

HUMAN/KIND

Issue 2.1 | March 2020



WILMINGTON, DE

Human/Kind Journal, No. 2.1, March 2020
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Printed in the United States

ISBN 978-1-951675-03-5

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Wilmington, Delaware 19808
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ISSN 2690-3903 (print)
ISSN 2641-628X (online)

To the Core

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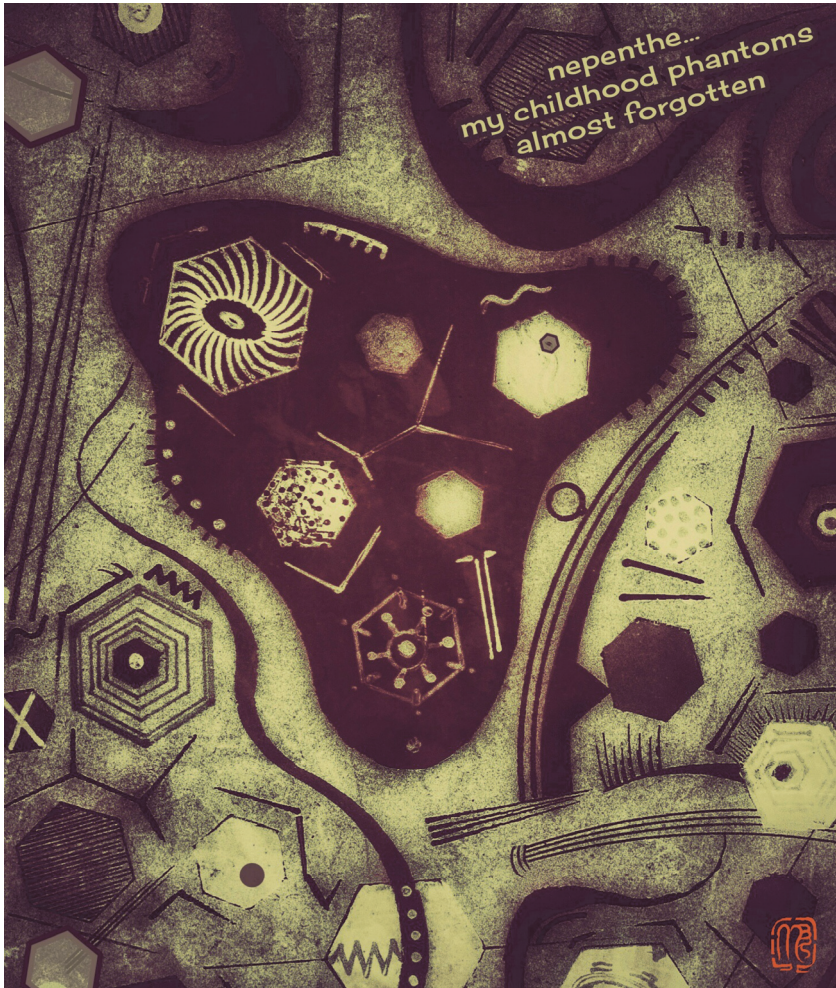
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Front Cover:

Does this jacket make me look hopeful? by Kiley Lee



MARK MEYER

with your mother, as a small child in the city

to see the body laid over top grass,
still in broad daylight,

you would not see your brother
still there in the flower-cap mushrooms and maggots

sprouting out of depressed sections of flesh
embalmed by soil and morning dew;

but the mother's wisdom is otherwise,
as she pushes her child behind her thigh

and later hugs deeply the flesh
fed by wildflowers and cold sunlight

PAT TOMPKINS

narcissus bulbs
in brown paper bags
how the story starts

JONATHAN ROMAN

my childhood
spent in books
hoping
it was just a mistake
I was born in the ghetto

JACKIE CHOU

sorority rush
they question
my address

Missing

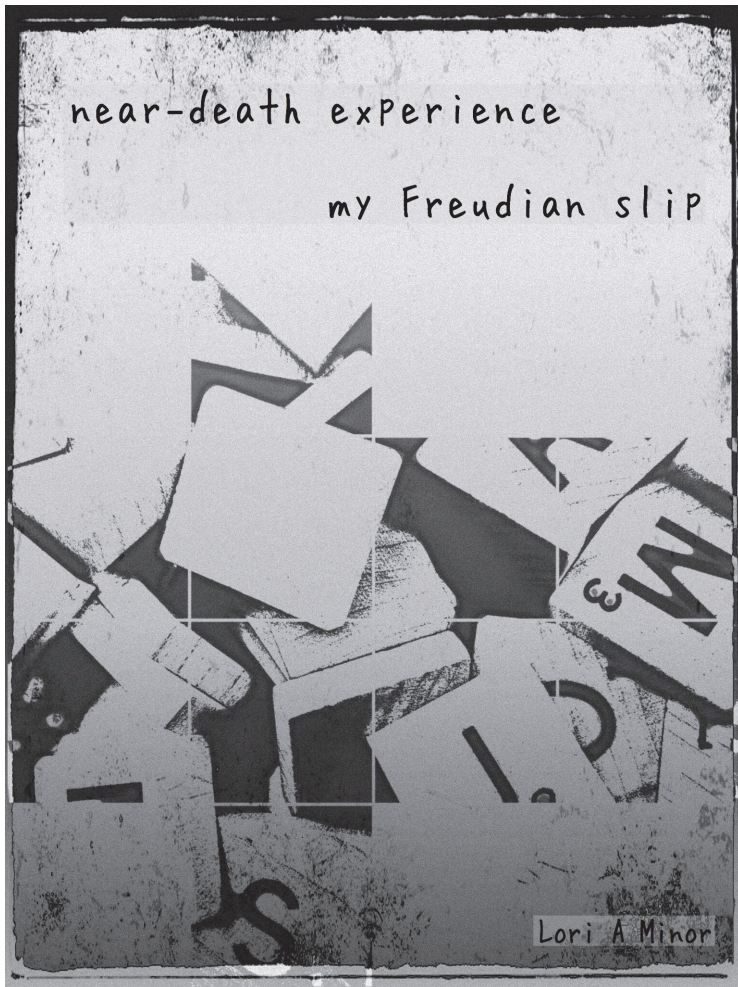
Playing with my train set on the living room floor, I hear my father rustling the pages of his newspaper. “Damn shame. Just a damn shame.” He says casually.

“Is it something about the Russians, dear?” My mother calls out from the kitchen as she turns off the faucet. She doesn’t move from the sink. He coughs and shouts nonchalantly, “No. The Johnson boy from down the street has gone missing. Fourth child this month to disappear.”

“Oh, that is terrible. What has the world come to?”

Sounds of the water faucet turn back on, and dishes clanking together as they are set on the dish rack.

I sit on the floor and stare up at my father. He continues to read the newspaper unfazed by what he just said to my mother, I turn my head towards the kitchen and see my mother washing dishes. She is unperturbed by my father’s announcement as she goes back to housework. I look down at the floor for a moment and continue to play with my trains.



LORI A MINOR

a red-stained tongue in an aviary

Against the backdrop of my mind, I can hear the faraway
reprimands
as I double
over
in hysterical laughter. To any passerby, I look insane. Tears pour
down the slope of my cheeks, a stark contrast to the laughs I can't
control.

*Don't laugh so terribly hard. Compose yourself. For if you laugh with such
intensity, you shall experience an equal intensity of sadness in your future.
Stop. Stop laughing.*

I gasp for air. The words are meaningless to me. I begin coughing,
my body giving in to the happiness.
Somewhere in the distance,

memories block out the warnings. When I was little, I used to sit in a big
plastic bowl on the kitchen floor, and read, my legs sticking out
carelessly.

I eventually outgrow the bowl, and the book, and the doll-like clothes.
But I never outgrew my skin.

Then I remember again, sitting on the living room carpet, my aunt stroking my palm and reciting the poetic verses. They have a taunting, teasing, biting lilt to them.

Yak kookoo, barg e chenar / One bird, a leaf from the chenar tree

When we lived in the townhouse, my mom would buckle me up in my stroller.

Down the

street we went,

mother and daughter. I can still hear her sneakers hitting the pavement,

the labored breaths as we rounded the corner. I

was an extra burden, I would sometimes wonder. Why would she make it harder on herself? We'd stop when we got to the next neighborhood over.

She'd pull the top of my stroller down, let the rain fall down on me for a minute.

"Look, look at the birds."

I don't remember if I did. The rain was too strong.

Dukhtarah sheeshta qatar / The girls sit together

They never let me sit with them. So I sat at the end of the table, away. I ate my food, which wasn't a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. It was rice that was a little too spicy for a kindergartener, but my mother didn't know that. I didn't either. They say children learn from watching their parents. My parents were my whole world. I knew nothing else.

My teacher asked me what it was, and thinking she already knew the name of the rice, I replied, "Very hot."

"Oh, blow on it, then."

Didn't hot mean spicy? That's what the hot sauce bottle said.

I wouldn't know. My English was still in the works.

Meecheenan dahnai ahnar / They sort the pomegranate seeds

My dad would cut them for me, feed me the ruby red seeds. My mouth was stained, rather gory.

Over time, I didn't know if it was the pomegranate juice or if I was truly bleeding, continuously cutting out the Farsi words from my tongue and replacing them with English. I had a horse's bit in my mouth, and I didn't know how to be steered. My mouth learned to tighten, to speak harsher, clearer syllables.

Kashke kaftar maiboodum / I wish I was a bird

I remember sitting next to my mother on the plane. The clouds engulfed us, and we flew away. I wondered why the lady across the aisle looked at me like that when I spoke to my mother in Farsi.

I wondered why we flew straight across the earth up.

when we could go

Why were we so afraid of the unknown?

Da awah par maizadum / I would fly in the air

I'd sit on my father's shoulders and suddenly, I was airborne.

Aw e zamzam mekhordum / I would drink the zamzam mountain water

"Shukur khudaya." Thanks be to God. To be spoken after every sip.

Shair guftak "Allah, Allah" / The tiger said, "Allah, Allah"

In the back of my mind, against the darkness, the face of an animal emerged, eyes glowing. My name could never fully leave their mouths. It was too difficult, and they didn't know how powerful I could become.

Ma guftum "Dard e ballah." / I said, "May there be pain upon the evil."

I watched from afar. I chose not to hate. The blue evil eye charm was between my teeth, and I bit down hard. I dreamed of my teeth falling out, yet darling, I'm still alive.

I resurfaced and heard the reprimands again. *Don't laugh so terribly hard. Compose yourself. For if you laugh with such intensity, you shall experience an equal intensity of sadness in your future. Stop. Stop laughing.* A smile made its way to my lips.

I couldn't care less. I laughed even harder. I finally looked up at the birds my mother pointed out in the rain. I ate my lunch without hiding it. I bared my teeth, showing the brilliantly red Farsi words dripping grotesquely, melodramatically. The plane flew upwards. I grew my own wings, the feathers tearing through my skin, and took off from my father's shoulders. I drank until the last drop.

I corrected the pronunciation of my name,
 catching each syllable as they
 fell carelessly from
 the stranger's mouth.

The evil eye swung
above me
as I slept, dangerously hypnotizing.



Silence Isn't Golden

LORETTE C. LUZAJIC

JAY FRIEDENBERG

thunderheads
a radio filled
with nationalist rhetoric

LOUISE HOPEWELL

smoke haze
over the cathedral
our prayers for rain

BABAFEMI OPEYEMI PAMELA

fall colours . . .
two children walk
hand in hand

The Women Never Mentioned Sable

While they trimmed the ends of their hair
and got brown or black dye carefully put in

as they sat, uncomfortably, under the watchful eye of the hairstylist.
When they marched through the cloth store,

yards of moss green, blood red,
ivory white for the living room and guest room.

During the monologues about why that lavender dress
won't go well with those brown shoes,

never, not once, did the women in my house,
grandmother to aunt to mother to sister, mention the color sable.

It must have slipped their extensive kaleidoscopic memory,
I should assume that mere coincidence is to blame for this

colourful omission in my childhood.
My teacher, she never included it in her lessons

and the crayon boxes neglected it.

When we mixed the paint, none of the new

variants became sable, never.

And no matter how much I try, as I stand in the market, center stage

among mundane masquerades of vegetation and bargains on bootlegs,

I cannot get out of my head the pale lady in a

broad floppy straw hat and sunglasses

who touched me on my shoulder, and told me that I

had beautiful sable skin.

None of the women who accompanied me,

mother, grandmother and sister had never heard of the colour sable,

and none of them were pale.



Zip Stud Blossom

JANINA AZA KARPINSKA

JIM KACIAN

play rehearsal
unfinished parts of my character
showing through

CAMERON ELLIOT

raindrops ...
those parts of my boyhood
still frozen

Moonlight (Coming of Age)

People say you're always going to be Black
even before you're human. my people,
the ones who display russet on their skin
like tattoos in inappropriate places

say i am Black before many things.
before i'm starry-eyed, idealistic,
a person.

but what is Black if not
pledging?
if not to crossing the burning sands,
to pledge my allegiance
to my brothers and sisters,
to speak in Ten Point Plans?

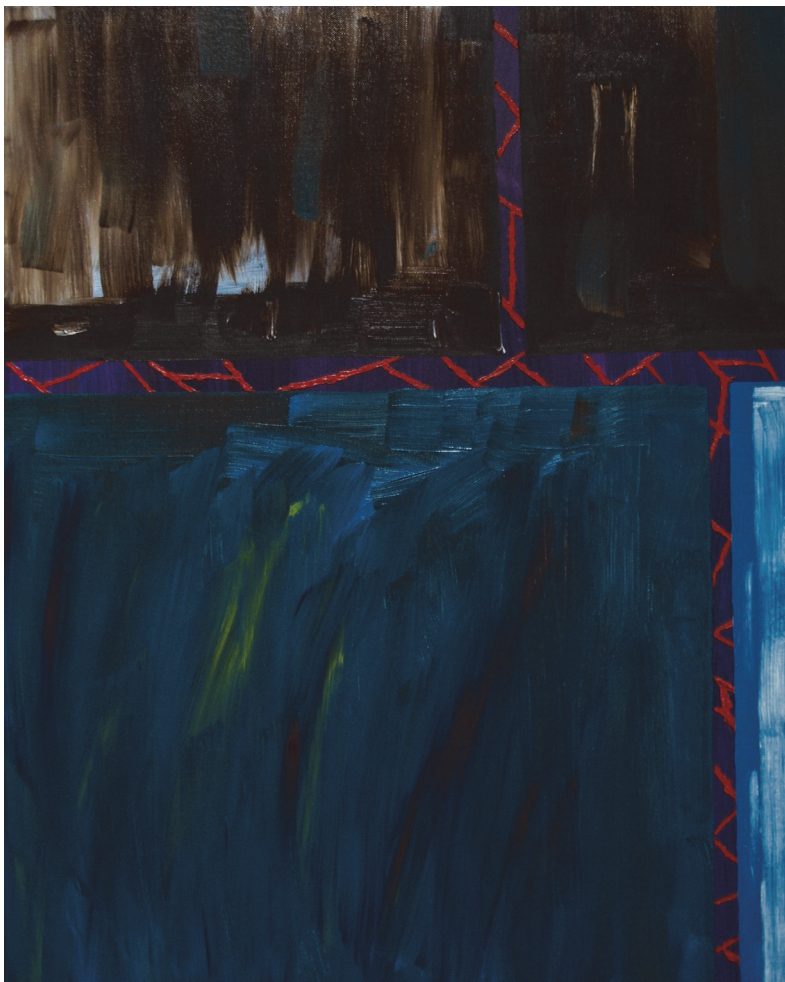
what is it if it's not to be angry?
because when they say *Black*
they truly do mean *angry*
and *angry* means the women will handle it
by throwing bricks at the storefronts,

breaking glass chandeliers
making their children the product of their riots.

i'm told it takes years of whippings
the verbal, the emotional kind
to become undoubtedly Black
to tolerate it take the place of your name

told that it demands your mother offering you
not a shoulder to cry on, but
a rib to draft you, her son, into a man;
it demands your father delivering you
not money, but life advice:
Remember who you were born as
to you know you've made it.

soon, i too will grow into Black,
pledge into the lifestyle of fear
by acquiring chains for my neck
by remembering to associate *boy* with
my gender and not my race,
by remembering to plant my feet
into the Earth, see my ancestors
in fields of proteas and carnations;
see their reflections in my iris.



Release

EDWARD LEE

Blood and Endings

There she is he says before breakfast, pointing out the window toward the grassy hill that slopes lazily toward a road like a ravine, rutted and man-made. A small black bear—*Ursus americanus*, I would find out later—lopes like a fuzzy wheel across the field, rolling shoulder and haunch, shoulder and haunch, as her angular nose leads her toward Where is she headed? I press my face against the window just enough to see the corner of the deck that juts off the back of my brother's little blue house where I'm visiting for the weekend. What is she after? Up through the trees, there's a mountain top, but we can't see or hear it. Down and across, trees with foliage all green and gray and blue, the ocean palette of rural Virginia. The angle is acute, but then I see him, or part of him, my brother: Levi's, a white t-shirt, an elbow, and the butt of a rifle, one I might have known he owned but had never seen. He must have gone outside just after pointing to the bear. My brother's a finish carpenter by trade, an artisan with wood, but also a poet and a photographer. In rural America, no one is just one thing.

I follow my brother onto the un-stained deck but keep my hand on the latch. He's between me and the bear, his back to me, hands full. I don't think of mass shootings, Columbine or Sandy Hook, or my first, the San Ysidro McDonald's where 40 people were murdered and maimed, people who, like me, had stopped where I had just days before to pee or

buy French fries and a Diet Coke. I don't think about how fast-food restaurants make me think about violent death. All I can think about is the gun my brother is holding. It is about three feet long, with a wooden stock that rests in his right hand. The barrel—about half the length of the whole—lies loose in his upturned left. It's a light touch, graceful and muscular.

And I can almost smell blood and endings. My brother and I know. We have lost a lot. But he can't hear me, his ears plugged with torn twists of toilet paper, little wisps of clouds like angel's wings, makeshift protection for what must come next.

Might come next? We'd seen her the day before, or one a lot like her. Up the road a few miles, the neighbor said that five of them roam her ten acres. *They breed like vermin*, my brother says later over the first shot of whiskey. *Two at a time, every two years.*

The babies make them dangerous, he adds after the second shot.

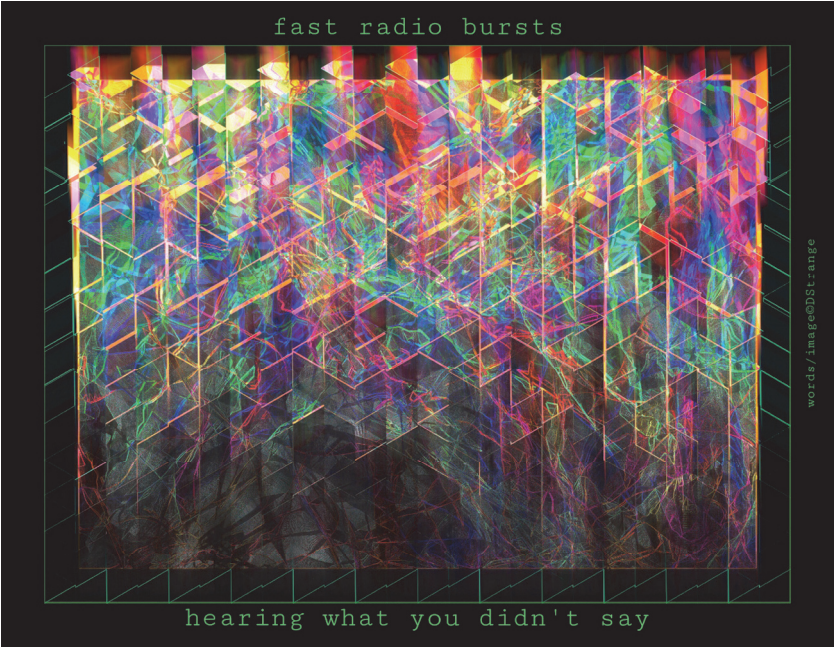
Now, we're silent as we watch her settle down like a big cat in the morning sun. She sniffs and tastes and licks a patch of fallen cornmeal, leftovers tossed for the birds. And then she turns—not to us, but away—and tumbles like a dark dandelion puff toward the tree line, a half-hundred yards distant.

I breathe into civility as she-bear heads for the trees. My hand is still on the door, but as it creaks I know there will be no shot. There will be no burn or smoke, no deafening. It's over.

But then she stops, abrupt. She turns toward us. She looks at us.

There she is, my brother says as I slip through the dark slit of the door and enter the empty house.

There she is, he says while he waits, gun in both hands.



DEBBIE STRANGE

JAY FRIEDENBERG

pistol shots outside . . .
the slow click
of a loaded gurney

BRAD BENNETT

twenty years
since Columbine . . .
spreading weeds

SUSAN BURCH

exhausted paper
the police keep trying
to connect
word count
with crime

The Point Is

for Michelle McNamara

I sleep with
a knife under my pillow
fingers gripped on the camel bone handle
ready for anything
I sleep with that knife

perhaps you should have one
under your pillow too

we could be weird and knifey together
we could cringe when the housekeeper finds it
we could both feel safe finally

fighting each other's demons
protecting each other's bodies
burrowing each other's fears
like termites in the wooden beams
like mice beneath the floorboards

like cancer in the marrow
I know you probably won't but

still under my pillow sleeps a knife
that can speak for us both—

*Shine a light in my face at 3:00 am
Golden State Mother Fucker or some copycat killer
and you'll bleed the rage
of a thousand sleepless women*

just waiting for a reason.



Ossified 1

JULIE WARTHER

SUSAN BETH FURST

flamingos in Santa hats climate change

ROBERTA BEACH JACOBSON

detasseling the Iowa caucuses

BRUCE H. FEINGOLD

firestorm
the children huddle around
a solar lamp



Best Gear & Seeded Time

CHERIE HUNTER DAY

Evolution

i. Psychologists say your room is a good representation of your mind. My room has a hundred things cluttering it and none of them are of any use.

ii. I keep trying to reconnect with my old self by listening to my old favourite songs, watching my old favourite movies. It's like trying to feel at home in a building that's been burnt to a crisp.

iii. This friend I have who's an Instagram poet, they talk a big game about self-growth. How much could I really be growing when I'm standing still? How much could it really help to bury myself in work if I've made a job out of fantasizing about burying myself in my backyard?

iv. My feelings are as comprehensible when expressed as Van Gogh cutting his ear off. They're a rush of salt water pressed up against a door and anyone who cares about me is on the other side, at risk to drown if they turn the knob.

v. I wish all the inexplicably happy people around me would take prescription depressants, so I would no longer have to take those little white pills that leave a shitty taste in my mouth. Sadness seems more rational to any rational being than being happy.

vi. I take my pills, get flowers for my backyard, clean out my room and call it self-growth, call it progress, call it healing, call it code words for “I’m a little less fucked up now than I used to be.”

vi. I make role models out of seemingly sane people I will never be anything like and call it vicarious learning, modelling, call it code words for “I find it inspiring that you can get out of bed every day.”

vii. It’s easier now to resist the urge to push myself in front of speeding cars on the highway. You just have to flinch real hard, visualize the jump, and let the image satisfy you.

viii. I hail myself for accomplishing tasks my classmates completed two months prior. I know if I don’t celebrate myself, nobody will.

ix. Incredibly, I’ve made it up to the night of every single day in my life, whether I wanted to, or not. What a truly remarkable feat. I pour champagne all over my bed to celebrate how fast I ran from my demons.

x. Every night I tuck myself in, they take hold of me again, and drag me back to square one.

i. Every morning I find my room cluttered again, I pour tears all over my bed, and prepare to morph all over again.

CLAIRE VOGEL CAMARGO

truck-stop bathroom
a phone number for help
to get out of the life

SUSAN BURCH

a hand-me-down
from his father –
wife beater

KALA RAMESH

rainforest
I discover leeches
don't let go



The Anatomical Heart

MICHAEL ORR

If All My Lover Were God, I'd Finally Believe

And last year—

when i took you to a restaurant in the whitest part of town
the part where parts of me folded like paper;
where eyes darted to the Black figure
fake chain, thrift shop shoes
discount jeans, then button-down
then face

the part where i fit neatly in a pocket;
the part where they'd ask us
where we're from
as if we're foreigners;

we ate in silence
hands on forks and forks to ourselves;
shimmied past each other in shallow isles
said I love you with the small of our backs;
passed as normal at the intersection,
adjusted our hands to one another by the genre-shift,
barely visible
but there

Arrived back to where
east & west and *you & I* don't exist,
but we do and Georgia does

straightened our spines & checked for blood
finding solace in our safety, safely
finding gospel in making it back to our Mecca
alive

like true southerners
with promises made best below the belt;
kept beside where you rested your bible at night
souvenir from the state
where God ruled our politics;
coition stayed in the back pockets of our jeans
scattered & warm & quiet
but here

JULIE WARTHER

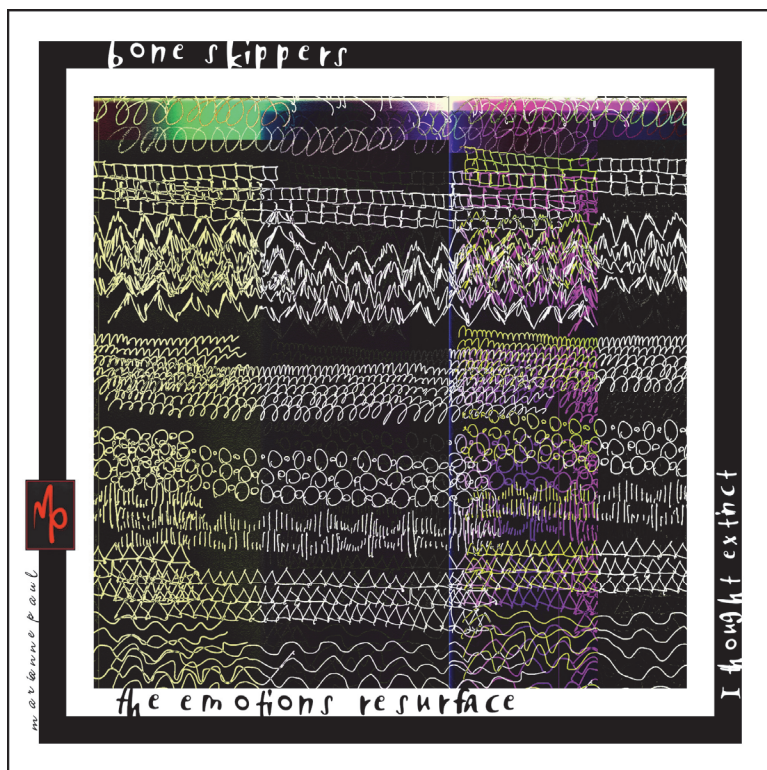
daybreak in a chord each bird's given song

WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN

light from the street
two men shake hands
then kiss

CRAIG KITTNER

long lunch
walking with butterflies
the ways I can't be shamed



MARIANNE PAUL

One Flew West

I'm lying on the bank and there's a face leaning over me a child we see often hanging out with her mates drinking cider while he's fishing and I'm desperate for someone anyone to talk to but now she's screaming in my face as a siren goes wild and she's gripping my hand as my stomach's pumped dry and it's pitch black outside before she gets to call home and she clings to my hand as I plead with her to go . . .

And now I'm lying here wondering why she isn't Prime Minister, or if the memory hasn't left her as wrecked as my teenage liver should have been, had she not flown over that day.

ash key turns:
the distance
home

KATALIN JUDIT HOLLÓS

last migrant train
a molting crab
sheds its shell

HELEN BUCKINGHAM

NO ENTRY
dam nation

RICH SCHILLING

small
arms

child

of
war

Gender Reveal

A father-to-be aims
a rifle at an explosive

target to see if he's
having a boy or a girl.

47,000 acres scorched.
\$8 million dollars.

And the damage you
cannot see. Every time

you say *slaughter*,
I hear *daughter*.



Wheel of Fortune

LORETTE C. LUZAJIC

20/20 Vision Part I

Rosemary is for remembering
there is to be no oblivion. Again,
the same sun brimmed over crisp
blades of grass, made the morning
dew hiss and dry. I am one day in
and behind the rest, rubbing dark circles
into deep violets. I submit to this task,
and reject being still—a silent night,
a baby asleep in the crèche, because
the world shut me out. Nowhere is
a place I have visited. I am a guest.
But I am never here long. I am set,
my own guide. I point and name
the lights the sky forgot to turn off.

A Transcendence of Hollow Bones

Ari knew that the day she first saw the bird was the day that it had died by the sheen of the halo of blood around its head. She had paused on her walk from her car to her office, surprised that no one else even seemed to notice it. She considered herself a kind of amateur expert on birds; she at least knew her dark-eyed junco from her tufted titmouse. Internet searches to identify them let her think about something winged and free. This dead bird, though, was only a simple sparrow with its head opened up on the concrete. Ari was tempted to bend down and scoop up the little sparrow, tuck its sprawled and broken wings around its center like a shroud and lay it in a quiet place in the grass under some barren bush somewhere. Ari had seen a dying sparrow, once, that had been nipped on the wing by a young turkey and then flung into the air for sport. That dying sparrow had wanted to be in the grass. But that was the summer. The ground was frozen now, and even if Ari relocated the sparrow, she didn't think it would help anything. Ari kept moving, though she couldn't banish a back-of-the-mind unease telling her that she'd made the wrong choice, like somewhere a universe diverged.

When Ari walked by again days later, she thought the bird would be gone, or at least beyond recognition as something that had once lived. When she reached the bus stop along her walk, Ari felt the tug of a strange moral obligation to check. When she did, only two things had changed: it

had gotten cold enough for long enough that ice fractals now embroidered the deep red halo on the concrete, and the sparrow's visible eye had . . . transformed. Ari could think of no other word for it. What had been a blank black bead on Friday was no longer there, replaced instead by a green ethereal glow. Ari looked around, convinced there must be a crowd gathered to gape communally at this riddle of a miracle. Still, no one noticed, as though this were some dried leaf leftover from autumn. She realized that none of them wanted to break from the track of routine to search for mystery, mystery that she had been searching for all along without knowing it—something *more*.

Now Ari knew that there was no touching the bird's little body. She stood, in awe, bumped into by others—sometimes accidentally, sometimes passive-aggressively. Ari wondered how long someone was supposed to stand witness to a miracle. It had been a while, but she thought miracles were supposed to be brief—the more spectacular ones anyway. Ari felt like she could stare forever at that soft green light—the eye of the universe. Ari didn't know when she left the bird, when she'd made that choice, but she remembered nothing from the rest of that day.

It happened again the next day, too—this time the sparrow's whole head was radiating the green light, no sign of the sparrow's actual head itself still existing underneath.

Over the next two days, one wing transformed, then the other.

One week from when Ari first spotted the bird, one week from its death, the sparrow's whole body was light. Even the blood halo gleamed with it. No one noticed; no one ever noticed. Ari could sense the distance in the eyes of the people all around her, even when their concerns were so small—lost keys, running late to jobs that made them feel like they had

carved out their own heart and blood no longer caressed their veins. But the bird—Ari knew there was something about the bird, something with no words, something outside of time, something made of broken and reformed stars.

As Ari watched that last day, the light faded. It was not within one blink, or even two. It dulled, slowly, like a fog spreading out so thin that everything else becomes clearer. And, when the last of the light was gone, Ari left—not for her office, not for her car, but for a place where she could seek the miracle of the light again.



In a Whorl

JANINA AZA KARPINSKA

Clarksdale, Mississippi

A couple of angels have failed to get drunk again,
but Jesus, green-faced and confused, afraid of his own words,
is kissing them through the rancid air of the place
where we are all just plastic bottles melting in a trash can,
listening to the sound of dying trees
and dry leaves that can't fill the sky.

DAVID KÄWIKÄ EYRE

holocaust museum
a trash can full
of staring cups

KELLY SAUVAGE ANGEL

the god I warship

TAOFEEK AYEYEMI

revolution protest –
a gunshot scatters a gang
of crows

Reactive

In high school, my friends and I would drive three miles to drink wine coolers by the local nuclear power plant. Hobbitland, we called it. Years before, Hobbitland was just a maze of trees and winding roads behind the K-Mart. Now the rising steam clouds could be seen for miles around. As Richard drove, I would watch for a break in the treetops and let myself be awed, again and again, by the enormous concrete hyperboloids doused in blinding spotlights. Ah, beautiful danger. We blared music, windows open, and yelled lyrics as loudly as we could as he careened around the curved roads. Smalltown boy. Don't leave me this way. Everything counts in large amounts.

meltdown
the constant fear of cracking
spilling over



Was It Worth It Now that You Are Here

EDWARD LEE

Rust and Bone

Rust, noun: a reddish-brown substance that forms on iron and steel on contact with water.

Rust also refers to a fungal infection of certain plant species that results in reddish-brown patches on the leaves.

When iron and steel rust they lose their strength.

They weaken.

Rust flakes when you run your hand over it, leaving sharp needles of decay on your fingertips. It builds over time, creating mottled layers of burnt umber hues.

I brush the flakes away on my jeans,

wonder how many dips in the lake it took before the layers began
to build upon us.

Why I Believe in Sympathetic Magic

And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

Matthew 5.17 (King James Version)

If I cup
a fish in

my hands
in sign

language
the hands

already
make the

shapes of
more fish



Ossified 3

JULIE WARTHER

I eat time

with a tongue
too fat for my mouth
greedily lolling
over puckered lips

try to find extra seconds
in the grains of sand
in the hour glass
eat those too,
with motes of dust
which make mornings
still for longer,

saliva drips down
my growing chin,
fat fingers
picking unripe fruit,
still green, savouring
the bitter release
of things not quite ready,

I lick the envelopes
of unrequited love letters
ink still wet
until my pink mouth
becomes a lattice
of paper-cuts,

I will peck days
to the bone,
make nights of them.

I could not say

A storm fills my mouth but won't
come out. I choke on the hurricane
until it meets my eye, lukewarm,
cliff-hanging tears. Stomach turns
earth until the slow rain of it stops.

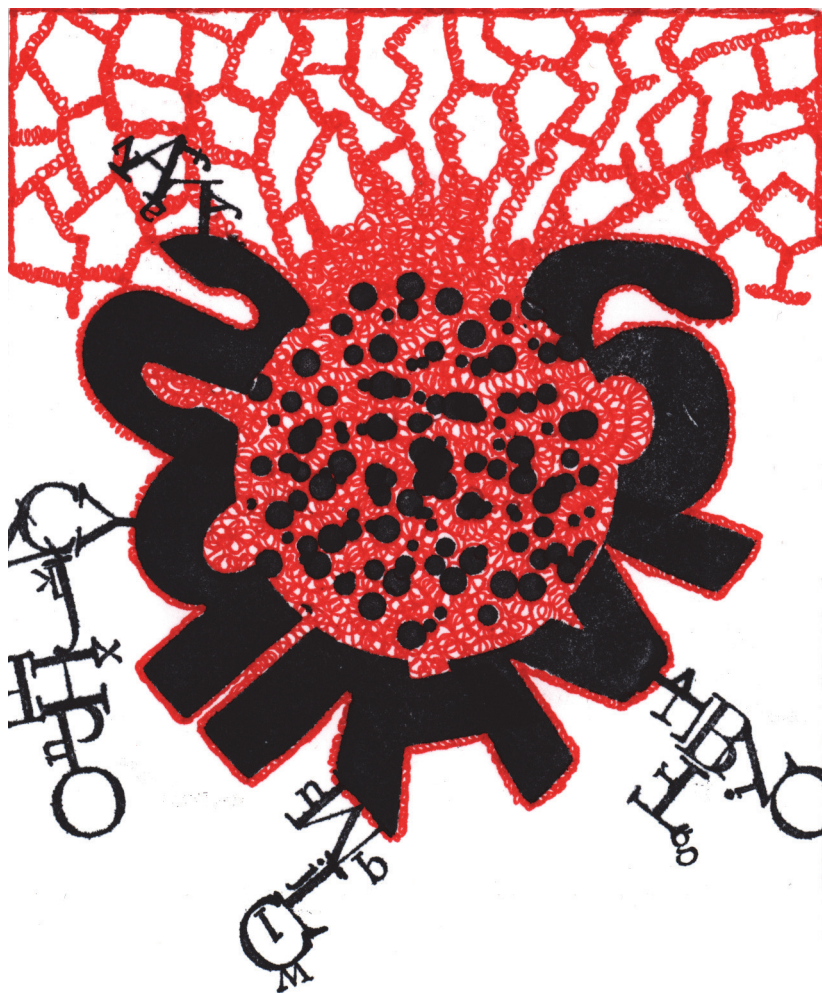
There are clothes and cloaks
comforting me but I don't quite fit
in. This life is rocky, barely better
than sedentary. Craggs of sediment
layer and crack my face and etch time.

The snow inside this globe shakes
me awake. I settle down
then race the cold that swims
this suffocating bubble until it's time
to weigh the paper down.

Each day I wait for the sway
of mood and climate to determine
my fate. In some moments
I am horse-shine, nourished, but brace

for the unexpected: the horse shit.

When I mindfully hold my only breath
I clench a windy day between
my teeth. As I mindlessly stir, my lips
crack open for the freeze to fill
until everything burns and begs for a salve.



A Sudden Outbreak of Meaninglessness

MICHAEL ORR

...

made it through the TSA checkpoint with not that much trouble. the agents didn't detain, didn't say much about my expired driver's license. quickly walking. cutting through the mass of people and their chatter everywhere. my attention isn't on any of them and certainly not on much that they're saying. too much to think about. still in disbelief . . . frozen in silence . . . mama . . . life-support . . . get there quickly . . . not long to live . . . i'm finally at my boarding area. seated. checking my phone for updates to Facebook, texts from family . . . texting them that i'm at the airport, waiting to board.

right foot's throbbing. the ebb and flow of mild tingling and numbness; results of my shooting in an attempted robbery at the Holiday Inn where i worked in 2017. massaging my foot, soon watching each passenger board, then it's my turn. catching my stomach . . . this IBS (triggered by years of stress and compounded trauma . . .) i'm having another flare up . . . "dear Gd, help me," "mama . . ." buckled in. deep breathing and my headphones securely on. i send off one more text to my youngest brother to let him know i've boarded and i'm on my way. airplane begins its descent down the runway. i hate this part. i'm not such a big big fan of flying. the angle as the plane lifts off; thank Gd the woman next to me has pulled down the window cover . . . bathed in the loud hum of the engines, i grip the handrests and try breathing in deep. we are now in the air . . .

feeling the pressure in my ears. I turn on some soul joint and settle back.
“mama . . . what the hell happened?” my “aunt” Vickie (mama’s cousin) told
me by text that i needed to get here quickly.

the world a blur my prayer-songs sink into the ground

Antyesti

everyone wondered why his ashes
floated atop the water like that.
his children had to drown him
in death
hands and fists on buoyant powdery bone
to announce a final resting
in gingery waves slurping shores
embossed with a collar of boot prints.

sunlight breaking in refraction
ash refracting to atoms
in downward fight
reaching for air
and dervishing to the floor the same.

these waters are a grieving
his children thought
ash refracting to atoms snowing
on a lukanani's back.
only sweet water burial for dem daddy.



AGNES EVA SAVICH (haiku)

MARIAH SANFORD (art)

Once on a Ghost Ship [7]

His jawbone was buoyant
and even, gliding along waves while I rested
in it, curved to its curve. I was
as surprised as anyone when it slapped
the water and shattered. I wired
a few pieces together and made a raft.
For a long time the sea was flat again,
shifting a little bit under me.

MARGARET WALKER

just passed the last chance stop

KAT LEHMANN

maple bones
these old adornments
too heavy to hold

PHILIP WHITLEY

storied moon
everything lovers
still repeat



Ossified 2

JULIE WARTHER

INTERVIEW

with ELLIOTT BRADLEY

by Nazli Karabıyıkoglu

When did you first realize your affinity for writing?

I first realized I wanted to write for the rest of my life when I served my first lunch detention.

I was in there for passing notes in class. At the time of my most famous middle school crime, I hardly spoke aloud due to my stutter, so in order to interact I wrote things down. It wasn't allowed, but it was the sacrifice I was willing to make at the time. Eventually, I was caught, and sentenced to serve a lunch detention in my Language Arts teacher's classroom.

For her, having lunch away from our friends wasn't enough. So we had to copy sentences from whatever book she laid in front of us. In front of me: *Langston Hughes: A Collection of Poetry*.

Scanning it page by page, I copied each poem on the loose-leaf paper in front of me, just as instructed. Eventually, however, I stopped writing and was just reading the book. By the time the class came back, I was halfway finished, with 17 words from the book that I didn't know the definition to scribbled on my arm.

The next time I was caught for note-passing, it was for writing my own "I, Too" during a lecture.

What is your process for writing poetry and prose?

I have to wait for a time where I (probably shouldn't) be writing. At sketchy bus stops, I pull out a pen and write a line on my arm. On the train a stanza is formed. Playing UNO with a child at my job, I finish the last stanza. While I'm in a lecture, I copy it all on paper and edit. I like to believe I'm like this because I never turn the writer-part of my brain off, but it's probably because I just can't focus [laughter].

When writing poetry, do you write from emotion? What usually inspires you?

I absolutely write from emotion. I don't think I know a single writer who doesn't. For me, most of my inspiration comes from super strong emotions. Getting my heart broken after becoming deeply invested in someone, a child making me a Play-Doh dinosaur for Christmas at the local YMCA, watching police brutality cases, my boss remembering my birthday—all evoke strong emotion from me.

What do you want the readers to know about you?

I don't write for White peoples' enjoyment. All my work is Black-centered, because I'm Black. All my work is Queer-centered, because I'm queer. I fully believe white audiences can read and enjoy my work, but I will never rely on their enjoyment in order to create or publish.

Are there any immediate events or publications that you have coming up that you want the readers to know about?

Yeah! Agnes Scott College's Ignite Poetry Collective is going to CUPSI this year in Virginia, so if anyone wants to follow their journey, follow them on Instagram (@ignite.poetry) and donate to their team's GoFundMe. I do their "Poetry Night, Open Mic" once a month at Ebrik's Coffee Room and

they're a group of Black, women/non-binary poets who are killer on stage. I'm also working with Gathered and Grounded for their Future Perfect Project, so readers can catch me at those events, and can follow me on both Instagram and Twitter (@ayeelliottmyguy) for any other upcoming events I'll be at.

Do you think that magazines play an important role in a poet's/artist's publishing career? How do you choose "the right" magazine/journal? Do you have a dream journal?

I don't believe magazines play as much of an important role in artists' careers like they used to. I think social media does. Being on multiple platforms does as well. One of my favorite poets (currently) has hardly been in large journals but has been on digital media platforms such as Write About Now, HBO, Button Poetry, Tedx Talks, Slam Find, Penguin Books UK, plus others—which has helped build her career up substantially by massively increasing her fan-base. Her publishings in lit mags helped, but for 21st-century poets, the readers like to hear voices read their own work before reading it themselves.

That being said, I'm a mix of performing poetry and writing it. I pick out journals to submit my work to the same way I pick out venues to perform at. Is it inclusive? Do they have a diverse staff? Is the journal more conservative than not? If the answers are overwhelmingly yes (and they're moderate to liberal), then it's a go to submit. My current dream journal(s) would be a toss-up between the *Missouri Review* and *Nightingale & Sparrow*.

Your poem "Moonlight (Coming of Age)" which is published by *Human/Kind Journal*, has themes revolving between fatherhood,

Black identity, and memory. What is your main drive when you are choosing your themes? Which components feed your themes?

My earliest memory regarding race was the murder of Trayvon Martin. I didn't sleep for weeks, I didn't wear jackets with hoods for a year, and I haven't lived since. To this day, Skittles hurt my teeth and Arizona's are bittersweet. "Moonlight" mirrors the lost childhood of every black child who has had to grow up quicker in order to adjust to a society built off of white supremacy and anti-black institutions. I never forgot the day he died, because from that point on I was no longer a child. My father told me I was now just Black, and that's what I would be for the rest of my life. And that's something I'd just have to grow into. I chose those themes because I can never forget. We, as Black people, don't ever forget.

INTERVIEW

with ARIAN FARHAT

by Shobhana Kumar

What does identity mean to you? How does it translate on the page and off it?

To me, identity is poetry itself. It's our own juxtaposition, our contrasting strengths and weaknesses, the constantly conflicting moments of success and failure. On the page, it feels like I know who I am. I accept all the things that make my identity, all the highs and lows. After all, it was the page that chose to listen to me during a time when not many else would. Off the page is a little different. I am proud of the progress I have made, in instilling confidence and acceptance into myself. But the real world, as I've learned and continue to learn, is not always kind to what is different. As a person who grew up balancing two cultures consistently, not everyone was understanding and accepting of that tightrope walking act. Writing is a way I developed my identity, and learned how bravery and vulnerability often go hand in hand. By sharing our stories with each other, we share our identities. By sharing our identities, we break down barriers, become informed, and gain empathy. I'm simultaneously intertwining how I portray my identity in writing and in person, and I continue to learn from the brilliant writers I love to read.

When reading your work, memories leap at the reader very frequently. They are haunting images, and speak of love and togetherness. How have memories shaped you as a writer?

I'm the kind of person who forgets why I *just* walked into a certain room, or where I put down the pen I had in my hand *literally* ten seconds ago. But I can recall the lighting, set up, and mood of a room from seven years ago, or riding my bike without training wheels by focusing on a leaf on the sidewalk. As a writer, my memories have shaped me by helping me focus on the small details, the tiny things that are often overlooked, but which make up an experience. It helps me work on using sensory details in my writing. By incorporating memories, I also weave in nostalgia. I think I feel nostalgic a lot these days, especially as it's my last year of high school, so I'm recalling lots of childhood memories. I'm very grateful to my family for giving me happy memories throughout my childhood, and for also teaching me to make my own as I grow up.

You speak of music as a powerful influence. One can also see how you engage with language. Can you tell us a little more?

I think it's beautiful how someone's voice rises in pitch when asking a question. The breath someone takes between sentences could be considered a measure of rests. I actually don't think language and music are entirely separate concepts. Our voices, our command of language . . . I've come to learn that we humans are such musical creatures. When I write, I hope I write something that is musical, that captures emotion the way music does, with rhythm and dynamics.

In my AP Psychology class, we learned about a theory that suggests that language affects how our brains think. The more languages we expose ourselves to, the more diverse our thinking becomes. I think that also goes hand in hand with listening to others' stories and identities. I've been taking Spanish at school for 6 years now, and I'm learning so much about how emotions and actions are expressed differently. For instance, in Spanish, words are masculine or feminine, but in Farsi, there is no sense

of gender in a sentence! That can alter one's perspective of the world entirely! Growing up in a household where we spoke Farsi, I also try to be innovative, and incorporate a lot of Farsi sentence structure and semantics into what I write in English.

When did you first know that you are a poet? Was it epiphany or did it grow on you naturally?

When I was little, I was that kid who changed her mind on what she wanted to be when she grew up on a weekly basis (I apologize for raising my parents' hopes when I declared I wanted to be a lawyer one week. The next week, I set my mind on being a fairy). It was around fourth grade that I started writing, and devotedly went to after school Writer's Club meetings. When I began middle school, I found myself expanding my writing to poetry, but I still didn't think of myself as a poet, just as "someone who liked to write." I realized I was a poet very suddenly, maybe only a couple of years ago, when I found myself up at 3 in the morning on a school night, frantically scribbling an idea on a piece of scrap paper. The next day, I could barely stay awake in school, but I was very proud of the poem that resulted.

Where do you see your writing taking you? Do you see books of verse, fiction, non-fiction, fantasy?

I think I still have a lot of work to do in terms of improving and learning my writing. I hope to do so by reading and practicing more. In the future, I hope to publish fiction novels and collections of short stories and poetry. I've participated in NaNoWriMo for three years now, and I have successfully completed two projects! I am confident in my ability to work hard and get things done. When I go to college, I want to immerse myself in a writing community, and participate in writing workshops.

Do tell us a little about Arian on an ordinary day, a day perhaps when the Muse does not visit? What is her life about?

I am currently a high school senior, so the majority of my daily life revolves around school. When I'm not doing my homework and studying, I am monitoring my college applications' statuses with fingers crossed. I definitely think I'm at a pivotal point in my life, and I'm learning to live in the moment. I love painting and playing the violin. On the weekends, I can be found at the local bookstore, volunteering at my community's nature center, or exploring nearby Washington D.C.

Thank you, Arian. Just one more before we leave you with the Muse. Who are the writers who have influenced you the most? What do you read?

My inner bookworm lights up with happiness when it comes to talking about books. My favorite writers include Suzanne Collins, Tahereh Mafi, Khaled Hosseini, Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, and the great poets of ancient Persia. I read a mix of modern and classic, but I will devour pretty much everything and anything. One of my favorite series that I could talk about endlessly is *The Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins, who writes about a society dangerously similar to ours with a precise, haunting style. One book that I could say changed my life is Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which captures the sacrifices and hardships Afghan women endure. I love books with some good social commentary and a unique voice!

BOOK REVIEW

Stumbling Toward Happiness: Haibun and Hybrid Poems

by Kat Lehmann

(2019 29 Trees Press) 6"x9" perfectbound paperback. 104 pages.

ISBN-13: 9781096125372 www.amazon.com

more than bones
beneath the layers
I dig deeper
and excavate
the heart of myself

In *Stumbling Toward Happiness*, Kat Lehmann doesn't circumvent the hard work when it comes to the emotional messiness of self-reflection. "The first ingredient in success is failure," she says, and proceeds to show us how she allows herself to look troubles in the face and push forward.

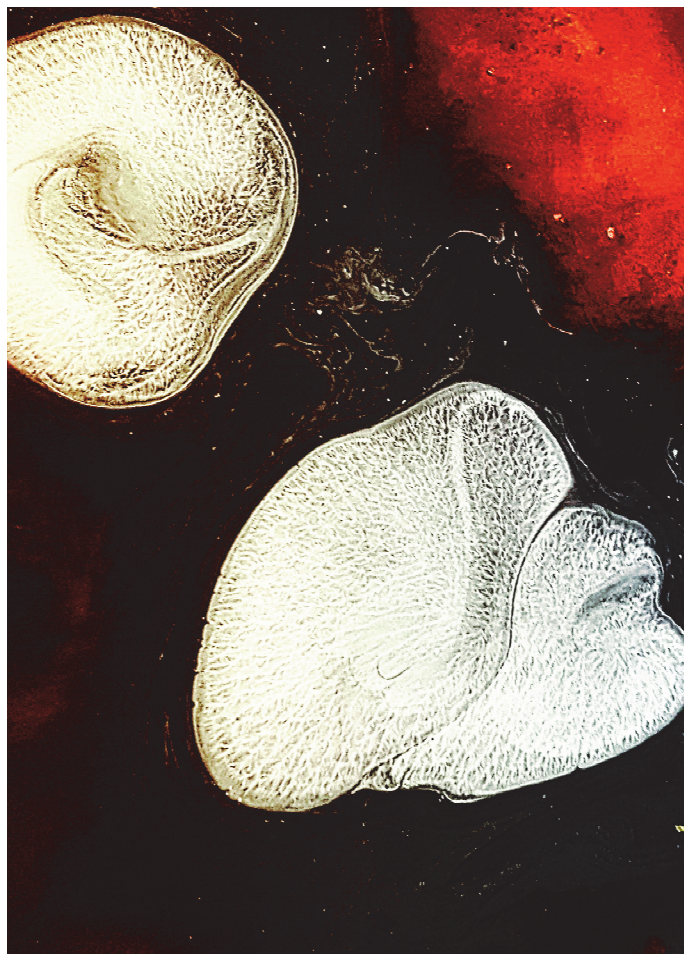
Lehmann utilizes hybrids of prose and micropoetry, mostly haibun, as tools to navigate grief, loss, disconnect, and what she refers to as "the striving." Despite such heavy topics, the collection is not weighted down but rather has a fluid movement as we follow her journey. Lehmann sums up this process in her concluding haibun: "words, when uttered, become breathable like air, like the collaboration that sustains the atmosphere." The reader becomes part of this collaborative experience with the author.

This feeling of transcendence is something the reader can't help but take on themselves, adjusting their personal focus while gazing through Lehmann's lens. Lehmann creates resonance in the realm of hope, reflecting on seemingly impossible situations with magical truth: "If you want to enter the roots of a tree . . . you will find a way to fit." And while she continues to second-guess herself, she still reflects on self-advocacy and self-care: "I lean on the fulcrum of myself, the one that lets the best parts of me rise."

"An object should be true to itself," Lehmann states and she backs it up with her actions. This beautifully-crafted collection demonstrates how one can cut away some of the spent parts of oneself and allow those pruning cuts to heal and reblossom over and over. Readers will feel this rejuvenation for themselves and want to reread this collection in times of distress and also pass this book along as a gift to loved ones.

Reviewed by Grix

*Introductory tanka and quotes all come from *Stumbling Toward Happiness: Haibun and Hybrid Poems*



Ossified 4

JULIE WARTHER

BOOK ANNOUNCEMENT

Human/Kind Press has recently launched with its first book by regular contributor, Marianne Paul. Please read below for the Advance Praise of the book. Available at our website.

BODY WEIGHT: A COLLECTION OF HAIKU AND ART

by Marianne Paul

ISBN: 9781951675028 4"x6" perfectbound paperback. 40 pages.

Full-color ink on 70 lb. white paper.

"Marianne Paul's art and haiku keep evolving to the cutting edge of experimentation. She takes the reader into the metaphysical and gets under their skin with the use of beautiful yet confronting images. Through her unique pairing of haiku, Marianne has created a new dimension beyond white space for her audience to journey."

- Robbie Cairns

Author of *In Transit* and *The Drifting*

"In *Body Weight*, Marianne Paul stretches the concepts of juxtaposition and resonance by creating two separate, complete worlds of unique awareness which she then pitches at each other. At the nexus, they are held together, and yet apart, by a single word or phrase, demanding a newer evocation of resources and taunting the cognitive distance between the verses and the reader. Scattered through the collection are

sense-swapping artworks which catch your breath as you arrive at each unexpectedly, spring-boarding you into another level of awareness. Marianne's work here is as fresh as it is conceptually unique in its structure and content."

- Samar Ghose

Author of *turn, climb, realign*

"We are scented by our memories, while poets can be arbiters of a truth otherwise diminished over generations. As reality seeps into this author's poems, it's as if she addresses all the "Greats," real and otherwise, from Escher to Alice to Magritte, and the 'great issues' that tumble through us as we live, breathe, and expire. Marianne Paul is a Golden-eye whistle: She is creating a new way of alerting us, as well as communicating what we need to re-discover. This fresh and original way of writing poetry, interspersed with amazing illustrations, comes at a time when we need to hold, and hold on, and gifts us a mesmerisingly accumulative warmth for the soul."

- Alan Summers

Co-founder, Call of the Page

BIOGRAPHIES

Akhim Alexis (he/him) is a writer born and raised in Trinidad and Tobago who is inspired by his mother Simone, who also writes poetry. He is currently pursuing an MA in Literatures in English at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. His most recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Crêpe & Penn*, *McNeese Review*, *Camwood Literary Magazine*, *Capsule Stories* and *The Caribbean Writer*. Twitter: @akhimalexis1; Instagram: @akhimalexis.

Kelly Sauvage Angel (she/her) A graduate of Northwestern University, Kelly Sauvage Angel spends her days exploring the literary, visual and performing arts. She is the author of *Om Namah . . .*, published under Kalyanii, as well as countless articles, short stories and essays. Her haiku have appeared in some of the finest publications on earth.

Joseph Salvatore Aversano (he/him), a native speaker of both American Sign Language and English, writes in the latter. His poems have recently appeared in *Bones*, *Contemporary Haibun Online*, *E-ratio, is/let*, *Modern Haiku*, *NOON: Journal of the Short Poem*, *otata*, *Otoliths*, and in the *New Resonance 11* anthology from Red Moon Press. He currently lives in the Aegean port city of Izmir with his wife Asu. Instagram: @js.aversano.

Taofeek Ayeyemi (he/him), fondly called Aswagaawy, is a Nigerian lawyer and writer. His works are featured in *The Quills*, *The Pangolin Review*, *Kalahari Review*, *Minute Magazine*, *Tuck Magazine*, *Akitsu Quarterly*, *Haibun Today*, *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *Cattails*, *Seashores*, and others. He won the 2018 Poetic Wednesday Poetry Contest and Honorable

Mention Prize, 2019 Morioka International Haiku Contest. He can be read at: [www.facebook.com /ayeyemitaofeek](https://www.facebook.com/ayeyemitaofeek).

Brad Bennett (he/him) of Arlington, MA is an elementary school teacher and haiku poet. He has published two collections of haiku with Red Moon Press. His first, *a drop of pond*, won a Touchstone Distinguished Book Award in 2016 from The Haiku Foundation. His second, *a turn in the river*, was published in 2019.

Elliott Bradley (he/him) Minneapolis born but Atlanta native, Elliott Bradley is a poet and prose author whose work focuses on his identity as a transsexual, Black man in the south. His writing has been featured in *Royal Rose*, *InQluded Magazine*, *Peach Magazine*, and others. He can be found on Twitter and Instagram @ayeelliottmyguy.

Helen Buckingham (she/her) lives in Wells, England. Her credits include: *Haiku in English: The First Hundred Years* (W. W. Norton, 2013) and *The Wonder Code* (Girasole Press, 2017). Among her collections are: *water on the moon* and *mirrormoon* (Original Plus, 2010), *Armadillo Basket* (Waterloo Press, 2011) and *sanguinella* (Red Moon Press, 2017).

Susan Burch (she/her) is a good egg.

Claire Vogel Camargo (she/her) dove into haiku in 2015, won first place in the 3rd My Haiku Pond Academy Annual Contest 2017, a Sakura Award in the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Haiku Festival 2018. Her poems in many haiku journals, she belongs to BHS, HSA, HNA, and the new Austin Haiku Group. Author of *Iris Opening*, she holds BSN, MSN nursing degrees.

Audrey T. Carroll (she/her) is a Queens, NYC native and the author of *Queen of Pentacles* (Choose the Sword Press, 2016). She currently lives in Rhode Island. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *peculiar*, *Glass Poetry*, *Vagabond City*, *So to Speak*, and others. She can be found at audreytcarrollwrites.weebly.com and @AudreyTCarroll on Twitter.

Jackie Chou (she/her) studied Creative Writing at the University of Southern California. She writes free verses and Japanese short form poetry, inspired by her own feelings and experiences, and birds and flowers around her.

Gemma Cooper-Novack (she/her) Gemma's debut poetry collection *We Might As Well Be Underwater* (Unsolicited Press, 2017) was a finalist for the CNY Book Award. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in more than twenty journals; her plays have been produced across the United States. She is a 2016 Deming Fund grantee and a doctoral candidate in literacy education at Syracuse University. Twitter: @gemmasupernova; Website: www.gemmacoopernovack.com.

Cherie Hunter Day's (she/her) collages have appeared in a variety of publications including *Blue Mesa Review*, *Bones, is/let, moongarlic, R'r*, and fourteen issues of *otoliths*. Her most recent book of micropoetry, *for Want* (Ornithopter Press, 2017) received an Honorable Mention in the HSA Merit Book Awards.

Cameron Elliot (he/him) of Hamilton, New Zealand is an autistic writer who has just completed his first novel, which he describes as a psychological, sexual, supernatural horror. He lives with his wife, Kirsten Cliff Elliot, the REAL haiku writer in the relationship, but enjoys crafting a few 'ku when inspiration shines. Website: helpmyhusbandhasaspergers.wordpress.com

David Kāwika Eyre (he/him) has taught high school Hawaiian for 30 years. His *By Wind, By Wave*, was named best natural science book of 2000. *Kamehameha – The Rise of a King* received the 2013 Award of Excellence in Hawaiian culture, a Moonbeam Children’s Book Award, a Read Aloud America award, and a Nēnē Award. His latest work, an awkward collection of haiku entitled *not a one*, was published by Red Moon Press in 2018.

Arian Farhat (she/her) is a teenager born and raised in the Washington D.C. metro area. As the daughter of Afghan immigrant parents, Arian strives to inspire and inform through her writing. When she isn't writing, she can be found reading, playing the violin, and painting. Twitter: @girlhearscolors.

Bruce H. Feingold (he/him) has been a psychologist for forty years in the San Francisco Bay area. His haiku have been published world-wide and have won numerous awards. Bruce is the Vice-President of the Haiku Poets of Northern California and on the Board of Director of the Haiku Foundation. Instagram @haikubruce.

Jay Friedenberg (he/him) is President of the Haiku Society of America and served for two years as Associate Editor of the organization's journal *Frogpond*. He has had his poetry accepted in numerous U.S. and international journals and has published several book collections of his work. He has won multiple U.S. and International haiku contests. Website: bigapplearts.com. Twitter: @JayFriedenberg; Facebook @jay.friedenberg.

Susan Beth Furst (she/her) is a Touchstone Award-nominated poet and author. She writes Japanese short-form poetry and especially enjoys writing haibun. Her chapbook *Road to Utopia* (Yavanika Press) and *The*

Amazing Glass House: A Haiku Storybook (Purple Cotton Candy Arts) were published in 2019. Susan lives happily in Virginia with her husband Herb.

Katalin Judit Hollós (she/her) is a teacher, poet, playwright, translator and drama pedagogue who was educated at Budapest University and the Theatre and Film Institute. Her short stories, poems, essays, translations and articles have appeared in literary magazines and anthologies in English, Hungarian, and Swedish. Twitter: @Juditka1982.

Louise Hopewell (she/her) is a poet, playwright and songwriter based in Melbourne, Australia. Her haiku have been widely published, including in *Under the Basho*, *Modern Haiku*, and *Red Moon Anthology*. When not writing, Louise can be found riding her bicycle or playing ukulele. Website: louisehopewellwriter.wordpress.com.

Roberta Beach Jacobson (she/her) is an American humorist who makes her home in Iowa. Some of her recent publishing credits include *Akitsa Quarterly*, *Frogpond*, *Under the Basho*, *Presence*, *Plum Tree Tavern*, and *The Heron's Nest*. She is a member of the Haiku Society of America. Website: RobertaJacobson.com.

Elizabeth Jaikaran (she/her) is a New York-based author and lawyer, with work appearing in *Huffington Post*, *Playboy*, *The Higgs Weldon*, *Brown Girl Magazine*, *Sorjo Magazine*, *The Muslim Observer*, *The Jurist*, and the *New York Law Journal*, among other mediums. Her first book, *Trauma*, was published by Shanti Arts in 2017. Instagram: @lizziejkrn; website: lizjaikaran.com.

Jim Kacian (he/him) is the founder and director of The Haiku Foundation (thehaikufoundation.org), founder and owner of Red Moon Press (redmoonpress.com), editor-in-chief of *Haiku in English: The First*

Hundred Years, the definitive resource for the genre, and the author of a score of books of poetry, primarily haiku. He and his life partner Maureen live in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

Janina Aza Karpinska (she/her) is an Artist-Poet from the south coast of England. Her collage approach uses scraps of experience; snatches of conversation; emotions; and shreds of random pictures to make a pleasing whole. She has an eye, and heart, for the easily overlooked—in subject, form and material.

Candice M. Kelsey (she/her) Candice Kelsey's debut book of poems, *Still I Am Pushing*, is with Finishing Line Press. Her poetry has appeared in *Poets Reading the News*, *Poet Lore*, and other journals while her first microchapbook *The Pier House* is forthcoming with the Origami Poetry Project. She is currently working with the O, Miami Poetry Festival on an exciting project for the 2020 festival. Handles: @candicekelsey1.

Elizabeth Kemball (she/her) from England is a writer and illustrator whose work has featured in zines including *Black Bough* and *Iceberg Tales*. She was longlisted for the *Nightingale & Sparrow* 2019/20 Chapbook series, is an Editor & Designer for the literary arts zine *Re-Side* and is currently being mentored by Mari Ellis Dunning. Website: lizziekemball.wordpress.com; Twitter: @lizziekemball; Instagram: @e.kemball.

Craig Kittner (he/him) moved to Wilmington, North Carolina in 2012. Before that he lived in fourteen other places. He has worked as an art gallery director, magazine writer, restaurant owner, and blackjack dealer. He is fond of birds, cats, and rain . . . but rarely writes of cats. Twitter and Instagram: @craigkittner; Facebook: craig.kittner.

Edward Lee (he/him) is an artist and writer from Ireland. His paintings and photography have been exhibited widely, while his poetry, short stories, non-fiction have been published in magazines in Ireland, England, and America, including *The Stinging Fly*, *Skylight 47*, *Acumen* and *Smiths Knoll*. He is currently working on two photography collections: *Lying Down With The Dead* and *There Is A Beauty In Broken Things*. He also makes musical noise under the names Ayahuasca Collective, Lewis Milne, Orson Carroll, Blinded Architect, Lego Figures Fighting, and Pale Blond Boy. Website: edwardmlee.wordpress.com.

Kiley Lee (she/her) is a Pushcart-nominated poet and artist, with work in multiple publications and exhibitions across the United States. She lives in the Appalachian foothills with her family and loves staring at the clouds. She tweets @KBogart10.

Kat Lehmann (she/her) of Connecticut holds a Ph.D. in biochemistry and an unwavering awe of nature and the process of personal transformation. Her haibun has been published in *Frogpond*, *Human/Kind*, *Sonic Boom*, *Rattle*, *Narrow Road*, and anthologies. Her book, *Stumbling Toward Happiness: Haibun and Hybrid Poems* (2019), shares her meditative notes of self-exploration. Website: songsofkat.com; Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook: @SongsOfKat.

Lorette C. Luzajic (she/her) is an award-winning artist and writer from Toronto, Canada. Her collage paintings have been featured in dozens of literary journals. The originals are collected worldwide, and have been exhibited internationally as well. Lorette's creative writing has been nominated twice each for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize. She is the editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*. Website: www.mixedupmedia.ca.

Sarah Marquez (she/her) is an MA candidate at Southern New Hampshire University. She is based in Los Angeles and has work published and forthcoming in various magazines and journals, including *Capsule Stories*, *Kissing Dynamite*, and *Twist in Time Magazine*. When not writing, she can be found reading for *Periwinkle*, *Random Sample* and *The Winnow*, sipping coffee, or tweeting @Sarahmarissa338.

Kyrie Mason (he/him) is a writer and visual artist residing in Durham, NC. Kyrie's work primarily focuses on how crazy it is to be young, black, and perpetually confused in the modern world. You can find his work at: kyriemasn.com and follow him on his insta: @kyriemasn.

Elaine Mead (she/her) is a writer, based in Tasmania. She is fascinated by how we learn from our experiences to become more authentic versions of ourselves, and using words to make sense of life. Her work has been published with Reflex Press, *The Suburban Review*, Writers HQ, and **82 Review*, amongst others. Website: coffeeandbooks.co; Instagram: @cestelaine.

Mark Meyer (he/him) is a contemporary visual artist and retired educator, now into his seventh decade. Currently, he lives in the Seattle, WA area, but he has also lived in New York and Texas. In a prior lifetime long, long ago he was a neurobiologist; he still really misses looking through microscopes. A rather mediocre guitar player and struggling poet, he does try.

Lori A Minor (she/her), editor of #FemkuMag, is a body positive and human rights activist. Her work has been featured in several journals and has won awards, including a 2020 nomination for Best Small Fictions. In August 2019, Lori gave a presentation at Haiku North America on Social

Awareness in Haiku. Website: loriaminor.wixsite.com/poet; Twitter and Instagram: @femkupoetry.

Erin Murphy's (she/her) work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Georgia Review*, *The Normal School*, *Field*, *North American Review*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, and elsewhere. Her eighth book of poetry, *Human Resources*, is forthcoming from Salmon Poetry. She is Professor of English at Penn State Altoona and serves as Poetry Editor of *The Summerset Review*.

Victoria Bosch Murray (she/her) is a Pushcart-nominated poet with two chapbooks: *Prayer for Plum and Sinew* (Red Bird, forthcoming) and *On the Hood of Someone Else's Car* (Finishing Line, 2010). She has an MFA in poetry from Warren Wilson and teaches English in Boston, Massachusetts, her heart home.

Michael Orr (he/him) is native of Atlanta GA. He gets up early in the mornings so he can pursue his irresistible desire to create figurative and abstract images, stories and poems in visual form. He works in illustration, collage, hand-carved stamps, ink and paint. Cornpone.tumblr.com.

William O'Sullivan (he/him) is a writer, editor, and teacher in Washington, DC. His haiku and senryu have appeared in *Frogpond*, *Presence*, *Failed Haiku*, and the *Poetry Pea* podcast. His essay "First Run," from *100 Word Story*, received honorable mention in Best Microfiction 2019 (yes, even though it's nonfiction). Website: wmosullivan.com.

Babafemi Opeyemi Pamela (she/her) Opeyemi has a deep love for the natural environment, keenly observing the ongoing interactions around her. Her Japanese short-form poetry has been published in *Wales Haiku Journal*, *Akitsu Quarterly*, *The Mamba*, *Tanka Origins*, *Ribbons*, and others.

She is an Agricultural Engineer in her early twenties, living in Ilorin, Nigeria. Twitter: @pamzena.

Max Parrilla (he/him) is a new writer looking to make his mark in the literary world by writing short stories that deal with the day-to-day that transition toward dark matters. In short, Max is that texting and driving PSA that keeps you up at night.

Marianne Paul (she/her) is a Canadian poet, novelist and, recently, an amateur bookbinder. She has won the Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival haiku contest and the inaugural Jane Reichhold Memorial Haiga Competition. Instagram: @ms.haiku; Twitter: @mariannpaul. Websites: mariannepaul.com and literarykayak.com.

Ivan Peledov (he/him) lives in Colorado. He loves to travel and to forget the places he has visited. He has been recently published in *Sage Cigarettes*, *The Local Train*, *Existential Ponders*, and the CultureCult anthology, *Nocturne*.

Kala Ramesh (she/her) poet, editor, anthologist, and festival director, has been a foremost advocate and practitioner of haiku and allied Japanese poetry forms in India, including tanka, haibun, and renku. Kala's initiatives culminated in founding INhaiku in 2013, to bring Indian haikai poets together. In July 2020, HarperCollins is publishing her book of tanka.

Jonathan Roman (he/him) is a poet & storyteller from the Bronx, New York. He hopes to one day make something people will consider Art.

Mariah Sanford (she/her) is a visual artist and teacher living in Lawrence, KS. You can see more of her photos at: bloomandruin.shootproof.com.

Agnes Eva Savich (she/her) Austin, TX. Agnes is a university program coordinator and performing oboe player who loves to write haiku and related forms. Twitter: @agnesevasavich.

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Debbie Strange (she/her) is an internationally published short-form poet, haiga artist and photographer, whose creative passions bring her closer to the world and to herself. She maintains a publication and awards archive at debbiemstrange.blogspot.com, which also includes hundreds of haiga and reviews of her books. Please visit her on Twitter @Debbie_Strange.

Pat Tompkins (she/her) is an editor in northern California. Her haiku have appeared in *Modern Haiku*, *bottle rockets*, *Dwarf Stars*, and other publications.

Orrin Tyrell (he/ him) is from Dallas, Texas. A written, visual, vocal storyteller, he enjoys the immediacy of short-form poetry and their ability to document and archive life/imagination. Twitter: @bluesboy81.

Srishti Uppal (she/her) is an eighteen-year-old poet and essayist from Delhi, India. Her work has appeared in *Marías at Sampaguitas*, *Nymphs Publications*, *The Royal Rose*, and *Crêpe & Penn*, among others. She is a first-year student pursuing psychology honours. You can find more of her work at her blog: chaosandcalculation.wordpress.com on her Instagram: @srishtiuppal.

Margaret Walker (she/her) is a former school principal. Now homebound with ME/CFS, she has the opportunity to meet people from across the world as a leader of the ME/CFS Self-Help Program. She is a Pushcart Prize and Red Moon Anthology nominee whose work has been published in *Failed Haiku*, *Human/Kind Journal*, and My Haiku Pond's "Luca's Lily Pad."

Julie Warther (she/her) of Dover, Ohio is an associate editor at *The Heron's Nest* (theheronsnest.com) and was instrumental in establishing The Forest Haiku Walk in Millersburg, Ohio (innathoneyrun.com/open-air-art-museum/haiku-walk) and the Seasons of Haiku Trail at The Holden Arboretum in Kirtland, Ohio (holdenarb.org/seasons-of-haiku-interpretive-trail) to feature the work of other poets and bring further awareness to haiku.

K Weber's (she/her) writing has been included in issues of *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Detritus Online*, *Black Bough Poetry*, *Writer's Digest*, *Moonchild Magazine*, *Theta Wave* & more! K earned her BA in Creative Writing from Miami University (1999). More publishing credits and access to her five online chapbooks/audiobooks on her website! Twitter: [kwandherwords](https://twitter.com/kwandherwords); Instagram: [kweberandherwords](https://www.instagram.com/kweberandherwords); Website: kweberandherwords.wordpress.com; Soundcloud: soundcloud.com/kweberandherwords.

Philip Whitley (he/him) is a sculptor and retired teacher living in the Blue Ridge Mountain foothills of South Carolina, USA. Writing English Language Haiku informed by Japanese short forms, his poems appear in international journals such as *Under the Basho*, *Frogpond*, *Failed Haiku*, and The Haiku Foundation.

