

Darren C. Demaree

Madeleine Reyno

Dessa Bayrock

Nate Maxson

Irtiqa Fazili

Sahar Abdallah

Joe Bishop

Gregg Shapiro

Karen Grosman

Sara Mang

Sam Hatoski

Azania Curling-Wright

Matthew Rotando

Emily Zou

Sacha Archer

Elizabeth Ann Francis

Isobel R. S. Carnegie

Joan McNerney

Grace Ma

Caitrin Pilkington

Steven Henderson

Emmy Fu

Francis Tomkins

JC Bouchard

Acad Victoria

Fall 2018



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Acta Victoriana, est. 1878, is the literary journal of Victoria College in the University of Toronto. It is produced and published on the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishnaabe and the Wendat, as well as other Nations that have been subject to historical erasure. As members of the literary community on campus, we recognize the need to be part of the collective conversation required for the ongoing process of decolonization and reconciliation.



## Letters from the Editors

Moving into winter means a season marked by binaries: between in and outdoors, warmth and cold, past and present. The pieces in this issue exist both in tandem and alone, grappling with what it means to both move forwards and look backwards. In “The Ghost Bridge”, Matthew Rotando writes that “I long for the sense that time is not beyond / me”— and this grasp at an understanding of overarching time and place is reflected in many of the pieces in this volume. Whether it be Dessa Bayrock’s love letter to love, Grace Ma’s fragmentary reflections on the summer she learned to “consent to being alone”, or Isobel R.S. Carnegie’s “turning in gradual motion / within the bleached / light of winter dawn”, the writing in AV 143.1 speaks to the power of emotion, memory and human experience in remarkable ways. We finish with JC Bouchard writing in “Monuments” that “It was only a matter / of time but I couldn’t tell which direction”. I hope that you are pulled through the worlds of each artist in this collection, and the delicate, temporal fragments they craft.

Maia Kachan

Damaree writes, “I am fit / to chase / again”, and Bouchard, “*I am ready / now. Take me there.*” This volume is bracketed by a readiness to move again. It unpacks the ripe tension between readiness and remembrance. It seems, as a collective heart, our board gravitated towards pieces that were, in one way or another, resisting time or, maybe, resisting capture by time. Hatoski puts Achilles and Rothko into conversation with an old lover; Shapiro, Archer and Pilkington introduce us to legacy; Carnegie stops us in our tracks with the press of lips; and Fu has no choice but to charge. There is electric power and courage here, in the breaking of continuums related to time. These are works that ripple outward, immutably shifting everything they touch. We thank our authors and artists for allowing us to share them and we hope everyone gets where they need to go.

Sanna Wani



## **EMILY AS THE CALVES FLEX**

Darren C. Demaree

I am fit  
to chase  
again.

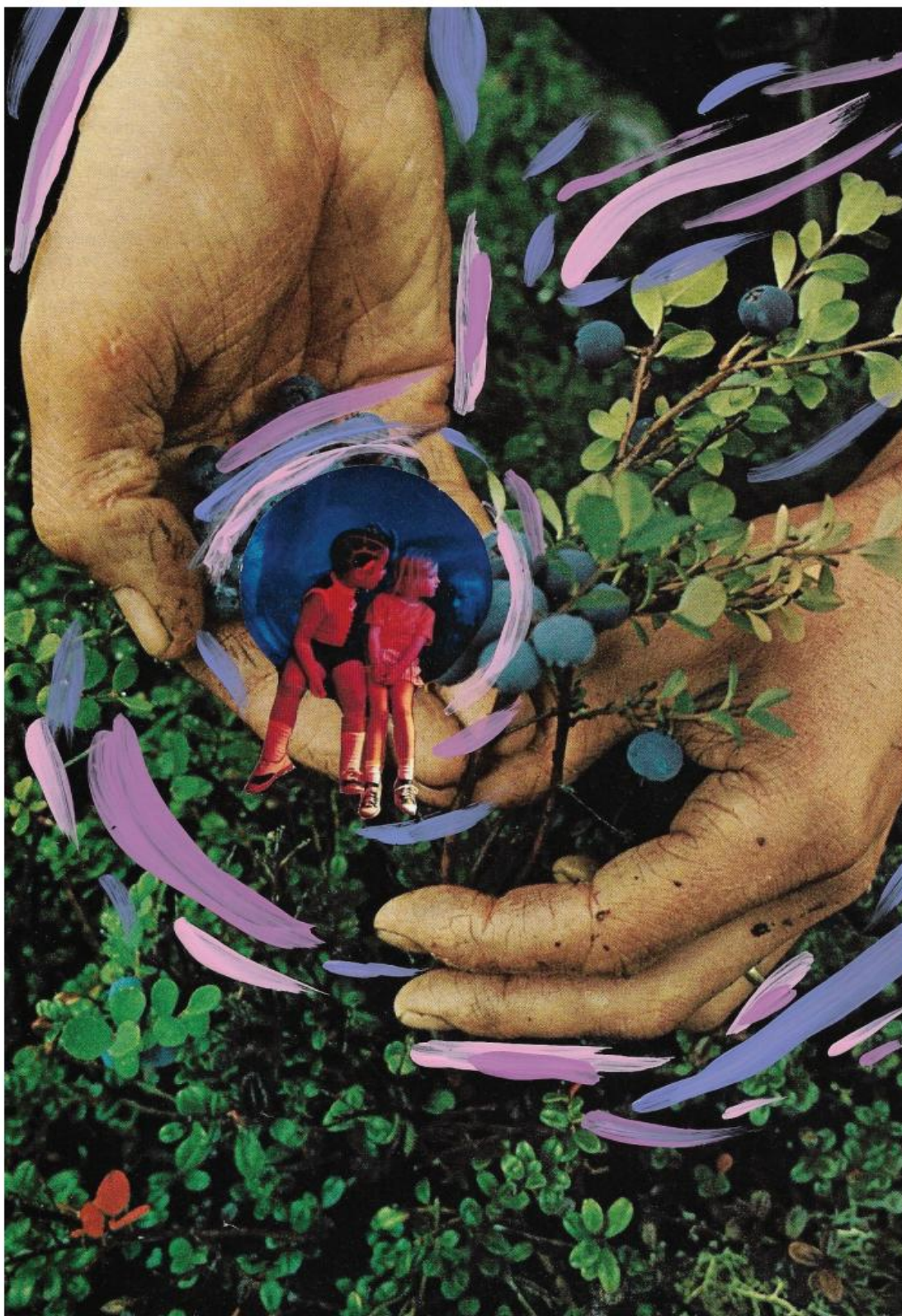


## **EMILY AS WE PUT THE PEDESTAL ON TOP OF MY LEGS**

Darren C. Demaree

I have been a victim  
before. This, this, is not  
one of those times.





Untitled by Madeleine Reyno

## Saint Aphorism

Dessa Bayrock

I love you to the ends of the earth, til death do us part, til the part  
about death, til death from above. My love is out like a light,  
in like a dirty shirt, over and above and beyond the pale. My love  
is a ghost, a haunt, a haint; it killed the cat and spilled the milk  
and spoiled the broth. There are too many cooks in this kitsch  
but still my love is hand to mouth, close-fisted, red in tooth and claw;  
my love is wrong-footed, booted, shooed into the forest and left  
for dead. There among the trees the house of my love grows,  
proud and knobbly on its chicken foot, and you stand in front of it  
and chant: little love, little love, turn your back to the forest  
and your front to me. At night my love prays to Saint Aphorism,  
preys on the knock-kneed and weak-hearted, praises the day  
I met you. My love, too, is a holy man, an omen, an amen, a bird  
in a burning bush floating into your hand. You can lead this love  
to water, and it guzzles like a dehydrated dog; it has learned  
all the tricks it can, my poor love; it bites the hands that feeds,  
but its bite is a blessing, a blasting, blasé about its own blood.  
My love is like a red, red rose, which is to say it rose between us  
like the sun in the east, like bread in the night, to its feet in applause.  
It sets, too, like a table, like a volleyball player, like the way you  
and I set out together. We're putting ourselves into this hot car  
like a tire iron through the window; we're getting there, hell  
or high water or harm. This love sets an extra place at the table,  
just in case a stranger comes to call— and when the call is coming  
from inside the house, I sigh in relief; it's you, it was always you.





## After Van Gogh's "Peasant Burning Weeds, 1883"

Nate Maxson

Someone's way out on the edge, see there? Not the dreamlands but the  
sleep-lands, far as the eye can water: desert twinned with still life and  
stillborn blooms

I imagine plucking one and putting it in my hair, an act of shaky defiance  
and against what? This? Lung disease and dormant apple trees

Where faces blur and spark and we don't speak when there's a dust storm  
passing

They are torching, with unknown instruments and shadowed hands, small  
cairns of thistle and cornhusk

Smoked into an orange, oil derrick dry coughing skyscape, it's a riddle:  
*I am burning- a billow of letters, like holding a mirror to a deathbed mouth  
to check for breath— I am that which walks from tarnished mirror gallery to  
grinding outskirts, while Vincent dries sunflowers in the twilight*



## Moonlight

Irtiqa Fazili

My Beloved comes bearing  
a snow blanket in one hand  
and a full moon in the other.  
He spreads one on the ground to sit upon,  
and nails the other onto the sky:  
sparkling silver ice to light us.

A fox darts past, fast as a shot,  
fleet feet and russet coat  
like red clay against the woods.  
It disappears at the deep green edge of the trees,  
seamless as a raindrop meeting the ocean,  
as easily as coming home.



**The Neglected Tree** by Sahar Abdallah



## **We Idled at the Ship**

Joe Bishop

We idled at the Ship, owned Captain's rum.  
Hyperbole assailed as we blasphemed  
our head doctors. Soaring on park swings,  
we kicked out legs and took October's moon.

We cuddled our insomnia in poems.  
The night that owned you had my thumb flushing  
your vodka, Ativan. In the Psych wing,  
I sifted past a howling Haldol scrum,

past cemetery stares; you were in the bowels,  
wearing a saffron robe bruised with inkblots.  
You opened up, let air your dreams of blood,

words of the dead behind cinder-block walls.  
There, you embarked, tackled petrified rot,  
the sewage, on a voyage, up-close, abroad.

## Farm Museum Fundraiser

Joe Bishop

Speaker thanked you, James, at St. Teresa's,  
where you sold raffle tickets ---- Protestant  
treasurer patting Catholics ---- before  
joining Anne, who waited at a communal  
table for a waiter to serve the rye  
bread that came with lamb stew. Raised near pastures  
of fated grazers, Anne abstained from them  
chopped. You goaded her, James, but Anne refused  
to sip your Guinness broth; instead she bit  
the yellowed slice, tempered blushing hunger,  
reminded herself you tally funds for a cause  
close to her rustic roots. Wary of growls  
behind attire, of slaughter, Anne held back  
an Abrahamic judgment of your nudge.





## Myths and Facts About My Grandfather Harry

Gregg Shapiro

He was a Gemini born in Antopol, Poland on June 5, 1913 – or maybe 1912 or 1911. He came to America, to Chicago, in the 1920s. The oldest of four, he had a brother, left behind in Europe because he had a speech impediment, who became a legendary figure in family mythology. He lived longer than his younger sister Sylvia and brother Charles.

He met his wife, Marian, at a dance. They married in 1938. How he loved to dance.

He was an overprotective father of three daughters and a combative father-in-law to their husbands. He outlived his wife, a daughter and a son-in-law. He had seven grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. He was a favorite uncle, brother-in-law, and cousin.

He lived on Grenshaw Street on the West Side, on Whipple Street in Albany Park, on Sacramento Avenue in West Rogers Park, on Waukegan Road in Morton Grove. He lived in West Rogers Park, again, on Touhy Avenue, in an assisted living facility at the end of his life. My grandfather had a French poodle named Jacques when he lived in West Rogers Park the first time.

He had many different occupations. He was a boxer. He knew light welterweight world champion Barney Ross. He operated a bar and grill on State Street across from the Chicago Theater. He ran numbers from the back of the restaurant. He knew Al Capone. He knew Al Capone's brother. My grandfather was a typesetter at Ludlow. He worked as a security guard at Majestic. He carried a gun when he was employed as a security guard at Lampert Jewelers. He carried a gun! He sold new and used goods on Maxwell Street.

He had an awesome sense of humor, a distinctive speaking voice and a lilting accent. His distinctive speaking voice and lilting accent were affectionately imitated by a grandson and a grandson by marriage.

He cherished his cars. He had a red 1964 Chevy II that was stolen in the early 1970s and set ablaze in a parking lot about a mile from his house. After that he drove a yellow 1973 Dodge Dart Swinger with a white vinyl top. My grandfather kept a small bottle of yellow paint in the glove box to

touch up scratches and dents, meticulous as a manicurist. He had a grey Dodge Omni that was involved in a drive-thru car wash catastrophe. His last car was a magenta Pontiac Sunfire. He secretly kept a set of keys to the Sunfire after he sold the car to Maggie having failed several driving tests; he blamed the test-givers. He was a bad driver – take the drive-thru car wash incident, for example. My grandfather was a terrible driver, but he was a good passenger. He thought I honked my horn too much.

He liked going to Las Vegas and Southern California. He attended my college graduation in Boston. Despite dietary restrictions, he ate dinner with me and Grandma at Durgin Park in Quincy Market on their first night in town. He and Grandma stayed at the Holiday Inn on Cambridge Street so he would be walking distance from the synagogue in Charles River Park. He went to Bogota, Colombia to visit my brother and his family.

He loved watching movies. His preference was for westerns. He enjoyed war pictures. He was especially fond of movies about boxers. He took me and Grandma to see the Robby Benson movie *One On One* at the Sunset Drive-In on McCormick. He had passes to the Devon Theater. He took me to see the French film *Cousin cousine*. He had trouble with the subtitles but he perked up during Marie-Christine Barrault's nude scene.

He kept kosher. He ate borscht. He ate herring from the jar. He ate sour cream and bananas. He loved sweets. He drank coffee, black with sugar. He was a snappy dresser, partial to bright colors and patterns. He loved loud Hawaiian shirts. He often wore red sox.

He called my husband Rick "John", the name of an ex of mine, for about a year after he first met him. He was one of a handful of people to call Rick "Ricky". He had an artistic streak, drawing a picture of the man with the pipe if you asked.

He liked the ladies. He loved the ladies! My grandfather was comfortable in drag. He was fluent in three languages – English, Hebrew and Yiddish. He read the newspaper every day. He wore his hair combed back in a modified pompadour. He was always clean-shaven. He was a keen observer of my erratic history of facial hair. He liked jewelry; especially pinkie rings and watches.

There was a belly-dancer at his 100th birthday party. The mayor of Morton Grove was a guest at his 100th birthday party. He was given the key to the Village.

My grandfather was a mezuzah kisser. He attended services and prayed daily. He was on a first-name basis with his higher power. Did I mention that he liked red? He makes an appearance in at least ten of my poems.



**Nectar 1** by Karen Grosman

## Underneath: A Glosa

Sara Mang

*I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,  
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.  
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.*

Sonnet XVII by Pablo Neruda (1904-73)

I do not love you as if you were perfume, or tonic  
distilled and crafted in small batches  
or a Pacific sea salt, smoked  
with alder floating above itself burned  
infusing moist salt surface with vanilla and clove.  
It is residue oil on nape that unpens inert trill to blast  
or unventilated under arm like moss  
keeping you covert, ingrown, tame  
in corners and folds and creases at last.  
I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz.

I do not love you as if you were abalone pearl  
multihued mauve tones, cast bluish, blushing  
or a scarlet emerald  
scraped from veins of Columbian foothills where rain needles.  
It is shell, peel and coffee grounds  
soil—exhausting sulfur, magnetting moths  
soaking seed, sprouting sage or mint  
steeps as you stir  
excavating heat, putrid and soft  
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.

I do not love you as if you were pure and natural silk  
woven ornately into textiles, refracting light  
or cashmere, soft and buoyant, yet insulating.  
I love you as you kill a yellow jacket wasp



tiny baroque hourglass, hand-painted vase  
snapped to stillness, abrupt  
absence of agony  
for bees that sting or worms that spin  
yielding like wool from goat's gruff  
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved.

I do not love you as if you were delicate threads of saffron  
unknown in the wild, mutant breed of flower  
volatile, unadulterated, in need of full light  
or precious jasmine blossoming in the dark  
parting with its fragrance.  
I love you as you undersleep, deny its toll  
thread the wild inside—airtight.  
And when you wilt and disintegrate into soil  
I will succumb and fold  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

## Ode to Venla

Sam Hatoski

She is a tired elbow that props me up to see  
red or orange skies of god herself, painted us crestfallen  
a keystone Achilles drags his heel on and bleeds stolid.

I pine for that old lover, that searing burn to grin through  
when Rothko spoke in my sleep of animus  
abandoned for some deficit which remains unnamed.



**Dream** by Azania Curling-Wright



## The Ghost Bridge

Matthew Rotando

Here is the drifted root, the bottom-heavy afternoon: I long for the sense that time is not beyond me. But it has gone on, as I have, and we are under the bridge of rust, baked in the sun and lost from justice. It's not that nothing right was done, it's just that the loneliness of space took us over, and we went back to being children. We wandered along with the sun, its proud march melting our aspirations, reforming them each day. I wished I was you, even though you wanted me more than I could conceive. Trucks made their own wind on the streets where no people walked. Only ghosts forgot, and the rusted bridge collected everything we saw: all busted goblets and glittered coiffures. Little starry-dusted starlets tripped behind us while we cried, deep in our joy of solitude.



Quiet Introspection by Emily Zou





## From Montage of Abrasions

Sacha Archer

There is a Bible in the house. It was my mother's. Despite the fact that it is recorded on the inside front cover with no uncertain pomp that it was presented to my mother, it in no way connects to her. It seems to have been given to her when she was a child attending the early indoctrination sessions of the Christian religion which are referred to by the benign title of Sunday School. This Bible which has travelled with me from house to house along with the rest of my books belongs now, to me, but only via proximity. In fact, it belongs to no one. There was never a time when I remember the book belonging to anyone. It has floated from one place to another within the houses in which I've lived, but not as a result of use, but rather in a rhythm of displacement, the shifting of a stubborn object that will not disappear, as if outside of the amorphous iterations of home, the re-arrangements and purges, the floods and moving boxes, the deaths and departures, the voids into which objects tend to retreat never to resurface. The book's utter lack of use (in my lifetime) by anyone close enough to read it, use it as a coaster, a decoration etc., its ignored presence (more a type of space than object) has always ensured that its sense of property has eluded an identifiable link.

Flipping through the pages it is evident that portions of the text were engaged. Certain passages have been marked with pencil, I have to assume by my mother. But when they were marked cannot be traced, except generally to that time before my memories begin because, though I was dragged to church as a small child and myself placed into the indoctrination sessions, those practices dwindled and then ceased quite early on in my childhood, and the absence of religion in the home makes it unlikely that my mother was actively engaging the book anytime after we stopped attending church. She very well could have prayed, while closing her eyes to sleep, on the off chance that some entity was listening, but I am altogether ignorant of what happened behind those then seemingly massive white doors to her bedroom—and furthermore, by that time, the bible was not kept in her room, but, I believe, in the basement, which was entirely storage.

The marked passages are very few and mostly predictable, concerning the love and violence of people and god. I list them here as a trace of my mother's taciturnity on the challenges and sufferings at a certain time in her life (and though it was before my time, her reluctance to share her pain with me suggests a silence that reached farther into her past):

"the moon and stars to rule over the night,  
For his steadfast love endures forever"  
(Psalms 136:9)

"And the people will be as if burned to lime,  
like thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire."

Hear, you who are far off, what I have done;  
and you who are near, acknowledge my might."  
(Isaiah 33:12-13)

"Therefore thus says the Lord:  
'Behold, I will plead your cause and take vengeance for you.  
I will dry up her sea and make her fountain dry'"  
(Jeremiah 51:36)

"Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.

And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on the right and one on the left."

"Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!' And having said this he breathed his last."  
(Luke 23:32-33, 46)

"And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent'"  
(Acts 17:9)

When my mother spoke, it was, like all of us, generally of the banal events of the day, the week, the month—gossip, plans, schedules—or of time—the past, the present, the future (recollection, observation, projection). The vast majority of conversation which occurs between any of us is so entirely void of content that all that can be recognized in recollection is the event of connection. I don't say this disparagingly, but instead with a certain amount of awe—that speech more often than not is a vehicle of connection alone, rather than a means of informational relation—more closely related to the body than ideas. I can hardly remember any of the conversations between my mother and I, and those I do remember are mostly insignificant in the import of their content, basic (essential) exchanges made memorable by humour and joy, anger and pain.

A trace of her handwriting reveals itself from time to time on the back of old photographs that surface, buried under unsuspecting objects in the few boxes of her belongings that have been retained. What is written gives only dates, names and locations—that succinct documentary information which is not expected to be exceeded when accompanying a photograph. While the desire to encounter the revelations of her thoughts naturally occupies me as I handle those photographs, I am met by an altogether different mode of proximity. Like conversation, which generally acts as a vehicle of connection, not primarily information (the light of words absorbed by the foliage of listening precipitating either growth [*the picture of health*] or the burning of that overexposed foliage), my mother's handwriting, relating, semantically, nearly nothing about herself, emanates the aura of her physical presence with a strength that semantic content, or for that matter, the image of a photograph, could never match.

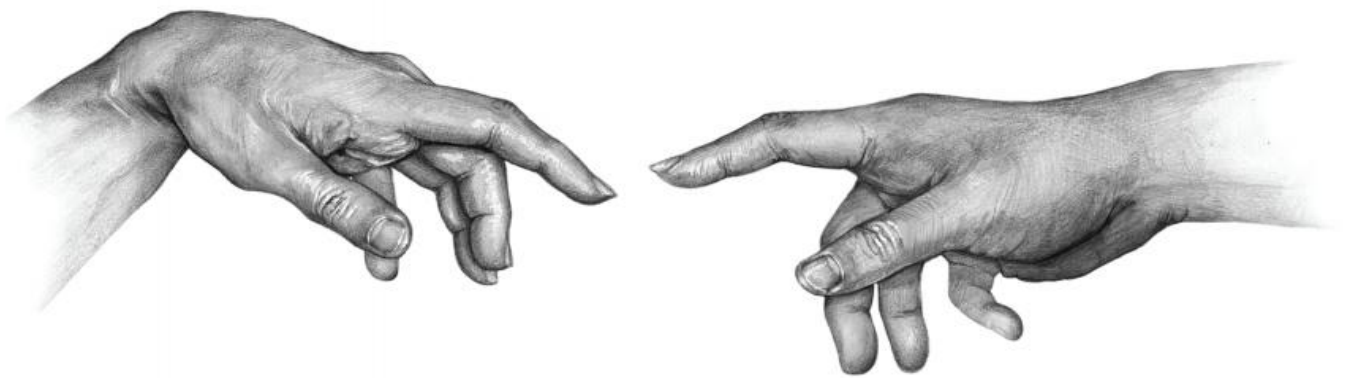
Once, not long after she passed away, in that same basement where the above mentioned bible used to live, while looking through boxes at that time recently filled and organized on shelves by her second husband (a repulsive man that everyone in the family acutely disliked, and who, it has been hinted, my mother regretted marrying), I discovered a red notebook which showed little sign of use. Opening it I found perhaps 3 or 4 pages out of the entire book on which I recognized my mother's handwriting. The rest of the notebook was untouched and in such pristine condition that it was clear that the foray of writing had been quite brief and the book not returned to again. It was easy to read the momentum of intention that was almost immediately abandoned. Again, like my mother's markings in the bible, placing the

writing found in the notebook into a chronology is difficult. Unlike that bible that has clung to me like a shadow, the red notebook, of much greater value, has silently vanished. As the notebook displayed no signs of aging it is possible that she recorded the entry not long before contracting the ovarian cancer which swiftly ate her alive, in which case there was no possibility of continuance. But as I cannot quite remember whether she had written in the present continuous or the past perfect I am left in the grammar of the dark.

Just as my mother's presence is so strongly retained in her handwriting on the backs of those photographs, the red notebook, for containing in addition to her handwriting a quantity of her thoughts, was the epitomic object of remembrance. In it she wrote of her scarring relationship with my father, a scarring that ran through the landscape of my childhood and without which no recollection of that time would be complete. A scarring that tore the relationships between my mother, my brother and I so that one could not cross those borders imposed on the landscape following a war that ceases to be fought, but where victory is trusted to storybooks where the germ of hope can survive.

How fitting that the notebook was red.





**Vita Nova** by Elizabeth Ann Francis

## First Light

Isobel R. S. Carnegie

turning in gradual motion  
within the bleached  
light of a winter dawn,

they held up their hands.  
she took one,  
knuckles to lips, hands pressed

to the rising chill before first light  
and kissed the side of her mouth –  
a tender, practiced process



## **In 2018, there were three heatwaves**

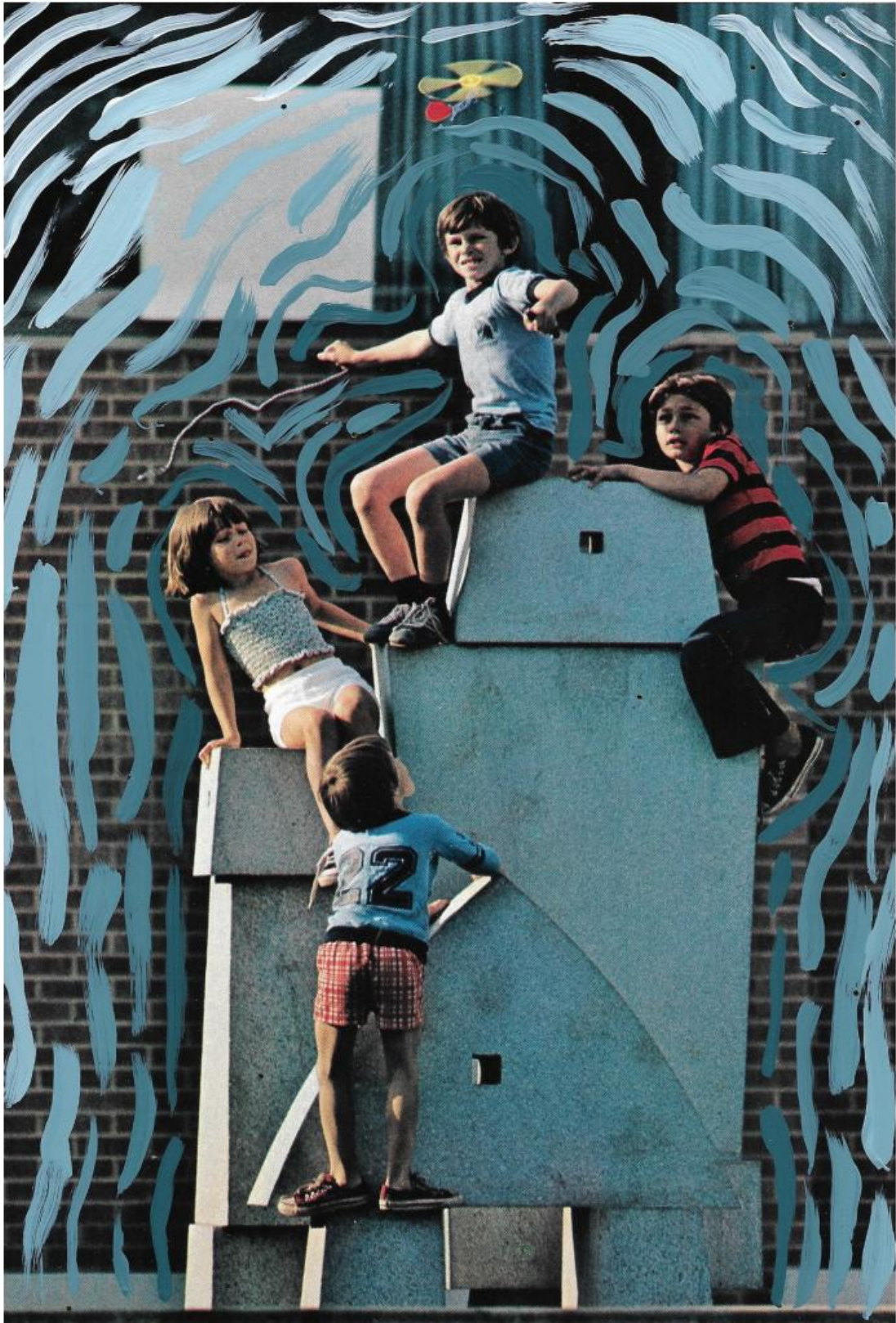
Grace Ma

That summer I learned to not touch my face.  
I also learned to pick up my clothes from the floor,  
wipe the kitchen counter thoroughly, abstain from  
pretty trinkets.

I learned to consent to being alone,  
to unclench my fists and ask why I had clenched  
them in the first place, to look at my palms.

In the last month I devoured an entire  
Chinese period drama. Down to every last word,  
words which I idolized and absorbed  
like water running on rocks.

It was the summer I went back to being  
my mother's daughter, or maybe it was  
the first time, or maybe I never stopped.



Untitled by Madeleine Reyno



## **Blue your eyes**

Joan McNerney

Blue your eyes  
this edge of snow  
in silent sky.  
Brown eyes soft  
tree bark patterns as  
yellow flicks  
sparkle in wintry sun.

And now it seems  
your eyes are green  
green as spruce  
turning to grey eyes  
glancing across as if  
from a mountainside.

Your eyes two violets  
hidden beneath frost.  
Close your eyes  
as sleepless stars  
glide through night  
in aerial ballet.

Black coal eyes  
glowing on fire  
red flames leaping  
out of eyes burning  
blue your eyes.





## The Year my Grandmother Was An Amphibian

Caitrin Pilkington

Frogs come into the world as jelly. They arrive as hundreds of marbles with dark irises, clinging to a reed, shifting in their tiny globes. Over long weeks, embryos become tadpoles, and tadpoles leave their orbs for the open water. In the springtime, they swim in a dark wave under the lily pads and around the stems. My mother is waking her mother. Her eyelids split and briefly show clear film over delicate blue.

"I don't think she wants to wake up," my aunt says.

Her eyes are closed again now. The harder anyone tries to shake her awake, the darker her expression becomes. She starts to look irritated, and her hand comes up to rub her temple. She hasn't eaten or drank anything in days.

We gather around the little island of her bed. The air smells of urine, disinfectant, and Ensure.

This bed has rods around its borders to prevent its occupant from falling, and a button for calling nurses.

We try to feed her, even as she sits between sleep and waking. Her skin is like wet rice paper layered over blue veins. She has lived through nine decades. My mother fills a spoon with water that has been thickened to prevent choking, and tips the congealed gel down her throat.

For years now she has been dribbling on to the floor: chunks of will and desire and fluid memory. We could only stare as the puddle grew: the impolite pool of it, the liquified stuff of self.

Her deliquescence is especially startling considering her former stubborn rigidity. She had been a draftsman for Northern Electric during the war. She taught herself to drive, despite our protests, at 78. She was always full of plans. Always the fastest person walking down the street. She'd shove five dollar bills in my pockets when my mother wasn't looking and her voice was cold with authority if you tried to jaywalk. She was impervious to nonsense, yet tender: I once I raised my hand, absurdly, to give her a fist bump, and she grasped my

fist in both of hers and kissed my knuckles.

My mother and aunt try her shoes on to see who they'll fit.

It has been a pale year of visits to this building. This floor is full of different characters. Comatose, bizarre, angry, sad, and outright lecherous. At some point during every visit, the do-woman accosts us. She can't be older than fifty, but she has such advanced dementia she can only say the word "do."

"*Dododododdododododo!*" she interjects, her face as earnest and transparent as a child's. Her brown hair is cut in a chic little bob with bangs and her eyes are wide and blue, but the way she shuffles slowly makes her seem ancient.

When her husband comes to visit, his blonde hair receding and his eyes tired, he takes her hand and walks her down the hall. Once I saw him raise her fingertips to his lips.

Sometimes it feels like an amateur play of a nursing home: every community theatre-ish actor playing their role to the hilt. Right down to the woman who would wait with her purse by the exit and desperately beg anyone who passed to let her out, "to run my errands." Forever separated from the outside world by a four-digit code. The last time I was there, I needed to laugh, to thumb my nose at the absolute fucking misery of it all.

We were sitting in the chapel, but I couldn't say a Hail Mary in front of the hallowed saint-votives with a straight face. It was too much — all these people, gathered here to die, revolving in their separate rooms in front of their flickering televisions. I was trying to think of a hymn that wasn't so goddamned on-theme. Instead, I started singing "I Say a Little Prayer," and before I knew it, I'd gotten so into the song for the benefit of my audience of one that I was dancing in front of the lectern holding the picture of Jesus. That time, as I left, she said, "wait for me."

Usually, when I visited, she was subdued, gentle and sweet.

I often wished she would say something real, something more like her old self. But when I think back to a time when she did speak boldly (as my mother took away her car keys: "*I might as well be dead if you do this!*") I had looked away, uncomfortable, unfamiliar with such a violent flash of honesty.

Instead, we would talk about the rain or whose neighbour's daughter I was, or the rain, or whose neighbour's daughter I was. Once, wrapped and locked in my

own first-ever heartbreak, I brought her a picture of her own dead husband. “How does it make you feel, to see his picture?” I asked her.

“Happy and sad. Happy and sad,” she said, sounding like neither.

Sometimes people use the word ‘unraveling’ when they talk about people losing their minds. To me, unraveling sits side by side words like ‘unspooling’ and ‘disentangle.’ Unraveling can mean *to investigate and solve or explain (something complicated or puzzling)*. It evokes a kind of linearity. I imagined long conversations, a life spread out like a line of photographs on a dining room table, memories surfacing, radical honesty, a reckoning.

What happened instead was watching my grandmother fold and fold within herself from a distance. She turned and turned, an old woman, an embryo, a being within a cryotank, solitary in her own disappearance.

She was absent, but she still a docile presence in this world. She stood, sat, ate, and slept when you asked her to.

But now, suddenly — she won’t eat. I finally recognize my grandmother in the stubborn way she shakes her head at the approaching spoon.

When she first arrived here, she was so distraught each visit was an existential experience. *I don’t want to be here! How can you say you love me and leave me in this place!* We would peer around at each other with horror bordering the edges of our reassuring looks. Our family doesn’t have a script for things like this. We would return to the car in silence. Occasionally someone would run through the sequence of this choice again just to say it out loud, hear the logic of it.

So we started her on medication that made her happy. Happy, but empty.

But now, suddenly, her desire to escape seems stronger than drugs.

She spins between here and there. I imagine it as the confused flurry of turning underwater somersaults at the lake in summertime: sun-air, water-dark, sun-air, water-dark.

When I was overwhelmed as a child I imagined a cabin in the woods where I could read by a fire by myself. I was so deep in the woods in the snow in the cabin that teachers would wave a hand in front of my face to bring me back to the lesson.

It's in our blood, I think to myself. We create an attic in which to hide away. We are children in pajamas peering down at a dinner party. I feel a silent smiling kinship with her obstinate retreat, as my mother and then the nurse speak loudly into her face and shake her shoulder.

Later we come again, and I feel scared at the sight of her face, the way her lips have retreated and her dentures protrude. The droop of one eyelid. She looks desiccated, like she's been dead a week. I think, *God, I hope this never happens to me.*

I feel the need to cover everything with a white sheet, to make her death sacred, ceremonious, unbiological. I play nocturnes and string quartets, dim the lights. I wished I'd brought candles.

Her breathing is ragged now. It's dark outside, half past eleven. She stops breathing for impossible lengths of time, then begins again. I put my hand on her chest and feel the little movements within, the sudden rushes of air and her rabbit heart. Her body is warm and soft under my hand. My other hand is in my aunt's. We sit on either side of her.

She is curled under the blanket, and we can only see her puff of white hair and her golden hoop earrings. Her face is white and wrinkled and peaceful now. Her mouth is open. She is wearing a pink cotton nightgown.

"She hated pink," my aunt says.

As I listen, I press harder and harder against her chest, trying to feel something. It occurs to me I may be preventing it beating. *Gentle, gentle.*

There is a strange, waiting kind of electricity in the room, a feeling that something essential is happening.

Her body is getting colder under my palm.

But still she gasps, breathes, and her heart taps up against my hand. I can feel every jolt and stutter, the movement of blood travelling beneath. I can feel her heart beginning to beat more gently against my palm.

Already, she is separated from us. She is covered in clear jelly, no longer swimming. She attaches herself to a reed and curls and curls within herself — retreating into a single black dot.





**little lake** by Steven Henderson



**Good morning that Frankfurt rises before me  
like a toy & unwelcome & nakedly I enter its  
impassable rivers**

Emmy Fu

Hearing the boy  
cry where the city thrums  
lowest

steps as steps away the train  
track scream fleshes itself into an  
unknown moan

*the pained gut mewling w lucidity is not allowed a smoke*

Hearing      Here  
Dangled bait like glory the clean  
feet of Judas I have kissed three times wavering  
white splayed toe vision for fish's breakfast  
    & my mute delight

So skin is sheet  
comfortable to be a cause

small things slow  
moves of honour  
beyond the first  
layer of water

The drought coming  
    up laps at the mad poet's ear—  
Once I am a pawn crossing the river  
I have no choice but to charge



**Slow Passage** by Francis Tomkins



## Monuments

JC Bouchard

When I was 24 I turned my back on myself because it felt good not to make decisions, or listen or talk out loud, and it felt clean to write pictures of the back-dropped clouds, of steak and eggs, and the dirt roads outside of Rocky's café where I think I saw a ship take sail by the Trans-Can. It was only a matter of time but I couldn't tell in which direction. People said forward but I said, *It feels good not to know*. It was easy to be alone, easier than it is now. Mistakes had less meaning. My favourite parts were the warnings, each of them more new to me: horoscopes, dead dogs, disappearing buses. Some of them I didn't believe but most were real. I was real and I thought, *I am Unreal, and the North is especially unreal, and today could be incredible*. The drive up the 108 in a school bus—the frozen lakes of snow were absent of footprints, and I thought how good that silence could clean itself of history. Even the road swallowed itself. It was a lie when I told myself that I was never coming back. Up to the City buried in white mined from the men of my Father's day, the ashes of ghosted birds, the City like tendrils strangling the highway—they erected monuments to the dead. When I got there I checked for my Father's name, but couldn't find it. I checked the plaques beneath the drift lines and saw my own name, and saw statues at the edge of the hills boarded by Horne Lake, where so



many had already rested. The hills were chalk.  
I grabbed for rope in my pocket and heard  
a boom, looked up, saw the sky unravel, pitch  
and burn. I undulated and sifted on the shore.  
When the time came I moved deep in solid  
trees, pulled the rope from my pocket, tied  
it to my wrists. I begged for someone to save  
me. I ruined my cold body. All of the people  
used to tell me: Nothing you do will stop it  
from happening. I opened up my palms, triple  
checked the lines. *Okay, I said, I'm ready  
now. Take me there.*



## Contributors

**Sahar Abdallah** is a children's books illustrator who grew up in Egypt and lives in Toronto now. She worked with various publishers in the Arab region. She finds inspiration in her Cat and likes to explore different applications for her medium "Collage". She won the state incentive prize, 2012 Egypt and in 2018 the - UAEEBY- Etisalat award, 2018 UAE; both of the awarded books were poetry books for children.

**Sacha Archer** is a writer that works in numerous mediums as well as being the editor of *Simulacrum Press* ([simulacrumpress.ca](http://simulacrumpress.ca)). His work has been published internationally. Archer has two full-length collections of poetry, *Detour* (gradient books, 2017) and *Zoning Cycle* (Simulacrum Press, 2017), as well as a number of chapbooks, the most recent being *TSK oomph* (Inspiritus Press, 2018) and *Contemporary Meat* (The Blasted Tree, 2018). His visual poetry has been exhibited in the USA, Italy, and Canada. Some of that work, among other things, can be found on his website, [sachaarcher.wordpress.com](http://sachaarcher.wordpress.com). Archer lives in Ontario, Canada.

**Dessa Bayrock** lives in Ottawa with two cats and a variety of succulents, one of which occasionally blooms. She used to unfold paper for a living at Library and Archives Canada, and is currently a PhD student in English, studying literary awards and the production of cultural value. Her poems have appeared in *IDK Magazine*, *Cotton Xenomorph*, and *Spy Kids Review*, among others. She is the proprietor of post ghost press. You can find her, or at least more about her, at [dessabayrock.com](http://dessabayrock.com) or on Twitter at @yodessa.

**Joe Bishop**'s work has appeared in various journals across Canada and abroad, including, most recently, *StepAway Magazine* and *Poetry Is Dead's* Metal Issue. He lives in Newfoundland.

**JC Bouchard**'s collection of poetry and photographs, *Let This be the End of Me*, was published by Bad Books Press in spring 2018. His poetry is forthcoming in *Carousel* and has appeared in *PRISM international*, *carte blanche*, *Arc*, *The Puritan*, and more. His new chapbook is *Borderline Definitions*.

**Isobel R.S. Carnegie** is a writer and editor from Toronto, studying English and Sexual Diversity through Victoria College. She edits *The Gargoyle's* Avant Garg, and is the Editor in Chief of Victoria's *Goose Fiction*. This is a love poem for her girlfriend.

**Azania Curling-Wright** is a Jamaican, Canadian visual artist. She practices painting and drawing, and her work consists of abstracted faces of figures she constructs. Her practice focuses on the unity of abstraction with human emotion and perspective. Just as there are limits that can be pushed through experience, she believes there are boundaries to be discovered and pushed within her practice through the fictional beings she creates. While living and working in Toronto, she is also studying at OCAD University working towards a BFA, majoring in Drawing and Painting.

**Darren C. Demaree** is the author of nine poetry collections, most recently *Bombing the Thinker*, which was published by Backlash Press. He is the recipient of a 2018 Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award, the Louis Bogan Award from Trio House Press, and the Nancy Dew Taylor Award from Emrys Journal. He is the Managing Editor of the *Best of the Net* Anthology and Ovenbird Poetry. He is currently living in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

**Irtiqa Fazili** is a medical student at the University of Tennessee and a recent graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. Her poetry and fiction have been published in *5x5*, *The Pharos*, *F Word*, *The Allegheny Review*, and elsewhere.

**Emmy Fu** is a fourth year student at the University of Toronto.

**Elizabeth Ann Francis** is a self-taught fine artist based in Toronto. Her work is often a visual duel between realism and minimalism, careful observation and haphazard lines. Her work finds a middle ground where ideas from two ends of a spectrum can exist together. Ann works primarily in oils and graphite, and explores themes surrounding the human experience and the natural world, drawing inspiration from the High Renaissance and Baroque periods, and Canadian landscape painters like the Group Of Seven.

**Karen Grosman's** practice ranges from painting, drawing, ceramic sculptures and ceramic art installations. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from OCAD University. Majoring in Drawing and Painting with a Minor in Art History. Her paintings have been exhibited in New York and Toronto. Ceramic sculptures are represented by *Coastal Eddy Gallery* in Laguna Beach and her art installations have been exhibited throughout Toronto. Conferences she has participated in include the *Feminist Conference* at the *University of Toronto* (2015) and the *Ryerson University Midwifery Conference* (2017).



**Sam Hatoski** writes about the things that both hurt and heal her soul: love, depression, female friendship, queerness, and her perennial existential dread. She currently, and happily, calls Toronto (Tkaronto) home.

**Steven Henderson** is a photographer from Barrie, ON. He is a graduate of the film production program at the Toronto Film School and is currently taking graphic design at Georgian College.

**Grace Ma** is a second-year student at the University of Toronto, pursuing a double major in English and Environmental Science. She is an editor of the *Trinity Review*, and her main claim to fame is that she used to pronounce “Aristotle” like “Chipotle”.

Originally from Labrador, **Sara Mang**’s fiction and poetry have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous literary journals including *The New Quarterly*, *Canadian Literature*, *ARC*, *Prism*, *Room*, *Pulp Literature* and *CV2*. Her work was a finalist for The New Quarterly’s Peter Hinchcliffe Award, Malahat Review’s Far Horizons Award for Poetry, the L. Hemingway Short Story Award and the Bristol Story Prize. Currently an MFA candidate at UBC, Sara lives in Cornwall with her husband, three children and rabbit.

**Nate Maxson** is a poet and performance artist. The author of several collections of poetry, he lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

**Joan McNerney**’s poetry has been included in numerous literary magazines such as *Seven Circle Press*, *Dinner with the Muse*, *Moonlight Dreamers of Yellow Haze*, *Blueline*, and *Halcyon Days*. Three Bright Hills Press Anthologies, several Poppy Road Review Journals, and numerous Kind of A Hurricane Press Publications have accepted her work. Her latest title is *Having Lunch with the Sky* and she has four Best of the Net nominations.

**Caitrin Pilkington** is a journalist and audio producer based in Toronto. She has written for *VICE*, *THIS Magazine*, *Halifax Magazine*, and the *National Post*, and previously won the Carleton University High School Short Fiction Prize. This is her first published work of fiction.

**Madeleine Reyno** is a Canadian student in her third year of studying Human Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Toronto. She has a penchant for collecting old magazines and cutting out all the pretty pictures, and also really likes sudoku. If you ever catch her walking around campus with headphones on, she is probably listening to ABBA.



**Matthew Rotando** is a steak-man, a cyclist, and paddler. He prefers swimming to the harpsichord, mangoes to mangosteen, and jackfruit above all fruits but the avocado. These days he can often be found skulking about the edges of New Rochelle, New York, looking for something crunchy. Poems are for whying and sometimes for why-notting, but he likes those poems best that get him the odd fake cigarette or temporary tattoo. His first book is *The Comeback's Exoskeleton* (Upset Press) and age has poems scattered around, including *Oddball Magazine* (October 2018), *Matador* (January 2018), and *Green Linden* (October 2017). His favorite color is green and silver. The word is a lot weaker than a slap on the back of the head, except when it isn't.

**Gregg Shapiro's** chapbooks, *More Poems About Buildings and Food* (Souvenir Spoon Books) and *Sunshine State* (NightBallet Press), will be published in early and mid-2019, respectively. He is the author of *Fifty Degrees* (Seven Kitchens, 2016), selected by Ching-In Chen as co-winner of the Robin Becker Chapbook Prize. Other books by Shapiro include the short story collections *How to Whistle* (Lethe Press, 2016) and *Lincoln Avenue* (Squares and Rebels Press, 2014), the chapbook *GREGG SHAPIRO: 77* (Souvenir Spoon Books, 2012), and the poetry collection *Protection* (Gival Press, 2008). He also has work forthcoming in *Gargoyle* and the anthology *Lovejets: Queer Male Poets on 200 Years of Walt Whitman* (Handtype Press). His poetry was recently featured in *South Florida Poetry Journal*, the *Gay and Lesbian Review*, *Chelsea Station Magazine*, *Minnie's Diary* and the Anhinga Press anthology *Reading Queer*. An entertainment journalist, whose interviews and reviews run in a variety of regional LGBT and mainstream publications and websites, Shapiro lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida with his husband Rick and their dog Coco.

**Francis Tomkins** is an artist and writer based in Toronto. They are in their final year at OCAD University, working toward their BFA in Interdisciplinary Art: Publications. Most of their time is currently dedicated to their thesis project, *Prodigals Press*, a publishing imprint which aims to highlight the voices of those at the margins of spiritual communities in order to encourage inter-faith learning, growth, and healing. They also edit the undergraduate literary journal *Nest*, a publication for OCAD U students to showcase their creative and academic writing. In their spare time, they fantasize about leaving the city behind, living off the grid and learning all there is to know about subsistence farming.

Born 1997, **Emily Zou** is an interdisciplinary artist based in the Greater Toronto Area who is currently studying at OCAD University in the Drawing & Painting program. She works primarily with painting and drawing media but also with photography and ceramics. A common theme she explores is translating intangible ideas and concepts into tangible, physical, visual realities, usually in the realm of spaces, environments, and landscapes.

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