

# *The Pointed Circle*

Issue 38

THE POINTED CIRCLE 2022 XXXVIII  
Portland Community College  
Cascade Campus

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# Introduction

We have been reckoning with a world that is full of holes, and we cannot deny our grief.

What is a hole? From the Old English *hol*, and Germanic *hollan*; related to Dutch *hol* meaning ‘cave’ and ‘hollow’, from an Indo-European root meaning ‘cover, conceal.’ A hole is a hollow place in a solid body or surface. An aperture passing through something. A small or unpleasant place; an animal’s burrow. Spaces where something, or someone, once was.

Wounds. Openings. *Portals*.

The sciences of epistemology and ontology that concern themselves with the knowing and being of things would ask, is a hole real? Does an absence of matter represent a real space? Can we perceive absence if absence itself is fundamentally immaterial?

We know full well that we perceive the loss we face. We feel it when we are taken from. It is palpable when the architecture of our world does not keep us safe from its elements.

We invite you to consider that grief is the ceremony of reconciling with an absence. Grief is a natural precipitate to the formation of a hole: grief is the remainder of the thing asking what has been lost, and what it will be looking for next.

We as editors-in-grief have humbly assembled this collection of bold and honest creative alchemy forged by our contributing artists and authors as part of their own ceremonies.

Our sincere intention for this edition was to create a portable space to travel with you that preserves the autonomy of your ceremony—that gives story to the so-called absent and the immaterial—that empowers you to seek out the openings, so we can discover together the world we might find within.

With care,  
The Pointed Circle Team  
Spring 2022

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# I GET FRUSTRATED

*Tia Cowger*

reading poems about poems that have the word ‘poem’ in the actual poem. The word disintegrates into frustration, but now I’ve got other things to frustrate about. Watching my mother sleep a Thursday away, or someone unnecessarily commenting on my appearance, or trying to spell the word ‘unnecessarily’ right the first time. About the clocking reading 4:52 and it doesn’t matter morning or night because it’s dark at both in Midwestern November. Or that everything is frustrating when I think too hard or too little, but finding effort to think just the right amount hurts my brain and defeats the purpose anyway. Every time I open my mouth wide enough to fit the words I exhale the suffocating weight of imperfection I always suck back in. I’m frustrated the only poems I’ve been able to write about for over two years all deal with my dead father, yes, even this one. That now I associate the word ‘death’ with peace instead of ‘not yet, not yet’, but still swallow the fear of dying young and unloved whole, but I don’t know how to digest it in a way that will matter. Or that my feet are always cold, and my body is so tired, but I still can’t sleep at night because hope is a black ash stained on my skin that won’t wash out no matter how hard I scrub. This poem has only ten sentences, and they all hurt, and that’s frustrating too.

# YOUR SECRET MY WOUND

*Mary Jo Cook*

A pollywog scooped  
from the pond sent driving  
the green dodge dart  
to set you free  
unaware of birds and bees  
just a pollywog sent driving  
your wheels high centered  
swallowing the cloying  
scent of nausea  
things not spoken  
sitting in the backseat  
clutching a spherical glass  
slushing shame  
my wound  
seeking  
the lost frog

# CORDS

*William Erickson*

little cotton  
heart

i see  
weather-  
rusted edges,

blunt blue  
pent up  
there

My  
caged  
gloves

pinch

rain  
drips

from  
every dead

fall

the way  
dead falls  
in plucks

it plucks  
my harp  
strings

# AS IF, FATHER

*Juanjuan Henderson*

So few and so little you owned,  
but you liked bragging, about what  
you had, or believed what you had, as if  
people would believe you.

Whenever you learned an English word,  
you repeated it to your friends  
on the other side of the ocean, as if  
reciting a winning lottery number.

Out of the blue, you walked up  
to two old men with the baby carrier,  
and showed off your granddaughter, as if  
you wanted to make their day.

We tried to tell you how sick you were,  
but you brushed us off with a joke, and raised  
your glass of wine, as if  
we were all liars.

You made a funny-looking bed for yourself,  
called it “moon,” and charmed us with stories  
of you taming wolves at night, as if  
it really happened.

It was true, though, that you knew how  
to make up a song. But making  
each of us sing it? As if  
we knew what you were thinking.

Also true that, a thick rope tied  
to your torso, you used to pull  
all of us in the Northern snow, as if  
you were a one-man sleigh.

To think that you had that much  
strength still, hauling us  
with all our heaviness, as if  
you were not dying.

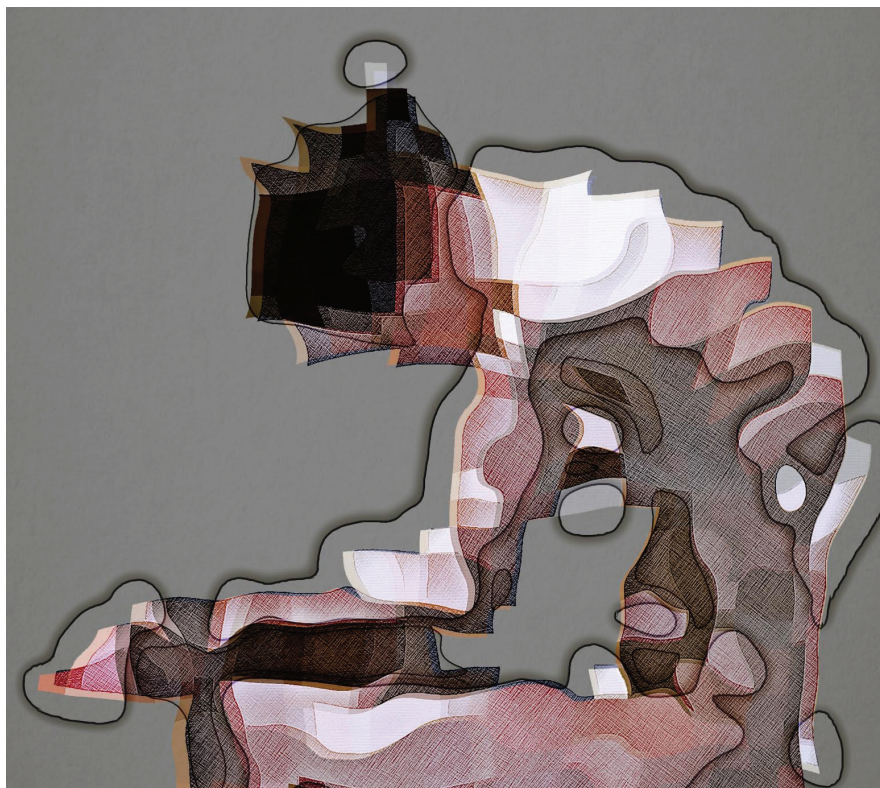
# HOW ABOUT A STORY, FATHER?

*Juanjuan Henderson*

For my father who once killed  
a snake with his bare hands,  
it would've been a duel between him  
and old age. But he bowed out  
with grace—no hard feelings, no chips  
on his shoulder. He just became  
another old man, nothing to expect,  
little to do, except telling faraway  
stories.

On a fine day, he took a walk.  
With brittle bones and a metal  
knee, he balanced himself  
half leaning, half pushing  
his granddaughter's stroller—  
to think he, deft as a carpenter,  
once cut down winter wood  
to make my crib.

He did not like fuss, nor had he  
any use for pity; even his dying  
was modest. If I had come to his room  
for a Hallmark moment, or to convince him  
of some sort of an afterlife, regardless  
of the correct moves, he would've wiped me  
off the short list that might write  
his eulogy. That would've been fine,  
for I could always sing a song,  
or, in the least, tell a story  
about a man who talked like Homer,  
walked like a lion.



**#1244**

*Matt Gold*

# WAITING FOR WORDS

*Brittany Hammond*

My dog is too old to chase birds anymore,  
we sit under cloudless skies and watch them.  
I ask him  
*a cloud never dies but what if all the worms did?*  
*They would go find more* he replies,  
clearly he did not understand my question,  
*they'd go find more* he reiterates.  
What does he know when he can go  
anywhere that I will follow.

The trees had been top heavy a month ago,  
now they have shed last year's apparel,  
waiting for spring to don anew.  
I check my brain for signs of spring,  
it's painted eggshell,  
I dare not walk in there.  
I wonder if we have had a good life.  
*It's had its days* my dog whispers,  
we sit like mugs waiting for our coffee,  
my thoughts grasp for air.



# WHY I HAD TO TURN OFF MY PHONE

*Brittany Hammond*

It's tough to find a mortician who will do house calls for the bodies piled up in your living room. Or the ones under your bed who escaped the screen of your social media because death is now social and must travel. There is always the funeral director who sells caskets for the double the price of Amazon, kid caskets delivered to your door, (assembled for an extra fee.) With so many bodies maybe a death row inmate can come and dig some holes and the priest will always come to your home, speaking hand-me-down words in hand-me-down guilt. I pray to God under the moon and he watches me like an unwanted daughter. Faith is another word for ignorance dressed in flowers and mother's delicate pearls. Either way, I am going to hell and we are already burning. Death still travels with only a trendy carry-on. Sometimes delayed but never canceled. Never is anyone happy to see them but we cannot shut it off - the blood starts to flow through my kitchen.

# BEHIND THE CLOTHESLINE

*Airea Johnson*

My mom called today  
with a mid-year resolution:  
*We need to talk at least  
twice a week because  
I'm not getting any younger.  
When I die, you might regret  
not talking so much.*

& I'm like, Whoa  
where did this come from?  
She always thinks about mortality  
after dad died, like it's so close,  
a murder of crows watching her  
from the clothesline. I can't say  
I don't think about it too.

Every call from my sister  
could be bad news,  
when my mom's phone  
goes to voicemail I imagine  
the clothesline has snapped,  
maybe I'm dramatic.  
No one called me

the night my father died,  
but I know blood dripped  
from the corner of his mouth  
like his body was preserving  
the last bit of guttural consciousness.  
We all wonder what goes through the mind  
of someone dying, & it's always sentimental,

something like *How will my kids go on without me*,  
but I think it's more *Holy fuck I'm dying*–  
or maybe it's lights out one moment  
and screaming your way into a new world  
the next. If that's the case,  
my father would be a toddler.  
All teetering four year old wonder,

and I wish I could hold him.  
Rock him to sleep, read him stories  
about a girl who lets go of a balloon  
too soon, and when he cries  
I'll tell him, *It's okay, It's okay*

# ANOTHER DAY PASSED

*JW McAteer*

In that morning twilight of sleep  
I sometimes hear you breathe.  
Hear you rustle and turn,  
that almost wakeful whisper  
awareness, blooming from rest.

I turn toward you  
to speak, to embrace,  
to know the heat of your skin.  
Our bodies folding together.

My hand slides to you,  
a quiet caress of skin on cotton.  
But absence reminds,  
wrenches twilight into day.  
The linens still taut,  
as a bed freshly made.

I have tried to reclaim the hollow  
where your body once warmed.  
But my mind refuses,  
as though you grumble.  
Pushing me away,  
that playful, sleep-worn moan.

My smile fades,  
turning brown at the edges.  
Fulgent facets of history  
cascade.

Our.  
Our life,  
our children,  
our connection,  
our unstoppable force,  
dismantled by momentum.  
And distraction.

A skidded scar,  
all that remains.

I no longer loathe him  
but I do not forgive him,  
cannot forgive him.

His urgency  
his speed  
him.

You would smile  
for mornings begin as they always have,  
warm soles upon a worn floor,  
groggy steps to the children's room  
though no one sleeps beyond the door.

I sit on their beds  
run my hands across the plush.  
Echoes kiss them awake.  
Their grins welcoming,  
light, into a cornered shadow.

Now, silence greets me  
but the tears no longer flow,  
buried by time  
in the drip of days passed.

I raise the blinds,  
motes ride the air,  
like our children's laughter.  
It warms my heart  
before it burns.

Down the stairs  
coffee smooths the air.  
Your coffee,  
that I never could enjoy.  
Still I sip,  
savoring,  
that supple quench  
of your lips.

Each day I sit at my desk  
not knowing how I arrived.  
Fearing the phone.  
Its hard black edges,  
sinister  
with malice  
and memory.

A phone call.  
A white room.  
Frigid with steel and hot with sound  
but not breath.

Your body, a crimson ruin.  
The children, blurs of flesh  
but for their bright jackets  
and silly socks.

My heart became ash.  
My breath, stone.  
Unable to bear the weight,  
I fell.

Into myself  
collapsing through each day,  
more hollow than before.  
A dying tree  
that still sprouts leaves.

I ask you daily  
how lives become things,  
that can be stolen,  
as though someday  
they might be found.

The answer is shapeless,  
without sound.  
Free of meaning,  
or intention,  
or time.

And so without relent,  
sun dissolves into earth.  
Another day, passed.

Here, in the evening twilight I stand  
motionless,  
in the entry to our home,  
now silent,  
but for my steps alone.



## What's At The Top Of The Sequoia Tree?

*Shelbey Leco*



# TYPICAL BONNIE BEHAVIOR

*Jeff Bond*

Bonnie Passwater wants to play a game. This is typical Bonnie behavior. She sulks all through dinner and then, just as we, her guests, are chasing the last bits of pie around our dessert plates and pretending not to check our watches because we don't want to have to pay the babysitter overtime, Bonnie suddenly announces that no one's leaving yet, there's a game we simply have to play. And everyone will go along because we're seated in such a way that the only possible escape would be to climb over our hostess or vanish into thin air.

"It's called ONE OF..." she says. "I'll write down some subjects on cards and hand them out. If your card says, favorite smells, you have to tell me a story about one of your favorite smells. See? It's easy!"

No, it's sad, because Bonnie only wants an excuse to talk about her dead daughter again. What's *easy* is knowing she'll assign us things like movies that made me cry or books I read twice, and then pretend it's a coincidence when her card says greatest loss and she gets to let her grief hold the floor for fifteen minutes. The whole thing will be all the more unbearable because Bonnie is drunk.

"Hold on, I'll get the cards!" She hops out of her chair and darts into another room. A few of us exchange glances—can we find our coats and run?—but then Bonnie is back with a fresh pack of 4 x 6 index cards and a brand-new Sharpie. Her daughter has been gone for five years. It was an accident at school: Gretchen swung her schoolbag at another girl and missed; the bag kept moving in an arc formation until it made contact with Gretchen's temple. Gretchen had been born with an incomplete skull and the right hit on the head had always been a danger. The schoolbag had a laptop in it,

though actually some said it might have had a hammer. No one knew why she'd swung her bag in the first place.

A grim-looking serving girl, not yet detached from her teens, clears the last of our plates as Bonnie gets the game ready. "Now let's see," she says, pretending to think as she writes on the cards in neat block print. Curiously, Bonnie must have refilled her wine glass when she went into the kitchen to fetch the index cards. She's either too excited or too drunk to notice that our glasses are empty. She sent the bartender home after that serving girl brought out the main course: lamb with asparagus and rice. It was delicious, of course. Now, however, that serving girl has scurried into the kitchen like she's afraid of us or something.

Bonnie talked about her daughter a lot that first year after the incident. But now everything's moved on, and it's understood that Bonnie should allow the subject to come up naturally, or not.

"Here we go!" Bonnie slurs as she passes out the cards. Fran Ringold gets memorable teachers. Chester Burchfield, once a high school track star, gets athletic feats. Milton Clery gets guiding principles—which means he's probably going to tell us about his atheism again. Of course it's all just warm-up for the real act: Bonnie and her daughter. Dianne Talbot gamely describes one of her scariest nightmares, which involves an enormous bird trying to eat its own tongue—which honestly sounds more disgusting than scary. Zak Ringold briefly holds forth on one of his favorite words, which he rather preposterously claims is *interpose*.

Throughout it all, Bonnie listens with a patience that is nothing short of frightening. It's true that her eyes are glassy from the alcohol, as are ours—we didn't really need that last bottle of wine. But we start to loosen up, and Bonnie's game becomes actually enjoyable. Ben Hogan gets reasons i drink and finds that he can't keep himself to just one reason. Mitchell Blankenship offers up his Aunt Ginny as one of his

most embarrassing relatives. “Won’t eat anything with legs!” he says, giggling. “So I said to her, ‘How else is it gonna get itself to the table?’”

“*Eyes*, Arthur,” his wife interjects congenially. “Aunt Ginny won’t eat anything with eyes. Oh never mind—what difference could it make?” And we all laugh. Bonnie, too. It’s been ages since we’ve seen Bonnie laugh.

“What an amusing game!”

“Where did you learn it, Bonnie?”

“I believe our hostess made it up.”

“Did you?”

“How clever!”

“Dianne, it’s your turn!”

“No, I already went.”

“Then whose turn is it?”

One by one, our eyes trend toward Bonnie. She smiles as she arranges the sleeves of her taffeta dress, then slowly lifts her card from its place face-down on the table next to her now-empty glass. For a moment she has us in suspense, as if it’s not a foregone conclusion what’s written there.

The serving girl reappears. She is not a very talented serving girl—good help is so hard to find these days—and she struggles under the weight of a tray loaded with glasses and a dusty bottle of crusted port. For a few moments we forget to think about Bonnie’s card—we’re too afraid of that tray, its contents crashing over Dianne Talbot’s head. But the girl gets it on the table without breaking or hurting any person or thing. Chester Burchfield again volunteers to pour.

Bonnie looks at each of us individually, her eyes finally coming to rest on her glass as Chester fills it to the top.

“Alain and I had the best parties,” she says, in a clear, thrumming voice. “If I do say so myself. Though all the

credit goes to Alain. He loved nothing more than inviting people into his home—this home. *Our home*. Mindy: do you remember the night no one realized the oven wasn't working and the Chicken Marbella came out practically *raw*...? Alain got on the phone and ordered a dozen meatball subs from the pizza place? Oh that was memorable. I wish he were here. He's been gone nine years. Some of you never met him. Meredith: You never met my husband, did you. And you, Mitchell? Is that true? I don't think that pizza place is still there. But there might be something."

She pauses to catch her breath, staring at her drink as if hoping it could jump in her mouth.

"Did you all like the meal?" she says at last. She makes the question sound almost innocent. "And are you enjoying the game?"

Yes, Bonnie. Yes, of course.

At last she reveals her card: unimaginable tragedies, it says. Fran Ringold gasps. Why? We expected greatest loss; it's the same idea, trussed up.

"If it's all right," she says, "I think I'll share a few words." She sounds for all the world like she just now made up her mind for either the first or the last time in her life.

"Today would have been Gretchen's sixteenth birthday." This detail shames us—so eager it is to force us into charity. "The day she was born..." Bonnie hiccups, pretending she didn't. "...she was six weeks early but I already felt she was more *alive* than I could ever hope to be. There's no other way to describe it, is there? She started talking when she was very young, too. Big words. Not just *mama* and *dada* but actual words like *climate* and *herbivore*. She tore through picture books. I remember when she was only two..." — she hiccups again— "I pointed to a page and said, 'D is for Doggy, Gretchen,' and she said, 'Yes, mother, and D is also for *Denver*.' Like she was born knowing things! We'd never told

the girl about Denver! What would we have said? When she got older she loved books. Big books. We were happy. Happy (hiccup) because she was in her room, curled up with her bean bag and her giant stuffed toy dog. *Reading*. Not trying to throw a softball or ride a bike. Because those things might have killed her. She was born with an incomplete skull." Bonnie looks up. "You knew that, yes? I'm not telling you something you didn't (hiccup) already know? Gretchen's incomplete skull?" For what seems like the hundredth time we murmur to Bonnie our fervent assurance.

"In some ways it's a miracle that she was with us as long as she was. Eleven years." She turns away. We expect her to hiccup again but she doesn't. "And today she would be sixteen," she says. "You would think it gets easier, wouldn't you? No—perhaps you wouldn't think that." The question hangs: how long before it's appropriate to nudge Bonnie into her next thought?

"It's hard, so hard, seeing girls her age, doing the things she should be doing now. Going to dances. Noticing boys. For a while I kept up her diary. I wrote in it every day. I read new books by her favorite authors and wrote down what I imagined her thoughts would be. I even invented her first crush! But I stopped. I only knew the girl. I can't know the young woman. I can spin her story out only so far before it starts to feel... *unfair*."

There's a window behind Bonnie's head. If only she would open it, let some air into the room. A release valve.

"I saw her the other night. I did. I woke up she was standing there and she said she forgave me. I asked her what for and she said that true forgiveness is independent of specific transgression. Those were her exact words: *independent of transgression*. I had no idea what she meant but I felt so... *remedied*. *Remedied* is the right word. Isn't it? Or am I thinking of something else?"

The silence that follows is overpowering. None of us is its equal. Bonnie's eyes close and we worry she's asleep. When she opens them, her face does a most unusual back and forth, toggling between the beauty she was and what she is now. For a moment none of us is sure if we want to hug her or step on her like a bug, she's both fragile and terrifying. Then she rises from her chair as if lifted, her face bathed in a soft focus like in an old movie or on television. She beams.

“You all have been so kind.”

# WHAT SHE WANTED

*Lisa Cantwell*

she wanted to be a dancer  
wanted opera gloves  
she wanted to travel the world  
to twirl the umbrella  
to sing in the rain in Spain or France  
she wanted kisses  
wanted surreptitious kisses  
wanted kisses from misses  
wanted surreptitious kisses from misses  
she wanted hits  
she got misses  
she wanted a mister  
wanted the California boy  
wanted California  
boy how she wanted California  
she wanted a trip  
a fantastic trip  
to trip the supermoonlight fantastic  
she wanted superelasticbubbleplastic  
she wanted champagne bubbles and devil-may-care  
wanted featherlight as air  
wanted ocean wind in her hair  
she wanted to be someone somewhere  
to shake the dust off somewhere else  
wanted a different ending  
wanted to start at the bittersweet end  
the land of the living end  
let the end begin

# CLOSING A COCONUT

*by Stepy Kamei*

Listen, I've

Dug my nails into my scalp,  
Cracked it shut as a coconut –  
*shut*  
*shut*  
*shut*

I spent my summer  
Starring as a featured player!  
Performing from the future,  
Live from the loony bin, again.  
Credits, roll. So I  
Can forget the

*shut*

I've grown to distrust the  
Musk of beer. No, let me lie in a  
Casket of cocktails instead.

Now, soaked in hibiscus cheer,  
I cannot recall the  
Absurdity of the stage.

I cannot recall  
The errant ghost I once called an acting career.

*shut*



I ask to be berated  
On the condition that it be done  
By lilac tongues.

*shut*

And every time, my  
Brain cracks closed.

And every time, I  
Remain surprised

By the enormity of the echoes.

They loop themselves *shut. shut. shut.*



*Rachel Coyne*



*Rachel Coyne*

# NOW

*Sarah Garrido*

Now the hardest part: exquisite second bloom,  
the roses suddenly reviving.

I turn to show you another  
sunset trembling the sky  
into fiery orange, and bright pink,

sunset I want to put in your eye.

Open the sockets again,  
see the things I see.

But the phone rings by mistake.  
Onslaught of dust, stacks of belongings,  
you in the chair, now not, a missing  
litany of questions, driving soundlessly by the static sea.

The hardest part does not cease, but lessens by degree.

Now: sparrows swooping into any here without you, now  
not knowing what you would finally say.



# JINGLE BELLS

*Lio Jones*

**M**y finger traces along the collar of her onesie and I wonder if she would have grown up to love me. If she would have seen the pure love I have for her, even now that she is gone. Would she have grown up with confidence in her heart and a fire in her belly that no one could dowse? I wonder about her and I can feel my own heart breaking. Small splinters of who she could have been, are stabbing into my chest wall. I finish folding the cotton newborn onesie and place it next to the pile towering over me.

His jeans now demand my attention. Course blue denim and warm copper-colored buttons. Warm like the smiles he gave me when we were young. Before we were married and before he left. I fold the pants in half, then slowly fold the legs in on one another. Each fold leads to a harder one. Stiff material not wanting to budge and my shaking fingertips are now fighting to finish the job. When she died so did we, his mind stiff and set on destruction. My shaking fingertips begged for his to hold me.

Black lace snags on my callused hands, dragging its way out of the fabric grave that has been living on my couch for over a year. A bra that has been long forgotten, one of the clasps clinging to the lace trim of a blouse. Both mine and both from such different times in my life. My stomach flips and turns as I unhook the two.

The bra, a Valentine's gift from him. Not my husband but the man who wishes he was. The man I let unhook this bra, the one who forced me to. The lace is snagged and holes have formed in the pattern from the years of wear. This bra was my husband's favorite. This bra made me feel like trash.

The blouse was deep black silk with black lace trim. I have only worn this once and it was in the rain. Cold September rainfall fell on the crowd around me. We had all let the rain soak us, cause if our faces were covered in droplets no one would know we were crying. I wonder if she was crying. If she somehow could tell what was rain and what was tears. I think God was crying with us that day.

One too many cocktails fill my mouth's memory as red spaghetti straps catch my eyes. *Jingle Bells* replacing the sound of the busy street. The grey shirt I'm wearing morphs into his hands, grabbing, pulling, pushing. My husband in the living room with the rest of our coworkers. I pull at the straps, a familiar feeling for this dress. Spaghetti straps, form-fitting, and at the knee. A dress my husband bought me. I hold it up to examine it like a crime scene. Red like the blood that runs in my body, like the bloodshot eyes that stared down at me. I won't fold this one, I can't fold it. I place this dress on the hardwood floor, I'll use this to sweep the dirt up later.

Blankets and sheets make the bulk of this mountain. Queen sized floral sheets my mother gifted me on my wedding day, throw blankets for the guest room, and a knitted baby blanket my mother-in-law made.

The Sheets are a lost cause, stained and ready to meet their maker. Failed acrobatic coffee drinking has left a soft brown stain on the corner. The once purple flower pattern now looks wilted and ready for compost. Small memories, a happy life shattered by one red stain on the left side. It was a spontaneous miscarriage that woke me up in the middle of a warm early fall rainstorm. Blood pooled underneath me as the life I desperately wanted slipped away. The doctor said there was nothing we could have done. She had left and taken the beauty out of those purple flowers. I wonder if she knew the truth? If she knew the man that had brought her into my womb? Would she like Christmas music and black

lace? Would she know the man that would raise her would know nothing of this violation? That he would love her and sing *Jingle Bells* to her every Christmas. He would hold her close in her cotton onesie and rock her back and forth. Her soft body cradled in his jean covered lap. Would she know how scared I was when I saw that little pink x? Would she love me if she knew I begged God to take it back and I cried when he did?



# Ink on Paper

*Cynthia Yatchman*



# RECAST

*Alison Lubar*

Once again I welcomed  
a damp shirt pressed against me  
rebounded from fitful swirling pit  
and power chords. Silver is slower  
than gold, longer to liquidize, less  
fragile, but still soft .975 and imprints  
your hair on a pillow, the first  
in this new bed.

I had a home in you as a cardboard box  
under a blue-tarp sunshade. I would lick  
each syllable from your nicotine fingers  
and you hold my hip in our last goodbye.  
See you sometime at some show. I'll wait  
for the train alone. You were stoned every  
moment. It matters who you save your words  
for, who you want to immortalize. Dust to dust,  
baby. Crumble your ash, smudge the cigarette  
on the entryway brick, call this last night anything  
but sterling.

# MOM

## *Winter Snow*

people always tell me i'm doing my best  
you're doing your best, don't worry  
but how can i not worry  
when doing best has become  
rolling out of bed and putting on a fresh shirt  
my best use to be dreams  
i believed i could do anything  
but now, i can't do anything

but my mama she so proud  
and I don't understand why  
i wish she wouldn't fuckin say it  
always telling me how proud she is  
she told me,  
i'm so proud of you  
the way you acted when your dad died

but mom if i'm honest  
i was only so strong because I am so numb  
so numb that I can't move  
i've been depressed as fuck for three years  
becoming so numb from failing everything I started  
always saying I can do that and I'll do this  
but never do, and I never did  
you stood strong and were there for me

so i become so numb so that i don't feel  
so that i can survive, and i don't feel so  
i do not kill myself at the end of the night  
but you're still proud of me

and i wish you wouldn't say it  
but it would feel worse if you said that you weren't  
so how about we just stick to  
hi and i love you  
until the day i can tell you, i'm proud  
i'm proud of the person i've become  
but i love you ma, thanks for being proud

# DAD

## *Winter Snow*

we had nothing in common  
i had nothing i wanted to share  
art was your life  
i thought it could never be mine  
now i cry as i write  
because all i want to do is share with you  
my new passion of words and rhymes  
you could illustrate them for me  
make them father and son poems  
we would have had something we shared  
i would have sent them to you as soon as i finished them  
excited for you to read them  
and make you proud that i'm doing something i love

i'll never have those moments  
you're gone, i miss you  
so i write this to be with you  
i pretend i'm going to send this to you  
and you'd be able to see how much i love you  
i pretend the feeling of the tears on my cheeks  
is your hand that i held as you passed  
i wish you were here

# NO ROOM ON MY PALLETE

*Güzide Ertürk*

Nothing happened to me, William.  
The blood is fake;  
a couple of days ago, with a coupon,  
I went to a shop. Do you believe, William,  
on a crumpled paper was written fifteen percent off?  
I touched the horsehair brushes with my fingertips;  
perhaps they were synthetic.  
Either nylon or polyester, they were cheap. But I chose the  
thickest.

A painter whispered, "round sixteen."  
He wanted to tell me that he loves to paint  
the leaves with it, but I didn't care.  
While he was spinning in the air  
his right index finger, he wanted to say,  
he loved to mix the colors-  
but couldn't complete the sentence.  
His words and finger were in the air.

Round sixteen and red-  
let it flow a little,  
then ventilate the room.  
Don't be so afraid.  
A feather and a bit of wind.  
There is no room on my palette for more.

That's why, William, I paint henna on my palm.  
Tiny veins run throughout and crisscross each other.  
If I showed my palm to a fortune teller,  
who knows what she would say.  
Come on, William,

when you wash your hands with water  
a few times, with patience...

Oops! Be careful. What was I saying?  
When you wash your hands,  
it all goes away, mingling with the water.

# KRISTIN

*Lisa Delan*

There is rice in your hair  
and we are laughing;  
your seat backs up  
to the window where  
the sun washes your red highlights  
(under which there is surely more rice)  
and we are solving life.

Three conversations  
(which all happen to  
be taking place at once) unfold,  
our secret language indecipherable,  
the chattering of seagulls,  
arms sweeping the room.  
We are loud.

I am not conscious of myself,  
in this depth there is only the  
current and who can say which  
one of us moves it?  
We are bobbing  
beyond the swells,  
blissfully untethered.

But you drifted too far,  
and I cannot hear you  
hiding in the stillness;

now my words rise  
damp and hollow,  
condensing  
on my cheeks.

I lift my fork in silence,  
moving against the weight  
of remembrance;  
I pause to brush my  
hair from my eyes,  
and feel the rice  
stuck in my bangs.

# ZHENGIE

*Lisa Delan*

Zebra leggings, red boots,  
motorcycle jacket,  
a burst of laughter -  
your eyes rush to me  
like kids bounding out the door  
on the last day of school,  
a force, and a balm.  
This is how I found you,  
Zheng, on the steps  
that first time.

In my memory the sun  
is holding you  
(though that summer swam  
in fog), and you dance  
towards me (but how, down  
those narrow steps?).  
We talk in dreams and worlds  
as if we had bumped into one  
another after a long absence,  
or had just saluted the sun  
and poured tea that morning  
in our slippers;  
your words are adventures  
waiting in the wings,  
operas and weddings and  
children... your words paint  
circles within circles  
and I am right  
in the middle with you.  
I will learn that  
everyone you touch



feels that they sit  
in the center of your  
world - and for each  
of us, it will be true.  
There are no constraints  
to the room you  
have made in your heart.  
My inimitable friend,  
I will miss seeing life  
through the window of  
your eyes,  
the fog peeling itself  
from the sidewalk  
as we sit on the steps.  
And I will know  
when I feel the sun  
warming my hair  
that you are the rays  
that touch me still.

# ANOTHER TURN AROUND THE SUN

*Lisa Delan*

When I met the world on this day  
(when my mother carried half  
the years I hold today),  
my welcome was shaped  
by the fatal fall of Camelot,  
its dreams taken to the sea on  
the waves of pirate radio,  
on the receding footfall that  
had marched for freedom,  
and the hard rain that would rend  
a stone wall while fecund smoke gave  
rise to acres of swaying souls.

The whole of the world rested  
in my mother's arms with me  
(I did not hear the songs of  
half a million strong);  
her arms sang to me of  
only this moment where  
promise is born.  
Later there'd be time enough  
for this business of being human,  
in which we are torn and meliorated  
and have to find our way home.

Now that my mother's song has  
joined the wind, I understand that  
she did not hold the world for me -  
she held me for the lost  
and broken world,  
so that on my way home I might

lend my voice to hers,  
lend my voice to  
all the songs raised up  
to mend the world.

# DIAGNOSTIC

*Caleb Bouchard*

A woman woke up one morning with a lump in her armpit the size of a tennis ball. The lump had a funny feeling about it, tough and fuzzy. She told her husband about the lump in her armpit the size of a tennis ball, concluding, “Maybe it really is a tennis ball.” Her husband said, “Could be. You know Roy, from church? They found a softball in his shin a few days ago. It was in the weekly newsletter.” The woman drove herself to the doctor, who examined her with skepticism. “Tennis balls tend to be over-diagnosed,” the doctor said with squinty eyes. “Most likely, it’s a golf ball, or a clementine. Let’s do an x-ray and get to the bottom of this.” A nurse led her into the x-ray room where a technician provided the woman with a lead apron. As the woman put on the apron, she remembered how she and her husband played tennis on an almost daily basis, early on in their courtship. They were energetic then, tanned and thin. Their skin was dewey and blemishless, their parts weren’t wrinkled, didn’t swing and sag. They could barely take their hands off each other, they were so filled with verve and vigor. The same couldn’t be said today. She missed those times. As the technician ran the test, the woman tried to push the doctor’s doubtful comments out of her mind. She hoped with every fiber that it was in fact a tennis ball in her armpit. *Please, God, she thought, I’d do anything for a tennis ball. Not a golf ball or a clementine or a softball. A tennis ball! That would mean the world...*

Back in the examination room, the doctor showed her the scans, which clearly showed a gummy bear lodged in the hollow under her arm. “My goodness,” the doctor said, wide-eyed and chuckling with amazement. “I’ve only seen

a handful of these in my career. What a treat! Something to show the kids, eh?” The woman didn’t bother to explain she and her husband did not have children, and even if they did, they would have much preferred a tennis ball, or at least something that didn’t soften and melt under the scorching heat of the sun, turning into useless goo.

# MAKING THE ROUNDS

*Caleb Bouchard*

A pinecone floats through space, lost and alone. It goes over to Jupiter's house to say hello. Jupiter is away on business. The pinecone pops over to Mars to see if she has plans tonight, but Mars is burning with rage after an argument it had with Venus. It's clear to the pinecone the two planets need some time alone. The pinecone carries on, orbiting over Earth. Even though the pinecone has no memory of ever having been to Earth, there's always been a vague attraction to the luminescent planet. Earth and the pinecone have always seen each other as *just friends*, but now the pinecone wonders if there might be some potential for something more. At any rate, the pinecone feels it has endured enough rejection for one day. Perhaps it will try again the next time it's in the neighborhood. The pinecone doesn't want to appear desperate, after all.

Now, the pinecone not only feels lost and alone, but also exhausted. It decides to stop off at a motel on the moon. Through a shroud of hazy cumulus clouds, Earth flashes a little wink as the pinecone drifts on towards the VACANCY sign.



## Lost

*Cormac Power*

# LOUIE

*David Davis*

We had many choices that day.  
Bitsy - small, cute, and sweet.  
Gully - a giant, handsome, and alert.

But it was you who caught our eye.  
You'd been there too long - wanting, needing  
freedom.  
We picked you, maybe you picked us.

Spaniel, they said. Louie's a good boy  
who needs a good home.  
Our family of two was then three.

You settled in, and our friendship began.  
Friendship quickly became love.  
You required little, kibbles, an occasional  
pat on the head, and a chance to run.

Arkwright, your favorite park.  
A flash of relentless pleasure, hurtling, bounding.  
You loved to run.  
Oh, how you loved to run.

Cramped, yet contented  
in the back of our small car, you ever patient  
as we headed west.

Minnesota snow turned to Arizona sunshine.  
Chasing squirrels gave way to hunting lizards.  
Protecting mom, her garden buddy.

Then it was time you had a friend,



she came gift wrapped at Starbucks.  
Denni, a little sister for you.

She took your bed, your pillow,  
you freely shared our home with her.  
Friends, big brother pretending she was alpha,  
but we knew better.

A calm gentleness, giving ease as you always did.  
Years passed.  
Your eyes grew dim, age came to you  
as it comes to all.  
Knowing it was time to say goodbye,  
we wept.

And now you are gone.  
How right they were. You were a good boy.  
You were a very good boy.

Farewell, old friend.

# THE WAY OUT OF THE HOLE

*Stuart McKenna*

I was nineteen when my life took a terrible turn. Brought on by a lack of accountability along with my inability to deal with my childhood trauma, I ended up homeless on the streets of downtown Portland. At first it was exciting to say “fuck you” to the world, and doing what I wanted to do and living the way I wanted to live. However, it wasn’t long until I was introduced to a drug I’d never heard of that changed my life forever—Crystal Meth.

My head was throbbing, my body was shivering. The smell of rotting orange peels filled my nostrils. The feeling of cold concrete stretched along my whole body as if I were laying naked on the floor. My eyes struggled to open as they tried to adjust to the light. Finally, after blinking several times, I began to realize where I was. A jail cell. I was indeed naked except for my underwear. As I tried to raise myself up, I felt my skin sticking to the cold pavement floor. I slowly stood up, my head throbbed as the blood rushed to my brain. What the fuck is going on, how did I get here? I wondered.

It turns out that the night before I was in the process of getting released when I decided to mouth off to a guard. That was a bad idea. From what I was able to put together, two guards had grabbed me, dragged me down the hallway to a holding cell, picked me up off my feet, and threw me down onto a concrete slab in the holding cell. Mind you, I had been on a yearlong drug binge and was maybe 170lbs, with clothes on. As I lay there, helpless, one of the guards jumped on me and punched me so hard my head bounced off the concrete. I lost consciousness. They stripped me to my underwear and dragged me off to the hole.

After a day or two, I had an administrative hearing, which is an in-house hearing in the jail. It's done over the intercom that's in each cell, where there is no judge, just a sergeant who hands down your discipline for infractions while in custody. They sentenced me to six months hole time on Level Five, which is the highest level they can give, as they claimed I had assaulted a guard while being dragged to the holding cell. This is why I was thrown on to the concrete slab, assaulted, and knocked unconscious. This is complete bullshit—they'd pinned my arms to my sides while dragging me to that holding cell. I may have mouthed off, and said some things that I probably shouldn't have, but these guards were easily two or three times my size. I knew better than to actually fight one. The reality was, every time I was in jail, I was terrified of what could happen to me.

So, there I was in solitary confinement, where I was going to spend the next six months. I was in a state of shock for the first few days. The cells are small in solitary, maybe six feet wide by ten feet long. In it you have your toilet/sink, a long concrete bench that acts as a table, and one concrete slab with metal on top for your bed. There are no bars like Hollywood portrays, just a door with a tiny window and a slot for them to slide your food through. There is zero human contact, and no window to see the world. Just a small, cold, lonely room.

I soon realized that there were only three things to do in the hole that kept my mind occupied enough that I wouldn't go crazy: sleep, read, and write. When I'd finished detoxing from the drugs, sleeping all day was no longer an option. I had to find something else to do, so I read. It was boring. I didn't have the ability to sit still long enough to read a book and my attention span was all over the place. My mind raced frantically through all the mistakes I had made and what my life was like because of them. I had to get the thoughts out of my head; I had to find an outlet, a way to get free of the barrage of guilt and regret. I had to get out of this place.

I was allowed out of my cell for fifteen minutes each day to shower or make a phone call. None of my family wanted to talk to me after who I'd become, so shower it was. One day when I got out of the shower, I noticed a stack of paper sitting on top of a desk, and it dawned on me that I used to write, write a lot. It was my therapy, my escape from the thoughts and feelings that tormented me. I asked the guard if there were pens to write with, and he reached into a drawer and handed me a box of pencils. In jail they do not give you full sized pencils, but pencils that have been cut down into thirds and sharpened just enough for the lead to be useable, just like the ones in convenience stores used to fill in the circles on a lottery ticket.

That night I started writing. At first it was so hard; I had so much in my head that it was all coming out unorganized and out of place. I kept getting angry, ripping up sheets of paper or crumpling them up and throwing them against the wall, even yelling in frustration. However, sure enough I started feeling lighter. Suddenly the lights went out—I had completely lost track of time. But I wasn't ready to stop, and right above the toilet, there is a light that always stays on at night for room check, so I sat on that cold metal toilet for hours, writing and writing. At one point I started crying and could not stop. As tears streamed down my face and onto the paper I was holding, my pencil made holes in the spots that had been soaked with the water streaming down my face. That night I wrote until my eyes were so tired that everything blurred before me.

Waking up in jail every morning was really hard to get used to. It always started the same way.

Bang! Bang! Bang! "McKenna! Get up! Breakfast!"

It always took me a good minute to remember that I was in jail as I dragged myself off my bunk to grab the paper bag full of non-human consumption grade food and a milk carton. I

placed the food on the concrete slab that acted a table and lay back down. As I lay there, I noticed my head was a lot quieter than it had been. I did not feel weighed down by regret and guilt, and in that moment, I woke up. It was the writing. It was something I had forgotten about that had helped me so much when I was in high school.

When I was released from jail, I spoke to my mother about how much writing meant to me and how much it helped me with me while I was in jail. She went out the next day and bought me my first journal. I still have it. Since then, I have always kept a journal.

Writing has been my way out. Out of the darkness that consumed me to the point of homelessness, to the point of putting a needle in my arm, to the point of jail. Writing has given me a voice when I felt I could not speak. It has given me freedom from active addiction and given me an outlet to the negative thoughts that often have consumed me and tried to drag me back. Writing has given me something that nobody can ever take away from me. It is all mine. It has no boundaries or restrictions. It is free, and so am I.

# I CUT OPEN A GRAPEFRUIT WITH MY HOUSE KEY

*Domino Cadieux*

remembering a time when i was less afraid  
of changing

before we were swallowed  
by work by worry

times when i really believed that *forever*  
was a solid state

where you and me  
*you and me* – it was infinite

*wasn't it ?*  
until it wasn't.

the sky makes new gold above me  
i feel suspended. heavy.

a ball of wreckage  
tethered to the bottom of the ocean

unsure of where i'll splinter,  
of what will fill me next

empty as the air that leaves me

# DRIVE LIKE YOUR KIDS LIVE HERE

*Lyndsey Weiner*

.com is where you can buy eponymous signs  
to put on your lawn

most of them cost between 12 and 20 dollars  
they are for my neighbor who is 25

and his friends but also for the mail lady  
who won't even slow down unless she sees the flag up

I recently learned that the Toyota unintended acceleration crisis  
was just people thinking they had their foot on the brake

while they mashed the gas pedal toward oblivion  
I come home in the afternoons to the donuts my neighbor  
has carved

into our dirt road with this or that vehicle even though  
his brother died last year, pinned under a car driven by his girlfriend

who was so drunk she didn't call the police  
for hours, I couldn't understand why everyone stopped

at the open casket in the receiving line  
like that bloated, gray-faced boy could hear what they were saying

*I always knew I was going to lose him*, his mother  
told me that evening  
she has three boys, I only have one, I can't play those odds, still

driving home sometimes  
I step on the gas and fly down my road with my seatbelt off

gravel clicking away at my undercarriage like a deranged typist  
hoping nobody sees

# STEPHENVILLE

*R.J. Lambert*

Many moons ago, a boy in a toy car  
in a real yard hit a real bar  
with his head. They said  
it was a question of supervision.  
Mary who hung the moon would soon  
find out there are at least two kinds  
of freedom. On one hand,  
the preventable event.  
But ever after, & even though  
you only ever lose what you once had,  
you may choose to lose your mind,  
to check that empty box for fun.  
Or might you choose to search  
the lost & found for someone  
else's prized possession? For some  
abundances, undone, shock like a star  
begun or pock the moon unspun.  
There's no one way to lose a son.



# NEAR-EARTH OBJECTS

*R.J. Lambert*

Nights awake, the porchlight  
blooms with moths,  
an orrery alive with wing beats.  
The yellow light reaches me moon-like.  
Also like a boyfriend, going steady.  
All our dreams were grand. But, at dawn,  
a desert wind is on the sand.  
The dark inferno revving generations  
of warm gusts. In this new light,  
the proof of planets dusts  
my fingertips. Do you feel it  
in your guts? Indifference. A different  
wind blows here & I'm allergic to it.



# Fishing

*Celia Estelle Paglin Luce*

# WHEN A CROW DIES

*Celia Estelle Paglin Luce*

They gather around the body

I was just talking to him last week

They seem to say to each other

They call out a warning

They sing a song

Survival is war

Survival is war

The ending of things

Is the carrying on

# POSTPARTUM

*Amy Katherine Cannon*

After the parting,  
the terrible separation  
that saves us both  
from lingering too long  
as one entity—one identity,

painfully cleft, no matter  
how: there's a kind of brutality  
to it, a nearness to loss  
in bringing forth life,

a certain shade of holy about it,  
penumbra of all our days  
in the blood and shit and water,

the very teeth of the thing  
the passing through one by the other

life and death together,  
the wrack and the wring.

# CONTRIBUTOR BIOS

**Jeff Bond's** stories have been published or are forthcoming in the Carolina Quarterly, Sequestum, and Bridge Eight. He lives in New York City, where he was for many years a staple of Manhattan daylife as a Happy Hour bartender. He serves as a reader for The Masters Review and creates and edits video, which can be found on his website, [jeffbond.nyc](http://jeffbond.nyc).

**Caleb Bouchard** lives in Atlanta, Georgia. His writing has recently appeared in *As It Ought To Be*, *The Atlanta Review*, *MORIA*, and *Thimble Literary Magazine*. Find him on Instagram @calebbouchard.

**Domino Cadieux** is a singer, multi-instrumentalist, queer freak, and activist based in Portland, OR. Their work is highly informed by music, memory, and the fluidity of identity and place. Over the past two years, their work has grown to reflect adaptive qualities of isolation, both beneficial and painful, as well as what at times feels like limitless stillness against a backdrop of relentless anxiety.

**Amy Katherine Cannon** is a writer and writing teacher living in Los Angeles. She received her MFA from UC Irvine and is the author of the chapbook "the interior desert" (Californios Press) and the mini-chapbook "to make a desert" (Platypus Press). Her work can be found in *Bone Bouquet*, *LETTERS*, *LIT*, and *Rock & Sling*, among other places.

**Lisa Cantwell** is a freelance theatre educator and a recent graduate of the MFA in Writing program at the University of San Francisco. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Ponder Review*, *december*, *Welter*, *The Pointed Circle*, *Underblong*, *High Shelf Press* and *Beyond Words*. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and is the winner of the 2022 Jeff Marks Memorial Poetry Prize.

**Mary Jo Cook** is from the Lost Coast of Northern California. A graduate of Pacific Northwest College of Art. A painter of imagined scapes, made a career in the world of food before retiring into poetry. She calls Portland, Oregon home.

**Tia Cowger** is a graduate of Eastern Illinois University. A poet at heart, her work has been published in *The Examined Life Journal*, *Gone Lawn*, *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *The Coffin Bell Journal*, *Passengers Journal*, and *Wild Roof Journal*.

**Rachel Coyne** is a writer and painter from Lindstrom, MN. Her books include *Whiskey Heart*, *The Patron Saint of Lost Comfort Lake* and the YA series *The Antigone Ravynn Chronicles*. Follow her on Instagram @imrachelcoyne.

**David R. Davis** is a retired social worker and therapist who now writes fiction and poetry. He has published two novels - *Running In*, *Walking Out* and *The Unusual Man*. David's poetry has been published in *Monsoon Madness*, the *Oro Valley Writers Forum Anthology*, Volume I, and his short story *A Love Supreme*, *Redux* in the *Running Wild Press Anthology of Stories*, Volume 5.

**Lisa Delan** is a classical soprano specializing in American Art Song; performing, recording, and commissioning musical settings of an expansive range of poetry. She has recorded extensively for the Pentatone label and can be heard on Apple Music, Spotify, YouTube, and other streaming platforms. Her poetry appears in *Beyond Words Literary Magazine*, *Mill Valley Literary Review*, *Wingless Dreamer*, *Viewless Wings*, *Tangled Locks*, *Cathexis Northwest Press*, and *Lone Mountain Literary Society*.

**William Erickson** is a poet and memoirist from Vancouver, Washington. His poetry appears or is forthcoming in *West Branch*, *Heavy Feather*, *Bear Review*, *The Adirondack Review*, and numerous other pubs. He is the author of a chapbook, *Monotonies of the Wildlife* (FLP)

**Güzide Ertürk** was born and grew up in Istanbul, Turkey. She is a storyteller, who currently lives in Portland, Oregon, and studies Creative Writing at Portland State University. She has published four collections of short stories in Turkey.

**Sarah Louise Garrido** is a poet and creative copywriter from the San Francisco Bay Area where she lives with her husband and two young children. She received her MFA from Saint Mary's College of California in 2010.

**Matt Gold** is based in Brooklyn, NY, where he divides his time between music and photography. As evidence of the democratizing nature of his approach to photography, Gold has no formal training in the visual arts. His first image, a picture of his cat on a Sony Ericsson Z310A flip phone, was taken in 2008, and he has continued to explore the aesthetic possibilities of that instrument. Gold's work has been featured in numerous publications and journals.

**Brittany Hammond** is a full-time student in Portland, OR. When she is not writing she enjoys spending time with her two children or reading her poetry to her two canines.

**JJ Chen Henderson** is a writer and an artist. She has published short stories, poems, and a novel. Henderson has also sold more than fifty of her original paintings.

**Airea Johnson** is enchanted with the grief process, the idea of significance, and the freewill dilemma. Her writing career started in Saint Augustine, FL. There, she hosted open mics for the Flagler College English Department and was an editor for FLARE: The Flagler Review. She works as an editor for Cathexis Northwest Press. After spending two decades in the south, she resides in Portland, OR with her red tabby Henry. Her poems appear in Third Wednesday Magazine, Oyster River Pages, Lucky Jefferson, and others.

**Lio Jones** is an overly caffeinated queer writer tackling difficult topics like death, gender identity, and self growth through poetry and short fiction. Their hopes are that one day my writing will help others find community and self love, but for now they are navigating the life of a college student.

**Stepy Kamei's** work has appeared in journals including Gyroscope Review, FIVE:2:ONE Magazine, Grim and Gilded, and Calamus Journal. In addition to writing, she frequently performs in interactive and globally-accessible theater productions. More details about her upcoming work as a performer can be found @somelaughingghosts on Instagram.

**R.J. Lambert's** (he, him, his) debut poetry collection, *Mind Lit in Neon*, is newly available from Finishing Line Press. He received the 2021 Patricia Cleary Miller Award for Poetry from New Letters and was nominated for a 2021 Pushcart Prize by The Worcester Review. R.J. teaches writing at the Medical University of South Carolina and is online at [rj-lambert.com](http://rj-lambert.com) or @SoyRJ on Twitter.

**Shelbey Leco** Growing up in Southeast Louisiana, outside of New Orleans, Shelbey was always inspired by nature and art. As a young adult, she studied at the University of New Orleans where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies in Urban Society with disciplines: education, english, and anthropology. She enjoys traveling, art, and exploring new places.

**Alison Lubar** teaches high school English by day and yoga by night. They are a queer, nonbinary femme of color whose life work (aside from wordsmithing) has evolved into bringing mindfulness practices, and sometimes even poetry, to young people. Their debut chapbook, *Philosophers Know Nothing About Love*, is now out with Thirty West Publishing House (May 2022); you can find out more at <http://alisonlubar.com/> or on Twitter @theoriginalison.



**Celia Estelle Paglin Luce** is a writer from Portland, Oregon who loves to hate writing. She's tried to get away but words just keep coming for her. She is interested in the overlap between ordinary and otherworldly.

**JW McAteer** writes at a small desk in a large room, with a sizable coffee at the ready. He serves as the Editor and Publisher of Etched Onyx Magazine ([www.onyxpublications.com](http://www.onyxpublications.com)) and co-host of the Story Discovery Podcast. He resides in Nashville with his wife and two children, and a cat named after a dog.

**Stuart McKenna** is a full time student at PCC who has survived the hell of addiction to come out the other side with a drive to never go back. Driven by his past he strives to be the best father he possibly can and create a future worth being proud of.

**Cormac Power** is a freelance Illustrator and cartoonist from Everett Washington studying at The Pacific Northwest College of Art here in Portland. His work is primarily character-driven and focuses on creating narratives both fictional and real that reflect upon contemporary politics and pop culture.

**Winter Snow** is a neurodivergent artist who likes to write about being sad, being in love and sad love, and of course anti-capitalism.

**Lyndsey Kelly Weiner** is a graduate of Stonecoast MFA and teaches writing at Syracuse University. She blogs at [haikuveg.com](http://haikuveg.com).

**Cynthia Yatchman** is a Seattle based artist and art instructor who shows extensively in the Pacific Northwest. Past shows have included Seattle University, the Tacoma and Seattle Convention Centers and the Pacific Science Center. Her art is housed in numerous public and private collections.

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To any who claimeth unrightful ownership or would seek to deface,  
abuse or otherwise mistreat this book:

Be blinded by botflies and bitten by pilliewinks  
a blight upon thy days,  
may thy digits fall from thy feet,  
may thy coffee always be decaf,  
may thy cat eat thee and may thy devil eat thy cat  
may thy wild strawberries never be tamed  
and may you fall in love with the smell and texture of a baboon's ass.

Issue 38 of *The Pointed Circle* is set in Minion 3, a typeface designed  
by Robert Slimbach.