

Fahmidan Journal
Issue 13: Falling into Autumn

•

Co Editors in Chief

A.R Salandy

R.K Kisswani

Senior Editor

Yasmine Dashti

Junior Editors

Areeba Bhajikhara

Farah Hasan

<i>Writer</i>	<i>Title(s)</i>	<i>Page(s)</i>
<i>Anuja Ghimire</i>	<i>arts poetica</i>	3
<i>T.A Jones</i>	<i>Care for the Caretaker</i>	4
	<i>Love Bomb</i>	5
<i>John Muro</i>	<i>Valse Triste</i>	6
<i>Elizabeth Stone</i>	<i>Three cups</i>	7
<i>Myriam Sabbaghi</i>	<i>Silence full of the Unsaid</i>	8
	<i>To the Flower of None (Written by Sohrab Sepehri, translated by Myriam Sabbaghi)</i>	9
<i>Elizabeth Bates</i>	<i>Obituary for Anonymous</i>	10-12
<i>Bex Hainsworth</i>	<i>Ichthyosaur Fossil at the Natural History Museum</i>	13
<i>Tuur Verheyde</i>	<i>Us</i>	14
<i>Linda M. Crate</i>	<i>let me fall into autumn</i>	15
<i>Lisa Molina</i>	<i>Autumnal Magic</i>	16
	<i>Scrambled</i>	17-18
<i>Dr Sara Louise Wheeler</i>	<i>After the Storm</i>	19
	<i>The Falling Sickness</i>	20
<i>A.J Huffman</i>	<i>Autumn's Snow</i>	21
<i>Susan Zegarsky</i>	<i>Nocturna</i>	22
<i>David Estringel</i>	<i>Fall</i>	23
<i>S.M Badawi</i>	<i>Aubade to Interlude</i>	24
	<i>عنق</i>	25
<i>Beth Mulcahy</i>	<i>An Ode to the Old Country</i>	26
<i>Kresha Richman Warnock</i>	<i>The Leaving</i>	27-28
<i>Marisca Pichette</i>	<i>the color of mourning</i>	29
<i>Diana Raab</i>	<i>Lexicon of Grief</i>	30-31
<i>Louise Mather</i>	<i>Glitch</i>	32
<i>Jane C. Elkin</i>	<i>Creepy Trees</i>	33
<i>Katie Proctor</i>	<i>CRUSH(ed)</i>	34
<i>Rob McKinnon</i>	<i>The Smell of Smoke</i>	35
<i>Stefanie Fair-King</i>	<i>Severed Heads</i>	36-37
<i>Rose Menyon Heflin</i>	<i>Autumn Nude: A Haiku Series</i>	38

arts poetica
Anuja Ghimire

a longing, prayer, my wish to tell you, I'm here
what language does my invented god understand
when I deep clean the top shelf of the fridge
a frozen cream stain dissolves and I want forgiveness
I've sundried the compartments, spread food on the counter
In the backyard, grass has dried the color of wildfire
I've forgotten how to put back the plastic receptacles again
because I was searching for a metaphor in a dried chili pepper
what am I supposed to have understood by now
tomatoes and milk will warm if I linger
but look how beautiful the clean white light
before the singing of the machine, the warning of the open door

Nepal-born Anuja Ghimire writes poetry, flash fiction, and creative nonfiction. She is the author of *Kathmandu* (Unsolicited Press, 2020) and *fable-weavers* (Ethel Zine, 2022), and is a Best of the Net and Pushcart nominee. Her work has found homes in print and online journals and anthologies in Nepal, the U.S., the U.K., Australia, India, and Bangladesh. She reads poetry for *Up the Staircase Quarterly* and enjoys teaching poetry to children in summer camps. She works as a senior publisher in an online learning company and lives near Dallas, Texas, with her husband and two children.

Care for the Caretaker
T.A Jones

“Take care of yourself”.
Words casually said when a
Friend departed frequently.
No deeper meaning was meant
But when I think about it, I
Never followed through.
My focus was focused on the
Very friends that told me
What to do as I cared for
Those that held my heart.
Smiles kept up appearances
Appearing in front of those I
Tried to save from mentally
Traumatic events that sent my
Friends into spirals, but there’s
Two victims created from
Simulated therapy sessions.
Care for others but if you
Forget to care for the
Victimized and tired caretaker,
There will be no one left to care.

Love Bomb
T.A Jones

Each explosive is corrosive
Burning away at my skin.
Extreme gestures.
Immeasurable efforts.
All for me to forgive you.
Just hope I cut the right wire
Before we're through.

T.A. Jones (he/him) is a Black poet/writer based in Atlanta, Georgia. He graduated from Western Carolina University with a bachelors in English and minor in Creative Writing. He currently works as a preschool teacher and occasio music journalist/podcaster for CentralSauce. He's finishing his first poetry compilation, Obsidian Sun.

Valse Triste
John Muro

- After Jean Sibelius

The way the trees, in early evening,
distill color from light,
the floating away of green
reveals a thinner skin
of speckled yellow-gold
trembling.

Waves, too, are sharpening
a setting sun, like whetstones,
turning light into thin
sheets of foil wedged between
the coming dusk and night.
All receding

except fabled stars glittering
like distant beacons
set in igneous rock; wind's
ruffled sheen
burnishes sky. World's slightly
drifting

while dwindling
wisps of citrus-bright
clouds are caught between
ascent and descent
in moon-gold
obsidian.

~

Twice nominated in 2021 for the Pushcart Prize and, most recently, for the Best of Net, John Muro is a resident of Connecticut and a lover of all things chocolate. His first volume of poems, *In the Lilac Hour*, was published in 2020 by Antrim House and it is available on Amazon. Since then, John's poems have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Acumen*, *Barnstorm*, *Euphony*, *Grey Sparrow*, *River Heron* and *Sky Island*. His second volume of poems, *Pastoral Suite*, was published in June of 2022 by Antrim House and it, too, is available on Amazon. Instagram: @johntmuro.

Three of Cups
Elizabeth Stone

I see the future in my mind's eye, Anja chakra active, observing; apophyllite in the night sky. Balasana against earth, autumnal breezes kissing cheeks. Challenges become resolved and waves of tranquility crash over; a loose cardigan in crisp winds.

A patchwork cat napping atop embroidered pillow cases, another purring at my side; aware. Balance is found once again; solace, healing, wholeness. A satisfaction of life as leaves drop and a season starts anew. Freedom is fresh on my tongue as I turn the page, a book I can't stop reading.

Fire rages in leaves, in the trees, in me; re-igniting my soul in colder weather. A moisture in the air accumulates as contentment rises; a shower of vetiver over once desolate lands.

Wisdom in oneself, learned throughout lifetimes.

Elizabeth Stone holds degrees in English, with a Creative Writing focus, as well as Communications & Digital Studies. Her work can be found on her Amazon Author link (<https://amazon.com/author/elizabethkathleenstone>) and in Issue 1 of the Tabula Rasa Review. She is professional writer currently residing in Cincinnati with her two cats.

Silence Full of the Unsaid

Written on the margins of Pessoa's essay, "On the Heteronyms"

Myriam Sabbaghi

We were far
We were drunk winds of the desert
Picking grapes of thought
Bells clinking from the other side of the mountain
Pomegranates strewn about the earth
You wrote a name on a stone
Your smile, my sunshine
Our movement the shame of the silent trees
And then I stopped, your hands spoke the secret
Of endless nights
But I knew your mind was somewhere else
Above the sky
Maybe I was a slave of memories past
Lost in your illusion of weeping clouds
Or maybe I was a bird of prey entangled in the trap of love?
Our eyes met again, and I gave you all that I longed to give
That forgotten branch, a moment of tea leaves
Silence full of the unsaid
We became wanted
And loosened the braid of impossibilities

To the Flower of None
Sohrab Sepehri
Translated by Myriam Sabbaghi

We were going, how tall the trees were, how black the gaze!

می رفتیم، و درختان چه بلند ، و تماشا چه سیاه

A road from us to the flower of none

راهی بود از ما تا گل هیچ

A death in the foothills, a cloud above the mountain, birds at the edge
of the cliff

مرگی در دامنه ها ، ابری سر کوه ، مرغان لب زیست

We were singing, “Without you I was a door to the outside, a glance to the shore, and a call
to the desert.”

می خواندیم: بی تو دری بودم به برون، و نگاهی به کران، و صدایی به کویر

We were going, the ground was scared of us, and time rained upon our heads

می رفتیم، خاک از ما می ترسید، و زمان بر سر ما می بارید

We laughed (and suddenly): the void stirred from its sleep, and secrets
revealed a cry

خندیدیم: ورطه پرید از خواب ، و نهان ها آوایی افشانند

We were silent, the desert in disquiet, and the horizon a filament of the gaze

ما خاموش ، و بیابان نگران، و افق یک رشته نگاه

We sat, your eyes full of the faraway, my hands full of loneliness, and the earth full
of slumber

بنشستیم، تو چشمت پر دور، من دستم پر تنهایی، و زمین ها پر خواب

We slept. As they say, “A hand picked flowers in a dream...”

خوابیدیم. می گویند: دستی در خوابی گل می چید....

Originally from Seattle, Myriam currently resides in Washington D.C. Myriam completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Washington, Seattle, and her graduate studies at the University of Chicago. You can find Myriam spending time with her family and friends, reading and writing poetry, traveling, and cooking. Follow her on Twitter @thewooldyer.

**Obituary for Anonymous
Elizabeth Bates**

Ira's knees nearly buckled under the push of a strong fall gust, ushering him through the revolving doors of the Pedal Frost Hotel. In keeping with 1920s Art Deco styling and grandeur of architecture, the entire lobby looked to be dressed in geometric gold leaf. Patterns shifted as Ira passed against them, the illusion of flickering candlelight.

Before reaching the concierge desk—and amid the multitude of busy patterns to run his eyes over—Ira found himself staring down the polished baby grand in the center of the hotel lobby.

A single voice arose from behind the desk. When Ira got close enough to peer over he was greeted by a bellhop wearing the traditional bellboy cap. "Are you checking in?"

"Sort of."

"Under what name?"

"Byrne. I'm sorry, aren't you the *bellhop*?"

The bellhop nodded graciously. "I'm the concierge and bellhop. I'm the only employee of this establishment in fact."

"Just you? Who cleans the rooms?"

"That would be me, sir."

"Well, I suppose you know why I'm here and who I am then."

"No, sir."

"Well if you're the only one—"

"The owner makes the reservations."

"I see. Perhaps you could point me in the direction of the owner so I can have a word with him about what his expectations are of me."

"Expectations? I don't quite understand."

"The piano." Ira extended his arm in the direction of it. "I'm here to play. Lobby pianist." The bellhop's eyes widened further with each word until the whites would have allowed in any bug that happened to fly in his direction: frozen open. "I'm sorry. Have I said something to offend you?"

The bellhop shook off his trance in the same way someone shakes winter snow from their shoulders. "No. Just be careful."

Ira chuckled to himself. “My fingers have somehow managed to side-step injury until now. Don’t expect that to change anytime soon. Now can I speak to the owner?”

“Due to recent circumstances . . . the owner had to take leave this morning. He’s . . . unwell.”

“Alright then. I’ll go settle in.”

The bellhop’s face was icy and pale like he’d seen a ghost.

Ira made his way to the piano bench where he unburdened his arms of luggage before unloading a handful of sheet music. He promptly shifted to position it on the music desk only to discover a strange note of direction—warning?—on the piano lid: *Before playing, please fill out the obituary notice.*

Ira whispered, “Obituary notice?” He read along:

Obituary for Anonymous

_____, (DOB: _____ - Tomorrow’s Date: _____) died of unnatural causes.

A dozen or more copies of the obituary template for the not-yet-dead sat on the lid of the Steinway.

Ira shouted out to the bellhop from the piano. “What’s this nonsense?”

The bellhop discreetly walked to meet Ira next to the piano. “I really would advise you not to play.”

“Not to play?”

“There’ve been some incidents.”

“Care to elaborate?”

The bellhop hesitated before divulging the concerning tidbit. “Everyone who has played this piano has died within twenty-four hours, sir.”

Ira laughed.

The bellhop looked on sternly. “I wish I could say I’m making this up. That it’s urban legend. But I assure you there is absolutely no explanation other than the fact that every person who has played those keys meets their early demise within a day.”

Ira pulled up the piano lid. Carried on with positioning his sheet music on the music desk. The bellhop interrupted. “Did you hear what I said? You’re going to die. Eleven already have!”

Ira sat down on the piano bench. “What do you think the guests would prefer? Beethoven or Bach?”

“Neither! Don’t do this to yourself! You must be insane!”

Ira flattened his sheet music. “I’m something else.”

“I won’t let you play. I won’t allow it.”

“You must. I have a task to carry out here in this hotel. Same as you.”

Ira bent his hands into proper Cs. A couple of guests roamed about and others paused in the hallways having heard the first notes of Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata” resonating in the lobby. The bellhop shouting all the while. Begging Ira to stop.

At song’s end eleven figures leaned against the Steinway. Ira asked, “How’s that for an audition?”

They all clapped. Art Deco gold flickering through their outlines.

The hotel owner manifested at Ira’s side. “Haunting. Marvelous! You’ve earned your spot as resident of the Pedal Frost Hotel.”

Ira smirked and looked at the bellhop whose face was icy and pale . . . like he’d seen thirteen ghosts.

Elizabeth Bates is a Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize-nominated writer from Washington state where she lives with her family. She is the author of poetry chapbook, *Mosaics & Mirages* (Fahmidan Publishing & Co., 2022). Twitter/IG: @ElizabethKBates
Website: elizabethkbates.com

Ichthyosaur Fossil at the Natural History Museum
Bex Hainsworth

It is a stone snapshot of tragedy behind glass,
held within the polished wood of a picture frame.
A memory of death carved out of the earth.

Her long beak is closed, gritted pain: she did not cry out
in the final moments, although the one visible eye bulges,
planetary, a steel moon full of fatal knowledge.

There is a jumble of tiny bones, trinkets, treasure,
held behind a cage of long slender bones, the comb of her ribs
keeping them safe, beside the faint dip of her heart.

One flipper is pressed to her belly, soothing them all.
Each individual scale has been preserved, locked
together in chainmail, like bubbles of grey coral.

And her daughter, mirror image, sharer of fate.
She was born tail-first, died nosing at her mother,
forever joined in this fossilised afterlife.

187 million years of mothers and daughters since,
and still we carry life and death, always, with us.

Bex Hainsworth (she/her) is a poet and teacher based in Leicester, UK. She won the Collection HQ Prize as part of the East Riding Festival of Words and her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Heavy Feather Review, Atrium, Okay Donkey, bath magg, and trampset. Her debut pamphlet of ecopoetry will be published by Black Cat Poetry Press in 2023. Find her on Twitter @PoetBex.

Us
Tuur Verheyde

This world we sense,
Its blood dripping from a freshly
Cut gash, its pale ash softly covering
Our smouldering hills, like hurt
That will not fade, like tears that
Cannot dry; this world flows
Upon our flesh, stealthily scorching,
As it sinks to settle cosily where
Once we were; this world,
Our pain and pleasure, reskinning,
Unwinding, burying the layered past,
Pushing down the languished legends
Of our former now, souring self
Into stranger, sweetening other
Into a face soon known and loved;
This world, its mesh of everything,
Its torment and release is
Who we are and
Who we will be,
When we are
Gone.

Tuur Verheyde is a twenty-five year old Belgian poet. His work endeavours to capture the illusive, the oppressive and transgressive. Tuur's poetry interrogates topics like spirituality, politics, philosophy and mystery, and works to engage readers' curiosity, empathy and imagination.

Website: <https://tuurverheyde.com>

let me fall into autumn
Linda M. Crate

others mourn the end of summer,
but i am more than ready to
surrender the oppressive heat;

i am ready for autumn to wrap me in
her cool hug and her vibrant colors—

ready to bury every regret,
and heal with the trees as i let go
of pieces of my past like leaves;

ready to drink in the beauty of
leaves pressed against blue skies—

ready to smell cinnamon, apples,
pumpkins, and autumn leaves that litter
the forest floor;

i am ready to taste pumpkin everything
and apple cider and caramel drizzled apples—

let me fall into autumn or let autumn fall into me: i need to feel again.

Linda M. Crate (she/her) is a Pennsylvanian writer whose poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has eleven published chapbooks: *A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn* (Fowlpox Press - June 2013), *Less Than A Man* (The Camel Saloon - January 2014), *If Tomorrow Never Comes* (Scars Publications, August 2016), *My Wings Were Made to Fly* (Flutter Press, September 2017), *splintered with terror* (Scars Publications, January 2018), *More Than Bone Music* (Clare Songbirds Publishing House, March 2019), *the samurai* (Yellow Arrowing Publishing, October 2020), *Follow the Black Raven* (Alien Buddha Publishing, July 2021), *Unleashing the Archers* (Guerilla Genesis Press, August 2021), *Hecate's Child* (Alien Buddha Publishing, November 2021) and *fat & pretty* (Dancing Girl Press, June 2022). She is also the author of the novella *Mates* (Alien Buddha Publishing, March 2022).

Autumnal Magic
Lisa Molina

I catch the red orange leaf
as it
tumbles,
turns,
drifts,
drops.

My cupped hands delicately embrace
this mysterious fallen flicker of fire
for a few moments.

When I spread open the wings
of my close-fingered palms,
I gasp, mouth open wide;

as the mysterious miracle
of a migrating Monarch
flutters away upon

cool
 autumn
 breezes.

Scrambled
Lisa Molina

The first day
of tenth grade:

She curses when
she breaks the yolk.

To her, it is a bad omen
of the day to come.

The perfect sun, once
round and bright,

now just a
dribbling blob.

Without form.
Without shape.

No longer ushering in
a new day; a new chance.

All she can see are the
algebra assignments

she will never turn in.
Zeroes in the grade book.

All the scribbled
wrong test answers,

marked with a
blood-red X.

And her father's frown,
looking at her report card.

The dark clouds
of self-doubt
raining back black.

Her scrambled
brain, that doesn't
compute like

"The Good Eggs."

And she,
like all the king's horses,
and all the king's men,

can't put it back together again.

Lisa Molina is an educator/writer in Austin, Texas. She is a “2022 Best of the Net” nominee for her poem “Who You See,” published in *Fahmidan Journal*, and her digital chapbook “Don’t Fall in Love With Sisyphus,” published by Fahmidan Publishing, launched in February 2022. Her words can be found in numerous journals, including *Fahmidan Journal*, *Sky Island Journal*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Beyond Words Magazine*, *Flash Fiction Magazine*, and *Neologism Poetry Journal*. She currently works with high school students with special needs.

After the storm
Dr Sara Louise Wheeler

The nightmare of dark images -
crashing waves, broken boats,
and drowning,
subsides, giving way
to the sensation of sun rays dancing
across the outsides of my eyelids.

I awaken on a beach,
though I see myself rouse.
My hair is still dark and I'm
wearing a white dress, with lace
around the V-neck and straps.

A thin gold chain around my neck
glistens and falls sideways, into place
as I right myself, balancing on my hand,
arm outstretched, blinking in the brightness,
with a confused expression.

The scene snaps back, and through my eyes
at close range, I see blurred images of sand
and shallow sea water, laced with bubbles
as the tide sways back and forth. Shells
and pebbles speckle the smooth sand.

Panning back again, the images fade to feelings...

Someone is helping me up -
they hand me driftwood,
saying parts of my boat are scattered
across the beach for miles;
they'll help me assemble and rebuild.

Together we walk away
from this beach of wrecks
which features
in every post-trauma dream
I have.

The falling sickness
Dr Sara Louise Wheeler

Galena-lined lids against bright malachite,
and the pyrite-flecked blue of lapis lazuli,
peering through spy-hole eyes, cut
into a carved stone face on the wall.
She watches him fall, in an involuntary
display of a mystery illness; unwittingly
learning how to assist him.

A cane across the tongue, between gritted teeth,
eerily similar, centuries later. Her advisor calls it
'epi-lapse', muscles-spasms, contortions.
The same as that which afflicted
the Great Alexander, Caesar's hero.
The Greeks thought it showed
that they were favoured by the Gods;
in Rome, a sign of divine possession.
associated with the powerful.

Regardless of trend, they shared it,
these exceptional men from history,
as I do, though my puny life
is incomparable. But perhaps,
there's a strength in me also
that comes from *'The falling sickness'*.

Dr Sara Louise Wheeler writes the column 'O'r Gororau' (from the borders) for Barddas Welsh poetry magazine and she won Disability Arts Cymru's 'Creative Word Award 2022' (Welsh medium), with her poem 'Ablaeth Rhemp y Crachach' (The rampant ableism of the Crachach). Sara lives and works in the borderlands of north-east Wales and her recent bilingual projects have included 'Y llyfr llesiant/ The wellbeing book' with local children and Wrexham libraries. Sara is an executive board member for PEN Wales, and she is one of the poetry judges for Eisteddfod yr Urdd, Sir Gaerfyrddin 2023

Autumn's Snow
A.J Huffman

is a brittle cold, a dance of death. This
shower of suicides echoes across the forest
in rainbow hues of burial. Earthly shades
of gold, brown, red ripple, a collection
of waves riding the breeze. Blanketing paths
and passageways, the inviting mounds regress
travelers to juvenile versions of themselves,
encourage free-falling dives into piles of potential
crunch and crackle. Thoughts turn to kindling,
inspiration strikes flint, erupts into warming flame.

A.J. Huffman is a poet and freelance writer in Daytona Beach, Florida. She has published 27 collections and chapbooks of poetry. In addition, she has published her work in numerous national and international literary journals. She is currently the editor for Kind of a Hurricane Press literary journals (www.kindofahurricane.com).

Nocturna
Susan Zegarsky

I

When the dead tell me what the living do
my mind falls barren and bleak, I fall
as falls the witch in the wood in the cold of winter, shivering in this malice
behind her broken limbs and burned branches, sharp thorns of ribs
starved thin like the shriveled hearts of the men who put her there.
She, blamed and banished, and these words on her lips: send me home again.

II

In exile I write letters to ghosts, my wounds, words
grow heavy, buzzing with bees or a desert tongue, sweet
as pistachios dripping with honey; my friable seconds etched thinly
in long stretches of sorrow, the motes of pale autumn light recounted. In this bitter
life of mine how I want and ache, yet this I promise you:
with a heart that sings of stars I will love all dying things.

Susan Zegarsky is a writer and visual artist who writes fiction and poetry in French, English and Arabic, with work featured in *Prismatica*, *Coffin Bell*, *The Slake*, *Grim & Gilded*, *Cauldron Anthology*, *Ink in Thirds*, *Lynx*, and *Autumn Sky*.

Fall
David Estringel

Summer clouds
pull—
cotton candy stretches—
'cross the sky,
passing time
(and my front porch),
playing Cat's Cradle
o'er lazy fields,
spying atop Jacob's Ladder.
With a whisker's twitch,
Autumn comes.
Play and frolics
in the sun
fade to gray
with pecks
from Winter's lips
and the falling of leaves.

David Estringel is a Xicanx writer/poet with works published in literary publications, such as The Opiate, Azahares, Cephalorpress, Lahar, Poetry Ni, DREICH, Rigorous, Somos En Escrito, Hispanecdotes, Ethel, The Milk House, Beir Bua Journal, and The Blue Nib. David has published three books and three chapbooks of poetry with his fourth book being published December 2022. Connect with David on Twitter @The_Booky_Man and his website www.davidaestringel.com.

Aubade to Interlude
S.M Badawi

I was six when the call to prayer found me
Broadcast across rooftops, I heard
Urgency, the muezzin's voice lifting
Out of his body to call people to prayer
Allah Akbar
Allah Akbar
Allah Akbar
Allah Akbar
Arabic not yet mine, I learned
To anticipate the pre-prayer,
Tap on microphone, nudge in my sleep
I'd wake to a flickering tunnel
Of blanket and pillow, darkness
Followed by silence, interlude
Between La ilhai Illa Allah
And the birds

عنف

S.M Badawi

“...violence is a combination of aggression and othering. It’s aggression performed on an other.”

— Jennifer Woodhull: “Etymological Root of the word ‘Violence’”

As a child, I did not know how to pronounce violence;
it jumped from page to mouth, curved into *veo-lance*.
I later learned Americans pronounce it *vilence*
and the root of all things is intention.

ع

At the edge of America, a boy fisted my hair.
Fronds shadowed a pool where we shoved and sluiced.
I didn’t know the *l* in palm tree is silent. I submerged,
choked raw with chlorine. When the sting of blood came
I scraped bottom.

ن

One time my dog bit me, nipped my finger right at the knuckle.
The pain of her betrayal stronger than her teeth.
In this memory, I emerged.
I planted my seed (for the root of حب is seed),
clamped the boy’s finger between my teeth.
He, a beast that could be broken.
I was nothing but jaw and molar.

ف

In Arabic the word for violence is عنف, the root of ع and ن denote suffering.
Our suffering collective: a girl and a boy othering each other,
but the word, like the world, begins and ends with intention:
masculine singular imperative.

S.M. Badawi is an Arab American writer and teacher whose words appear in Hayden’s Ferry Review, Diode, Orange Blossom Review and elsewhere. Her work has been nominated multiple times for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize. Find her on twitter @smbadawi

An Ode to the Old Country
Beth Mulcahy

I'm crossing the ocean for you
so you will love me as I love you

you are the land of my heart
though we have never met
I have yet to feel your mist on a glen
to ken the lilt of you
from the shore of a loch
to spy white wild heather
on the ben

You'll welcome me, won't you?
my ancestral home
with hundreds of lost years
of immeasurable kindness
in the echoing fuss of uncles and aunties
long gone beyond

I'll beg you to tell me
who I am
to show me how it was
with the family
as I wander the paths
of my ascendants

I'll imagine life into
castle ruins
find warmth somewhere inside
the damp, piercing gales of you

I long to belong to you
the way you already
belong to me
for you to see me and know
that I belong
to you

I will belong
to you

Beth Mulcahy is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet whose work has appeared in various journals. She has a forthcoming chapbook, *Firmer Ground*, with Anxiety Press. Her writing bridges the gaps between generations and self, hurt and healing. Beth lives in Ohio with her husband and two children and works for a company that provides technology to people without natural speech. Her latest publications can be found here: <https://linktr.ee/mulcahea>.

The Leaving
Kresha Richman Warnock

Márgarét, áre you grieving/over Goldengrove unleaving? (“Spring and Fall” – Gerard Manley Hopkins)

Memories of my daughter, Anne, always begin in golden grove. When I was pregnant with her, in Vancouver, when we lived in the jerry-rigged basement apartment with exposed pipes and bordello-style wallpaper in the nursery, the streets of that city were shaded with bright yellow leaves in the fall. When she came home with us in the gloomy Pacific Northwest November, there were enough leaves left to provide a little color on those first newborn walks.

Before she got her toddler legs, we had moved back to the States and our lives, as a family, were accented by many moves, every three or four years. We added a little brother to the mix, but at least we were all together, as in each new home we unpacked boxes of toys, upgrading to video games and CD’s and computer equipment as they got older.

At our next to last move, we left Anne in Los Angeles, or, more accurately, she left us. She was nineteen, and living in rural Indiana, where we were headed, had no appeal. We drove out on a sunny Thanksgiving Day. There is no change of season in Southern California, but we arrived in Indiana to the barren, leafless winter. By the next fall, our house there had its own golden grove – a hearty hickory tree that umbrellaed the driveway in thick yellow leaves every autumn for the seventeen years we lived there. Anne’s visits sometimes coincided with this glory, like the fall when she flew out to say goodbye to her little brother before he deployed to Iraq.

Finally, for two years, the planets aligned. First, grown-up little brother moved back to the Pacific Northwest. Then grown-up Anne and her husband moved close by, and my husband and I settled in this corner of the world. We were together during the worst part of

the pandemic. But business and temperament called Anne and spouse back to the East Coast. Half my heart is torn out of my body.

Sitting at my writing desk, I can see a sliver of shimmery yellow outside my window. Most of my trees here are green year-round, but it is only November, and I can revel in this one golden tree that brightens my view of the grey Tacoma sky.

I tell myself that life is change. I tell myself that golden grove must take place to bring back spring blossoms. The poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, who wrote of golden grove, saw its demise as the end. He saw the leaves on the ground, the decaying “wanwood leafmeal”, as the final destiny of us all... and ultimately it is. In the here and now, I tell myself that spring will come in Anne’s East Coast home, too. In January, when they arrive, the branches will be leafless, but green follows the empty branches that follow the gold. I tell myself that the husband Anne is committed to is a good man; their dreams are crazy but doable, and what they choose.

But sometimes, I remember back to those first months -- the pregnancy, the infancy, moving quickly into childhood--the times when you are one and then almost one and then less than one with your child, and then she’s an adult. And I let myself grieve what’s over.

Kresha Richman Warnock lives with her husband, Jim, in the Pacific Northwest, where they moved right before the pandemic hit. They were happy to have their furniture set up just in time, and she has spent the days since writing her memoir. She is the mother of two adult children. Kresha has had essays published in “Eat, Darling, Eat” and “Devil’s Party Press” and the anthologies, American Writer’s Review 2022 and Pure Slush. She has an essay pending in “Jewish Women of Words”.

the color of mourning
Marisca Pichette

I sit by the stream and listen to the beating

ceaseless onslaught of water over stone,
leaves curling their gravity-driven paths
down to the earth. They dapple
stone and water like the sun.
Yellow partners, each waning in its own
time.

Soon the sun will retreat
to the south, drawing the hummingbirds
and butterflies in its wake. The trees
send off their workers in clouds
of abscission. Their journey is short,
but destinations so often prove temporary,
and the wind has other plans for yellow
leaves.

Tossed, relocated, run
in rivulets up against rocks in
the stream; the servants of the forest
form my picnic blanket. I soak
in everything fading from here,
from this place. The sun kisses
my neck farewell and the yellow pales
and seeps from my blanket until
each leaf is a mass of papery
windows looking into the soil
that once
was green.

My boots disturb a memorial
as I rise and hike back
under branches cutout like bare
scaffolding supporting the sky.

Marisca Pichette's work has appeared in *Strange Horizons*, *Fireside Magazine*, *Room Magazine*, *Ligeia Magazine*, *Enchanted Living*, and *Plenitude Magazine*, among others. Her debut poetry collection, *Rivers in Your Skin, Sirens in Your Hair*, is forthcoming from Android Press in April 2023. Find her on Twitter as @MariscaPichette and Instagram as @marisca_write.

Lexicon of Grief
Diana Raab

After my father's funeral,
I told myself that I'd always remember
all he taught me about
how to live a good life.

He wanted the best for me,
never a bad bone in his back
'a happy go lucky man,' they called him.
I didn't inherit all those traits:
occasionally I dip into the river of sadness,
most often when I am criticized
for who I am.

During this month of autumn,
the season where in my hometown
leaves fall from their trees,
I think of letting go of all sadness
gripping at my heart and stifling my lungs.

I need to breathe again
in a way that my lungs expand
unlike dad's because of decades of smoking.
Oh why did he keep puffing those cancer sticks,
and only quit when blood spurted onto his hankie?

The lessons we learn from our ancestors,
as I think of my own children
who want nothing from tradition.
They want to cruise through their own life
all woke, as they say.

As tears fall from my eyes, I stop to wonder
what have I done wrong so they see
tradition as a curse or is it our universe who has failed?

I ask spirit for a blessing right now—
please give me answers
and the strength to carry on
so that my demise is not like that of
my grandmother Regina, whose heart
could not find peace in what we crave.

Diana Raab, PhD, is an award-winning memoirist, poet, blogger, speaker, and author of 10 books and is a contributor to numerous journals and anthologies. Her two latest books are, "Writing for Bliss: A Seven-Step Plan for Telling Your Story and Transforming Your Life," and "Writing for Bliss: A Companion Journal." Her poetry chapbook, "An Imaginary Affair," was recently published in July 2022 with Finishing Line Press. She blogs for Psychology Today, Thrive Global, Sixty and Me, Good Men Project, and The Wisdom Daily and is a frequent guest blogger for various other sites.

Visit: www.dianaraab.com.

Glitch
Louise Mather

An endo flare up, or fibro –
my body humming

wasps awakening wildly
on my tongue, underneath

feet already cold – a glitch
or numb or fire or

crushed leaves like pins –
I'd only just got over summer

Louise Mather is a writer from Northern England and founding editor of Acropolis Journal. A finalist in the Streetcake Poetry Prize and Nominated Best of the Net, her work is published/upcoming in various print and online literary journals including The North, Acumen, Fly on the Wall Press, Dust Poetry Magazine, Cape and Ink, Sweat and Tears. Her debut pamphlet 'The Dredging of Rituals' is out with Alien Buddha Press, 2021. She writes about ancestry, rituals, endometriosis, fatigue and mental health. Twitter @lm2020uk

www.louisematheruk.wixsite.com/louisemather

Creepy Trees
Jane C. Elkin

Creepy trees, bent ghostly trees
shiver in the park
with gnarly trunks and twisted limbs
and ragged, shaggy bark

Their aged fingers, stiffened
with arthritis in the cold
leach sadness from the fog
sapping courage from my soul

Creepy, barren, evil trees
shades of ashen black
lure starlings to their branches
angling for a midnight snack

I dare not venture near them
these webs of pitch and grey
for fear that they will seize me next
and I become their prey

Jane C. Elkin's poetry and prose appears in such markets as The Old Farmer's Almanac, The Best of Ducts.com, and Ruminare. A graduate of Bennington Writing Seminars and the author of World Class: Poems of the ESL Classroom, she is currently completing work on Mother's Ink: A Momoir in Handwriting Analysis. To learn more, visit www.jcelkin.net.

CRUSH(ed)
Katie Proctor

i.

at fourteen i taste an apple slice, vanilla sunshine flesh, see it damp and inexplicably neon on my tongue, and when i wake i pick strawberry seeds from my teeth, little dreams in my mouth. i forget how it feels to hear, deafened by fantasy, paint over wounds with formaldehyde and shiver under blankets. i am plagued, feverish, fizzing.

ii.

i learn to live between phases, a lethargic moon, waiting. it's slow until it's faster, all-encompassing, white hot and messy. the daydream is like treacle, sweet and vicious and sore, fossilising me, and it sounds like a song that skips itself, a flailing heartbeat, limbs on fire. i feel every second as it passes, fleeting and lingering at once.

iii.

but it sounds like laughter, tears of ecstasy and train ticket paper cuts. i bruise my knees, will it away through lying lips, pray for this forever, never, watch it creep into my nights, crisp linen by my pillow. and i don't know how to be honest when i don't know what it is i'm honest for, so just know i'm trying, aching, my body like overripe fruit, melting. something crushes me.

iv.

it fades like colours under sunlight, greying and soulless, clinging on and slipping. i spit out sunflowers, plant them in the soil, and wait on dewy grass. the grief comes in waves and the bottled feeling doesn't taste quite the same, but it copies, a palimpsest. i run it through my fingers. it's not enough of anything.

Katie Proctor (they/them) is a 19 year old poet from Yorkshire, England. They write freeform poetry and prose typically regarding their experience with love, relationships and mental health. They are the author of *Seasons* (2020), *HELICOPTER HONEY* (2022) and *A Desire for Disaster* (2022). They are the editor-in-chief of *celestite poetry*, a journal of creative writing. They are a first year student at the University of York, studying English and Related Literature. You can find them on Twitter and Instagram @katiiewrites and online at katiiewrites.wixsite.com/poet.

The Smell of Smoke
Rob McKinnon

Cleared of fallen trees the road reopens.

The bleak smouldering hangs in the oppressive air
thickly sifting the marred morning
creating a muted yellow ethereal sky,
the smell of smoke unavoidable.

Charred blackened paddocks
stretch with conspicuous sorrow,
the fearsome progress of the frenzied inferno
seared all in its sinister path.

Progressing along,
the brutality of the menacing furnace
soon becomes appallingly palpable.
The scorched carcass of a kangaroo
desolately lies next to the singed bitumen.

Along the blistered fence line
the sullied posts still support the wire,
as more last panicked mortal moments
become clearly tragically apparent.

Further along,
the vile subjugating violence
of the riotous firestorm
continues throughout the scorched black valley.

Rob McKinnon lives in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia. His poetry has previously been published in 'Freedom/ Rapture' Black Bough Poetry, 'Adelaide: Mapping the Human City' Ginninderra Press, 'Messages from the Embers' Black Quill Press, Fahmidan Journal, Backstory Journal (Swinburne University), The Saltbush Review (Adelaide University), Wales Haiku Journal, and other online and print journals.

Severed Heads **Stefanie Fair-King**

We decided to make a pumpkin pie. From scratch. This involved shopping for cooking pumpkins, which are smaller and rounder and smoother than your typical jack-o'-lantern variety.

With our living room TV displaying a carousel of horror movies during an all-day marathon, my sister and I laid out our cooking instruments on the kitchen countertop. Our images were mirrored in the blades of butcher knives. Glints of light reflected off the sharp teeth of the blender. Two pumpkins sat heavy and lifeless on the counter, silent as severed heads.

While Michael Myers hacked his victims with a butcher knife on-screen in the living room, we sliced through pumpkin craniums in the kitchen. We placed the bright orange halves onto a baking sheet and slid them onto the oven rack. Through the oven window, we watched as the meat cooked. When the pieces were baked, we very carefully, with medical precision, peeled back the rubbery steaming skin to reveal the tender pumpkin flesh, which we then diced up and pureed in the jaws of the blender. We seasoned the meaty pulp and poured it into a pie crust and placed it back into the oven for another round of baking.

This might seem like a lot of trouble for a pie—and it was. That was the whole point.

The truth is—I don't even like pumpkin pie. I'd take a cherry or an apple pie any day over pumpkin. But it was Halloween, and my sister and I had no plans, so we made a traditional fall dessert from scratch.

On the living room TV, five or six horror movies played out in the time it took us to have a completed pie. I cut myself a slice but only took a few bites. The pie had already served its purpose.

Stefanie Fair-King loves coffee, books, cats, and Oxford commas. She has degrees in English, philosophy, and liberal arts. Stefanie participates in a writers group that has been meeting online since the beginning of quarantine, and she has written and published several pieces with the support of this group. She and her husband live in Texas.

Autumn Nude: A Haiku Series
Rose Menyon Heflin

I.

The trees bare themselves
Unabashed maples and oaks
Fall's naked splendor

II.

Such shameless hussies
Flashing all the passersby
Waving so proudly

III.

The romance is gone
The niceties are over
Autumn on my tongue

Rose Menyon Heflin lives in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. Her poetry won a Merit Award from Arts for All Wisconsin in both 2021 and 2022, one of her poems was choreographed and performed by a dance troupe, and she had a CNF piece featured in the Chazen Museum of Art's *Companion Species* exhibit. Her poetry has recently been published or is forthcoming in *Abyss & Apex*, *CREATOPIA*, *Deep South Magazine*, *Fathom Magazine*, *Fiery Scribe Review Magazine*, *Fireflies' Light*, *Isotope*, *Moss Piglet Zine*, *Of Rust and Glass*, *OpenDoor Magazine*, *Pamplemousse*, *Poemeleon*, *Red Weather*, *Salamander Ink Magazine*, *San Antonio Review*, *SPLASH!*, and *Xinachtli Journal*.