got pistol-whipped
until his head mistook itself

for a smushed-in eggplant.
neighbors had theories,

but we knew it was the rock
he filched from the headstone.

where the street ran out.

where the fence hung
loose and limp.

where the steel marker
reads: Dead End.

SWIMMER'S ITCH

It is daylight somewhere, mostly
on the edges of another person's sleep. My friend
gets up early to watch the birds, but I am beginning to find
that the birds also watch us. The sky is pink
over the lake, and tomorrow
it will be again. In every part of the world, someone
is saying goodbye to something. There are so many things
I do not pay attention to. The end
always arrives before I'm ready.

Someone is buying a brand new swimsuit
at the Emporium, where every shop smells waterlogged.
There is no body that does not harbor
a little bit of destruction, open follicle, cherry
flavor to make it all go down easier. My father-in-law
warned me of brain-eating amoeba in the lake
on the other side of the state. I think of the way the body will
just keep going, begging for food and love, like a skinny cat
looking for a place to spend the night, tongue tough,
teeth bared, sweet for a can of whatever you've got.

MOVING POEM

Living

He eats liver and heart and marrow
and calls me madame mammal,
baby bones, and honey bones.

He boils chicken feet into broth
until an oily-sweet film
fills the one-room studio we share.

Learning

He is quitting coffee.
This time,
he is really quitting coffee.

To avoid studying,
he researches better ways to study.

He takes the last egg
and replaces the carton,
empty,
back into the fridge.

When we watch TV,
he pauses every time he laughs
so he doesn't miss a fragment of dialogue.

Playing

There is a game we play
where one of us hides,
only letting a sliver of ourselves show,
and waits to see how long it will take
for the other to notice us.

Sometimes, I wait so long
that I can't decide
if we're still playing or not.

Practicing

I am practicing turning myself off
learning not to want him, so that now
I've almost convinced myself that I don't.
I haven't yet realized that maybe
that isn't the point.

Walking

The second week of February,
we walk the vacuum of
the reservoir, all brittle-brown and frozen.

Sealed in my own silence,
I choke in the clean, cold air.

I can recall moments of living
so clearly, only now I can't remember
if they were a memory or a dream.

I walk between the worlds
of what I know and what I feel.

Dreaming

He dreams I die in my sleep.
You were so sad, he says.
Why?
He doesn't know.

Offering

The ponderosas are leaking
their scent everywhere and
I'm going to leave him soon.

Somewhere, on the other side of town,
a house waits for me like a timer.

I take in the ponderosa with open mouth
drawing its odor inside me,
internal, intimate.

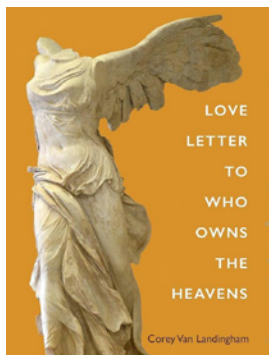
I am so tired of offering
my self in pieces.

Living

I move away

and each morning I wake
to trembling white curtains,
the spring air raising
the stubble of my bare legs,

and outside, sunlight
on the rooftops that house
a dozen different lives.



***Love Letter to Who Owns the Heavens*
by Corey Van Landingham**
(Tupelo Press, 2022)

This book meets the moment with prodigious intelligence but, more importantly, with the biggest heart. Drone warfare, long-distance romance, divinity, and art all meet Van Landingham’s eye.

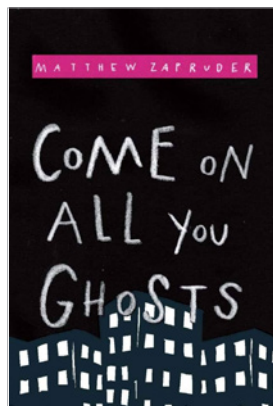
—KATHERINE
INDERMAUR



***Bedtime Stories*
by Steve Langan**
(Littoral Books, 2024)

Langan’s poems are an embattled form of mindfulness in the age of too much. These poems address the ceaseless noise with self-awareness—that we are all an active part of one problem or another. The book is built from lines that are a form of moving forward, and the knowledge that sentiments such as “life will never be as good / as it is right now” are both a distress call and a prayer.

—NANO TAGGART



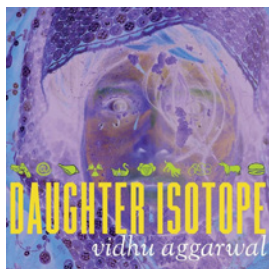
***Come on All You Ghosts*
by Matthew Zapruder**

(Copper Canyon Press, 2010)

Zapruder is a man who (famously) believes that when you want to say a thing, say it how it is; don’t slather it in unnecessary metaphor.

Digression, unvarnished memory, and an ability to step into the lives of strangers are all to be had in a collection that occasionally left me floored—as in the poem “Journey to the Past.”

—NEIL FLATMAN



Daughter Isotope
by Vidhu Aggarwal
(The Operating System,
2021)

Daughter Isotope is like teleporting into an alternate universe. These poems contain everything an alt world should: pop culture, action-packed language and lines, fast food, innuendo, grief, mythical and religious story, science, space, tech—and let's not forget the rainbows and unicorns. "As stars blow apart so do our virtual mutualities, so do our mutual virtualities, so do our visceral / municipalities, so do our muchacho virilities?"

—NATALIE PADILLA
YOUNG



Second Empire
by Richie Hofmann
(Alice James Books,
2015)

The lyricism here is astonishing. This collection's jewel-like poems interweave incisive observation—of urban and natural landscapes—with confessions and epiphanies alike.

—KATHERINE
INDERMAUR



Like Love: Essays and Conversations
by Maggie Nelson
(Graywolf Press, 2024)

Poet and critical essayist Maggie Nelson draws from twenty years of a writing life in *Like Love: Essays and Conversations*. Each chapter, set chronologically, includes reviews; conversations; and—what Nelson does best—razor-sharp reflections on queer issues, art, and love. There exist only a few, Nelson being one, who can use the word love without issuing a single cliché.

—SHARI ZOLLINGER

WASTED ELEGY

for John Kaly (1967–2023)

I. Whole Foods

Lately, I've been failing
at avocados.

What green allure

in the neon supermarket,
smooth goseflesh
stickered *California!*

But in linoleum daylight,
bruised, turning to
purple muck in the sink.

How precisely you
sliced, with your infinite
patience, through

the pebbled rind—
scooping the dark seed
from luminous pulp—

or laid out a line
of paintbrushes,
flat to fine,

as evening's golden, folded
hours slipped steadily
through the blinds,

(trees add shade to shade)

whole notes scrawled on
envelopes unglued
by undomesticated

time

I try to coax back.
Without you, the shy flit
of poem is just this

splintered avocado pit.

II. Spiral Jetty

Dream of your blue
J.Crew sweater pressed
against my cheek, rasp

of wool so real
I can't unstick sleep—
tendrils of grief spiraling in—

or spooling out?
Grief is a Mouse

we saw pressed into dust
and the color of dust
on the corrugated road

to Spiral Jetty,

tail a sharp, unanswered
parenthesis trailing
death. And above,

a scoop of pelicans—
ribbon furling, unfurling
in perforated loops

over pink water that
had retreated half

a mile from the black coil
of prehistoric rock. Basalt
and salt, clots

of foam whipped up
in sudsy drifts.

You came unstuck,
panicked by the vast
depth or breadth or

too-muchness
(*Blue—uncertain—
stumbling Buzz*)

of this howling world.
So I held you fast,
poor ballast of my arms

circling your ribcage,
ear flattened to the thud
of your sudden dread.

Be still

I didn't tell you then—
though I think it
often now—

as if the unsaid
said too late
could take back

what's undone.

19 HAIKU

corpse flower in my chest a ticking clock
chin bone china
spool of thread embroidering fantails on my sheet my hands my
wings
euglena the tyranny of either-or
the boy with the mandrake root smile
another quaking aspen epileptic fit
gently cradling our bellies our knees
bowing sunflowers harvest moon
the place where the lips were pain
mirrorball your eyes
the Minotaur beating in the heart of a beefsteak tomato
neither animal, vegetal, nor filial
here is a list of differently shaped plastics I need you to buy me
mushrooms beyond the houses houses
railroad tracks what lives what dies
everyone is replaceable Tarquinius Superbus
taking a selfie et in Arcadia ego
the Milky Way unfolding briar roses
echolalia villanelle

MOLLUSK

River mussels sprayed
over the ice, their nexus
close to the bank. Sequins
on a gown's waist, they are
the rest of what did not
survive the winter. Temperature
fluxes popped them—
I can see the washed-out
bodies—or pearls.

Is this what you
thought of when
you stocked the river,
homing new natives?
I tell you I could hold
one hundred in my hands
then spread my fingers
above the ice to hear them
split like firecrackers.

SUPERHERO MOVES

Your son has learned to give all the right answers:
The movie's not scary, it's not real Dad.
You'd taught him that after his friend jumped

off a slide wearing the same costume
as cartoon superheroes in pajamas and masks.
It's fake, you'd said, and now, when the actor

wearing skin-tight motion capture
discusses body counts with the actor
wearing military rank on his dress uniform,

he won't let you fast-forward.
And now, when the villain
is finally subdued at the cost

of millions of fictional lives,
you ask if he was scared,
but no, the heroes always win, he says.

That night you'll find yourself cutting
green yarn he's webbed
throughout his closet, having weighed

his smile when he said I'm Spider-Man
against the drama you and your wife watched
after he went to sleep, which finally revealed

how the heroine's son died—
his body almost levitating in the flashback,
hanging—and you say he is the heroine's son

even though she can't fly or bend bullets
with her brain, not because she saves people,
which she does, but because we're meant

to empathize with her grief
and the good she's still capable of.
Your son knows words have consequences,

so when the teacher asked them to write a sentence
and to draw what they can do
in the virtual kindergarten

he attends from his bedroom, one year
into the pandemic, he wrote I can play nothing
and drew a sad face.

There were lots of things he could do,
you said. He rolled his eyes.
He wasn't sad, he said.

The man in the drawing
was sad.
Admit it,

somewhere along the line
you broke the fantasy
that makes our world

more magic, the one where you believe
in suffering and sacrifice
and other people going through

what we're going through.
You've blamed neighbors, cursed
family, you haven't always

changed the channel fast enough,
so when your son asks
what if all the superhero universes

were connected, you play dumb.
Like Marvel and DC, you ask.
Or the Spider-Man cartoon and movies

and comics? No, all of them, he says.
Even the PJ Masks.
Wouldn't Catboy and Flash

be friends, he asks. But isn't that
our world, connecting them?
It's true, I say, it's all connected:

the heroes always get along,
the bad guys just make mistakes.
We have to make room in our hearts

for everyone, I tell him.
I've learned to give all the right answers,
and he's learned to pretend I have them.

YOU CAN'T MAKE FRIENDS WITH A BUTTERFLY

Makes you hate the world when
beauty turns its back—stained

glass wings pirouette on lavender
lantana, heliotrope, nothing.

Makes you wish for winter. I have
used all my patience, humor, charm, put

myself second—tried

to be friends with a butterfly, following
around the yard, alleys, down

streets into others' yards. All ended
for us by the mailbox. No farewell.

Just a breeze, a kid passing
on a bike.

PLAN B/LANK BLOOM

after Sylvia Plath's "Morning Song"

Cow-heavy and floral
monthly pain the process

of slough-off interior stamp
one petal at a time *she loves me*

she loves me she loves me she is me
she is me she is shucked dandelion

strewn seeds as a plaything
blow hard and make a wish

make a new body beginning
out of tuft and tail

a loosed pattern
stitches all slipknot out

and out shrinking drip
no—let the mammal pasture

and the flowers freeze
in the seed see crocuses

on a February morning
tuck their purple heads back in

to the frost-damp earth say
not your time

say *not yet* and be
the better for it.

INSTEAD OF GHOSTS,

with a line by C.D. Wright

out here, the road signs speak
bitter directives. Loss makes its presence
following forward, but I know who
I am. In any moment, there is an absence,
trees thick and quiet to what else
there is, and you repeat the question.

I'd forgotten the depth of particles colliding,
the sound of pressure collapsing distance,
echoing out across the river.

I'd forgotten your hands in dusk moving
before you. A second, I've learned, is a killing thing.
The sound of your voice traveling ahead.
Far, farther.

"A second is a killing thing" is a line borrowed from C.D. Wright's "Clockmaker with Bad Eyes"

VOICEMAIL FROM A TRUCKER

Paul, the air was dark and redolent above Orange Avenue; there the fire flicker of a blazing refinery met the diesel and long-haul smell, hush of a mechanism for cooling air, distant engine sound, and near; and a man in his first floor apartment. For just a second, I was him, standing over the kitchen sink, faucet gushing, staring down. Sure, Paul, nothing like last year or the ones before it; of course by now the heat is complicit, and just off the exit, Beach City Auto Shop and Beach City Donuts. But last night, in the midst of that celestial event, the bodies, two bodies, caught up in one another's heft, left a third to reflect the damage: the moon dark lipped, cherrying above Los Angeles. I can't say I find it pretty here, unless it's night. 16 hours from sleep; the city refined to light and cut by the cherry-eyed taillights glowing slow along the slaked freeway. Imagine that. Miles worth of freight are stacked tall at the water where the boats come in to find relief. Think of me, alright? When you touch what met a flatbed first. At times it is speech I can't stand, and Paul, these voices over the fading radio; at times it is the sun, the cab's upholstery warm from it, and the stale smell of cigarettes brings back my mother, smoking by the sink in the kitchen, a length of ash, yellow curtains and the slow clemency of her face when, like me right now, she watched it all through a broad and open window.

AT MINER LAKE, AGAIN

Someone plowed under the tangle of raspberry vines where you knelt and offered me a diamond ring. Someone painted the emerald house beige and added a proper fence. I'd restore our little garden—zucchini and cukes, marigolds and daisies—shaded by the garage. And the rope hammock, languid between the oaks by the lake. But the cottonwoods and maples, though taller, still sway in this late September breeze, which is still a little warm, and smells of peaches.

ASKING AND ASKING

If you squint, if you follow the path of the sparrow that lands on the spiky weeds in the field, you might find me, under the same paper sky. The oaks have just started to turn. In their canopy, they hold the call of an owl, which sounds like my child, asking and asking. I take a breath and try to rest. The sky is white as sleep and just as vast.

TEMPORARY CHARM

Along Lake Michigan's shore, I look for a flat white stone to fit my palm. You walk a little ahead with the dog. Each time I find a better stone—smoother, more perfectly oval—I trade. To reach the lake, we hiked a trail strewn with fallen beeches whose bark is gray as clouds. A yellow warbler and a vireo sing. We walked for an hour. As the waves recede, more stones emerge. They are one shade of white underwater. Another shade when I lift them into the air.

LIFE WITH STONES

O

I am a tourist here
following the path
to Pocket Beach

once before years ago
my son and I descended
from the needle in space—
that bulbous loft in air
full of smiles in profile
city and ocean showing
themselves to the two
of us in rare sun

today below a lowering sky
I'm alone unmoored
by that time-washed memory
where did I put those pixels

O O

I say to myself, One stone for each hand.

My hand picks up three
four five twelve stones
like apostles

each unlike the others
round lined pudding'd
pocked storm-dark dull

my hand gathers them to me I want
to be discriminating, to choose
but they call, each voice its own

○○○

A man in Seattle is out late walking his stone
dark twine wrapped around a gray granite square
the size of a heart two hands thick I want
to tell him you are a character in my dream
but we are both awake and I feel the sound
of the rock clonk and thump against the cement
with each swing of his arm swing of our legs I stay
behind my life measured by the drum
as he strays from edge to edge of the walkway
the pull of the rock on his finger twine tight tugging

○○○○

At the airport security wants
to see those solid shapes
the dense dozen holed up
in a corner of my carry-on

The woman unzips my bag
finds the nest of stones
looks at them then at me
(she's practiced that expression)
waves me away

○○○○○

Home again
I unload them
one by one
remembering
my aloneness and
the navy blue harbor

its flurry of ferries
the shush of the tide
slipping through rocks
the stripped hulls
of tree trunks washed
ashore wet red weathered
wood larded with stones
rotating populations
of earth's origins
broken smoothed heavy

LONG GREEN ROWBOAT

My father tries to mend
the boat again. Planks
look sound but there's
more water to bail out.
With an oilcan pinned
to a stick of wood, he skims
the bottom, can't keep up
with seep. Some kinds of love
won't give up. He aims to save
this boat, built steady
for his mother, who couldn't
swim but absolutely had to
fish the lake. She swept
the oars in low arcs, passed
lichened islands, coves, a cliff
that felt both distant and
close. And where depth spoke
she'd anchor there, and cast.

Despite the caulking
and the paint, my father's
care and hope, leaks persist.
Some transformations
won't stop, until alone
I drag the boat high up above
shore, fill it to the oarlocks
with good loam, with summer
flowers nodding, bow to stern.

*WOMEN'S VOICES FROM KURDISTAN:
A SELECTION OF KURDISH POETRY*

EDITED BY FARANGIS GHADERI, CLÉMENCE SCALBERT
YÜCEL & YASER HASSAN ALI
(Transnational Press London, 2021)

REVIEW BY STEVEN BARFIELD & ALAN ALI SAEED



This slim, elegantly presented bilingual volume of Kurdish poetry translated into English and created by the Exeter Kurdish Translation Initiative is likely to appeal to anyone interested in women's lived experiences and how they have been woven into the memorable lines and resonant images of poetry. It is worth noting in advance that it also includes two male Kurdish poets, who wrote positively about Kurdish women's experience and served as important proponents of feminist values: Hêmin (1921–1986) and Fayege Bêkes (1905–1948). If Kurdish women's lived experience is often distinguished by a sense of oppression, then it is also one that engenders female solidarity and fortitude. This is perhaps summed up in

one of the final poems in the volume, "The Secret," which moves deftly between the metaphorical and the literal.

Gulîzer (1979–), a Turkish Kurd, uses a deliberately non-patriarchal pseudonym and has published several collections with Avesta in Istanbul. She remarks in her lyric "The Secret" ("Raz"):

*I entrust each of my broken parts
To a woman close to me
I know
Women always have a chest
For the safekeeping of these parts cherished and broken.*

The book is innovative, covering a wide selection of diverse Kurdish poetry from the 19th to the 20th centuries that has been translated for the first time. Usually, the poems were written originally in one of the Kurdish dialects (the book covers work in Gorani, Sorani, and Kurmanji), as well as Arabic. There are nine poets represented in the volume. It makes no claim to be representative in the broader corpus of Kurdish poetry as its focus is only on the work of women or those male poets who advocated for women's rights and value. It is pioneering in highlighting women's poetry, rather

than the more familiar work of Kurdish male poets.

For those interested in assessing this marginalization, Ghaderi and Scalbert Yücel's useful introduction offers notes to various PhD dissertations and critical essays on the subject of Kurdish women's poetry for the English reader. The volume demonstrates not only the poets' attention to issues such as war, conflict, and oppression (an unavoidable aspect of the Kurdish experience), but also a focus on gender discrimination, as well as themes drawn from everyday aspects of female experience, such as family, intimacy, fantasy, and romantic love, which are arguably less predominant amongst the concerns of Kurdish poetry written by men.

Kurdish is a minority language. It has only relatively recently become recognized as an official state language in Iraq. Little has been translated into

English and, in addition, literary translation is hindered because its native speakers fear they lack fluency in the target language of English. Ghaderi and Scalbert Yücel organized workshops around a co-translation model in which Kurdish native speakers of different dialects worked with a translation editor or a co-translator to polish the English versions of the poems produced. This is a productive model for the translation of literary texts from minor languages into major ones and where the number of native bilingual speakers is restricted.

The collection is a broad selection of Kurdish female voices that presents poems of real quality and distinction. We suspect readers will find themselves wishing for more poems from the poets anthologized here. Many featured poems excel in their lyrical depiction of personal experience while also speaking to general aspects of human experience. For example, Mestûre Erdelan (1805–1848), who wrote in Gorani, is represented by a beautiful and moving elegy for her husband, Khosrow Khan. The elegy's final lines, "How I wish the throngs of blossoms would be destroyed / and poppies would yellow with aching hearts," remind us how grief often involves unhappiness and anger that the world goes on despite the loved one's death. The poem's setting in spring, a time of yearly renewal, seems especially cruel to her, because her late husband loved this time of year.

The book is a fine
sampler of Kurdish
women's voices, that
in the end will leave
you wishing there
were more...

Hêmin (1921–1986), a celebrated Iranian Kurdish poet, is represented by “Memory of Shirin,” which manages to start as a seeming love poem to a Kurdish woman but becomes a bold, anthemic argument for female empowerment and education:

*Even if we have thousands of clear-watered rivers like Zê, Gader and
Lawên, life's springs will be muddy if women are not free.*

*Slavery is outdated, dear Kurdish girl!
Rise, awaken—it is not the time to sleep!*

*Break the door, rip the veil, run to school.
The remedy for the Kurdish malady is education, education.*

Fayeq Bêkes (1905–1948) was from Iraqi Kurdistan, near Sulaymaniyah. In the poem “Nasrin,” the speaker addresses a woman he empathizes with because her subordinate position fills him with a burning sense of injustice because the Kurdish project of inclusive nation-building cannot simply ignore and leave women behind. The speaker warns Nasrin that she is “chained, your life is oppression-filled” and implores her to “throw away the veil, there’s no shame in that.” He views the Islamic veil as an emblem of her oppression by patriarchy.

Jîla Huseynî (1964–1996) from Iran wrote in both Persian/Farsi and Kurdish and is represented by both a dream poem about a man she loves, or could love, “When I Dream About You” and “Question,” a poem about what it means to be a woman across the generations:

*My mother's worn scarf
Does not leave my head alone.
It says: 'I am your grandmother's.'
It might have been her grandmother's too.*

Diya Ciwan (1953–present), was born in Turkey and moved to Syria in 1975, but she now resides in Iraq. “The Needle” is a humorous poem, seizing on an object associated with women’s work (by implication the so-called trivial nature of such domestic work in men’s eyes), which Ciwan turns by an extended argument into a powerful symbol of affirmation. The needle for her is empowering and more valuable than one of the famed Damascene swords traditionally beloved by male warriors:

*For as long as there is light in my eyes
I shall never leave her,
or swap her for the Sword of Damascus.*

Tîroj (1959–present), a pseudonym of the Iraqi Kurdish poet Hana Mohamed, has written in both Arabic and Kurdish. She is represented here by two passionate love lyrics that depict the speaker's state of mind and challenge the idea of the woman as being only a passive, decorous object of love for man. In "From the Glow of Imagination" the speaker remarks:

*I broke my pen
I tore up my pages
And set them on fire*

Trîfa Doskî (1974–present), also from Iraq, writes in Bahdinani Kurdish and offers daring and often passionate lyrics, several of which are represented here. However, she also channels love poems into elegiac depictions of the grief and survivor guilt that inhabit Kurdish culture after the Anfal and the calamity of the wars against Saddam Hussein's regime. In "Widow's Hopes," a woman laments her dead lover:

*The homeland has become a mass grave,
and I cannot put down by my foot anywhere, I fear I'll step
on your head; oh, you who once slept in my arms.
So I panic.*

Viyan M. Tahir (1983–present) from Duhok Iraq, is probably the most contemporary of the Kurdish poets represented here, as her first volume was only published recently in 2020. Her two poems are visceral explorations of the conditions of love from the woman's point of view and the difficulties and passion of amorous relationships. The female speaker is caught in the tumult between the desire for amorous surrender and the preservation of her identity. In "Ego," she remarks to her lover:

*Every second of my life
Is clogged with your colour.
I try so hard to empty myself of you,
I want so much to rob you of myself,
So you get drunk on my cupful of love.*

The book is a fine sampler of Kurdish women's voices, that in the end will leave you wishing there were more from each of these poets. As readers we can only hope this anthology will inspire a publisher to commission a significantly lengthier volume, allowing more of the work of these and other Kurdish poets to be read by English readers in translation.

- Humberto Ak'abal, *If Today Were Tomorrow*, Milkweed Editions, 2024
- Rose Mary Boehm, *Life Stuff*, Kelsay Books, 2023
- Gaylord Brewer, *Before the Storm Takes It Away* (nonfiction), Red Hen Press, 2024
- Rob Carney, *The Book of Drought*, The University Press of SHSU, 2024
- Justin Evans, *Cenotaph*, Kelsay Books, 2024
- Jeff Ewing, *Wind Apples*, Terrapin Books, 2021
- Kate Gale, *Under a Neon Sun* (novel), Three Rooms Press, 2024
- Sally Keith, *Two of Everything*, Milkweed Editions, 2024
- Casey Knott, *This Season, The Next* (memoir), Cornerstone Press, 2024
- Steve Langan, *Bedtime Stories*, Littoral Books, 2024
- Kevin McLellan, *Sky. Pond. Mouth.*, Yas Press, 2024
- Lauren Russell, *A Window That Can Neither Open Nor Close*, Milkweed Editions, 2024
- Tomaž Šalamun, *Kiss the Eyes of Peace*, Milkweed Editions, 2024
- Alison Thumel, *Architect*, University of Arkansas Press, 2024
- Elinora Westfall, *Life in the Dressing Room of the Theatre*, Vine Leaves Press, 2024
- Ava Nathaniel Winter, *Transgenesis*, Milkweed Editions, 2024

If you are interested in reviewing a poetry book for *Sugar House Review*, email our review editor, Michael McLane, at reviews@sugarhoureview.com.

SUGAR SUITES



Sugar Suites houses work that explores our diverse and rapidly changing mediascape, where images, sounds, and interactive elements complicate and illuminate more traditional modes of poetic expression.



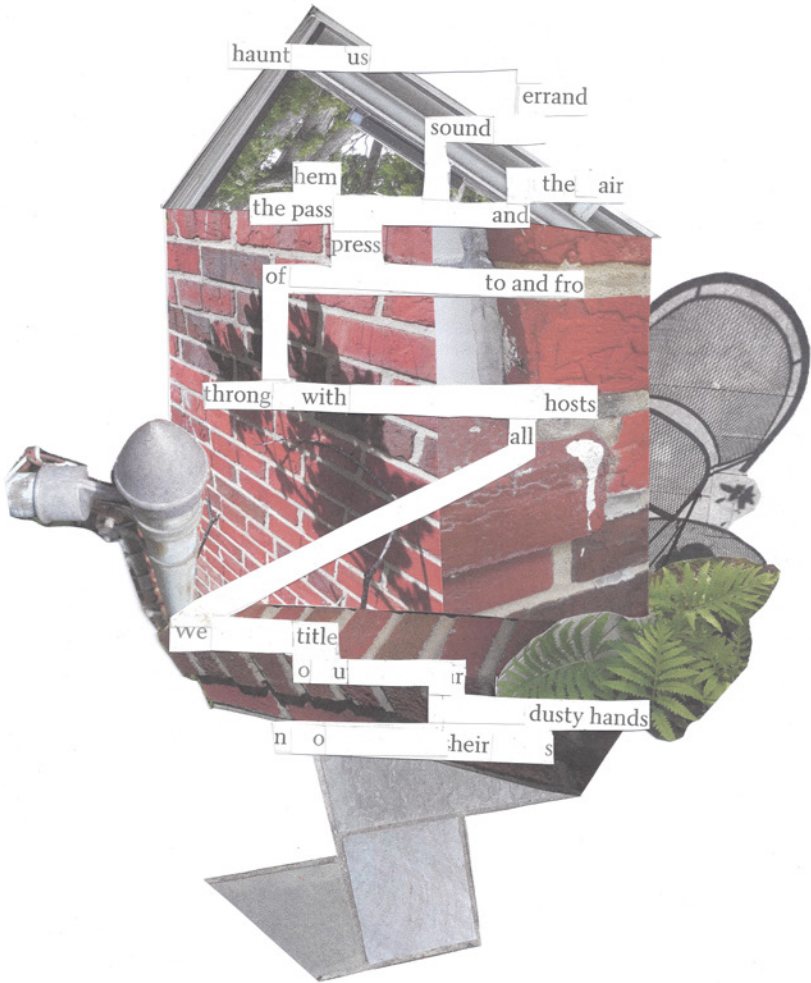
Scan any of the QR codes with a mobile device to be taken to Sugar Suites online, where you can find the full versions of the following pieces and more.

The code on the left will take you to the first five sets, or go to SugarHouseReview.com/sugarsuites.

visual poems



House on Nacotchtank and Piscataway Land



video poem

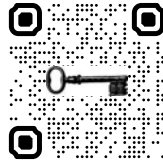


WHAT CAN A BODY BE, OR,
GREAT SALT (LAKE) DREAMING



ARTIST STATEMENT EXCERPT: As a Utahn raised along the shores of the saline body of Great Salt Lake, I have been held by her throughout my life. It was a memory of her smell and muck and shimmer that carried me through personal identity crises in my early 20s, so when I learned of her suffering years ago, I was struck with grief. I dedicated a large part of myself to her and entered into an intentional apprenticeship with her ways. This piece speaks with multiple styles of being—from bird to human to lake—and asks the sentient lake embodied questions like, “What is it like to be an ancient, rolling body? What do the lake’s dreams feel like when threaded through human bodies?” It gently listens for the muscled and poetic songs that rise up.

visual poem



MISTRANSLATION

1.



2.



ALEX AVERBUCH, a Ukrainian poet, translator, and scholar, is the author of three books of poetry and an array of literary translations among Hebrew, Ukrainian, English, and Russian. His poetry has been published in numerous journals and anthologies. His English-language publications appear in, or are forthcoming from, *The Manhattan Review* (Pushcart nominated), *Copper Nickel*, *Plume*, *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Words Without Borders*, and *Common Knowledge*. His latest book, *Zhydivs'kyi korol'* (*The Jewish King*; English transl., Lost Horse Press, 2024), was a finalist for the Shevchenko National Prize, Ukraine's highest cultural award.

About Averbuch's translators: OKSANA MAKSYMCHUK AND MAX ROSOCHINSKY are poets, scholars, and translators. Their translations were featured in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, *Words Without Borders*, *Poetry International*, *Best European Fiction*, and other venues. Winners of the 2014 Joseph Brodsky-Stephen Spender translation competition, they coedited *Words for War: New Poems from Ukraine* and co-translated *Apricots of Donbas*, a collection of selected poems by Lyuba Yakimchuk, and *The Voices of Babyn Yar* by Marianna Kiyanovska. Their work has been supported by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, Ukrainian Book Institute, Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, Peterson Literary Fund, Fulbright Scholar Program, National Endowment for the Humanities, and National Endowment for the Arts.

STEVEN BARFIELD was a British academic for most of his career, teaching principally at the University of Westminster, London. More recently he has been an educational consultant, and has taught, mentored, and advised throughout the Middle East. Now largely retired from teaching, he remains a researcher and is a visiting research fellow at London South Bank University.

CYNTHIA BARGAR is the author of *Sleeping in the Dead Girl's Room* (Lily Poetry Review Books), a Massachusetts Book Awards 2023 Honors Poetry Book. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Ocean State Review*, *SWWIM Every Day*, *Driftwood Press*, *On the Seawall*, *Rogue Agent*, *Book of Matches*, and *Our Provincetown: Intimate Portraits*, a book of images and text by Barbara E. Cohen (Provincetown Arts Press, 2021) and the upcoming *Last Milkweed Anthology* (Tupelo Press, 2025). Cynthia is associate poetry editor at *Pangyrus LitMag*. CynthiaBargar.com.

A graduate of the creative writing program at Boston University, DEBORAH J. BENNETT'S poems and translations have appeared in *Salamander*, 236, *Tupelo Press*, *Connotations Press Online*, *FUSION*, and elsewhere. Her prose has appeared in *Only a Game*, *Cognoscenti*, *Edify*, and elsewhere. She recently attended Bread Loaf's Translators' Conference and the Colrain Poetry Manuscript Conference. She teaches languages at Berklee College of Music, where she is inspired by fellow artists.

ANN-MARIE BLANCHARD teaches poetry and philosophy at the University of Notre Dame on the west coast of Australia, having taught writing for a decade at universities in the US. Her work has appeared in *The Missouri Review*, *A Public Space*, *Adroit Journal*, *Palette Poetry*, *Meanjin Quarterly*, *Westerly*, *Cordite Poetry Review*, and elsewhere. In 2022, she won The Missouri Review Editors' Prize in Fiction.

ERIK BROCKBANK is a poet and psychology researcher living in the San Francisco Bay Area.

SUSANNA BROUGHAM'S poetry has been published in *Massachusetts Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, and other journals. Her work has appeared on *Poetry Daily* and *American Life in Poetry*. For her day job, she works as an editor for publishers and art museums.

MARY BUCHINGER is the author of six collections of poetry, including *Navigating the Reach* (Salmon Poetry, 2023), *Virology* (Lily Poetry Review Books, 2022), */ klaʊdz /* (Lily Poetry Review Books, 2021), *e i n f ũ h l u n g / i n f e e l i n g* (Main Street Rag, 2018), and *Aerialist* (Gold Wake, 2015). Her work has appeared in *AGNI*, *Boston Globe*, *DIAGRAM*, *Gargoyle*, *PANK*, *phoebe*, *Plume*, *Salamander*, *Salt Hill*, *Seneca Review*, and elsewhere. She serves on the board of the New England Poetry Club and is professor of English and communication studies at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences in Boston. MaryBuchinger.com

SAMUEL BURT is a poet and artist from Grinnell, IA. A 2022 winner of the AWP's Intro Journals Project, Sam's work has been featured in *Salt Hill*, *Colorado Review*, *Ghost City Review*, and *The Journal*. Sam is a recent graduate of Bowling Green State University's poetry MFA and serves as a reader for *Palette Poetry*.

CHRISTINE BYRNE is currently an MFA candidate in poetry at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she won the John Logan Poetry Prize. Her most recent work is forthcoming in *New England Review*, *The Journal*, and elsewhere.

TERESA CADER'S fourth poetry collection, *AT RISK*, was selected by Mark Doty for the 2023 Richard Snyder Memorial Book Prize and will be published by Ashland Poetry Press in October, 2024. Her other books include: *History of Hurricanes* (Northwestern, 2009); *The Paper Wasp* (Northwestern, 1998); and *Guests* (1990), winner of the Charles B. Wheeler Prize Poetry Prize and the Norma Farber First Book Award. She's received multiple honors and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Bunting Institute at Radcliffe, MacDowell, and Bread Loaf. Her poems appear in *The Atlantic*, *Slate*, *Plume*, *Poetry*, *Harvard Review*, *On the Seawall*, *AGNI*, *Ploughshares*, *Harvard Magazine*, and other venues. Her work has been translated into Icelandic and Polish.

PATRICIA CASPERS is an award-winning writer, founding EIC of *West Trestle Review*, and the author of three full-length poetry collections: *The Most Kissed Woman in the World* (Kelsay Books, 2024), *Some Flawed Magic* (Kelsay Books, 2021), and *In the Belly of the Albatross* (Glass Lyre Press, 2015). Her work has appeared widely in journals, such as *Ploughshares* and *Malahat Review*. She is a Unitarian Universalist.

BENNY CAUTHEN is a poet and songwriter who stays up late watching movies on his phone. His work has been published in *3Elements*, *Book of Matches*, *Coastlines*, and other places he has since forgotten. He is an aspiring all-American.

MICHAEL CHANG (they/them) is the author of *Synthetic Jungle* (Northwestern University Press, 2023), *Toy Soldiers* (Action, Spectacle, 2024) and *Things a Bright Boy Can Do* (Coach House Books, 2025). They edit poetry at *Fence*.

KATHARINE COLES' ninth collection of poems, *Ghost Apples*, was published by Red Hen Press in June 2023, and her eighth, *(Solve for) X*, came out from Turtle Point Press in 2022. Her prose books include *The Stranger I Become: On Walking, Looking, and Writing* (essays, Turtle Point Press), *Look Both Ways* (memoir, Turtle Point Press), and two novels. She received awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation's Antarctic Artists and Writers Program (to write the collection of poems *The Earth Is Not Flat*), and the Guggenheim Foundation.

LILA CUTTER is an MFA candidate at Oregon State University with a background in equitable arts education work. Her poetry often refracts perceptions of femininity filtered through place and has appeared in *The Racket Journal*, *Landfill Journal*, and *Oatmeal Magazine*, among others.

J. P. DANCING BEAR is editor of *Verse Daily*. He is the author of sixteen collections of poetry, most recently, *Of Oracles and Monsters* (Glass Lyre Press, 2020), and *Fish Singing Foxes* (Salmon Poetry, 2019). His work has appeared in hundreds of venues.

JIM DANIELS' latest books include *The Human Engine at Dawn* (Wolfson Press); *Gun/Shy* (Wayne State University Press); and *The Luck of the Fall* (Michigan State University Press), a collection of short stories. A native of Detroit, he lives in an old church on the south side of Pittsburgh and teaches in the Alma College low-residency MFA program.

KURT DAVID is a public school teacher and unionist. His creative work has appeared in *Foglifter*, *Gulf Coast*, *Split Lip*, and elsewhere. He lives with his boyfriend in Lenapehoking/Philadelphia.

KAREN EARLE, a private practice psychotherapist, is a New Directions Program/Writing with a Psychoanalytic Edge faculty member. After earning an MFA in

poetry from University of Massachusetts Amherst, she was adjunct faculty at Widener University and directed the writing lab at Bryn Mawr Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research. Her poetry has appeared in various journals, including *The G W Review*, *Chaffin Journal*, *Chaminade*, *The Denver Quarterly Literary Review*, and *Hudson Valley Echoes*. She was a semifinalist in the Slapering Hol Chapbook Contest and was awarded a Martha's Vineyard Institute for Creative Writing fellowship.

JOSHUA GOTTLIEB-MILLER received his PhD and MFA in poetry from the University of Houston, where he also served as poetry editor and digital nonfiction editor for *Gulf Coast*. Joshua has published poetry, essays, scholarship, hybrid, and multimedia writing; most recently he was a scholar at the inaugural Yetzirah poetry conference. His newer poetry appears in *Brooklyn Rail*, *miCRo*, *Poet Lore*, and elsewhere. His debut collection, *The Art of Bagging*, won Conduit's Marystina Santiestevan First Book Prize, and his second book, *Dybbuk Americana*, is forthcoming from Wesleyan University Press. Joshua teaches at San Jacinto College and lives in Houston with his wife and son.

DEREK GRAF'S first poetry collection, *Green Burial*, won the 2021 Elixir Press Antivenom Poetry Award for a First or Second Book of Poetry. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Journal*, *Sixth Finch*, *Meridian*, and elsewhere. He currently serves as clinical assistant professor of English at Yeshiva University. He lives in New York City.

SETH HAGEN lives in Atlanta, GA, where he teaches English. He has works published or forthcoming in *DIAGRAM*, *Right Hand Pointing*, and *Anacapa Review*.

ROMANA IORGA is the author of *Temporary Skin* (Glass Lyre Press, 2024) and *a woman made entirely of air* (Dancing Girl Press, 2024). Her poems have appeared in various journals, including *New England Review*, *Lake Effect*, *The Nation*, as well as on her poetry blog at ClayAndBranches.com.

CYAN JAMES holds an MFA from the University of Michigan. Her work has been nominated for two Pushcart Prizes and published in *Gettysburg Review*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Arkansas Review*, *New Mexico Review*, *Harvard Review*, and *Salon*, among others. She also holds a PhD in public-health genetics and works in health policy. Currently she is revising a novel about the young women who survived the Green River Killer. She loves fiddles, falconry, long road trips, and old front porches.

DENISE JARROTT is the author of *NYMPH* (Vegetarian Alcoholic Press, 2018) and two chapbooks, *Herbarium* and *Nine Elegies*. Her work has appeared recently in *Overland*, *South Carolina Review*, and *Denver Quarterly*. She grew up in Iowa and is currently living in Melbourne, Australia.

STEPHEN KAMPA is the author of four poetry collections: *Cracks in the Invisible* (2011), *Bachelor Pad* (2014), *Articulate as Rain* (2018), and *World Too Loud to Hear* (2023). His work has appeared in *The Yale Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Hopkins Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Subtropics*, and *Smartish Pace*. He was also included in *The Best American Poetry 2018* and *Together in a Sudden Strangeness: America's Poets Respond to the Pandemic* (2020). During the spring of 2021, he was the writer in residence at the Amy Clampitt House. He teaches at Flagler College and is currently the poetry editor of *Able Muse*.

ABBIE KIEFER is a poet from New Hampshire. Her work is forthcoming or has appeared in *Boulevard*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Shenandoah*, and other places. She was a 2022 and 2023 semifinalist for the 92Y Discovery Prize. Find her online at AbbieKieferPoet.com.

LYNN KILPATRICK'S poems have appeared in *Western Humanities Review*, *McSweeney's*, *Tin House*, and *Denver Quarterly*. Her collection of short stories, *In the House*, was published by FC2. Her fiction has appeared in *Ploughshares*, and essays in *Zone 3* and *Brevity*. She earned her PhD from the University of Utah and teaches at Salt Lake Community College.

CHRISTINE A. MACKENZIE (she/her) is a neurodivergent poet, licensed social worker, and psychotherapist living in Texas.

SANDRA MARCHETTI is the 2023 Winner of The Twin Bill Book Prize for Best Baseball Poetry Book of the Year. She is the author of three full-length collections of poetry, *DIORAMA* (Stephen F. Austin State University Press, forthcoming 2025), *Aisle 228* (SFA Press, 2023), and *Confluence* (Sundress Publications, 2015). Sandy is also the author of four chapbooks. Her poetry and essays appear widely in *Mid-American Review*, *Blackbird*, *Ecotone*, *Southwest Review*, *Subtropics*, and elsewhere. She is poetry editor emerita at *River Styx Magazine*. Sandy earned an MFA in creative writing from George Mason University and now serves as the assistant director of academic support at Harper College in Chicagoland.

MICHAEL MARK is the author of *Visiting Her in Queens is More Enlightening than a Month in a Monastery in Tibet*, which won the Rattle Chapbook Prize. His poems appear or are forthcoming in *Copper Nickel*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Sixth Finch*, *The Southern Review*, *The Sun*, and *32 Poems*. MichaelJMark.com

HANNAH MARSHALL lives in Grand Rapids, MI, where she works at the public library. Marshall's poems have been published in *The Best American Poetry*, *New Ohio Review*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, *Four Way Review*, *Poetry Daily*, and elsewhere. Her manuscript "The Shape Good Can Take" was a finalist for the 2021 St. Lawrence Book Award and the 2023 Converse Alumni Book Prize. She received

her MFA in creative writing from Converse University.

BETSY MITCHELL MARTINEZ received an MFA from the University of Michigan. Her poems have appeared in *The Northwest Review* and *Crab Orchard Review*.

KATHLEEN MCGOOKEY has published four books and four chapbooks of prose poems. Her book *Paper Sky* is forthcoming from Press 53 in October. Her work has appeared recently in journals including *Copper Nickel*, *Epoch*, *Field*, *Los Angeles Review*, *North American Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The Southern Review*. It has also been featured on *American Life in Poetry*, *Poetry Daily*, and *SWWIM Every Day*.

DION O'REILLY is the author of three poetry collections: *Sadness of the Apex Predator* (University of Wisconsin's Cornerstone Press, 2024), *Ghost Dogs* (Terrapin Books, 2020), and *Limerence*, a finalist for the John Pierce Chapbook Competition (forthcoming, Floating Bridge Press). Her work appears in *The Sun*, *Rattle*, *Cincinnati Review*, *The Slowdown*, *Narrative*, and elsewhere. She is a podcaster at The Hive Poetry Collective, leads poetry workshops, and reads for *Catamaran Literary Quarterly*. She splits her time between the Santa Cruz Mountains and Bellingham, WA.

DAYNA PATTERSON is a photographer, textile artist, and irreverent bardophile. She's the author of *O Lady, Speak Again* (Signature Books, 2023) and *If Mother Braids a Waterfall* (Signature Books, 2020). She collaborated with Susan Alexander, Luther Allen, Jennifer Bullis, and Bruce Beasley to produce *A Spiritual Thread* (Other Mind Press, 2024). Her creative work has appeared in *EcoTheo*, *Kenyon Review*, and *Poetry*. She's the founding editor (now emerita) of *Psalter & Lyre* and a coeditor of *Dove Song: Heavenly Mother in Mormon Poetry*. She lives with her husband and two kids in a little patch of forest in the Pacific Northwest. DaynaPatterson.com

GENEVIEVE PAYNE is a poet who grew up in Maine. She received an MFA in creative writing from Syracuse University, and her recent work can be found in *Colorado Review*, *Nashville Review*, *The Cortland Review*, and *The Adroit Journal*. She lives and teaches writing in the Hudson Valley.

CHRISTY PRAHL is the author of the collection *We Are Reckless* (Cornerstone Press, 2023). A Best of the Net and two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, her past and future publications include *The Penn Review*, *Salt Hill Journal*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, and others. She has held residencies at both Ragdale and the Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow and is the founder of the PenRF reading series. She splits her time between Chicago and rural Michigan and appreciates subways and silos in equal measure. More of her work can be found at ChristyPrahL.wixsite.com/christy-prahl.

RICHARD ROBBINS was raised in California and Montana, taught for many years in Minnesota, and recently moved back west to Oregon. His seventh book,

The Oratory of All Souls, was published by Lynx House Press in February 2023. His website is RichardRobbinsPoems.com.

ALAN ALI SAEED is associate professor of English literature at Sulaimani University, Iraq. He has a BA from Sulaimani University (2004), an MA (London University, 2009), a PhD on Bergson and British modernist stream of consciousness women's writing (Brunel University, 2016), and a PGCHE (Falmouth, 2021) in university teaching. See his publications here: [Sites.google.com/a/univsul.edu.iq/alan-ali-saeed/publications](https://sites.google.com/a/univsul.edu.iq/alan-ali-saeed/publications).

NATALIE SHAPERO is the author, most recently, of the poetry collection *Popular Longing*. She lives in Los Angeles.

BRENDA SIECZKOWSKI is an assistant professor of English at Salt Lake Community College. Born and raised in Omaha, NE, she's been reading and writing poetry since third grade. Brenda has a BA in English from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, an MFA in poetry from the University of Florida, and is finishing her PhD in creative writing and literature from the University of Utah. Her poems and essays have appeared in *The Colorado Review*, *The New England Review*, *Calyx*, *Poetry Daily*, *Verses Daily*, *DIAGRAM*, *The Seneca Review*, *Gulf Coast*, and *Subtropics*, among others. She is the author of two chapbooks, *Wonder Girl in Monster Land* and *Fallout & Flotation Devices*. *Like Oysters Observing the Sun*, her full-length poetry collection, was published by Black Lawrence Press.

Originally from Maine, NELL SMITH is a writer and field biologist in Arizona. Her writing has appeared in *Electric Literature*, *Flyway*, *Khôra*, *Southeast Review*, *Pidgeon-holes*, and elsewhere. She holds an MFA in creative writing and environment and natural resources from the University of Wyoming. NellSmithWriter.com

JOSHUA ST. CLAIRE is an accountant from rural Pennsylvania who works as a financial executive for a large nonprofit. His poetry has been published or is forthcoming in *Lana Turner*, *Modern Haiku*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Delmarva Review*, and *Ligeia Magazine*, among others. He is a Pushcart-Prize, Rhysling-Award, and Best-of-the-Net nominee. His work has appeared in the *Dwarf Stars Anthology* and is the winner of the Gerald Brady Memorial Senryu Award.

JOHN VURRO'S debut novel *Play, Rewind* is forthcoming from Tortoise Books (spring, 2025). It was shortlisted for the Masters Review Novel Excerpt Contest, judged by Charmaine Craig and *Craft's* First Chapter Contest, judged by Masie Cochrun. His story, "Turnkey," was chosen for *Carve's* One to Watch feature (summer, 2015). His story, "Carmine's War," won *Harpur Palate's* 2013 John Gardner Award. His work has been published in *The Sun*, *The Literary Review*, *Eclipse*, *Glint*, *Action*, *Spectacle*, and elsewhere. Find him on Instagram @johnvurrowriter.

LINDSEY WEBB is the author of *Plat* (Archway Editions, 2024), a finalist for the National Poetry Series, and the chapbooks *House* (Ghost Proposal, 2020) and *Perfumer's Organ* (above/ground press, 2023). Her writing has appeared in *Chicago Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *jubilat*, and *Lana Turner*, among others. She lives in Salt Lake City, where she is a graduate research fellow in the Tanner Humanities Center and PhD candidate in literature and creative writing at the University of Utah. She edits Thirdhand Books.

SUNNI BROWN WILKINSON is a poet and essayist. She is the author of the poetry collections *Rodeo* (Donald Justice Poetry Prize, Autumn House Press, 2025) and *The Marriage of the Moon and the Field* (Black Lawrence Press, 2019), and the chapbook *The Ache & The Wing* (Sundress Chapbook Prize, 2021). Her poetry has been awarded *New Ohio Review's* NORward Poetry Prize, the Joy Harjo Prize, and the Sherwin Howard Award. She holds an MFA from Eastern Washington University, teaches at Weber State University, and lives in northern Utah with her husband and three sons.

SARAH ANN WOODBURY lives nestled against the Bear River Mountains, where she writes; studies socio-ecology; and performs for her dog, local trees and canyons, and other willing audiences. Her recent work can be found in *The American Journal of Poetry* and *CALYX*.

BURGI ZENHAEUSERN is the author of the chapbook *Behind Normalcy* (CityLit Press, 2020), winner of the Harriss Poetry Prize. She coedited the translations of the anthology *Knocking on the Door of the White House* (zozobra publishing, 2017). Her work appears in *Little Patuxent Review*, *Moist Poetry Journal*, and as broadside (Ashland Poetry Press). She lives in Maryland. <https://linktr.ee/burgitree>

HOLLI ZOLLINGER is a self-taught artist who made a career of her talents: drawing, painting, and surface design. She is continually inspired by her surroundings living in the desert town of Moab, UT, and motivated by the art of creativity and incorporates color, texture, and pattern from the world around her. HolliZollinger.com

A native of Utah, SHARI ZOLLINGER divides her time between her work as a professional astrologer and independent bookseller. She has been known to write a poetic verse or two with published work in *Sugar House Review* and *Redactions*. She recently published *Carrying Her Stone*, a collection of poems based on the work of Auguste Rodin.

SUGAR'S MISSION, VISION, VALUES



MISSION:

Sugar House Review promotes an eclectic range of poets through publishing and live events to build nationally connected literary communities and foster the literary arts in Utah.

VALUES:

Submitting work to *Sugar House Review* is an act of generosity: *Sugar House Review* is honored that poets submit their work to be considered for publication. Each submission sent to us is read by at least two readers, generally more. We are invested in our contributors and we take their work seriously.

Poetry and the literary arts are sacred vehicles through which ideas become conversations. We believe that the transaction between writer and audience, reader and listener, can teach life-affirming habits of patience, empathy, self-awareness, and critical thinking.

Sugar House Review is committed to collaborating to achieve its mission and to help like-minded organizations and partners to achieve theirs. In the past, we have worked with churches, bookstores, art galleries, advocacy groups, grant makers, coffee shops, schools, universities, individual artists, and other literary projects.

We believe that a remarkable variety of exciting things is happening in contemporary poetry. We work to assure this excitement continues by publishing and promoting as wide a range of poets, voices, and styles as possible.

We celebrate the diversity of gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, race, religion, region, and any other category that informs creativity and identity. Poetry is an assertion of voice that is strongest when enacted and celebrated by a “teeming nation of nations” (as Walt Whitman described).

We are committed to treating our poets with kindness, professionalism, and just a bit of whimsy to keep things fresh. Our lives center around poetry because we choose that they should. Our intent is that anyone who publishes with us, reads for us, or works with us feels valued throughout the process and is pleased with the results of our relationship.

HISTORY:

Sugar House Review has published 27 serialized issues since 2009. We have released one spring/summer and one fall/winter issue each year, with double-length anniversary issues in 2014 and 2019. Our editors and readers evaluate submissions during allotted periods, choosing pieces that best represent our mission of publishing an eclectic range of voices. In addition to publishing national and international poets, we place emphasis on showcasing local and regional poets to contribute to our region’s poetry community and to lower barriers for live events.

Work first published in *Sugar House Review* has appeared in *Verse Daily*, *Poetry Daily*, and four Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses anthologies.

*Donate at SugarHouseReview.com or mail a check to
P.O. Box 13, Cedar City, UT 84721.*

*Sugar House Review is a 501(c)(3) organization—
all donations are tax deductible.*



STAFF

Natalie Padilla Young, Editor in
Chief & Art Director

Nano Taggart, Editor

Katherine Indermaur, Editor

Ben Gunsberg, Multi-medium
Editor

Michael McLane, Contributing
Review Editor

Shari Zollinger, Contributing
Astrological Editor

Clarissa Adkins, Reader

Neil Flatman, Reader

Samantha Samakande, Reader

Cassidy Wallace, Reader &
Editorial Assistant

John Kippen, Editor Emeritus

Jerry VanIeperen, Editor Emeritus

BOARD MEMBERS

Star Coulbrooke

Lauren Norton

Samantha Samakande

Nano Taggart

David Wicai

SPECIAL THANKS to Brock Dethier, who helps us proof each issue.

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW
MAIL ORDER FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

[] \$20 + \$7 s/h (US): 1-Year Subscription (2 issues)

[] \$35 + \$10 s/h (US): 2-Year Subscription (4 issues)

Start with: [] Current issue [] Next issue

BACK ISSUES:

[] \$5 + \$3.50 s/h [] 10-year Double Issue \$10 + \$3.50 s/h

Issue: _____

\$2 PDF ISSUES (compatible with most e-readers) available for download at SugarHouseReview.com.

Please make checks payable to Sugar House Review.

P.O. BOX 13, CEDAR CITY, UT 84721



GET YOUR SUGAR FIX



**Looking for excellent local
and regional art?
Look over here.**

Artisans

ART GALLERY

94 W Center Street • Cedar City, Utah 84720
435-586-4850 • artisansartgallery@gmail.com

Hours vary. Call or email for current days & times
Look for us on Facebook

"Mules" Photograph by S Yates

ANNOUNCING THE 2024 LIGHTSCATTER PRESS PRIZE

Submissions open July 15–Sept. 15

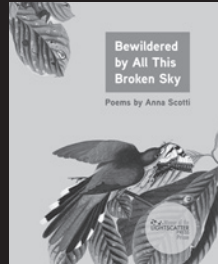
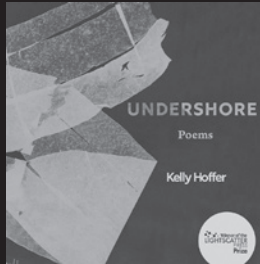


Judge: John Murillo



CONGRATULATIONS

to Derek J.G. Williams, winner of the 2023
Lightscatter Press Prize selected by Eduardo Corral
for *Reading Water*. Publication Spring 2025.



Available now:

EVENINGFUL by Jennifer Whalen

UNDERSHORE by Kelly Hoffer

BEWILDERED by ALL THIS BROKEN SKY by Anna Scotti

For more info or to purchase go to LightscatterPress.org.



READ. SUBSCRIBE. PASS SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW ALONG.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alex Averbuch
Steven Barfield
Cynthia Bargar
Deborah J. Bennett
Ann-Marie Blanchard
Erik Brockbank
Susanna Brougham
Mary Buchinger
Samuel Burt
Christine Byrne
Teresa Cader
Patricia Caspers
Benny Cauthen
Michael Chang
Katharine Coles
Lila Cutter
J. P. Dancing Bear
Jim Daniels

Kurt David
Karen Earle
Joshua Gottlieb-Miller
Derek Graf
Seth Hagen
Romana Iorga
Cyan James
Denise Jarrott
Stephen Kampa
Abbie Kiefer
Lynn Kilpatrick
Christine A. MacKenzie
Oksana Maksymchuk
Sandra Marchetti
Michael Mark
Hannah Marshall
Betsy Mitchell Martinez
Kathleen McGookey

Dion O'Reilly
Dayna Patterson
Genevieve Payne
Christy Prahl
Richard Robbins
Max Rosochinsky
Alan Ali Saeed
Natalie Shapero
Brenda Sieczkowski
Nell Smith
Joshua St. Claire
John Vurro
Lindsey Webb
Sunni Brown Wilkinson
Sarah Ann Woodbury
Burgi Zenhaeusern
Holli Zollinger
Shari Zollinger

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW



501(c)(3) non-profit



Support the project at
SugarHouseReview.com
or mail a check:
P.O. Box 13
Cedar City, UT 84721

\$12