

The Orchards Poetry Journal

Summer 2026



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For submissions, visit our website:
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Inspired by the small plot of apple trees near Cambridge, England,
where writers have gathered for years with their books and pens,
we welcome you to pull up a chair and enjoy poetry
in the orchard.

The Grantchester Award Winners

1st Place Prize \$50.00

Joseph Paulson, "Refolding Brown Bags," page 20

2nd Place Prize \$30.00

Ron Riecki, "I am so nervous about the future that even the sun
today is afraid," page 62

Pushcart Nominations

1. Carole Mertz, "War," page 42
2. Paul Burgess, "The Driver and the Driven," page 68
3. D Larissa Peters, "Understood," page 79

Contents

Elanur Williams	
Pollinated Bodies	15
Rachel Turney	
Wildflowers	16
Harry Clough	
Chamomile Tea	17
Jefferson Singer	
Planting Pear Trees at St. James Church	18
Deborah H. Doolittle	
Hsueh T'ao Gazes at Plum Blossoms	19
Mary Beth OConnor	
Yield	20
Debasish Mishra	
Without You	24
Dennis Maulsby	
Your heart-song	22
Denise England	
<i>Sans les Baigneuses</i>	25
Hildreth York	
On Passing the Archaic Greek Sculptures in the Acropolis Museum	26
Pamela Ahlen	
Playing with Elves at Midnight	27
Preston Ham	
an anniversary night	28
Henrietta Willimena	
Villa Nelle	29
Jennifer Fair Stewart	
Holdover	30



Summer 2026

David Gilman Frederick	
Holy Sonnet III	31
Zachary McLeod Hutchins	
Cold Shoulder	32
Carey Jobe	
Night Meeting	33
Judy Swann	
Body of Water	34
Andrew Vogel	
Neighborhood	35
Drew Brown	
The Hidden Poet 3	36
Kathleen Goldblatt	
The Old House on Cypress Street	37
Eileen Trauth	
Somehow Kin	38
Ken Haas	
When	39
Jeanine Stevens	
Choke Cherries	40
Carole Mertz	
War	42
Joan Bernard	
My Pipe Dream	44
Ruth Holzer	
Renters	46
Lew Forester	
Peeling Pomegranates	47
Fran Abrams	
Towards an Ending	48
Philip Abonyi	
Vestiges	49



Summer 2026

Barbara Krasner	
My Mother's Armor	50
Peter Schireson	
On the 12 th Anniversary of My Mother's	
Death	52
Arvilla Fee	
Missing Persephone	54
Mary Hills Kuck	
My Giant Coleus	55
Joan Canby	
Marigolds	56
Sean Bentley	
Down the Line	57
Kevin Swanwick	
The meaning of compost	58
Mike Rogers	
Particle Physics	59
Mary K O'Melveny	
In May, While We Were Sleeping	60
M.E. Gallucci	
Stranger	61
Ron Riecki	
I am so nervous about the future that even	
the sun today is afraid	62
Rose Mary Boehm	
Boundless	63
Jeannie E. Roberts	
If I Do the Math	64
R.H. Booker	
Chores	66
Danny Joe Robb	
While I Sit by My Window with My Dogs	67



Summer 2026

Paul Burgess	
The Driver and the Driven	68
John Menaghan	
Why	69
Gloria Heffernan	
Sleepless	70
Katie Lowe	
He Doesn't Look Disabled	71
Carolyn Martin	
Wheelchair Buddhist	72
Connie Johnstone	
The Existential Cure	73
Carla Schick	
What Does a Poet Want?	74
Marjorie Maddox	
Birth Party	76
Jean Anne Feldeisen	
Meabh	78
D Larissa Peters	
Understood	79
Shaheen Dil	
Shikwa	80
Dear Khari	
Garden of Her Making	82
Andrew Brenza	
Earthworm	83
Colleen Alles	
Elegy for an Earthworm	84
Carol Park	
Wandering on a Sign	86
Isabelle Bohl	
Mitigation at the Cabin	87



Summer 2026

Kathleen Granchelli	
The Blue Heron	88
Elizabeth R. McCarthy	
The Great Horned Owl	90
Lana Hechtman Ayers	
Incoming Tide in Storm Season	91
Dan Sicoli	
softly into petrichor	92
JK Kim	
Summer	93
Bonnie Wehle	
Elegy for a Nature Lover	94
Richard LeDue	
Visiting My Grandmother's Grave	95
Ann Chinnis	
What lives inside me	96
Kathie-Louise Clarke	
Tea Ceremony	98
Ute Carson	
Clouds Roll In	99
Barbara Eckroad	
Before the moon gets too high,	100
KB Ballentine	
Undressing the Light	102
Bethany Besteman	
Memory Care: <i>Quid est veritas?</i>	103
Elena Lelia Radulescu	
White Lullaby	104
Wally Swist	
Our Solace	106
Kevin Shyne	
How to Celebrate a 75 th Birthday	108



Summer 2026

Bonnie Wehle	
The Great God of the Desert	109
Josh Schneyer	
What Poetry Can Do	110
Darrell Petska	
A Body Must Try	112
Loretta Tobin	
Mosaics	113
Jane Simon	
Swirling Starlings	114
Duane L. Herrmann	
Memorial Day	116
Terry Firkins	
Spirit Guide	117
Carol Barrett	
My Therapist Asks Me to Describe Grief	118
Joseph Paulson	
Refolding Brown Bags	120
Nancy Lubarsky	
Gabby Sport	121
Chris Scriven	
Dauntless	122
Benjamin Cannicott Shavitz	
Morality	123
Anselm Eme	
<i>Alufa İrin-Ërin</i>	124
Ranjani Neriya	
tenacity so sheer	126
Elizabeth Weir	
Ode to a Noble Onion	127
Eileen Valentino Flaxman	
sometimes there is a day	128



Summer 2026

Maura H. Harrison	
Rx: Time in Nature	130
Mary K O'Melveny	
Forest Bathing on the Day That Time	
Sprang Forward	131
Bruce Rogowski	
Wild Vines	132
Angie Kinman	
Bloom	133
Amanda Brown	
for you, the honeybee who visits me	134
Linda Stryker	
Madame X at the Opera	136
Raina Siraesa	
rose-picking	138
Nancy Manning	
To Sheep's Head Lighthouse,	
Ireland	139
Glenis Moore	
Topsy	140
David A. Goodrum	
Coastal Guidebook	141
Kate Parlin	
RSVP: A Spiral	142
Tushar Sen	
Unfurl the Sails	143
Tobey Hiller	
Half and Whole	144
Ellen Girardeau Kempler	
Wordfisher's Lament	145
John Grey	
The Carousel Lady	146



Summer 2026

Donald Laird	
The Apple Tree	147
Nolo Segundo	
In Mourning for a Tree	148
Christel Maass	
Pigeon River	150
Michael E. Theroux	
Four Cedars	151
Rhett Watts	
Summer's End	152
John Delaney	
A Strip of Sun, Please	154
Michael C. Paul	
My Edifice	155
John Bartell	
The St. Joe	156
Jennifer Lagier	
Fieldhand	158
Kelsi Folsom	
Morning Pages	159
Laura Rodley	
Mister Cat	160
Tricia Knoll	
Summer's Hope	162
Xenia Tran & Vicki Miko	
Fleeting	163
Judith Sornberger	
Sending My Son His Stepdad's Wedding Ring	164
Noelle Sterne	
Counsel	165
Jeremy L. Rosenberg	
Hawk in the Know	166



Summer 2026

Brian Kates	
Hands	169
Judith Chalmer	
Filament	170
DB Jonas	
The Shock of the Familiar	172
Bethany J. Riddle	
Looking for Summer	174
Drew Brown	
The Hidden Poet 3, Continued	176
David Anson Lee	
The Orchard Keeps Its Ledger in Bone-Light	177

Biographies



Summer 2026

Elanur Williams

Pollinated Bodies

To bloom is to be dangerously
unfastened, to unzip the silk dress,

offering a gold-dusted heart
to storm and hunger.

An invitation to be touched,
scattered, or torn. Gathered,

or left to the wind.



Summer 2026

Rachel Turney

Wildflowers

Yarrow sway in the field,
a wedding symphony
of chenille and lace.

Thistle flower reaches for the
receding evening sun.
Take me with you into the night.

Alpine sunflower the purest yellow
buttermilk and daisies.

Dancing violet columbine
reminds me that stars are
sometimes alive. That has
to be true or they wouldn't
burn out and die.

The nodding onion bobs in the wind
perpetually agreeing.
I think I'll ask them if they love me.



Summer 2026

Harry Clough

Chamomile Tea

The space in between waves is
building. Patience is in the starting
blocks, raring to go. My small bag
of twilight stars is beckoning
sleep, easing into a pillow shape,

no sense of urgency, apart from the
whistle of next door's kettle. I am safe
from them in the old barn where
the first boy I kissed is still waiting, the
lights lapping at his bare feet.



Summer 2026

Jefferson Singer

Planting Pear Trees at St. James Church

*In ancient China, pear trees symbolized longevity;
pear and separation are homophones in Chinese.*

Two boys, no more than twelve,
plant two pear trees in the churchyard garden,

the saplings, as gangly as the boys,
lean against their bindings, slightly aslant;

half-listening to the gardener's commands,
the boys plunge their shovels into the dark earth,

wishing there were ten more trees to plant;
one day white flowers will drape the chapel roof,

and the boys, towering over their mothers,
will drive too fast past church.

How long will their lives stretch from trunk to crown,
what will they gain and lose along the way—

just now, they inhale the soil's pungent breath,
their shovels flash, the trees bend to their will.



Summer 2026

Deborah H. Doolittle

Hsueh T'ao Gazes at Plum Blossoms

after the T'ang dynasty poet, 768–831

Plum petals crowd the once-bare branches:
too many, too lovely, and too lush to endure.
They soften the scenery into a pink haze,
all but the ridges and peaks of distant rooftops obscured.

My thoughts have you breaking through that mist,
a dark silhouette amid the blush of spring.
One season soon, our love will burst into bloom,
but for now, my sighs cloud and befog my thinking.



Summer 2026

Mary Beth OConnor

Yield

This new spring morning a mist
rose up and wafted toward me

as I was looking down the hill
to our small orchard just leafing out.

I recalled the blossoming, the bearing
last summer, and that afternoon

I found the tree laden as never before,
its boughs bending earthward

and stood, open-mouthed, staring,
beneath a chandelier of peaches

glowing rosy in the sun, and when
a passing cloud released me from trance,

I stirred branches, gathered the drops,
and left the rest to ripen.

But when I returned, there amidst
the leafage, clinging to a twig high up,

one, single peach



Summer 2026

that for all my shaking and jumping,
for all the room in the crate I'd brought,

for all the pies and jams I'd planned,
would not fall into my open hands.



Summer 2026

Dennis Maulsby

Your heart-song

velvet strokes in the dark.
I embrace the beat, the solo sounds,
but lack the means
to fashion you from dreams.

The best I attain,
a silhouette, a shadow-shape.
No tender warmth to drape
across my bed.

I imagine us,
gentle breath heats my chest,
such soft, soft skin.
Hair brushes my chin.

The pillows redolent
of flowers, new-turned earth,
ageless woman's scent,
leaves my body discontent.

Longing drives me weary.
Of it all, the mystery,
our phantom-history,
betrays my desire



Summer 2026

to make you known,
put flesh on bone,
to touch your face

and live my delusion.



Summer 2026

Debasish Mishra

Without You

My throat is soaked with thirst
 but I topple the glass of water
as if this self-imposed austerity
will be my vehicle to you

I have replaced the roses in my vases
 with carrion flowers and stripped
the bedsheet from the mattress
and refused the light from windows

I had a hundred bright ideas
 for a hundred new poems
but I smothered them in my head
lest the larvae turn to lava

I have smashed the sound system
which would have otherwise
diluted my silence with
 the new noises of the world

I want to wear the nothingness
which grows like moss on my face
because the emptiness of my heart
 is entirely made of you



Summer 2026

Denise England

Sans les Baigneuses

*after Paul Cézanne, Les Grandes Baigneuses, 1894–1905
and Joyce Polance, Morning Route, 2023*

The curve of our shoulders, our hips,
hair pinned at the nape—effaced

from this landscape by twisting
winds stretching the pigments

of our skin into sky—a sunrise of flesh
tones, an amber braid deliquesced

to a cusp of cloud. Legs that drowsed
along mountain streams dissolve to tar

and asphalt—a street ripped in split
directions. Where do we nymphs hide

now, in this world stripped of stories,
where wonder is plowed and paved,

where the sky succumbs to a pitch
vortex not even the trees can resist?



Summer 2026

Hildreth York

On Passing the Archaic Greek Sculptures in the Acropolis Museum

I pass the island *kouroi*, muscle-patterned youths,
flat abdomens, carved buttocks, beaded hair.
They aim their great unseeing eyes
beyond me. Their frozen smiles
are passive in their unconcern,
perhaps the first of many men
who smile but do not see.

They frighten me—silent, white, remote
guards of the temples of the ancient gods.
These *kouroi*, so unmoving, have no thoughts
and no emotions for the rest of us.
Instead, I think of you, your mobile face,
your dark eyes blinking syllables of desire
only I can comprehend.



Summer 2026

Pamela Ahlen

Playing with Elves at Midnight

ELVES: emissions of light and very low-frequency perturbations due to electromagnetic light sources

From our house on the hill
I'm itching for some fireworks,
a queen-sized marital sizzle,
when suddenly I look out from my pipedream
onto midnight's sympathetic vibration,
a lightshow of elves
ripping the entire sky to shreds
of red and green, marigold, tangerine—
roaring silence rocking the sky
like a shred guitar with optic reverb.
And then before I can breathe,
or even think to put it in my pocket,
that one shooting star
arcing east to west to dust,
and if that weren't enough,
the fireflies,
O, like extraterrestrial
beacons longing for a kindred flare,
maybe *my* flare,
my eye decidedly accommodating,
for he's so asleep and doesn't he see the passion?



Summer 2026

Preston Ham

an anniversary night

he switches off the bedside lamp
that homely, private light

she comes in a little later
says hello, says ghost words
says she said, he misremembers

listens and drifts
falls asleep, softly snores
as rain drips off the eave

slower than it falls
there's a practiced ache
in their devotion

perhaps they mean that in reverse
the way they have become
interchangeable now



Summer 2026

Henrietta Willimena

Villa Nelle

I wake to a pleasant pitter patter
Of a gentle drizzle, a morning rain
That drowns night's bleak incessant chatter.

I crack the eggs and whisk the batter,
Pour last night's whiskey down the drain.
Watch the amber spill and splatter.

Pancakes will only make me fatter,
Will garner more of his disdain.
Too short, too old, too worn to flatter.

I brew the coffee, make too much clatter.
He awakes, comes down; I try to explain.
But he's still drunk, and mad as a hatter.

He breaks the bottle; I watch it shatter.
Thrusts it outward, I watch it stain . . .
Pitter patter, drip, and spatter.
What happens next, it doesn't matter.



Summer 2026

Jennifer Fair Stewart

Holdover

Another blowtorch morning
with its sandpaper eye, waits
on my water-witcher smile, lips
that twitch in sleep
at a source under the surface
to bathe a God-grappler heart,
its skinned-knee grit, bits of gravel
lodged there to coax out. Over time,

I'm a seedpod blown open,
skirling notes, schematics on the breeze;
I'm a swollen drupe, so full of wintered-over

dreams (smouldering
sure as zombie wildfire,
they'll burn). Over and over,

this diptych
set aglow in the garden
welds a blessed friction:
from invisible roots, the old pecan tree's greening up,
catkins dangling; in sun
shadow branches spread their mural of chiaroscuro
on the wall of the dead
cedarwood fence.



Summer 2026

David Gilman Frederick

Holy Sonnet III

for Travis Love

And what do Sunday lovers know of Love?
Who'll never taste forgiveness in a slap,
Or contemplate the merits of a shove
Into oblivion? Oh, the downy lap,
They sing incessantly, the pillow cross
Where all fulfilled they'll lay their petted heads
Beneath an angel's hands and gentle gloss,
And dreamily they'll dream away the dead.
But Love is sullen; Love is quiet rage—
Grace is rage smothered, and it leaves a bruise—
A taste of iron ripening with age.
Who knows Love well knows what it means to lose.
Who knows Love best knows what it means to fall,
To die, and love us all in spite of all.



Summer 2026

Zachary McLeod Hutchins

Cold Shoulder

Forgetting those whose bodies have been buried
is only acquiescing to an absence.

Forgetting a spouse to whom you are still married
requires a hummingbird's heart-straining balance:

- remember to forget that first slow kiss,
your bottom lip stretched taut between her teeth;
- remember not to think of what you'll miss,
with naught but sheets above and sheets beneath;
- remember to forget how her belief
sustained you in the face of crippling doubt;
- remember not to think of coming grief,
when crisis calls for faith, and you're without.

Forget how long most hummingbirds will live,
or else apologize, and then—forgive.



Summer 2026

Carey Jobe

Night Meeting

Our bedroom was black. Faceless black, the kind
that tells nothing. Quiet rain started. Curtains
rippled. White flashes showed furniture:
a dresser, a wall mirror. A hall door
shut itself, upstairs. We slept.

I tossed onto my side, nearly waking,
flickered my eyelids . . .

. . . through whistling trees
a moist wind poured off the mountains.
I stood on a cliff overlooking the green valleys
of the country I had fled
when, all at once, terror gripped me
—you were not with me.

In your neighboring dreaming
you heard the acid crackle
of quick, sharp drops on the panes
as fire. We,
the whole house, blazing!
You bolted upright, clung to me,
waking me to listen to your fear.

No fire. Rain, I soothed you.
You slept. I waited for each breath
until sure of you, then slept too.
Thunder washed by. We dreamed calms,
having met, briefly, under shelter we shared:
the cold, sure act of rain.



Summer 2026

Judy Swann

Body of Water

Day breaks over the stillness that is me
nestled into the shoreline of my lover
whose heavy legs like timber on a lake
cover the place where once a separate human
worked his way out of me into the light.



Summer 2026

Andrew Vogel

Neighborhood

Breezes in the sugar wood,
swinging beam, tended blossom.

Neighborhood crows count
out what we can all see,

we keep what we keep
'cause we've kept it.

Weekend carpenters busy,
hammer clap, saw careen.

Radio drone, a mower
plotting its verses.

Child's play remantling
the causes of the day.

Somebody calling, calling
a lost dog named Riddle.

All the insights that glance
off the cusp of attention,

all the nerve it takes to leave
our splendid poems unwritten.



Summer 2026

Drew Brown

The Hidden Poet 3

Start with an obsession, something that has intrigued, inspired or hurt.

Be curious, not judgmental.

Remember that the start of the poem is where you write about everything that you hate about yourself . . .

Insecurities, pain, traumas, anxiety.

You as the Imposter, Liar, Cheater, Thief.

Explore the dark place where the hard things reside, they are buried deep, thick with roots tangled in with your soul.

You need to summon not only mental toughness but will-power and physical courage.

Self-discovery always comes with a price. It will be heavy.

Search for the right words.

The words are critical; they are building blocks. Transformation starts here.

The words break through all the cracks.

This is where you make your stand: the sweat beads, your breath is labored, emotions may overwhelm your body.

Payment for facing demons thought long-vanquished.



Summer 2026

Kathleen Goldblatt

The Old House on Cypress Street

I drive hours to the faded stucco house,
the same metal flamingo staring out
from the storm door; imagine again

the chenille sofa through paint-peeled
windows; crane my neck from the car
to see the hill my sister and I ran up

until one of us claimed *king!* until the stench
of the chicken coop drove us back down—
up and down, dripping sweat—throwing out arms,

sails in summer heat, past fathers
who drank beer in the shade of a rusted awning,
aroma of roasted chicken drifting from a kitchen

where women talked only of yesterdays,
those Sundays we wanted nothing
but to have wings, to be the wind.



Summer 2026

Eileen Trauth

Somehow Kin

I look at you and wonder how it is
that we should want to know each other's worlds.
A single drop of common blood in us,
a fragile link that bound too different girls.
Sold-south father began a family
with mothers, all, who died so young; sprinkled
branches around the bayou. Progeny
sprang up from slavery's soil and scattered
sisters, pale, yet dark in master's eye. One
sought freedom with an Irish immigrant,
another shadowed emancipation,
walked inside her father's heavy footprints.
I hunger to taste life that might have been;
you grasp at thin threads floating in the wind.



Summer 2026

Ken Haas

When

*The book of leaving isn't hard to translate,
smart American boy, they sigh in my mind,
grandmothers of worry and the hurried plate,*

as if their memories were mine to get straight.
I answer them there with *not here, not this time,*
the book of leaving doesn't always translate.

But their death's work is to keep the snug up late,
make sure our ancient trunks are easy to find
after relative truths claim the fourth estate,

before long trains make loops to a one-way gate,
after teachers gingerly lower their blinds,
before books burn to leaves too dark to translate,

after old flags rise to correlate the hate,
after oath and broken glass and no such crime,
before searchlight, kiss the claw and desecrate,

before ghosts whisper *it's already too late.*
Again they sigh, pinch my ears to heed the chime.
The book of leaving isn't hard to translate.
The living just don't have the words or the time.



Summer 2026

Jeanine Stevens

Choke Cherries

*after Fall of Man, oil on panel, by
Hugo van der Goes (1440–1482)*

Adam and Eve are going to need a lot of luck,
don't even have a plow or shovel.
These two, slouching, wimpy, sallow skin,
no muscle tone, don't resemble my ancestors.
Clinging to each other, hands spindly,
they aren't used to labor.

In their basket, a few grubs, dandelion greens,
sour choke cherries. They don't walk but slither.
Liver pills might help. Some day
they will desire more: savory asparagus,
salty codfish, fleshy musk melon.

In air pungent with camphor, Adam, feet overlarge
and mossy, can't find a fig leaf. Eve, pale,
willowy, hides her nakedness behind a blue iris.

Serpent in a child's body, puzzled face
of an eight-year-old, webbed hands cling to the tree.
A reptilian tail helps her balance on two feet.
This is her tree. She may not be willing
to share her juicy pomegranates.



Summer 2026

Adam and Eve's future, not that promising.
Perhaps affection, but kissing hasn't been invented.
They need shelter, a cave, a goatskin tarp.
In time, a new couple emerges, more robust, ready
to plant and procreate. Standing, like us, exposed,
wanting suggestions for better fertilizer, better mulch.



Summer 2026

Carole Mertz

War

For such a time as this
my pastor speaks of the Second Coming

For such a time as this
the daffodils droop

For such a time as this
the letter does not arrive

For such a time as this
the mealworms feed the canary

For such a time as this
Archangelo abolishes the academy

For such a time as this
we eat grits

For such a time as this
Samuel sings a dirge

For such a time as this
airplanes hit the target but land on seas



Summer 2026

For such a time as this
man shreds its unknown destiny

The 21st-c. video slices forward to this—
the war machine's final scenes



Summer 2026

Joan Bernard

My Pipe Dream

As he drank black coffee, smoked
a Lucky Strike, Dad stared
out the window at the hill gauzed in a fog
so thick, it hid his green Plymouth.
He seemed not to see me open the fridge.
At sixteen, I knew not to invade his silence,
offer him orange juice, or mention
the transistor radio he'd promised to build
for me last spring.

Back in my room, I imagined him
to be like the dad in *Father Knows Best*
which my sisters and I watched Wednesday nights.
Jim Anderson would have said: *Wow, you're up early.*
Last night I nearly finished your pocket transistor.
Want to see?

I pretended we'd go to Dad's workshop,
the one he'd abandoned not long after buying
the parts for my radio.
I'd notice the tiny pieces, thin wires
connected precise as a spiderweb
on the table near his ham equipment.



Summer 2026

I even saw myself listening to it at the seashore
in my new two-piece swimsuit
like Annette Funicello in *Beach Party*.

But, that morning, as always, the smell of alcohol
seeped from his pores. I left the kitchen
in a silence thicker than his.



Summer 2026

Ruth Holzer

Renters

The room they shared
in those early years
was a ten-dollar-a-week,
cold water, fourth-floor walk-up
on East One Hundred Seventy-Sixth.
They fixed up a kitchen niche
with a hotplate and a bridge table
and hid the bed behind a curtain
when the in-laws came to visit.

Summer nights, they'd sit
out on the fire escape to catch a breeze.
It didn't seem small for those two
in their egoless universe
until they conceived of me
and had their bliss
diminished by a third.



Summer 2026

Lew Forester

Peeling Pomegranates

Ten and twelve, we run in & out
of doors, all the juicy verbs of yes
like crimson arils on our tongues.
Inside, a stale geography of walls,
a defeated empire of worn furnishings.

Outside, cicadas sing in the Pecan tree,
bees stir up light in the honeysuckle.
Inside, adult words like *you never*
& *when was the last time* pop & sizzle
as chicken fries for dinner.

Hiding under the pomegranate tree,
shelter of leaves and thorns, we reach
for ripe fruit, mock grackles squawking
on the fence while *suit yourself* & *I give up*
are deflated by the thorns. In & out, earth

approving every touch of our bare feet.
Childhood closes & soon the books
we share replace pomegranates—
covers peel open like leathery skins
& crimson words say *yes*.



Summer 2026

Fran Abrams

Towards an Ending

It's going on 11:00 at night
in this neighborhood
where each squat house sits
on a quarter-acre lot.

Lights inside are going off
as if touched by a giant hand
quietly tucking each neighbor
into bed with whispers of "Sleep well."

Except in the house with the green siding
where the lights stay on past midnight
and, if you could hear as well as the dog
who lives four houses over, you would know

two people are shouting at one another.
You would pick up a few words here and there,
like *shameful*, and *how could you*,
and *what does she have that I don't*.



Summer 2026

Philip Abonyi

Vestiges

My father watches how the sun kisses
magnolia with gentle tongue, how it
welcomes the kiss like dust to rain.
He calls this nature, and I say it's
love; the thing a man loses before
himself. I remember the color of
everything I have lost, from the face
of the woman who says she wants my
father more than the woman I call Mom.
Every day I try to forget myself—the scars
and focus on the shadow I want to cast,
the strength in my body turns into a
broken wall. I wander in the wilderness
of thoughts where vultures hover over
a living body. Sometimes, I trace my
way back through the rhythm of music,
but since I have not reached home, I'm
always stuck halfway into recovery.
My mother separates stones from beans
and I watch how she discards troubles
with the language of her fingers. I see
there is God in every song she sings;
this time, her voice returning everything
we have lost in a way that her hands
can never touch. There is sorrow in
watching your mother smile from fragments
of broken mirrors. There is more to her
silence, there is more to a bird singing
in the midnight about a light. There is
no love between fire and what it burns.



Summer 2026

Barbara Krasner

My Mother's Armor

Into her girdle my mother stuffed her fear
that she didn't satisfy my father,
that she miscarried at least twice.

As she wriggled into rubber,
she squeezed out the memory of disappointment.
Her papa wanted her to change the world.

She wanted to shop and hear Benny Goodman
at the Paramount. Into her nylon hosiery,
she slid and hid her fear of not being good enough.

As she snapped garter belt clips
into place, she sealed her fate
as a suburban housewife of the Camelot Era.

Nothing out in the open.
Because someone like my aunt
could come by at any time to wipe her index finger

along a ledge, shake her head, tsk. Because every word
could be an indictment, every gesture a smack.
With a girdle, my mother stood erect and poised.



Summer 2026

Gave an air that she could handle
life's curves with ease. Her parents' deaths.
Burned lamb chops. PTA snubs.

With a girdle, my mother cinched
her reputation as a blunt but classy lady
whose appearance made my father tear up with pride.



Summer 2026

Peter Schireson

On the 12th Anniversary of My Mother's Death

I take my morning coffee to the backyard
and park on the bench under the old Palo Verde.
Dog curls up at my feet among its half-buried roots.
Opening the little box of my morning meds—
heart, prostate, blood pressure, joints—
reminds me of how my mother, while not religious,
encouraged me to believe in miracles,
albeit by means of science.

Mid-day, I eat lunch in a café
whose owner has a limp and is unkind to his wife.
Above the stove, a small altar festooned with pansies,
so he appears, nonetheless, to be
on friendly terms with his god.
Home and showered, I stand before the mirror,
my face creased like an old unfolded map,
confronted by the chile relleno cocktail karma of my body.

Later, I watch on YouTube
as a white pelican in Saint James Park
swallows whole a living pigeon.
Thoughts course through my mind
like riderless horses.



Summer 2026

Back in the yard at dusk, I watch a lone plane
climb into a maze of clouds.

Every cloud a silver lining—a favorite of mother's.
So much promised, despite all probability.



Summer 2026

Arvilla Fee

Missing Persephone

I want to gather spring to my chest
like a lover who has ghosted me,
pull her in, as if to never let her go

I want to sob, ask her what took so long,
why she left me stranded
on a frozen lake flanked by naked limbs

But I know what she will say—
in that quiet, breathy whisper
only borne on sun-warmed air

She'll say, *But darling, you know*
I had to go—had to slip away,
as I promised Hades when he stole me

Like you, my mother weeps in winter,
like you, she lives alone
searching the horizon

for the first green bud
the first red-breasted robin
the first crocus sprouting
from the hem of royal robes.



Summer 2026

Mary Hills Kuck

My Giant Coleus

You were my joy. Your pinky blooms consoled me,
your purple fan-like leaves said, *Please, come hither.*

The winter has been cold and tough, you told me
by letting every day a large leaf wither.
It wouldn't drop at once but hung depleted,
would not let me pluck it, would not hide.
It shriveled, turned quite black, its life defeated.
When another leaf began its slide,
this one finally fell onto the hardwood.
Alarmed, I watered more and watered less,
nourished you with music, love, and carp food.
Nothing seemed to lift you from the mess.

Then came March, on every stem a bud!
You said to me, *You see, I'm such a stud.*



Summer 2026

Joan Canby

Marigolds

Once Nefatari's marigolds grew beside the Nile.
Apricot roses bloomed on Lahore's mountains.

No need to travel. Here in my garden, sunlight
into midnight, marigolds and roses bloom like

trauma separating thorn from root. A poem is
political. Once, Dante raged against the Pope.

Rage severs, deceives, helpless as in a dream
until night's fog lifts. Are we like Basho's frog

silent as raindrops, forgotten as dragonfly's light?



Summer 2026

Sean Bentley

Down the Line

Given enough time, even detritus
has value—odd fragment of a bowl,
broken spear, an upper jaw, cheek
by jowl with whole statues, gold crowns;
Greek floor tiles meticulously relocated
from a dig to a pristine museum; things
sunk in ships or buried in graves, dropped
in battle, dumped in a midden.
Far down the line we ooh and ahh—
here, the planks of a Roman galley
sluiced from the mud and reassembled—
wood barely fit for anything now but
recalling purpose and life beyond
its bark and heartwood, still showing
nail holes, oar slots, all that's left
of a story: a rune, a skeletal indication.
What are the chances the plank table I sit at
today and cellphone beside me ready to ping,
this deathless styrofoam cup,
will end up in some vitrine
down the line, X-rayed, hypothesized,
as obsolete as Ozymandias,
just as redolent of myth?



Summer 2026

Kevin Swanwick

The meaning of compost

Two people in the coffee shop were discussing the matter of faith. I listened with my dark roast, the price of admission. One seemed to be softly for & the other sternly against.

She insisted that the question of what it all meant was open & up for grabs & that one should be careful about trying to know too much. He reckoned that knowing was meaning.

Later I checked the compost pile behind the barn. Early spring frost had it surrounded but not beneath the cover I'd placed last summer. The food bits now looked like spring soil.

I turned it a few times before letting it rest again but then realized it was not resting at all. Nothing was resting or still, though the coffee grinds seemed most stubborn.¹

¹ This poem previously appeared in *Chronogram*.



Summer 2026

Mike Rogers

Particle Physics

So many types of attraction, repulsion,
so many qualities, hard to define,
let alone name, discovered by expulsion
under extreme pressure, and in the line
of fire from other particles themselves
projected with accelerating force
down narrowing pathways—whoever delves
into this matter will find there, of course,
what they look for. So people coalesce,
squeezed from outside, the application of heat
speeds up the process. It need not be stress,
as such, but common purpose, if they meet
to put on plays, play music, and grow whole:
the difference between diamonds and coal.



Summer 2026

Mary K O'Melveny

In May, While We Were Sleeping

A waxing gibbous moon
was keen to cozy up like
a smitten teen to Regulus,
Leo's brightly beating heart.

Meteor showers splashed past
starry clusters like freestylers—
debris spinning from Halley's Comet
were unearthed near desert cacti.

Jupiter sang sad farewell songs,
as flaxen Saturn's rings emerged.
Moon soon cozied up to Spica,
winked at Virgo's radiant blue star.

We know full moons bud, plant, milk.
They heal, turn to sucker, corn, flower,
frog. Each expands past shadow's girth.
Skies fill with gold, strawberries, blood.

As we wake, chaste green shoots
surround us, pale as seafoam. We see
sheen of newly forming earth, know
rebirth is worth the work ahead.



Summer 2026

M.E. Gallucci

Stranger

During the homily,
I found your reincarnation and
covered my teeth.

Last night, your ghost, a sheath
kneeled against the
arm and ivy of the
floral couch, sour colored beside the
elbow of the staircase, screaming
It's only ever me.

At times I think I can make out the
fishy smell of the springtime trees and
your eyes, wide as the moon and
dark as the dirt it shines upon,
gazing into my body, reflected golden in
goldenrod in both eyes.

You beckon at the windowsill.
My feet kick to come to you.

There's a stranger in your seat and
in two years he will drown me.



Summer 2026

Ron Riecki

I am so nervous about the future
that even the sun today is afraid

and I am alone on the tennis court with the dog,
not mine, my parents, and we are trespassing,
a sign that says *No Dogs*, and that's why we're

here, to protest—not really, but really, but more
that we were walking and I saw a bench, sat,
letting the leash go, the dog inspecting every

inch of the court—the net, the lines, the fence,
the sole ball left behind, broken, open, its guts
visible. How do you destroy a tennis ball?

And the sun, the same—destroyed, open,
xanthic. Birds sing warnings nearby. I know
I'm going to die. I know the dog is going

to die. One day. Why this thought? Why
this loneliness? Why at noon? The slate-
black roofs beg the sun to stop, but it refuses.



Summer 2026

Rose Mary Boehm

Boundless

I want to shrink until I fit inside
the silence of a tree,
a tree that whispers the language
we forgot,
keepers of the sacred beginnings
we betrayed.
I want to melt into the rock that covers its scalp
with moss, lean against the megalith
hewn by men whose intent
was not religion but spirit,
spirit they recognized in everything that is,
a universal conscience
of which they knew themselves
to be a part and—lacking words—
honored the infinite with art.
Let me slip in through the back door,
let me be rocked in the arms of kindness,
the benevolence of stars
that died billions of years ago
and whose light today
reveals what they know about
eternity.



Summer 2026

Jeannie E. Roberts

If I Do the Math

*after The Serpent, a painterly collection of
thematic objects, by artist John Slaby (USA)*

I spy with my little eye
lunch or maybe dinner.
If I do the math right
my Mickey D's burger 'n' fries
totals 748 calories.
Every now and then
I'll eat fast food,
tell myself walking
or gardening offsets my indulgence.
Though I'll forgo the soda
especially one sporting a plastic straw.
To make a place of beauty
I'll add roses and candles
thank my lucky stars for the meal
pray for unity
ask for peace.

And as I continue to spy with my little eye
observe the palette of offerings
the mix of methods designed to reduce pain
desensitize humanity's response to brokenness
the booze
the pills
the fixation with technology



Summer 2026

I wonder if the machine of American capitalism
will ever adjust its ashen lens
bridge the division
balance its accounts.
If I do the math right
I think it can.



Summer 2026

R.H. Booker

Chores

This morning I am greeted by a juvenile vermillion flycatcher
who lacks the neon-red plumage of his parents,

instead sporting a hue of budding mandarin while
watching me quizzically from the mesquite tree

as I organize the garage this Saturday morning,
none of which (I presume) he understands,

and is all the better for it,
the weight of our made-up world—

enough to break hollow bones.



Summer 2026

Danny Joe Robb

While I Sit by My Window with My Dogs

In the hills behind my house, bodies burn
The vapors rise over the sakuras
While I sit by my window with my dogs

Cars pull up to the crematorium
Big boxes go in, small ones come out, *see*
In the hills behind my house, bodies burn

Minutes turn to months, the dying to dead
Living goes well with mochi and green tea
While I sit by my window with my dogs

My wife asks me to help clean—it is spring
Put this up, throw that out, make more room, *see*
In the hills behind my house, bodies burn

But the harder task is choosing right words
To undertake the meaning of my thoughts
While I sit by my window with my dogs

The five o'clock bells beckon children home
A call to gather, a time to return
In the hills behind my house, bodies burn
While I sit by my window with my dogs



Summer 2026

Paul Burgess

The Driver and the Driven

I see a neighbor push his broken car
and think: “A creature from a distant star
who landed here to note what he observed
might think our cars were masters that we served—
that people spent their days in numbing toil
to feed the cars a steady stream of oil;
provide them countless spots to rest for hours,
from level plots to sky-consuming towers;
ensure the blasting, paving work is done
'til most of Earth is smooth for cars to run;
and see that cars along the endless paths
were never far from spas for taking baths.

Or might we just appear a race of fools
that's ended up enslaved to its own tools
because the things it builds to make it thrive
become the things it needs to stay alive?”
Of course, I'll grumble, mutter, gripe, and rant
but never give up driving, since I can't.



Summer 2026

John Menaghan

Why

Why does the dark descend except to mark an end
to all the toil that's soiled the once-bright day?

Why does dawn's light appear except to render clear
there is no loss or cost we cannot pay?

Why contemplate the cause or swathe our wounds in gauze
except to dream what seems won't pass away?

Why does the river sound its dark song underground
except to sing when no thing in time remains?

Why does the swallow call except to tell us all
they'll come a day when clay will feel no pain?

Why do the bones endure except in longing for
the hour when flesh will dress them once again?



Summer 2026

Gloria Heffernan

Sleepless

A villanelle

The whisper of the fan lulls me to sleep
like a breeze that breathes against the shore.
The silence has some secrets yet to keep.

In childhood, my nightmares made me weep.
To wake in silence scared me even more
so the whisper of the fan lulled me to sleep.

I'd count the cars that passed along the street,
so desperate for the sound their engines bore.
The silence had some secrets yet to keep.

Insomnia is lodged now someplace deep.
It threatens sleepless dreamers at their core.
The whisper of the fan brings me no sleep.

The darkness has no benefits to reap.
I rise from bed to work a little more.
The silence has some secrets yet to keep.

I understand exhaustion's all I'll reap
if I spend the night just pacing cross the floor.
Let the whisper of the fan lull me to sleep
while silence guards the secrets it must keep.



Summer 2026

Katie Lowe

He Doesn't Look Disabled

An eagle with a broken wing may not either
until it tries to fly like the other birds
in a world made of sky.



Summer 2026

Carolyn Martin

Wheelchair Buddhist

*with thanks to Jeffery Harrison's
villanelle, "Commuter Buddhist"*

I'm learning Buddhism in my wheelchair
as I zip around the house mindfully,
observing my thoughts with gentle care.

"Our thoughts create our world," the Buddha declared.
So I discipline my mind for victory
over discouragement and despair

while I rebuild my charmed world and prepare
to recover my pre-stroke mastery
over hands and feet. My brain's disrepair

sent my body into a black wheelchair
that offers me its wheels' agility
for unbalanced legs that refuse to bear

my weight. "That's just the way it is," I hear,
but "impermanence" is the dharma's key
to easing daily meltdowns into tears;

not to mention, the paralyzing fear
that this stroke will last through eternity.
"We are what we think," the Master declared.
I think a Buddhist will escape this chair.



Summer 2026

Connie Johnstone

The Existential Cure

Leave it to *The Atlantic*, April 2026 issue, that just arrived today, to dismantle one of the last vestiges I had left in my treasure chest of hope: the possibility of, if not me, someone, though I would prefer it be me, receiving revelatory information via transformation through electrical transmission, sent not over fiber-optic Wi-Fi but in the 100-million-volt-micro-second-race-through-my-body that would be a lightning strike. One lightning strike survivor interviewed put into words precisely what's been hidden in my darkest den of fantastic dreams: the existential cure. He said he "kept waiting to become a new soul" and became "despondent" after two years. I deeply understand the many levels of wrong inherent in that sentence except that I knew exactly what he meant. An early lover of mine was a rancher who had seen lightning strike his livestock, and he deemed me downright unstable when I ran out of his aunt Pauline's house to watch the lightning flashing all the way from the Rio Grande to the Sangre de Cristo, the morning glories on the garden fence awakened into such brilliant blue flashes it almost burned my eyes. We broke up over my Disinterest in refrigerators but I always knew the split began that afternoon with the August sky flashing, him hollering for me to get my fancy ass inside before I get killed, and me just dancing in the ear-splitting noise of those sizzling claps and the apricot-to-cantaloupe light-flashes, jagged, every time, the rain just raining on everything equally. And then the quiet, the magenta and blue of the sunset that followed. I know now I could have died, and I know now there would have been no revelations, but I didn't know it then. I still believed. Until today, when I read it in *The Atlantic*.



Summer 2026

Carla Schick

What Does a Poet Want?

after Kim Addonizio

I want the feel of a wooden pencil,
the old fashion yellow kind pressing
deep into my hands' histories, a scar
where a hot iron missed the cloth,
tiny cuts from fine paper, filing
away my words as leftovers
from a workday of chalk & markers. I want
a mechanical pencil, the click of lead slipping
into the shifting lights
of each season, making rainbows
in textured note pads, crafting curves
as my tongue flips sounds.

I want words to spill
from the tip of a point, words
to transform
lacerations, to uncover codes
launched in an evening news
that proclaims our resistance
a type of terror, our uprisings
a riot. I want



Summer 2026

a pencil that flies
through time, that completes the loop,
that pounds against lies
hidden in smeared
print. I long to feel
our bodies' indentations & rough edges,
to chisel stone, and to map out
an architect's intricate design, a future
reimagined without wounds,
without the forces occupying our city
streets, without the powers that blot out
original names buried in this land we call *home*.

I want you to follow
a flow of my writing down
the stairs along a bus ride as we kneel
to snatch line breaks of poems
falling from the mouths of passengers
passing through each of our days.



Summer 2026

Marjorie Maddox

Birth Party

It was Saint Patrick's Day, and the baby green.
The young doctor howled with laughter.

Under anesthesia, the mother heard everything.
"It doesn't look good," one nurse said to another.

Dressed in shamrock scrubs at the C-section,
the Irish doctor and his deep laughter

filled the operating room. "Green,"
he repeated to one nurse, then the other.

Under anesthesia, the mother heard everything.
"It doesn't look good," one nurse said to another.

When the baby stopped breathing,
then started again, someone called the helicopter

crew before starting the party. There were green
balloons and a leprechaun cake. Soon after,

a doctor asked where everyone would be drinking.
There were more jokes and laughter.



Summer 2026

Everyone quieted when the life-flight 'copter
arrived, whirring loudly. What did it mean

for someone to joke at the pain of another?
It was Saint Patrick's Day, and the baby green.

Recovered from anesthesia, the mother
refused a lemon-lime drink. Elsewhere, a team

of doctors was saving her daughter.
She wasn't there but heard everything

when the hometown nurse whispered to another,
"It's Saint Patrick's Day, and her baby's green,"

then added, "This soda bread's to die for."
So what that the mother heard everything?

Let the whole world party: her daughter
was alive. That, by itself, was everything.



Summer 2026

Jean Anne Feldeisen

Meabh

She took weeks to wholly open her eyes,
to mimic the open *O* of my mouth.
First had to satisfy an infatuation
with her tongue that slipped in and out
so pleasantly, avoid gagging on her hand
when it slid too far down her ruby throat.
All the while her eyes wandered,
caught dogs leaping, startled to their barking,
saw leaves dividing light overhead,
fixed full attention on unfurling
four tiny fingers to touch a plush giraffe.
When finally, at three months, she returned my smile,
our edges blurred; sunlight dabbed her eyes,
while the drab creature of me
wept diamonds.



Summer 2026

D Larissa Peters

Understood

Sitting here, listening to the rain, my glass in hand,
watching the lightening,
waiting for the thunder,
and all the other things,

I suddenly had understanding of all the moms
who drink—run ragged, wanting the pause,
to neglect the worries, the lists,
the failure in that space,

and the non-moms who want to be,
whose only consolation during a period
is, *may as well have some wine*,
the loose body feeling, the spattering

coming in surround sound with the rumbles
that just make me forget I'm both of those
and why *wouldn't* I want a drink
with the world the way it is?

People in streets and not going into streets
families not talking to each other
emphasized division, confusion, complex
world conflict, and epic failure—

why wouldn't I want to escape and sit
and sip and sit and sip
for all reasons that break the heart
and even in the midst of the world,
all I want is both less and more.



Summer 2026

Shaheen Dil

Shikwa

I have seen you on the crests
 of white waves
and in the nervous green of leaves.

I have heard you in the ashen grief
 of a mother
mourning her lost son
 and in the clutch of a bird's keening.

You are there,
 complicit,
in the rubble of war
 and burning fields,

your bright face and dazzle
 turned,
hidden from human misery.

Is there no summer's end
 I could slip into—

a place of lazy grace
 where nothing happens
and history isn't made,



Summer 2026

a place your awful grandeur
does not exist,
where a paltry being can decide

which path to take,
unhindered by some grand master plan
the universe is spinning
at your finger's touch?



Summer 2026

Dear Khari

Garden of Her Making

She watered me with half a heart,
a bloom and bruise in equal parts.
We danced like petals in the breeze,
but thorns would follow after ease.

She plucked my voice before it grew
then swore the roots I knew weren't true,
told tales that wilted trust and name,
and scattered seeds of guilt and shame.

I bloomed in soil she couldn't tend,
a garden scorched where love should mend.
She saw my joy, and it felt unfair,
so she clipped the light that reached me there.



Summer 2026

Andrew Brenza

Earthworm

I saw an earthworm writhing in the rain,
Stood still as flesh groped blindly and convulsed,
Suspended under ripples of sky's refrain.
I saw an earthworm wallow in the rain

And let the water swallow in my sight
The water-weakened body and the pulse.
I felt the reaching depth of coming night;
I watched an earthworm writhing in the light.



Summer 2026

Colleen Alles

Elegy for an Earthworm

As though we won't return
to this wet pavement on our way home,
I let fly

another lie:
Yes, I say.
I did move

that half-flat,
non-writhing earthworm.
That tiniest

victim of last night's
vigorous storm—
the one that stuck a city bus

at the corner of Lake Drive
and Hope. The neighbors talk
of flooded basements,

standing water, but this slimy
creature is your chief
concern.

After school, we pass by
the scene of my crime.
My eyes scour



Summer 2026

the sidewalk, worried
you'll find me out. *Where*
did you put it?

you ask. I gesture to the out lawn,
mud so rich and waiting. *And*
what happened after?

I know you
want me to say I watched it crawl
away. I know you

want me to write a happier ending.
It lived, I supply.
You scrunch your face, half-

believing. My girl, in my mind,
I always tell you
what's real—even if

I leave out how the end
of all our lives asks us
for this little thing

we call dying.



Summer 2026

Carol Park

Wandering on a Sign

Sky sea thrums. Blond grasses
sprout shoulder-high. Expanse
of marsh puddles in the distance.
Lying still on the path, a palm-sized

mouse with head sideways.
A single, liquid eye held open.
Its nose snub. A curl of a tail
trembles once and stops.

No rip of beak, no humans
live near to put out poison.
Egrets fascinate me—not rodents.
Yet I mark this last whisper.



Summer 2026

Isabelle Bohl

Mitigation at the Cabin

Let's not believe for a moment
the Francis of Assisi in us
is immune to somber sentiments,

when night after interminable night,
it scampers on the cold tin roof
in rushed and intent back and forth.

And soon it's not just one—
you might have lived with that,
open-palmed and brimming with mercy—

but a hustling mousy horde,
a veritable cavalcade in your attic,
so you would give anything for yesterday's peace,

pray for an owl to swoop down, pick them off,
a weasel to swipe them from your eaves—anything—
so long as they are gone and your clean hands pristine.



Summer 2026

Kathleen Granchelli

The Blue Heron

At twilight we slip our boats over the bank,
a quick plop into the shallows,
no words to quake the quiet morning mist,
just two souls drawing in river's breath.

Three hundred meters out from a quickening in the reeds,
a blue filament rises moored at the marsh:
a heron's hugging himself with vast folded wings,
cloaked with royal plumage.

All those feathers belie his visage below,
on a bare leg he stands impossibly so,
as on a mere thread of tungsten bracing his weight
while tucked under a wing the other leg waits.

In breeding time now,
his lore is bright blue;
iris, reddening; his
bill, an orange hue.

Only once o'er the years
did we see him give hunt.
With a fierce golden eye and barely a sigh
in one strike with mass, he impaled the stunned bass.



Summer 2026

Shaking his beak,
his mandible set,
without a sound,
gulped it all down.

Then as a blue ghost,
he rose into the mist and
with a tilt of his wings
sailed into the west.



Summer 2026

Elizabeth R. McCarthy

The Great Horned Owl

Sitting in the passenger seat, heading home from a likely last visit with the old man, a half mile from our house, I gazed out over the forest and farm fields as I've done for more than forty years. Watching for nature to step out and show herself in her quiet wild ways. Sometimes a flicking white tail, or black mass dashing across the road, or a mother grouse whose frantic act to protect her chicks had us stopped dead in our tracks. But this day was different, appearing out of nowhere, swooping through the gray sky, flying directly toward me, not swerving or avoiding my stare—she showed herself.

*silent wings extend
luring round yellow eyes
guiding a soul beyond*

That night, the phone rang just before the dusk of dawn when only the call of death or danger could break the stillness of sleep. Afraid to answer, I lay in the dark with fading memories and waited till morning light to confirm his passing.

*who travels through time
leaving nothing but space
a lost feather floats*



Summer 2026

Lana Hechtman Ayers

Incoming Tide in Storm Season

Your eyes are wide and glimmering as the sea,
Daddy, a meditation blue,
as we stroll the cool sand barefoot
as we must have done many times when I was a child
though I can't recall a single instance,
have no photographic proof,
and surely you must have held my small hand
in your calloused one, perhaps
even lifted me up as the waves came in to keep me dry.

Now, I am nearly as old as you when you died, Daddy,
and your callouses are balm against my palm.

Let me spare you the news of the world today,
for your heart would break like the waves
rushing to get somewhere they never arrive.
Let's watch my little faux-schnauzer Myra yawn,
the sound she makes like a diva clearing her throat,
and laugh a little, because you knew a little laughter
could make the biggest boo-boos go away
or at least hurt less, heal more swiftly.
Daddy, I miss you every day.

You were all the colors of the rain no one sees
but me, and it's raining all the time.



Summer 2026

Dan Sicoli

softly into petrichor

leftovers of nightfall rest in damp shallows
green clippings rest on the tops of my work boots

glinting of the morning like butter melt
a chirp of a blissful bird goes unanswered

those tomatoes had welcomed the downpour
like so many hungry stems and drooping leaves

dust has been weighted down by the muscle of sky
what breeze there is fills the air with frankness

of the musk beauty of all that is present
and satisfied in a place without hill or dale



Summer 2026

JK Kim

Summer

The glass leaves a wet ring;
the table stains darker, holds it.
Grass burns under soles,
the porch boards remember the
shade.
Laughter spits from the shallow end;
somewhere, a rope groans
alone.
Smoke from the grill sticks to shirts,
ice from the cooler bites through knuckles.
Boards creak after the bodies leave;
the hammock still rocks without weight.
Some things burn loud enough to echo,
some cool slow enough to forget.
And still,
both leave marks.



Summer 2026

Bonnie Wehle

Elegy for a Nature Lover

for Joan

A soft breeze tickles
my wind chimes
into a gentle motion
and I think of you,
your quiet ways,

your tender words
and the soft colors you often wore,
the pink and white and blue
of the forget-me-nots
in my grandmother's garden.

Myosotis sylvatica,
living where it is not native,
takes refuge in wetlands,
woodlands, lakeshores.
Did they grow at the cabin,

your refuge, where each day
the nuthatch crept down
the maple tree, sat on your shoulder,
picked seeds from your hand.
My, how that little bird must miss you.



Summer 2026

Richard LeDue

Visiting My Grandmother's Grave

Every summer I pretend I'm okay
that a lifetime is easily reduced
to a small, flat marker
overshadowed by the grass,
which has no difficulty
reminding me
it's evolved beyond memories
of cigarettes and beer in a coffee mug
on a warm Tuesday morning,
and the silence in that cemetery
isn't some profound peace
where faith is born,
but only helps empty more bottles.



Summer 2026

Ann Chinnis

What lives inside me

is the very small,
purple butterfly tree
in Erin's front yard.
I mowed it down
along with the crabgrass
the day she had her
malignant brain tumor
removed. I wanted
to be helpful. She hugged
me when I admitted my
error, whispering,
"Its roots go deep."

Not certain if she meant
the butterfly tree,
I'd get down on my knees
near that small patch of dirt,
put my reading glasses on,
and hunt for clusters
when she wasn't looking.

Not certain if she meant
her tumor,



Summer 2026

I made her text me reports
of the brain MRIs
she withstood for twelve years,
radiologists querying
every shadow.

Certain she meant
our friendship, I
write my grief into colors
we shared:
a full moon's silver
on the street's black asphalt,
white blossoms
in a grove of hemlock,
the tan-green center
of a sharply cut stub
that would once again be
a purple butterfly tree.



Summer 2026

Kathie-Louise Clarke

Tea Ceremony

We make a claim on morning tea
as soon as we graduate
from warm milk at bedtime,
and now here we are, you with the pot,
me porcelain cup proffered for your spill.

Tears could mingle
with the bitter leaves,
or accent the fragrant steam, and still we talk
—how he kissed her as if the night could last forever,
or as swiftly as a swallow dips into the stream.

I sip Assam and you draw in Darjeeling
through pursed lips,
better to aerate the brew.
We sit, witches at the cauldron, waiting for
thumbs to prick and cats to needle stockings

—let them worry at the edges, stand
and guess our purpose.
Once we were the beauty in the room;
now we are rain-battered,
tea-stained, and cloaked in age,

invisible
—but not irrelevant;
that is to say, we enjoy ceremony
where there is purpose
and it takes courage to be ordinary.



Summer 2026

Ute Carson

Clouds Roll In

At 70 we ride with confidence
on steady mounts that take us
over high fences and through turbulent waters.
We are relieved following successful breast surgery,
grateful that the prostate cancer is caught early.
We make love on a sunny afternoon,
and play ball with the grandkids the day after.

At 80 thunder rumbles unexpectedly;
we fall, break a hip, recover slowly.
The nights turn sleepless with anxious dreams.
Time becomes so precious because we feel its passing.
Savor the memorable moments.
They are fleeting.



Summer 2026

Barbara Eckroad

Before the moon gets too high,

before the mountains shine
purple in the dusk
before the bats begin to fly,

that's when I'll look for you
to come, to meet me in
among the apple trees where
we first revealed our love.

The light will echo off
the silver leaves on the
birch tree by the river
and the sound of the
breeze in far-off branches
will bring promise of
days gone by.

Will you be there?
Will I see you dancing again
in the darkening orchard
where the golden glow
has drawn me again after
time and sorrow?



Summer 2026

Or will I wait until the black
night holds me in its thrall
and the damp sky drops down
across the land forming misty
rain on my hair and face and eyes.



Summer 2026

KB Ballentine

Undressing the Light

I wake to the news of the day: cedars
 silvered with dew
and wrens singing
 the sun awake.

Blue heron shifting
 in the morning shadows,
 persisting
 with a one-leg perch
until her beak bursts the blue-gray mirror,
 lifts with a wiggle and flick.

The woods ricochet
 with purple and yellow,
echo the sky
 until it finally slides
 into blue,
air humming with the first bees.

A warning and a promise
 stirring the trees, urging
 the blossoms to give
and give and give.



Summer 2026

Bethany Besteman

Memory Care: *Quid est veritas?*

In the house where live the dying,
we learn fast to speak in slant
though the righteous call it lying,
and the sinners look askance.

In the house where dwell the time-lost
the dazzle of truth is brief,
as a spotlight on the star-crossed
only magnifies their grief.

So we say, *Your wife's a sweetheart
and she'll visit you tonight.*
She's among the dear departed,
but her spirit, it just might.

And we tell the wizened woman
who is waiting by the door:
Love, your momma's soon a' comin.'
—it's her daughter due at four.

In the night we soothe the fellow
who is anxious to go home:
Tomorrow, my lad, tomorrow.
But tomorrow never comes.

When the rust has rotted treasure
and the fire's burned to coals,
it's their final ease we measure
on the balance with our souls.



Summer 2026

Elena Lelia Radulescu

White Lullaby

Praised be the hand
that plucked the goose feathers
and filled my pillow
with whispering clouds.

Praised be the hand
that picked
the globes of soft cotton,
all through the brutal,
sunbaked summer.

Praised be the hand
that spun, weaved,
and sewed our quilt,
velvety-soft as the petals
of Rose Centifolia.

Praised be the hand
that pulls the quilt over,
pats my shoulder in pain
from old age,
weather change,
as if to say,



Summer 2026

sleep,
 my love,
 sleep,
I will be here tomorrow,
 I promise.



Summer 2026

Wally Swist

Our Solace

We're getting old, you here
being taken care by others,
me alone, making do, at home.
Early spring wind moving
enormous limbs of the sugar
pine in the backyard, cones
dropping every so often with
a thud, awakening me from
thinking about the aide that
relayed, "When you leave, she
tries to stand up in her chair
to follow you." So, when I left
today, I mention that we had
a fine morning together, and you
agree, smiling. Our kiss is several
seconds long. Driving back,
toward the Range, beneath a bank
of bilious gray clouds, the road
unwinds like a black snake
I once saw emerging from a pit
where it overwintered with
its brethren on Haskins' Flats,
slowly looping its body across
the dark brown mud of the field.
I miss you already and heard
you say, "Are you going too?"



Summer 2026

The further I drove, the less sense
it made for me to go home, back
to the house we lived in together,
but it makes no sense for me
to stay, since I have been with you
for several intense hours,
and there would be little room
for me amid the activities planned
for today: finger painting, balloons.
But how delighted I am in
our solace together this morning,
in the quiet before the aides came
to assist me getting you up
and cueing you to walk to
the bathroom so we could dress you.
How we held each other's hands
in the gray dawn, how that was
more real than real should ever
seem to, intent as we were, breathing
in and out, moment to moment.



Summer 2026

Kevin Shyne

How to Celebrate a 75th Birthday

Older but not yet elderly
Inclined but not bent down
Lips pursed to whistle with
Wise enough to see the good
Slow to speak to make
His meaning better understood
A book in hand
A corner flipped to turn a page
Led homeward by an elder dog
Tethered to the leash of age



Summer 2026

Bonnie Wehle

The Great God of the Desert

after Lawrence Raab

Say you are the god of the desert
and say you create the giant saguaro
and then you decide it needs spines
to protect it from creatures
in search of food, water, and shelter.

Then say you see the Gila woodpecker
go right ahead and drill
a big hole in it for her nest
and the elf owl take it over the next year
and you watch the white-winged dove
perch up on top and gobble the juicy
red fruit, bold as you please, and the pack rat
brazenly excavate her burrow beneath it.

And say you worry that the spines
may not be so useful after all, but then
you feel a breeze and hear the whistling lilt
the cactus makes as the wind wafts past it
and you say yes, that's what the spines are for.
Music.



Summer 2026

Josh Schneyer

What Poetry Can Do

It fixes nothing, really, poetry.
Despite its sunlight falling on the leaves
and dappling the ground below,
its wind above the trees with clouds in tow,

it cannot fix a tire in the rain,
repair a leaky roof, unstop a drain,
fill a bicycle tire with air, play
a flute, iron a shirt. It cannot on its best day

end world hunger, cure cancer, stop
your mother-in-law driving your wife mad.
A well-turned phrase or metaphor will not
bring peace, prevent the milk from going bad,

arrest a thief, or clean the windows
forty stories up. The things a poem
cannot do are legion, longer than Leporello's
list, longer than the Colorado river, than

the Ganges, Seine, the Susquehanna,
Pittsburgh's three rivers all combined.
Not all the poems ever written laid end-to-end
can delay your dying when it's time.



Summer 2026

Yet, in the sleepless dark of the darkest
insomniac nights, with the unruly
and indifferent world spread thoughtlessly
around you, when it seems nothing can stop

what can go wrong from going wrong,
poetry, in the face of all it cannot do,
shines a small light, a pinpoint in the long dark,
a solitary star that does no more

than shine. Its solitude and persistence speak to you,
and when you look at it, you find yourself,
despite all that you know to be hard and wrong and true,
strangely, improbably, comforted.



Summer 2026

Darrell Petska

A Body Must Try

When she died at 9 and I just 8
I lost myself walking

I walked the entirety of our farm
the meadow trail
the weeded riverbank
the barbed-wire fences enclosing our cattle,
our fields, our farmhouse, outbuildings and playhouse

I walked along our ragged creek,
ghostly fish riding its sprawl
past a lonely cottonwood tree
that wept its snow all summer
onto the rope swing dangling from a branch

Surely I walked every inch of our farm
turned toward every compass point
my morning legs crying for movement
my evening legs confined to bed
till they could rise and walk next day

among the fields and fences, creek and river
that forged my bones, shaped my flesh
and set me free with a companion
no mind again could find
but a body must try.



Summer 2026

Loretta Tobin

Mosaics

I gather what is broken:
flower vases, dinner plates,
champagne flutes, and people.

Send me your shards—
cobalt of divorce,
emerald of an empty cupboard,
red heat of broken vows,
clear hollow of a sterile womb,
gold tears for a missing child,
midnight of a mother
who no longer knows her children.

I will take the fragments,
broken promises, failures,
and heartbreaks—
press them into wet cement,
give them time to cure,
until life's own blush reflects
off the polished glass.

Finished. Recycled. Reclaimed.
Human.



Summer 2026

Jane Simon

Swirling Starlings

The new brain model resembles a flock of starlings in motion.²

I'm a mere flock in motion
A swirl of starlings dances in my brain
An enigma of nature to myself

My body has a wisdom all its own
To dance with seasons is my aim
I'm a mere flock in motion

At times I meet myself alone
Through wily winters do complain
An enigma of nature to myself

Human horrors I bemoan
Swirling starlings light dim terrains
I'm a mere flock in motion

My human foibles must condone
Sins resound through sun and rain
An enigma of nature to myself

Starlings' chicks emerge, full grown
Their rhythms soothing so sustain
I'm a mere flock in motion
An enigma of nature to myself

² This villanelle was inspired by David Brooks, "This Is How Your Mind Works," *The New York Times*, Jan. 17, 2026, p. A18.



Summer 2026

A swirl of starlings dances in my brain
I'm a mere flock in motion.
My body's wisdom I proclaim

An enigma of nature to myself
Starlings swirling in sure devotion
A swirl of starlings dances in my brain

An enigma of nature to myself
I'm a mere flock in motion
My body has a wisdom all its own.

An enigma of nature with no end
Starlings circle in sure formation
A swirl of starlings dances in my brain.

An enigma of nature like an elf
I'm a mere flock in motion
A swirl of starlings dances in my brain.

An enigma of nature is not the first
I'm a mere flock in locomotion
A swirl of starlings dances in my brain
My body has a wisdom all its own.



Summer 2026

Duane L. Herrmann

Memorial Day

Great grandfather stumbles
in the cemetery
to the grave
of his father, buried
in his prime
due to the ignorance
of someone else.

The old man stands
silent for moments
thinking, wishing
for what might have been
but never was—
and cries.

He misses his father.

Then, he salutes
as he did when little,
and his daddy
went off to war.



Summer 2026

Terry Firkins

Spirit Guide

The last tool in his hands
was a hammer we found on the bench
of his tiny workroom in the basement.
The head was pitted from age,
the hickory handle polished
with an oily patina of hand sweat.
Likely it was the same tool
he used to nail a honey-colored length
of weathered pine over the entrance
from the dark garage.
While emptying the house to sell it,
we discovered the board by accident
and were dumbstruck by how many years
we entered the house without seeing it,
carved with our initials from childhood,
the letters like worm tracks in ash wood.

Later we clawed the board loose
with his hammer and burned it
as a spirit guide in the fire pit
at the far edge of the yard,
watching the silky white smoke curl
through bare spring branches,
as the past, jumbled with its own present
in memory, drops us again, whooping
and dancing our little heathen dances
around the flames stoked by a man,
now younger, burning autumn leaves.



Summer 2026

Carol Barrett

My Therapist Asks Me to Describe Grief

after a poem by Sunnylyn Thibodeaux

It's like going through your overstuffed linen closet,
getting rid of seventeen towels and blankets.
Still can't find your favorite pillow.

It's like waiting for the ice and snow to melt so you can
go someplace. When the streets dry out,
where is there to go?

It's like making a to-do list half a page long, vigorously
checking things off, until you come to the end.
It's only 3PM.

It's like digging out a new sweater from the closet,
eagerly clipping the tags, to discover
you nicked the neck.

It's like watching a squirrel run up your crab apple tree,
scrambling to the end of the branch, and eat
the last ripe fruit.

It's like checking your phone sixteen times a day.
Nobody has called or texted.
Still.



Summer 2026

It's like taking yourself out for a treat, hazelnut mocha
coffee with mounds of whipped cream.
They're out of whipped cream.

It's like landing a piece in a topnotch magazine,
and there's nobody to tell. You order
five advance copies anyway.

It's like fixing a gourmet breakfast with cranberry muffins
and all the accoutrements, and then
going back to bed.

It's like rolling the garbage out in the rain, because
it has to be done. You're cold and damp
all morning.

It's like calling a friend to share the sad news.
For over an hour she tells you
how her poor horse died.

It's like thumbing through old pictures to remember
happier times. Dead and gone.
What's the use?



Summer 2026

Joseph Paulson

Refolding Brown Bags

Some collapse softly
into their creases
of pressed memory.

Others need fingers
at the vertices
of blunted corners.

It's what a god does
gently finessing
an *is* from a *was*.

Today I'm the one
who carefully decides
when something is done.

Empty bag holding
the startling promise
of my own folding.



Summer 2026

Nancy Lubarsky

Gabby Sport

Gabby Sport had detachable bangs and a wide headband. She was made of cheap, synthetic material that fit snugly over my bald head. After treatment, while I waited

for my hair to grow back, I could sweat and not worry. Just rinse in the sink, then hang to dry, and she was ready again. I wore her to the gym, biking, even skiing. Gabby Sport wasn't

really her name, just a nickname we coined for her when I became more active. The real Gabby, the expensive one, I bought in a wig salon. My hairdresser promised me he could

trim it so no one would notice. After the first dose, he came to my house to shave my head before my scalp got too itchy and hair started to fall out. (*Don't worry, I've done this before,*

he assured me.) He brought all his tools and clippers, set them up on my kitchen table, wrapped me in a cape imprinted with his salon's name. The buzz sound was almost too much to

bear. He wouldn't let me look in the mirror until Gabby was securely in place. He trimmed her a bit as if he was just there for a routine haircut. It was only years later I learned it was his first time, too.



Summer 2026

Chris Scriven

Dauntless

Though fear may turn our faces parchment white
when standing eye-to-eye with blackguard foes,
perhaps it's just a call to arms, to fight.

Luck favors those who throw a freight-train right
and trust their chins to take the counter blows
though fear may turn our faces parchment white.

No victory is ever found in flight,
it's only through adversity we grow,
through learning that we've got the will to fight.

Best not to pine for some long-vanished light
but strike our most defiant pose and crow
though fear may turn our faces parchment white.

My fists train in the dark, the lonely night,
where half-extinguished stars are burning low,
and this is where they practice how to fight

until their flesh and bone is dynamite,
unvanquished, undefeated, and unbowed.
Though fear may turn our faces parchment white,
our courage is awakened when we fight.



Summer 2026

Benjamin Cannicott Shavitz

Morality

I wrestle with my angels,
The ones who scream for blood
To pay for every failing,
Who cry, "Release the Flood!"
They see there's no perfection
In any human soul
And, desperate for purgation,
Demand the world burn whole.
They urge me, "Fell the selfish,
The hateful, and the cruel.
Exterminate the slothful,
The weak, and every fool."
I know I should obey them,
That every charge is true.
But, day by day, I fight them
Since I'm imperfect too.



Summer 2026

Anselm Eme

Àlufa Ìrin-Èrin³

I woke up laughing today,
Not because life was easy,
But because my shadow slipped and fell
While trying to follow me too fast.
Even the ground seemed surprised
That laughter could come before reason.

My neighbor greeted his goat like a king,
Bowed his head, and said, “Good morning, Sir.”
The goat answered by chewing louder,
As if wisdom lived in dry leaves.
We both stood there, very serious,
Until our seriousness broke into laughter.

My grandmother once said,
*Èrin kì í tán lójú eni tí ayé fẹ̀rà̀n.*⁴
Then she laughed at her own missing teeth,
And called them “retired soldiers of soup.”
I laughed too, though I did not understand life yet.

Today, I argued with my own pocket
Because it was empty but still proud.
It said, “I carry hope, not money.”
I said, “Hope cannot buy bread.”

³ The Priest of Wandering Laughter

⁴ Laughter never leaves the face of one life loves.



Summer 2026

We both kept quiet for a moment,
Then burst out laughing like old friends.

Some days are heavy like wet wood,
But even fire cracks when it burns.
So I laugh when my slippers break
And wave at people who are not there.
Let them think I am a little mad;
Madness sometimes is joy without permission.

If you see me laughing alone, do not worry;
I am talking with the small child inside me.
The one who finds a festival in nothing,
Who turns hunger into a joke and survives.
Because in this wide and serious world,
Laughter is the softest way to stay alive.



Summer 2026

Ranjani Neriya

tenacity so sheer

a curry-leaf has relocated
from a crumb, found flavor
in the dishwasher's
spoon kiosk, tidying itself
through repeated cycles
of long culinary engagement

it must love this synergic ocean
the clink, the drone, the supple foam,
this dream of another life
in a twinge of plastic sculpting,
this verdancy on a lank petiole of steel

I lift it out of its wonderment
alluringly wet, willingly aneroid
a pale green lung of breath so sheer
so tenacious just to be



Summer 2026

Elizabeth Weir

Ode to a Noble Onion

O Onion, how you please my eye and tempt
my tongue, as I ease off your loose overcoat.
You await my knife on the chopping board,
purchased for sacrifice, yet, promise your purpose,
a seat in good earth, where you can spread fresh roots,
grow tubular leaves, a tall purple bloom full
as a moon, and set young onions around your feet.

I peel back your fitted undercoat until you lie naked,
white, perfect, a victim awaiting my guilty knife.
I sigh and slice you in two, chop off your root;
eyes spring stinging tears as I dice your flesh,
crisp and tight, slide you into hot sizzle of olive oil,
sprinkle your remains with garlic salt, inhale
as aromas arise—my kitchen gods, well satisfied.



Summer 2026

Eileen Valentino Flaxman

sometimes there is a day

sometimes there is a day
that goes unnoticed
slips through the fingers
for I have better things to do

than stop to catch the light
in my mother's hair, or
watch her housedress sway
as she works in the kitchen,
its rhythm a kind of silent music

sometimes there is a day
that claims a place all its own
and lodges permanently
in the mind, a keepsake

to take out and hold
in the hand, turn over
and examine from all sides
how he looked at me
that last time

then there are days
I look past the face
in the mirror and
don't meet the eyes



Summer 2026

that stare back at me
don't recognize who
I am or what I want
as the crush of days
swirls and rushes past

but sometimes there is a day
that rises brilliant and clear
and stands alone and
I stand at its center

and that is enough



Summer 2026

Maura H. Harrison

Rx: Time in Nature

Formed formula composed for remedy,
“Take thou” this *récipé*, go restfully.

Collect an hour banked with boundless sky,
Canopy-kept or clear with cloudless sigh.
Sense hum: cicada choirs singing in rounds,
Their righthand whirl whirled left, stereo sounds.

Hear laughing-coughing-taunting blackbird caws,
Comical sleeks *ha*-squawking for applause.
Notice the single, distant hawkish cry,
A lonely lyric lofted up on high.

Formed formula composed for remedy,
Compounded into treatment, medically.

Inhale, let breath absorb alfresco air,
The waft of leaf and whiff of nature’s prayer.
Exhale and ground your steps on solid earth,
Expel abstraction’s angst for concrete mirth,

And turn your ear towards wind on breezy days
To hear the roaring quick of quiet ways.
Look back into the breeze, and let it hush
Your worries, woes submitted to the shush.

Formed formula composed for remedy,
Receive this *récipé*, necessity.



Summer 2026

Mary K O'Melveny

Forest Bathing on the Day That Time Sprang Forward

*We go where nothing is expected
and find everything waiting there*
—Pablo Neruda, “Morning”

I'm engaged in forest bathing from my windows.
Snow still fills most ground, fringed by greening shadows.
Bears have begun to forage for new shoots of spring.
Red-winged blackbirds preen—*conk la ree* they sing—
plant themselves at waterfall's edge where plumes spill
over rocks finally freed from ice blocks. Who will
be seen next? Eastern phoebes in a lilac bush.
Fee bee fee bee—a laughing flock as they rise, rush
off to land on spare oak branches. Air is still raw
but we are all keen for revival. I thought I saw
an orange warbler's sheen—wishful thinking dressed
up to avoid today's bad news swill. We are blessed
by nature's gifts to us. For a few moments, relief
cleanses me. Effaces the corrosive power of grief.



Summer 2026

Bruce Rogowski

Wild Vines

Who knows of color what they know?
What tender shoots, electric green,
Appear out of the bush below,
Until this moment, never seen—
Just yesterday I walked here, though.

Who knows of beauty what they know?
Young leaves, all symmetry and grace,
Like tiny flags set free to blow
And make a temple of this place—
A green unfurling, row on row.

Who knows of peril what they know?
Of shears or drought or gravity
That dares them to survive and glow
In all that color and beauty?
(If they're afraid, it doesn't show.)

"To hell with you and all your woe,"
They seem to say, "we love a dare!"
Who knows of magic what they know?
I watch them crawl along the air,
Inventing greenness as they go.



Summer 2026

Angie Kinman

Bloom

Haiku

March blooms gold jewels
a Klimt garden mosaic—
Byzantine art show

Cloudless sulphurs rest
on sunny coreopsis
gilded butterflies

Honeybee haven
forsythia pollen pop
branding liquid gold

Aureate finches
huddling on witch hazel—
sparkling brooches



Summer 2026

Amanda Brown

for you, the honeybee who visits me

sure, you can come over
but it's a bit of a mess,
because I'm a bit of a mess,

and I won't clean my house *for you*
the way I would for other outsiders
who don't actually get invited over,

so expect the sink'll be filled
with dirty dishes, and know my
plants'll be withering, unpruned.

I won't conceal any of my laundry alongside
the monsters under my bed *for you*. I won't
bury mounds of shame in the closet *for you*,

and I won't hide any bombs behind closed doors
for you. I won't even clear a path to the bathroom
for you, so just step over my failures, dear friend;

shimmy through the disaster with me. I'll
lead us out to the patio where we'll laugh
over the sounds of wind chimes and train



Summer 2026

whistles and we shall chain-smoke our
dreams with the flame of your lighter—
the one I bought *for you*—one of the ones

I always steal from you, accidentally,
because I'm a bit of a mess, but it's okay,
for you still seem to love me anyways.

let yourself in when you get here . . .
the door will be unlocked and
I'll leave the light on *for you*.



Summer 2026

Linda Stryker

Madame X at the Opera

*after Portrait of Madame X, oil on
canvas, by John Singer Sargent*

In evening black
she stands quietly
waiting for her friend
he's always late

She gazes toward the door
knowing he'll stroll in
she doesn't want to miss
Cio-Cio San's aria
un bel di, vedremo

her flaming red hair tied back
in an immutable bun
whitened face pensive
her low-cut dress
the waist tightened to discomfort

The table lends stability
but the left hand clutches
the long dress nervously



Summer 2026

Her body, a holy white
like a powdered woman
or a saint to be hanged
or someone about to do
the unthinkable

Her loneliness her patience
inextinguishable
she knows
one fine day, he will come.



Summer 2026

Raina Siraesa

rose-picking

ink drips from wounds, the bottle keeps
all that rhymes, hear the melody
of the melancholy, never the grime
shun what stains no petals, take the leaves
cupping tears that sparkle under the moonlight
mind the salt, leave it be, to the ocean it'll persist
there's no ridding of the red, for there is no rose
without its stem and thorns, bleed if you will, but
be sure it glimmers, that it dries like autumn's
leaves—that its crushed particles sail the wind like
curling smoke, fading to nothing at curtain call,
else take your leave, and your matte wounds and
humdrum tombs. an ache that fails to bloom proves
no return.



Summer 2026

Nancy Manning

To Sheep's Head Lighthouse, Ireland

Raging wind presses against our chests
as we fight to trek forward. Gray sky signals
a storm while we slush through mud, hike
through high grass, climb over sandstone.

Hills of heather paint the fields purple, gold,
encourage us to continue on this West Cork
trail. The blue sheen of Lough Aikeen attracts
like sapphire, numbs our summer hands.

White fuchsia whirls—tops spinning full-
speed. We pass a farm where sheep stand stoic,
stare as if they were ancient gods angered
by our intrusion. Further ahead, a semicircle

of stone, left by druids, marks the peninsula's edge.
A former burial ground? At last, we creep down
an embankment, view the white and glass
of lighthouse as the sea roars, warns of rock.



Summer 2026

Glenis Moore

Tipsy

Rolling, like a happy drunk,
the waves stagger towards the cliffs
intoxicated by the spirit of spring.
Their boozy party will breach the river
and smash the sea walls,
to vomit seaweed onto the village streets,
where the water will lurk, hungover
for days, before sliding back wasted
into the welcoming arms
of its forgiving wife, the sea.



Summer 2026

David A. Goodrum

Coastal Guidebook

Devour the horizon
the scent of ocean wave

the water surge
the faint whine

of a swarm of biting midges
and the adult gulls screeching

to defend their chicks
from neighboring cannibal birds.

Like a ravenous owl
swallow everything whole.

Hours after leaving the coast
and digesting all that is possible

cast out through the mouth
a small pellet of words

compressed lines of
small bones and fur

insect skeletons
wearing a coat of brine

and a microscopic view of sand grains
each a work of nature's art

carved from shell, coral, sponge
a gathering of galaxies.



Summer 2026

Kate Parlin

RSVP: A Spiral

sorry but
I have made my old mistake
of looking
at everything
until my edges
have melted into mist
and the whole
beautiful terrible world
has flooded my veins

I have seen how
we are all made of the same stars
stirred with saltwater and shadow
lightning and heartbeats
branches and breath
a swirling atomic storm
and it's too bright
blinding and infinite
but I can't look away

so of course I can't bear to be here
sometimes
I'm soaked through with seeing
and I could drown
in this dark shimmering ocean
of all of us



Summer 2026

Tushar Sen

Unfurl the Sails

The river merges with the sea,
It asks not what its end shall be.
It only sings along its way,
It only knows it cannot stay.

The sky leans low with quiet light,
The stars drift soft into the night.
No voice commands, no chains are cast,
Yet all are carried, swept, and passed.

If you should pause beside the shore
And dream of stillness evermore,
The current laughs in silver tones
And leaves you there, and moves alone.

If you stand still, the paths will stray,
And turn their silent gaze away,
Who crossed the flood became the song,
Who lingered there was pulled along.

Unfurl the sails to unseen sea
And walk where you are meant to be
Beyond the dark, beyond the foam.
The moving world becomes your home.



Summer 2026

Tobey Hiller

Half and Whole

I am fond of mermaids, yes it's true,
operatic singers of finite's binary.
Half-and-other make a wildling whole
to sing the sea's magnetic murmur.

In matters of the infinite binary,
scales and skin, legs and tails, are twin.
Song chants the constant ebb and flow
while top and bottom of the story glow.

Scales and skin, legs and tails,
the way she sings and combs her hair,
the top and bottom of the ocean's flow
is a lullaby all creatures know.

So she sings and combs her hair,
seizes hearts, enters mind—
it's not a lullaby, this much you know:
hurricanes, salt, and shipwreck in this flow.

Comb your green hair, seize hearts,
sing stories of the ebb, the glim and glow—
salt, hurricanes, island harbors, pearls for eyes:
still half and true: what merfolk know.



Summer 2026

Ellen Girardeau Kempler

Wordfisher's Lament

Some are not keepers—
pages marked by struggle—
the right words as slippery
as the fish that got away.

Transient as breath,
they hunker—mythic
monsters at the bottom
of an unplumbed hole.

Some say the art of snagging
is in the timing, in casting
with waxing or waning light
at the margins of night & day.

Some swear by the bait—
how you conspire to hook
them fast, with worms or
flies, a homemade lure.

Or they say, it's in the cast—
improved by lessons, practice,
the counsel of experts, carrying
tackle boxes—no guarantees.

Slapping the surface, the right
words swerve & jump, then dive
deep, lurking in the weedy places
between legend & belief.



Summer 2026

John Grey

The Carousel Lady

Along the beach, as dusk turns sand to rose,
Sea wind delights in ruffling evening hair,
While tavern lights and lithe young limbs compose
A second act of summer's sultry flair.

A woman calls time on the carousel.
Lights darken on a clown's inviting grin.
Sixteen proud steeds and sleighs no longer spin.
She flops down in a chair to sit a spell.

As crowds depart, no longer flock the shore,
She is alone, becalmed, no friends, no kin.
While tanned young dancers take to shiny floor,
Her night begins and ends merely within.

The takings slim, she gladly goes without.
Her life is tethered to the roundabout.



Summer 2026

Donald Laird

The Apple Tree

The apple tree was old but healthy still.
If it were picked, the ripened fruit would fill
Six heavy bushel baskets to the brim,
But apples hung untouched on every limb.
September and October came and went,
And fallen apples filled the air with scent.
By late November the big tree was bare.
Beneath it, rotting fruit lay everywhere.
Then the tree's owner, with a yard-waste bin,
Gathered the apples up and threw them in.
Year after year this happened. The one spring,
Just when the apple tree was blossoming,
And one might look at it almost in awe,
A man came with a ladder and chainsaw.
He set the ladder, climbed into the crown,
Started the saw, and cut a strong limb down.
He lopped a second limb and then a third.
For blocks the ruthless chainsaw could be heard
Whining and grinding as it cut through wood
Until the naked trunk was all that stood.
Without a pause he cut into the trunk,
And took it down in pieces, chunk by chunk.
A stump was left to mark the old tree's fall,
The debris was cleared away, and that was all.



Summer 2026

Nolo Segundo

In Mourning for a Tree

I heard the ungodly racket
of the chain saws, those
cruel barbaric weapons
'gainst somnolent nature,
and I thought, Could it be
that tree? The old oak
which had stood like a
seventy-foot high king
for God knows how long
in my neighbors' yard.

I could see for some time
it was dying, with a paucity
of leaves the last few years
but trees can take a long time
to die—and so I told myself,
he'll make it another year . . .

And perhaps he would have
but my neighbors must have
tired of the near leafless tree
and so called in the butchers.



Summer 2026

But when I left my house and
walked past their yard now
sawdust strewn, and saw the
empty sky where the oak had
once held court . . . I mourned.



Summer 2026

Christel Maass
Pigeon River

Walking dry ground of the estuary, once host
to untold numbers of passenger pigeons, today
all around us, red-winged blackbirds proclaim territory,
grasping last year's frayed cattails, planning
tomorrows.

From a rise in the upland, through trees
whose ancestors welcomed winged clouds
darkening the sky, we sighted an egret, white
like a flag of surrender, as alone as Martha was
before she passed, the last of her kind.⁵

⁵ Martha, the last passenger pigeon, passed away in 1914 at the Cincinnati Zoo.



Summer 2026

Michael E. Theroux

Four Cedars

Four cedars stand above the river froth
Noble green, wind-combed trees
River mist, sparkling, is swept aloft
To encircle our meadow memories

Quiet walks together, dew-soaked rest
Finger tips touching, you center me
Four cedars guard the ridge-crest
One moment in life to be free

Through days of city confusion
Long, restless nights of heat and noise
There winds a path of illusion
To draw us toward simpler joys

Four cedars, above the splash and spray
Four pillars, a river, wet meadow paths:
A vision of solace for each waking day
A peace we shall reach, at last



Summer 2026

Rhett Watts

Summer's End

Today I pet the furred back of a bee,
 bumbling, otherwise occupied
in the open face of a rosa rugosa.

Counted the sections of the morning glory,
folding the petals like origami paper
over and over.

I read that hummingbirds fly in figure
eights, lifted the clear vase to take in
the scent of the clipped roses crumpled, tinged

with blight. Hiked the trail where the stone
wall heaves and shifts under its own weight.
Mulberries strewn on the shed roof

go to the mourning doves, murmuring.
And what is the name of the leaf knob that holds
the stem to the elm's fractal branch until

it releases with the turn of some small key
falling to the lawn, still green where the sparrow
freezes, sensing the hawk high in the oak.



Summer 2026

Nothing to be done. Sun sweeps across the yard
like a Klieg light, or sudden blood rising to redden
one's face when the Chardonnay kicks in.

Wine that toasts summer's third season—
time of rose, time of lily both past.
Enter the aster, the mum.

A few anemone buds tight as nipples remain,
and a Clouded Sulphur lights on
a coneflower pulsing her wings

like a miniature star. The woman
my son loves is leaving him.
Nothing to be done.

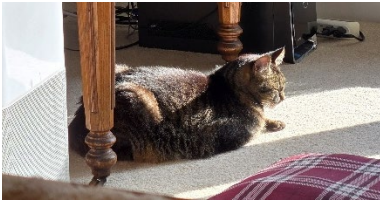


Summer 2026

John Delaney

A Strip of Sun, Please

A strip of sun, please; then I'll close my eyes
and let my body rest and start to doze,
where all my earthly thoughts say their goodbyes.



For different folk there are different skies,
but everyone'd be happy if they chose
a strip of sun. Please, let me close my eyes,

and let my spirits sunbathe as they rise
toward where the shadows live and darkness grows,
where all my earthly thoughts say their goodbyes.

A cat is curious but also wise,
for he always seeks a perfect place to pose:
A strip of sun, please; then I'll close my eyes.

I'd like to ask each man before he dies
how far his strip extends and if he knows
where all his earthly thoughts will say goodbyes.

Time lulls us into waiting; then it flies.
Light lingers in the evening; then it goes.
A strip of sun, please; then I'll close my eyes
so all my earthly thoughts can say goodbyes.



Summer 2026

Michael C. Paul

My Edifice

I'm not worthy of an edifice,
Nor will I ever be:
No lion guards or marble floors
Or columns tall and lean.
But all my life I always wished
They'd build a place for me—
Where, when at last I shuffle off,
My memory might be.

So, take some oak or walnut wood
And build a couple shelves:
A little house upon a tree
Where books can live and breathe.
And tack a bronze plaque onto it,
So when the neighbors come to trade
In Austen, King, or Harper Lee
For Sherlock Holmes or Frankenstein,
Plato, or Shakespeare's plays,
or Du Fu, Frost, or Langston Hughes,
Perhaps they'll see my name etched there,
And for a moment pause,
Then scratch their heads and think aloud:
"Well, who the heck was he?"



Summer 2026

John Bartell

The St. Joe

The pines that rise above the banks of the St. Joe
as it carves its way through the Bitterroot Mountains
are
western cedar
Douglas fir

Engelmann spruce.

A least that's what my brothers tell me.
They also tell me that the river, the St. Joe,
as it carves its way through the Bitterroot Mountains,
is the highest free flowing river in the country.

Which is a fact that,
while not overwhelmingly interesting,
is something to chew on as we land our flies on the water
with serious intent, fingers guiding line that slips downstream
to waiting bull trout.

And I wonder
as I stand on the banks of the St Joe,
the highest free-flowing river in the country,
how long that little tidbit of geological trivia will remain with me.

If in my last moments
I'll be afforded the luxury to recall it,



Summer 2026

or if it will slip
away
beforehand,
like water from a melting snowbank
as it carves the Bitterroot Mountains
under boughs of
western cedar
Douglas fir

Engelmann spruce.

Finding its rest
in the pipes of a town downstream
where a mother lives who doesn't recall
the names

or faces
of her children

but smiles when they hug her
and whisper their love,

which sounds
to her
like the quiet murmur
of ripples in a mountain stream.



Summer 2026

Jennifer Lagier

Fieldhand

Summer vacation from school
means getting out of bed at 5 A.M.,
pulling on tee shirt and cut-offs,
hauling myself into the orchard.

Manuel, my teenage coworker,
shares foil-wrapped fiery habanero
and scrambled egg burritos
dripping red sauce that makes our eyes water.

This fortifies us for grueling hours
moving wooden props that brace sagging limbs,
hauling a water can, driving dad's tractor,
Mack truck, or rickety forklift.

As Mexican farmworkers
move among fruit-laden trees,
they instruct me in rudimentary Spanish,
teach me bad words, obscene phrases.

Side by side, we labor and sweat
in triple digit Central Valley heat,
claw ourselves raw
from filthy wrinkles of peach fuzz.



Summer 2026

Kelsi Folsom

Morning Pages

*Sometimes grace just shows up, huge and bright,
and blinds you to tears.*

—Vinita Hampton Wright, *The Soul of a Writer*

Your hands find a pencil
and begin to speak

to unlearn out-loud the years
of emotional famine.

You tend the pockets
of sawdust in your mind,

unswept panic piling
in the corners.

You've been working
but not very well.

You find your hands
doing the seeing

and your body drinking
light like it's ice-

cold lemonade and you might
die without a sip.



Summer 2026

Laura Rodley

Mister Cat

*a sestina, in the form outlined
by Robert Lee Brewer*

He likes rock and roll, eschews jazz
prefers balled-up paper to dangling string.
A Maine coon, marks defined in fur,
newel posts are where he likes to scratch
sanding away edges of his generous claws,
when holding him, makes sure they retract.

Except when kneading quilt, extend, retract,
lounges in sunlit beams, ignoring jazz
he pokes at our dog, but never with claws,
a gentleman he prefers pennies, not string,
holding him in my arms, rarely a scratch
a purring mass of contented fur.

Willing to share contentment, let you stroke his fur,
but don't wake him up suddenly, must hands retract
if he is annoyed, about to scratch,
must keep us on our toes, all that jazz,
prefers boxes, leaping inside to dangling string,
loves to shred book covers, bills with his claws.

Perfect black marks line his spine, supple claws,
an *M* over his eyes, stripes on his fur,
no lit candles on our tree or tinsel string,



Summer 2026

kept indoors, avoiding danger rather than retract,
keeping him alive, avoiding death, all that jazz
though fishers come close, leave marks they scratched.

Even bears leave sign, a head-high scratch,
nicks in tree bark from spread-out claws;
they come in for berries—thieves—no fans of jazz.
Brambles catch their thick coats, leave telltale fur.
Outside in wild, cat's claws would not retract.
My worry surrounds him, a package tied in string.

Only balled-up paper for our cat, no string.
Under his chin he deigns to be scratched
with a hand mimicking his, extend, retract,
dig in side of his neck, mimicking claws.
He has no need of covers, has his fur,
though burrows under them, avoiding jazz.

No fluting jazz, no dangling string,
only stroking his fur, giving his chin a scratch,
tense fingers like claws while he keeps his retracted.



Summer 2026

Tricia Knoll

Summer's Hope

Love life generously. Watch children move out into new loves and learning. Wear a pink shirt and green pants to a memorial for a woman named Rose. A couple, both in their eighties, post photos of their King Charles Spaniel puppy napping. A famous poet cuddles an iguana. I grab a scintilla of faith that beyond my self-absorbed intent, summer will arrive: June's fireflies and the blood-sucking blackflies that bite at eyeballs. The hickory trees will get in the way of stargazing but shade the sunroom. I'll get up before the sun bakes the day and go to the park with my dog to jog two miles listening to mourning doves and watching dew rise from the soccer field. My vegetable garden with eight varieties of tomato and two of kale will be well weeded and mulched with straw. Pea pods celebrate beginning this season of mock orange, fading lilacs and white dogwood blooms. My Vietnamese-speaking neighbor at the community garden will plant his bitter melon. For reasons I don't know his tomatoes do better than mine.



Summer 2026

Xenia Tran & Vicki Miko

Fleeting

*late summer
we thank the rain
for spurts of green
revealing life
after the wildfire*

*in the garden
as everything blooms
our world seems smaller
and smaller
where love stays evergreen*

*a wooden bench
hidden among nettles
more poems
waiting to be written
before the light fades*

witch grass
smells of dank bark
drawing me closer
he knows by now
I'll be here awhile

if only
in her imaginings
her secret garden
how she knows
it exists

we stop
between the butterfly arbors
one last time
for a salty kiss
our quiet ending



Summer 2026

Judith Sornberger

Sending My Son His Stepdad's Wedding Ring

At eight, you stood beside me as I wed
the guy who would become your truest dad.
Lighting a votive candle by your bed,
he opened worlds inside you as he read.
Stepping up to serve as your den mother
when no moms (including me) would bother.
Making you Gandalf for Halloween,
teaching you to lift weights as a teen.
We traded in gold bands before he died
for new rings etched in intricate designs—
knots and curlicues we couldn't read,
which fit, since marriage is a mystery.
Now you're wed, let all our loves live on,
by wearing it as your wedding ring, son.



Summer 2026

Noelle Sterne

Counsel

What the writer prays for
is the strength to surrender,
to jump into the bog
of the fearsome unknown,
knowing only the bed ever recedes.

But once or a thousand times
the writer approaches the bank,
sways at the brink of unconscious,
tolerates not knowing.

Creativity can't yield to control.
It shrinks from trim fields of logic
and chokes in forced dams of achievement.

It demands one condition: trust.

And once or a thousand times,
the writer discovers
the moment after
the first icy splash—
the fall, after all, is of joy.



Summer 2026

Jeremy L. Rosenberg

Hawk in the Know

Feeling empty
and uncreative, I step onto my porch
(though I suppose it isn't really mine)
and gaze out across

the rain-soaked backyard.
The remnants of Hurricane Teddy are barreling
through Massachusetts,
and the sycamore trees at the edge

of the property are swaying
like tube men. Now I notice a red-tailed hawk
perched in the rightmost sycamore,
staring back at me.

He looks so calm
in his plague mask
and feather overcoat,
his sleek frame oscillating slightly in the wind.

I could make a poem out of this,
I think to myself.
I could ask questions like:
does he get dizzy perched

so high up?
Does he get lonely?
Is he ever afraid of
falling? Does he pine for a mate?



Summer 2026

Through a window, I peer
into the study for a moment
(at the books lined up like privates on the wall,
at the disapproving furniture-generals),

then I gaze back out at the storm and the yard
and the hawk.
Yes—I could make a poem out of this.
I could call it “Hawk in the—”

*No.
That’s not what’s going on here.
Let me tell you what’s really happening.
First, I’m not perched in THE sycamore—*

*I’m perched in MY
sycamore. A man is standing on his porch
(or whoever’s porch it is)
asking stupid questions*

*that I’m not going to answer.
In a moment, he’ll go back
inside to thumb the book-privates
and sit on the furniture-generals—*

*I’m not going anywhere.
Finally, as regards the poem:
if I were the author,
I don’t think I’d call it “Hawk in the” anything.*



Summer 2026

*Rather, I'd call it
(write this down, won't you?)
"The Hawk Who Owned
a Man."*



Summer 2026

Brian Kates

Hands

Not long ago, I returned to
the house where I grew up,
and there it was, my
little boy handprint still
in the sidewalk.

I remembered my grandfather's
calloused grip, how he gently
pressed my hand into the cool,
wet concrete, and it made me think
of the hands of those who
came before me—hands on
the axe and the plow, the wrench
and the rifle stock, hands clasped
in prayer or balled into fists,
hands held over the heart at Ellis Island,
hands that rocked the cradle and
stirred the pot, hands that signed
every letter *with all my love*,
hands that from one generation
to the next plucked the humming
string of hope desperate to find its tune.
Amato poked his finger through the tear. *Lo siento*.
He handed back the shirt and then the photo.
Some things are too old to fix, his face seemed to say,
Some things outlive time.



Summer 2026

Judith Chalmer

Filament

It was there last night in the moonlight,
half-hidden and hanging over the water.

Just a glimmer, a pinpoint, high up
in the branches. I say that I saw it,

but since when has eyesight ever been
sure? Maybe there was nothing.

Maybe it was will, illusion, desperate
hope. A small beak breaks the surface

of the pond. Imagination is bewitching,
I admit it—your large feet dangling

over the bank. We used to walk together.
Eons ago. Was that real?

Soon the fire will conceal the figure
of rock, shimmer, shore. It's not true

that I'm sad all the time. But I wonder
if you were, once, here—

might you have cast something
into the air, a small clue,



Summer 2026

a lure, something
a branch might catch,

or an eye, something sharp,
to hold us close in the unfeeling sky.



Summer 2026

DB Jonas

The Shock of the Familiar

*Nature is like the warden of a lunatic asylum.
It prevents you from being banal.*

—Edouard Manet

The fragments and adjacencies
you set before us all arrived
with some assembly required,
demanded we apply an effort
of our own, a toolkit that,
at first, we didn't know we had,
and so we couldn't help but
greet them with derision, with
hilarity, that release of nervous
energy their notoriety provoked,
their cool disorienting directness,
the absence of a clearly marked
instruction sheet, some handy
roadmap we could steer by.

Alarmed by their frontality,
their frankness, their insolence,
and their apparent lack of guile
(or was it just an absence
of finesse, we wondered?),
your intimate, unsentimental
imagery stared back at us
across a gaping interval, from out
beyond perspective, beyond
our common space, each naked face



Summer 2026

a face unmasked, unmodelled,
bathed in a discrete illumination
all its own, a light it didn't seem,
at first, to want to share with us.

The scandal of those urbane
improprieties, your impudent
departures, your refusal to conceal
the painter's hand, the materials
of construction, the way you hung
your flattened figures in the darkness
of an unreceding space, this all
expressed the substance
of your inspiration, your devotion
to the craft and to the past,
an obeisance to what spoke to you
across the years, across the air,
across the yellowed *vernissage*
of typology, of delicacy and decorum,
and embodied that affection we had
somehow lost, somewhere along the way,
for mystery, carnality, specificity,
an affection for what's there.



Summer 2026

Bethany J. Riddle

Looking for Summer

I looked for summer
and found it—
in my daughter's braided hair.
Each strand
carefully
and thoughtfully
woven together.

I looked for summer
and found it—
in the golden hills
outside our bay windows,
illuminated
by a gentle morning sun.

I looked for summer
and found it—
in the home-made scones leisurely slathered
with butter and jam,
the coffee sipped not chugged,
alarm clocks turned off,
schedules unscheduled.

I looked for summer
and found it—



Summer 2026

in the cherry tomatoes outside our bedroom window,
red and plump and ready to eat.
Our children's small fingers picking and plucking—
their mouths sticky and red, with each bite.



Summer 2026

Drew Brown

The Hidden Poet 3, Continued

The ending of the poem should encapsulate everything that you
love about yourself.

It is the hardest part.

You can only accomplish this through facing your truths and
laying them out for all to see.

There are no lies here.

Here is where you name your angels.

Gratitude, love, acceptance, peace, loving kindness, and the small,
still voice of the divine.

Yes, there is a piece of the divine in you.

These blessings find their way onto the page.

The saga is nearly complete.

The words take center stage.

They dance across the page: interpretive, avant-garde, redemptive
and new.

Some are weeping, others rejoice.

The curtain calls.

The final bow. Deep and long.



Summer 2026

David Anson Lee

The Orchard Keeps Its Ledger in Bone-Light

The trees compute their quiet sums in spring,
Each bud a number bending toward the light;
The branches practice discipline of wing,
And every leaf rehearses how to write
Its brief insistence in the grammar of air
That syllables through green, then slips away.
No fruit arrives without the cost of care:
The blossoms fall like truths we cannot say.
We harvest what the wind has already signed:
Apples that bruise as softly as a thought,
Each seeded with a loss we left behind,
Each sweetness something winter's absence bought.
So, time divides, multiplies, and still persists:
An orchard counting us as we exist.

Biographies

Philip Chijioke Abonyi is the Nigerian-based author of *Chemistry of a Dark Room and Radiation* (Ghost City Press, USA). His awards include: Stephen A. DiaBase Poetry Prize, 2026 finalist; Brigitte Poirson Poetry Prize, 2022 winner; and Eriata Abhobor Poetry Prize, 2019, shortlisted.

Fran Abrams began writing poetry at 73 after retiring as an arts administrator. Her poems appear in journals, 20+ anthologies, and five collections, including *Traveling on the Number Nine Bus* (Kelsay Books, 2025), and the forthcoming *Gathering Memories* (Atmosphere Press). Visit franabramspoeetry.com for more.

Pamela Ahlen is special events coordinator for Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Dartmouth. She is the author of the chapbook *Gather Every Little Thing* (Finishing Line Press) and the co-author (with Anne Bower) of *Getting in Down on Paper, Shaping a Friendship* (Orchard Street Press).

Colleen Alles is a lifelong Michigander and award-winning writer. The author of three novels and two poetry collections, she's also a fiction editor with *Barren Magazine* and an MFA candidate at Spalding University. www.colleenalles.com.

Lana Hechtman Ayers has shepherded over 150 poetry collections into print in her role as managing editor for three small presses. She lives in OR on the unceded lands of the Yaqo'n people, where on clear, quiet nights she can hear the Pacific ocean whispering to the moon.

KB Ballentine has books with Sheila-Na-Gig Inc., Blue Light Press, and Celtic Cat Publishing. Her work appears in journals, and anthologies including *Women Speak* (2023) and *The Strategic Poet* (2021). Website: www.kbballentine.com.

Carol Barrett has published three volumes of poetry, most recently *Reading Wind*, and one of creative nonfiction, *Pansies*. An NEA Fellow in Poetry, Carol has lived in nine states of the US and in England. She currently supervises creative dissertations for doctoral students at Antioch and Saybrook Universities.

John Bartell lives in Aledo, TX and is a past president of the Fort Worth Poetry Society and DFW Writers' Workshop. His poetry appears in *Loch Raven Review*, *Horror Writers Association Poetry Showcases*, *Canyon Voices*, and elsewhere.



Summer 2026

Sean Bentley's collections are *Grace & Desolation*, *Instances*, and *Into the Bright Oasis*. His poems appear in *Mudlark*, *Azure*, *Literary Nest*, and elsewhere.

Joan Bernard resides in Boston, MA. Her poems appear in *The Naugatuck River Review*, *The Book of Jobs Anthology* (ed. Erin Murphy), and *Main Street Rag*, among others. She is currently working on a manuscript about her parents.

Bethany Besteman is a writer and editor who lives in Silver Spring, MD. She holds degrees from Catholic University of America (Ph.D., M.A.) and Calvin University (B.A.). Her poetry appears in *Relief*, *Cable Street*, and elsewhere.

A German-born UK national, **Rose Mary Boehm** lives and works in Lima, Peru. Author of two novels, eight poetry collections, and one chapbook, she has work in many journals. *My Father's Sky*, a full-length collection, is forthcoming with Kelsay Books. Website: www.rose-mary-boehm-poet.com.

Isabelle Bohl began writing poetry upon retiring from teaching. She is a Pushcart Prize nominee whose work appears in *Quartet* and *Glassworks*, among others. Her collaboration poetry book is *Our Various Selves* (2025). She recently moved from the Northern Adirondacks to the Twin Cities in MN.

R.H. Booker graduated from A&M, served as an infantry officer in the United States Marine Corps, and lives outdoors as a wildlife biologist. His poetry appears in *San Antonio Review*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, and others. Profile: www.pw.org/directory/writers/rh_booker.

Andrew Brenza is the author of the hybrid novel *WRYTHM* (Montag) and the visual poetry collections *Colorways* (Anhinga) and *Smear* (BlazeVOX). His poetry also appears in *Strange Horizons*, *Blue Unicorn*, and elsewhere.

Amanda Brown lives in the Sonoran Desert with her family. She is a college instructor and school psychologist who enjoys writing poetry in her scarce free time. She has work forthcoming with Storm Dragon Publishing.

Drew Brown is a chef, a soldier, a small business owner, and founder of a non-profit dedicated to feeding the homeless. Drew lives with chronic, debilitating pain—but he lives, and for that he is truly grateful. He makes his home in Cincinnati, OH, with his wife Debbie, daughter Nina, and their dog Flash.

Paul Burgess is sole proprietor of a business in Lexington, KY that offers ESL classes in addition to English, Japanese, and Spanish-language translation and interpretation services. Recent work appears in *Blue Unicorn*, *Light*, and others.



Summer 2026

Joan Canby's publications include *Frogpond*, *Main Street Rag*, and *Broken Plate*. She has two chapbooks with Assure Press: *Metaxe* and *Cascades*. As a writer, she is interested in comparisons and connections. She tries to integrate her love of language, Chopin, and the natural world with metaphor.

Ute Carson, a German-born writer, published her first prose piece in 1977. Her story "The Fall" won Outrider Press's Grand Prize. Her books include *Colt Tailing*, a novel (2004); *In Transit*, another novel (2008); and *In the Blink of an Eye*, a poetry collection (Kelsay Books, 2023).

Judith Chalmer's second book of poems is *Minnow* (Kelsay Books, 2020). Her poems appear in *Image*, *Rewilding: Poems for the Environment*, and *Queer Nature*. She was a semi-finalist in Orison Books' Best Spiritual Writing Awards.

Ann Chinnis is the recipient of a 2025 Pushcart Prize and author of three poetry books: *Poppet*, *My Poppet*; *I Can Catch Anything*; and *Love Song: Port & Starboard* (Kelsay Books, 2026). She is a retired Emergency Physician and a leadership coach and lives with her wife in Virginia Beach, VA.

Kathie-Louise Clarke is British but lives in Oakland, CA. Her debut collection is *The Scarred Peach Is the Sweetest* (Match Factory Editions, 2026). Her poetry also appears in *Seaside Gothic*, *The Brussels Review*, and *The Orange & Bee*.

Harry Clough is a poet working and living in Edinburgh. His poetry focuses on the exploration of locality and its unique history, voice, and flora and fauna, especially that of Scotland, his home.

John Delaney's publications include *Waypoints* (2017), *Twenty Questions* (2019), *Filing Order: Sonnets* (2025), and books based mostly on his travels: *Galápagos* (2023), *Nile* (2024), *CATechisms* (2025, about his senior cat), and *Morocco* (2026). He makes his home in Port Townsend, WA.

Pushcart nominee **Shaheen Dil** has been shortlisted for the James Hearst and 49th Parallel poetry awards. She has published three full-length collections of poetry: *Acts of Deference*, *The Boat-Maker's Art* (Kelsay Books, 2024), and *Letters to My Younger Self*. Website: shaheendil.com.

Deborah H. Doolittle is author of *Floribunda*, *No Crazy Notions*, *That Echo*, and *Bogbound*. When not writing or editing *BRILLIG*, a micro lit mag, she's practicing yoga and living with her husband, three housecats, and a backyard of birds.



Summer 2026

Barbara Eckroad is a former elementary school teacher with a master's degree in English. She hosts writing groups on Zoom and in her home. She lives in CA with her husband, who writes sci-fi, and her rescued corgi, who does not. Her poetry collection is *Not About the Hours* (Kelsay Books, forthcoming 2026).

Anselm Eme is a Nigerian poet. He is the author of eleven books, including *Whiskers*, *Our Kids and Us*, *Awake Africa!*, *Sages in Pursuit*, and the *Shrieks and Giggles* series. Rooted in African experience but reaching global souls, Anselm's words invite readers into honest reflection and lasting inspiration.

Denise England is inspired by languages, art, and connections. She studied in Bordeaux and holds an M.A. in French literature. Her poems appear widely in the U.S., U.K. and Canada, and her full-length collection, *Gilded Windows* (Kelsay Books, forthcoming in 2027). Substack: deniseengland.substack.com.

Arvilla Fee, from Dayton, OH, is published in numerous presses. Her poetry books, *The Human Side*, *This is Life*, and *Mosaic: A Million Little Pieces*, are available on Amazon. Arvilla's life advice: Never travel without snacks. You can visit her website and magazine: soulpoetry7.com.

Jean Anne Feldeisen is a grandmother and retired psychotherapist living on a farm in Maine. She began writing poetry at 70. Her poetry books are *Not All Are Weeping* (Main Street Rag, 2023) and *South Jersey Sand* (Kelsay Books, 2026).

Terry Firkins is a poet whose work appears in *Ploughshares*, *Crazy Horse* (currently *Swamp Pink*), and many other journals. He is also a painter with solo shows in major NYC, Chicago, Seattle, and Milwaukee galleries, a solo museum show in IA, and group shows throughout the state of WI, where he resides.

Eileen Valentino Flaxman, former singer/actress, is now, happily, a poet. Find her story at eileenflaxman.com. Author of a memoir and three poetry collections, she is most proud of her latest: *The Power of Connection* (Kelsay Books, 2026).

Kelsi Folsom is the author of four poetry collections, including *Beauty Still Lives Here* (Kelsay Books, 2025), and has work in *West Texas Literary Review*, *The Clay Jar Review*, and elsewhere. She enjoys live theatre, thrifting, and hiking with her family. Instagram @kelsifolsom.

Lew Forester is a social worker and poet in Arvada, CO. Author of *Dialogues with Light* (Orchard Street Press, 2019) and *The Rooms Between* (Kelsay Books, 2024), Lew has poems in *Atlanta Review*, *Slipstream*, and other publications.



Summer 2026

David Gilman Frederick is an English and Latin teacher. He currently resides in the Himalayas, where he and his wife Jennifer work at a Christian boarding school. His previously published works include poetry, essays, short stories, and novellas. Besides writing, he enjoys playing music, especially Celtic harp.

M.E. Gallucci writes between water and mountains. She holds an MFA from the Writer's Foundry at St. Joseph's College. Her poetry and prose appear in *Rogue Agent*, *45th Parallel*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, and more.

Kathleen Goldblatt, author of *Our Ghosts Wait Patiently*, lives in RI where she reflects on poetry during walks with her dog, Archie, who faithfully listens. Her poems appear in *The Comstock Review* and *The Ekphrastic Review*, among others. She is a mental health advocate and psychoanalyst.

David A. Goodrum (www.davidgoodrum.com) is author of *Abrupt Edges* (Bass Clef Books, 2025), *Vitals and Other Signs of Life* (The Poetry Box, 2024), and *Sparse Poetica* (Audience Askew, 2023). David resides in OR.

Kathleen Granchelli taught English before transitioning to a career in not-for-profit R&D. Her poems appear in *Mediterranean Poetry*, *PersimmonTree*, and elsewhere. She resides in MA with her husband David Granchelli.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, with work in *Shift*, *River And South*, *Flights*, *Rush*, and *Trampoline*. His latest books, *Bittersweet*, *Subject Matters*, and *Between Two Fires*, are available through Amazon.

Ken Haas lives in San Francisco, where he works in healthcare. His first book, *Borrowed Light*, won several awards. A Pushcart nominee, he serves on the Board of the Community of Writers, and his work appears widely.

Preston Ham is a school psychologist in Washington State. His poems appear in *Braided Way*, *Sybil*, *Abstract Magazine*, and elsewhere. He was nominated for Orison Books' 2025 Best Spiritual Literature Anthology.

Maura H. Harrison is a writer and artist from Fredericksburg, VA. Her work appears in *THINK Journal*, *Ekstasis Magazine*, and others.

Gloria Heffernan is author of four poetry collections: *Moments of Color and Cloud* (Shanti Arts Publishing), *Fused* (Shanti Arts Publishing), *Peregrinatio: Poems for Antarctica* (Kelsay Books), and *What the Gratitude List Said to the Bucket List* (New York Quarterly Books).



Summer 2026

Duane L. Herrmann is an award-winning, internationally published poet, historian, and author, despite an abusive childhood with dyslexia, ADHD; compounded by cyclothymia, an anxiety disorder, and PTSD. Surprised to be on a Kansas farm, he's fond of grass waving under wind, trees, and moonlight.

Tobey Hiller's authored four books of poetry, a novel, and two collections of stories, including *DESCENT IN FIVE (motions)* (Sandy Press, 2026). Her award-winning work appears widely, and she has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Ruth Holzer is author of ten chapbooks, most recently, *On the Way to Man in Moon Passage* (dancing girl press) and *Float* (Kelsay Books). A multiple Pushcart and Best of the Net nominee, she won the Edgar Allan Poe Memorial Prize, Tanka Splendor Award, and Ito En Art of Haiku Contest Grand Prize.

Zachary McLeod Hutchins is Professor of English at Colorado State and author of peripatetic verse. His most recent book is *Joseph: An Epic* (University of Illinois Press). Zachary writes from the streets and trails of Fort Collins, where he lives with his wife Alana and eight children.

Carey Jobe (careyjobe.com) is a poet, classicist, and retired attorney. His poetry appears in *The Lyric*, *Sparks of Calliope*, and elsewhere. When not composing poetry, he enjoys gardening, travel, and writing articles on classical literature.

Connie Johnstone is the author of *The River of Perpetual Departure* (Kelsay Books, 2025). Her work appears in *Amherst Review*, *Gyroscope Review*, *Tule Review*, and numerous other publications. She lives in the Boise Valley, ancestral summer encampment of the Shoshone, Northern Paiute, and Bannock people.

DB Jonas is author of four collections of poetry: *Tarantula Season and Other Poems* (Finishing Line, 2023), *Flight Risk* (Kelsay Books, 2025), *In Dubious Terrain* (Kelsay Books, 2026) and *Ut pictura: New and Selected Ekphrastics 2021–2026* (Kelsay Books, forthcoming, 2026).

Brian Kates is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. His book, *The Murder of a Shopping Bag Lady*, was a finalist for an Edgar Allan Poe Award. His poetry appears in *Third Wednesday*, *Gyroscope Review*, and elsewhere.

Ellen Girardeau Kempler's award-winning poems appear in *Women in a Golden State* (Gunpowder Press, 2025), *Orbis*, and other venues. She is the author of *Fire in My Head / Flame in My Heart: Poems for the Pyrocene* (Kelsay Books, 2025) and *Thirty Views of a Changing World* (Finishing Line Press, 2017).



Summer 2026

Dear Khari is a poet, creator, and entrepreneur whose work centers on healing, and transformation. Through deeply personal storytelling and reflective writing, she explores love and self-discovery. Her poetry collection, *In Full Bloom*, symbolizes the beauty of becoming through life's hardships.

JK Kim is an ambitious student at Virginia Episcopal School in Lynchburg, VA. His interests lie in creative writing, particularly short stories and poetry. During his free time, he enjoys playing golf and pursuing photography as a means of expression and inspiration.

Angie Kinman is a retired teacher and writer in Nashville, TN. She has always been passionate about teaching poetry to her young students; however, it was not until her daughter, who had special needs, passed away on March 2, 2023 that she began to find healing through writing poetry.

Tricia Knoll's *The Unknown Daughter* was a finalist in the 2025 NE Poetry Club chapbook contest. Her other books include *Wild Apples* (2024), about downsizing, and *Checkered Mates* (Kelsay Books, 2021). She now writes mostly prose poems and serves as a Contributing Editor to *Verse Virtual*. Visit triciaknoll.com.

Barbara Krasner is a NJ poet whose recent collections include *Poems of the Winter Palace* (Bottlecap Press, 2025), *The Night Watch* (Kelsay Books, 2025), *Insomnia: Poems after Lee Krasner* (dancing girl press, 2026), *The Wanderers* (Shanti Arts, 2026), and the forthcoming *Memory Collector* (Kelsay Books, 2027), and *The Appropriation of Brueghel* (Shanti Arts, 2027).

Mary Hills Kuck has poems in many journals, including *The Connecticut River Review*, *Amethyst*, and *The Lyric*. *Intermittent Sacraments* (Finishing Line Press) and *Before I Forget* (Kelsay Books) are her chapbook and full-length book, respectively. She has been nominated for the Pushcart and Eric Hoffer award.

Jennifer Lagier has published twenty-five books, including the poetry collection *When We Don't See It* (Kelsay Books, 2026). She edited the *Homestead Review*, currently edits the *Monterey Poetry Review*, and helps publicize Monterey Bay Poetry Consortium Second Saturday readings. Website: jlagier.net.

Donald Laird lives in OR. His poems appear in *The Formalist*, *The Lyric*, and *The Edge City Review*.

Richard LeDue lives in Norway House, Manitoba, Canada. His last collection, *Existential Drunk*, was released from Alien Buddha Press in May 2026.



Summer 2026

David Anson Lee is a TX physician, philosopher, and poet published in *Right Hand Pointing*, *Eunoia Review*, and elsewhere. His work explores memory and transcendence, blending lyrical precision with philosophical and medical insight.

Katie Lowe lives with her husband and children in the south of England and writes poems amongst the detritus of family life. When she isn't writing, Katie enjoys dance parties in the kitchen with her children and trying to drink her tea before it gets cold. Her poems can be found at @katielowewords on Instagram.

Nancy Lubarsky, a retired educator, has work in *Exit 13*, *Tiferet*, and other journals. Her books are *Tattoos* (2014), *The Only Proof* (Kelsay Books, 2017), and *Truth to the Rumors* (Kelsay Books, 2024). Her poetry/film collaboration, *The Mess*, won first place in the ArtsbythePeople 2025 Moving Words Showcase.

Christel Maass, who lives in southeastern WI, enjoys spending time in nature gathering poems. Her poetry appears in *Gyroscope Review*, *Bramble*, *Third Wednesday*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Nemadji Review*, and other publications.

WPSU-FM *Poetry Moment* host, *Presence* assistant editor, and Commonwealth U. professor emerita **Marjorie Maddox** has 17 poetry collections, including *Hover Here* (Broadstone Books, 2026) and *How Can I Look It Up When I Don't Know How It's Spelled?* (Kelsay Books, 2024); 5 children's books; 2 anthologies; a story collection; and a middle-grade biography. www.marjoriemaddox.com.

Nancy Manning earned an MFA in poetry from Southern Connecticut State University and is enjoying her retirement from teaching English classes. Kelsay Books published her chapbook *Absence* (2025).

Carolyn Martin is a recovering work addict who's adopted the Spanish proverb, "It is beautiful to do nothing and rest afterwards," as her daily mantra. She is retired and resting in Clackamas, OR. Her poems appear in 200+ publications around the world. For more, visit her website: www.carolynmartinpoet.com.

Dennis Maulsby's poetry and short stories have appeared in numerous journals, including *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine*, *The Hawai'i Pacific Review*, and *The Briarcliff Review* (Pushcart Prize nomination). His award-winning books include three collections of poetry, two volumes of short stories, and a novel.

Elizabeth R. McCarthy lives in northern VT and turned to poetry when the pandemic closed the world down. She is a member of the Poetry Society of Vermont and the Lockdown Poets (an online Scottish group). Her most recent works include *Hard Feelings* (2024) and *Wild Silence* (2024).



Summer 2026

John Menaghan has published four books with Salmon Poetry—*All the Money in the World*, *She Alone*, *What Vanishes*, and *Here and Gone*—received an Academy of American Poets Prize and six Pushcart nominations, and published in numerous journals, including *Atlanta Review* and *American Arts Quarterly*.

Carole Mertz, author of *Color and Line* (Kelsay Books, 2021) has work in *Friends Journal*, *Oyster River Pages*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, and elsewhere. She is book review editor at Dreamers Creative Writing.

Vicki Miko is a retired television producer turned artist, photographer, and poet. Her poems and artwork appear widely in media, anthologies, and literary journals. She was nominated for the McKnight Foundation Art Award for her gardening workbooks for the JD Rivers' Children's Garden.

Debasish Mishra teaches English Literature in Dr. Harisingh Gour Central University, Sagar, India. A recipient of the 2019 Bharat Award for Literature and the 2017 Reuel International Best Upcoming Poet Prize, he has poems in *Prism Review*, *Arkana*, and elsewhere.

Glenis Moore is a poet who lives in the flat lands of the Fens just outside of Cambridge, UK with her partner and three rescue cats. When she is not writing, she reads, makes beaded necklaces, knits, cycles, and runs 10K races . . . slowly.

Born and raised in the southwestern coastal town of Mangalore, India, **Ranjani Neriya** now resides in MI.

Mary Beth OConnor is a writer, artist, and retired teacher in the Finger Lakes region of central NY. Her poems appear in *Blueline*, *Passager*, and other journals.

Mary K O'Melveny has authored five poetry collections, a chapbook, and a poetry and jazz album. *Flight Patterns* (Kelsay Books, 2023) was an Eric Hoffer Book Award nominee. Her award-winning poems are widely published. Mary lives with her wife near Woodstock, NY.

Carol Park teaches English, volunteers in a jail, hikes, and reads. Her poetry appears widely, in journals such as *Minerva Rising* and *California Quarterly*, and in her collection, *Songs Sharp and Tender* (Kelsay Books). www.CarolPark.us

Kate Parlin has essays in *Pregnancy and Newborn Magazine*, *Redbook*, anthologies of humor writing, and more. She holds a master's degree in Secondary Education and lives with her husband and three daughters in ME.



Summer 2026

Michael C. Paul is a writer, illustrator, and historian in VA. His work appears in *The Amethyst Review*, *The Sunlight Press*, and *The Lyric*. He is a four-time award winner in the 2026 Poetry Society of Virginia annual contest.

Joseph Paulson is a poetry editor of *Months to Years*. He teaches poetry as poet-in-residence of the Institute for Arts in Medicine (I_AM) at USC's Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center. Recent work appears in *The Lyric*.

D Larissa Peters grew up in Indonesia and has been somewhat of a nomad, living in many places, including the East Coast, CA, and now, TX. Her poems appear in *Gotham Literature*, *Spellbinder Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

Darrell Petska is a retired university editor and three-time Pushcart Prize nominee. His poetry appears in *Amethyst Review*, *3rd Wednesday Magazine*, *Chiron Review*, and widely elsewhere. Website: conservancies.wordpress.com.

Elena Lelia Radulescu is a Romanian-American writer. Her work appears in *Visions International*, *Blue Earth Review*, *Evening Street Journal*, and elsewhere. She is a retired teacher and lives in NM. Website: www.elenaleliaradulescu.com.

Bethany J. Riddle is a writer, poet, and educator in the Pacific Northwest. Her writing appears in *Amethyst Review*, *The Prose Poem*, and elsewhere. Find her at substack.com/@bethanyjriddle and on Instagram @bethanyjriddle.

Ron Riecki's been awarded a Dracula Film Festival Vladutz Trophy, Rhysling Anthology inclusion, and a 2022 Pushcart Prize. Right now, Riecki's listening to Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black" on En Lefko in Greece.

Danny Joe Robb is a retired U.S. Air Force Reserve colonel who earned a certificate in fiction writing from the UCLA Writers Extension, and completed their masters' course in novel writing. Website: thenakedpeacock.com.

Jeannie E. Roberts is the author of nine books, including *On a Clear Night, I Can Hear My Body Sing*, a full-length poetry collection (Kelsay Books, 2025). She finds joy spending time outdoors and with loved ones.

Pushcart Prize winner **Laura Rodley**'s latest books are *Counter Point* (Prolific Press), a Legacy Book Awards 2025 finalist; and *Ribbons and Moths: Poems for Children* (Kelsay Books), a 2025 International Book Awards winner.



Summer 2026

Mike Rogers lives in Frome, Somerset UK, where Dissenters have a cemetery all of their own. For 27 years, he taught German Language and Lit at university. A director, playwright, and amateur actor, he has poems in many journals.

Bruce Rogowski lives on Cape Cod in MA.

Jeremy L. Rosenberg is a poet and composer living on the east coast. Jeremy received a Bachelor of Music degree from the Boston Conservatory and a Master of Music degree from the University of Maryland. His poetry appears in *Last Stanza Poetry Journal*, *Gyroscope Review*, and elsewhere.

Carla Schick is a queer activist and educator. Their works appear in *Qu*, *Fourteen Hills*, *beestung*, and more. They received a 2023 Nomadic Press/SF Foundation poetry prize and a 2025 Tom Howard Poetry honorable mention.

Peter Schireson studied at UC Berkeley, University of Victoria, and Harvard University. He has published seven volumes of poems, has trained in Zen in the US and Japan, and is married to the psychologist Grace Jill Schireson. They live in Palm Springs, CA with their small dogs.

Josh Schneyer quit high school and worked as a cabinet maker, chef, opera singer, soldier, boxer, and teacher. Currently, he makes his living as a boxing coach. He has a BA in literature and an MA in creative writing from Boston U.

Chris Scriven writes an eclectic mix of poetry, much of which is inspired by his own lived experience of mental health issues. He is published on both sides of the Atlantic, by journals such as *Orbis*, *Acumen*, *The Lyric*, and *Burning Word*.

Nolo Segundo is the pen name of a retired teacher [America, Japan, Taiwan, Cambodia] who became a published poet in over 270 literary journals in 22 countries, was nominated for the Pushcart, thrice for Best of the Net, and has 4 collections published in trade paperback, the latest titled *THE 'W' POEMS*.

Tushar Sen is a finance professional and writer. He is the author of *Pandora's Box*, a collection of short stories. In 2020, he wrote and produced the short film *Zulfi*, which screened internationally and received 22 laurels across film festivals.

Benjamin Cannicott Shavitz is a writer and linguist who lives in NYC. He has published two collections of his own poetry and an anthology. Visit www.kingsfieldendeavors.com/writing for links to his writing.



Summer 2026

Kevin Shyne has loved poetry since high school, with encouragement and support from inspiring teachers and more recently from a small but passionate group of fellow poets in the Illinois River Valley. Kelsay Books has published two of his books, *The Faith of Fragile Things* and *The Reunion Float*.

Dan Sicoli, an editor with *Slipstream*, has a new collection, *Slag Alley* (Ethel Zine Press). A three-time Pushcart nominee, he's placed poems with *Chiron Review*, among many others. Profile: www.pw.org/directory/writers/dan_sicoli

Jane Simon's poetry has been published in several literary journals and her book *Intimacy, Obstacles & Miracles* was published in late 2025 by Kelsay Press. She writes a Substack, Poet Lair: poet.lair.substack.com@jsimon145 and welcomes readers' comments.

Jefferson Singer is a clinical psychologist in West Hartford, CT and psychology professor emeritus at Connecticut College. His poems appear in *Sixfold* and *Medical Literary Messenger*, among other journals. His poetry collection is *In Common Things* (Shanti Arts Press, 2024).

Raina Siraesa is a writer/poet/artist from the southeast. She takes inspiration from music, video games, daily existence, and the never-ending horrors of life.

Judith Sornberger is author of five poetry collections, including *Sorority of Stillness: A Gallery of Women in Art* (Shanti Arts, 2025). Her seven chapbooks include the prize-winning *Wal-Mart Orchid* (Evening Street Press). Sornberger is also a Commonwealth U professor emerita who lives outside Wellsboro, PA.

Author, editor, writing coach, and counselor **Noelle Sterne** publishes on personal, self-help, academic, women's, aging, writing craft, and spiritual topics. Her book *Challenges in Writing Your Dissertation* helps doctoral students, and her *Trust Your Life* helps everyone, including herself.

Jeanine Stevens studied poetry at U.C. Davis and C.S.U. Sacramento, and her work appears widely. She has 19 books and chapbooks, including *Limberlost* and *Tea in the Nun's Library*, and is Professor Emerita at American River College.

Jennifer Fair Stewart (jenniferfairstewart.carrrd.co) is author of the chapbook *Marginalia: An Interactive Book of Hours* (The Orchard Street Press). Her poetry has won multiple awards, including *Plough's* 2024 Rhina Espaillat Poetry Award.



Summer 2026

Linda Stryker, a retired university professor, spends time with her poetry groups, takes workshops, writes, and plays tennis. She is published in *New Millennium Writings*, *Main Street Rag*, and her chapbook, *Starcrossed* (2018).

Judy Swann is an upstate poet, bicyclist, and mother. Her work includes *Fool* (Kelsay, 2019) and *Stickman* (Jack Young, 2019). She lives in Ithaca, NY and has been busy rewriting Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* as a feminist utopia.

Kevin Swanwick lives in the Hudson Valley where he closely observes nature. His work appears in journals such as *Onager Editions*, *La Presa* (English & Spanish), and *New Millenium Writings*, where it was a 2025 award-winner.

One of **Wally Swist's** latest book of poetry is *Aperture* (Kelsay Books, 2025), regarding caregiving his spouse, Tevis, through Alzheimer's; others include *Huang Po* and *The Dimensions of Love* (S. Illinois University Press, 2012).

Michael E. Theroux, editor. *I Am, therefore I write. If I wasn't, I wouldn't, so when I'm not, I won't anymore. I think.*

Raised on a ND farm, **Loretta Tobin** holds a B.S. in Education from Minnesota State University, Moorhead. A Navy Seabee veteran, her poems explore rural roots, memory, resilience, aging, and the quiet turning of seasons and lives. She lives in Everett, WA, with her husband.

Xenia Tran is a poet, artist, and photographer from the Netherlands who lives and works in the Scottish Highlands with her husband and adopted animals. Her Dutch and English haiku, haibun, tanka, traditional and free-verse poems appear widely, in calendars, on TV, and in print, including two full-length collections.

Eileen Trauth (www.eileentrauth.com) has poetry in her book *Ordinary Time* (Kelsay Books, 2023), and in *Braided Way*, *Common Threads*, *Verse-Virtual*, and anthologies. She lives with her spouse, Kathy Driehaus, in Cincinnati, OH.

Rachel Turney, Ed.D. is an educator and artist located in Denver, CO, on staff at *Bare Back Magazine*, and is a reader for *The Los Angeles Review*. Her poetry collection *Record Player Life* is forthcoming with The Poetry Lighthouse. Website: turneytalks.com | Instagram: @turneytalks | Bluesky: rachelturney

Andrew Vogel listens, walks, and teaches in rural eastern PA, homelands of the displaced Lenape. His poems appear in *Poetry East*, *Valparaiso*, and more.



Summer 2026

Rhett Watts lives with her husband and Siberian cat twenty-five feet from Dark Brook. She facilitates writing workshops in CT and MA. Her poems appear widely. Her books are: *Willing Suspension*, *The Braiding*, and *The Double Nest*.

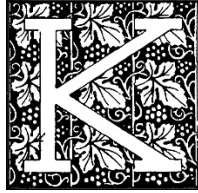
Bonnie Wehle lives with her dog, Tillie, in Tucson, AZ, where she served as a docent at the University of Arizona Poetry Center. She has authored two chapbooks: *A Certain Ache: Poems in Women's Voices* (Finishing Line Press, 2022) and *Little Altars* (Kelsay Books, 2025).

Elizabeth Weir's *High on Table Mountain* was nominated for the 2017 Midwest Poetry Book Award. Kelsey Books selected her second book, *When Our World Was Whole*, for the National Poetry House Showcase. Her work appears widely.

Elanur Williams is a teacher whose writing appears in *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Eunoia Review*, *Door is a Jar*, and *3Elements*, among others. She has taught reading and writing to elementary school students, and to adults pursuing their GEDs. She lives outside of Dublin, Ireland with her husband and daughter.

Henrietta Willimena is the pen name of a nerd with a need for the creative. She finds the pattern typology of lyric poetry as interesting as algorithms for elastic net theory, and more suited for expressing observations of human relationships.

Hildreth York is a poet, art historian, and curator. Poems appear in *Heresies*, *Mudfish*, and *Journal of New Jersey Poets 2026*, among others. Arts publications have covered art of the Ancient Near East to contemporary ceramics and textiles.



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An impressionistic painting of a bearded man with a halo, surrounded by various flowers. The background is a mix of blue, yellow, and orange. The man has a long white beard and is wearing a dark, patterned robe. The flowers are in various colors, including red, orange, yellow, and white.

Winners of the Grantchester Award

Joseph Paulson

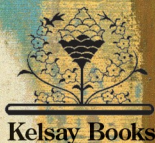
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Pushcart Prize Nominees

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Paul Burgess

D Larissa Peters



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