

# Gnarled Oak

*an online literary journal*



Issue 6: Cosmology  
Jan-Feb 2016



**Gnarled Oak**  
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**On New Year's Day**  
*Christopher Woods*



## **Frost Flowers**

*Sandy Coomer*

They break when touched –

so delicate and temporary  
we only harvest them with our eyes.

Hairline cracks in weeds seep  
an aura of bluish ice

like miniature glaciers inching  
against the frozen grass.

Our breath is a curtain  
we hide behind. In this field,

our suffering is white and hollow,  
bitter in the space between us.

All night the world evolved  
and we just sat there, waiting

for crownbeard and ironweed  
to wind some brittle shard

of memory out of the sky  
and spool it back upon itself.

Stems burst and ice pours out  
in petals. Slowly, over the hours

we count the morning  
and think ourselves lucky

as we stand in the curling dawn.  
It really did

take this long.

## Ghosts of Home

*Kim Mannix*

We were warned at seventeen that home will always haunt us. We tucked the notion in our pockets with our parents' worry and headed East to begin. The ghosts we kept stretched long inside us, threatening to break wide the circuitry of concrete cities. Eager at twenty-five to forget how long a voice roars through miles of open space. But we couldn't be held back from the whitest of winters, when even midnight gleams. All the shrouded land shrieking light into the night. We were stirred not by the stars, but the hollows between them. We fell flat-backed in cold fields, noses to the sky, baying at every phase of the moon. Will they say we've settled when our bones turn to dust?



## Cosmology

*Laura M. Kaminski*

When I was small, my world was flat  
and the night sky was a basket, woven  
from stripped leaves, uprooted grasses,

placed inverted over every space my  
feet remembered at the end of day,

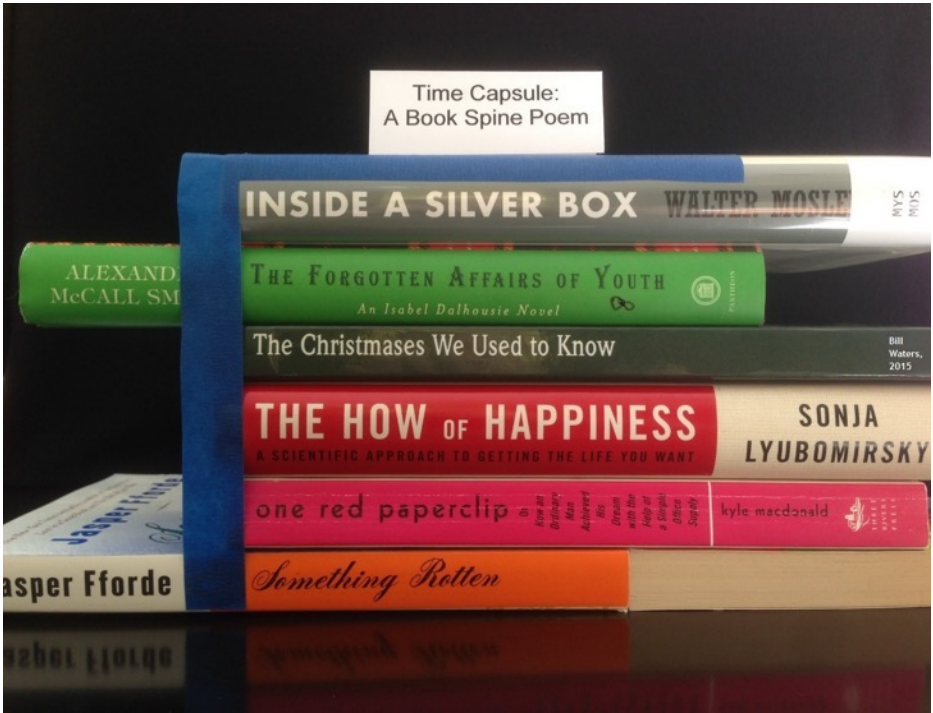
creating dark in which to sleep. But  
I had my secret: I would peek through  
this thatched lid, through small spaces

where fibers shifted, have my glimpse  
of the beyond, the realm outside where

it was always daylight, always sunlit,  
ever bright. I was too young yet to live  
upon a globe, did not believe in what

my elders called the stars.

Time Capsule  
Bill Waters



## Memories

*Angelee Deodhar*

A friend brings me two books about India from his mother's house and two small brass candlesticks with a swastika at their base. He also brings a bottle of her homemade mango chutney. The talk revolves around the significance of the swastika in India, Japan and Germany. I have come full circle with the Indian meal I have cooked for my host family in Plattsburg.

overcast sky  
a pale sun quivers through  
a rabbit's ears

## Chesapeake Beach in October

*Andrea Wyatt*

fields of dried queen anne's lace  
& ripe corn along the empty highway

butterfly weed pods split apart  
pulling their stalks down

chokeberries shriveled  
tangle of dusty roots

gray clapboard barns  
filled with hands of tobacco

roadside stands  
with pumpkins, green tomatoes

& baskets of gourds  
on splintered gray tables

smell of burning leaves & brine  
as we approach Chesapeake bay

& the running tide  
leaving mermaid's purse & sea walnut,

moon jellies with sunfish in their tentacles  
high up on the beach,

oystercatchers & laughing gulls  
swooping across the breakers  
in the cool moonlight

& past midnight  
as we unpack the car

we smell rain  
heading in our direction

## Three Crows and a Storm

*Joan Leotta*

Looking out and up from my front window I saw a yellow sky, darkened by the ominous promise of an afternoon storm. As I watched, three crows flew onto the strip of sidewalk near my yard. The large one, Leader, preened his feathers, cawed orders at the others and punctuated his pontifications with sharp pokes of his beak on the backs of his fellows. A crow's visit. What was it I had heard? As I watched I recalled—a group of crows is called a murder of crows.

The trio began pecking at the stubble of grass around them. A bolt of lightning cut through the yellow mists followed quickly by the rumble of thunder. Leader and then his followers raised their heads to the sky, opened their beaks to challenge the thunder with their own raucous cries. In reply, with sniper precision, sharp, large drops of water began to pelt the crows.

Lightning flashed and a curtain of water dropped from the sky. The lightening continued drawing bright victory swaths through dark sky. Thunder cheered storm's ferocity.

The crows persisted, strutting, screeching, cawing at the sky. One tremendous flash of light sliced into the ground across the street. The house shook. Crow leader opened his wings and flapped upward. His companions followed, raucously cawing a threat to return before disappearing into the dark—again sky, flying toward the woods at the end of our street.

The summer downpour halted soon after. A bit of blue edged out from behind the clouds—yellow air gone. The crows were gone. Yet I remained uneasy. For a time.

Eventually summer's brightness pushed away the malaise. Heat gave way to clear cool of autumn, the bright cold skies of winter, and the hazy blue skies and rainbows of spring, I completely forgot about the dark harbingers' visit.

However, when summer's heat again pressed hard upon me and blue skies yellowed with storms, the memory of the last crow's shrill shriek sounded in my soul. In the space of a month that summer, one neighbor's child died of a heart condition.

Our dear friend's son, crumpled over in the shower and died before his father could get him to the hospital.

"Undiagnosed 'issues' related to a birth defect." They said.

I waited, holding my inner breath for a third sad shadow to step across my spirit. Months passed. Just when I was sure that bad would not come in threes this time, that the number of crows had been a coincidence, a phone call shrilled near midnight on March 26, breaking the quiet of an early spring evening.

Like the crow's caw, the call screeched out the news that our son had stepped in front of a car on a darkened campus street near his dorm, crossing subsequently into paradise. Harbingers of the angel of death had visited—a murder of crows, indeed.

**Black Sun Rising**  
*Darrell Urban Black*





## Wyvern

### *Holly Day*

the bird inside me flaps tight beneath my skin, scratches  
with tiny claws at my insides, tells me that the only reason  
I'm not a sack of deflated skin lying empty by the side of  
the street

is that it's just too small and tired to break free. I take  
a deep breath  
force the thing inside me still with the pressure of my  
inflated lungs.

sometimes at night, I can feel the wings of the tiny bird  
inside me  
slipping into place just behind my shoulder blades, feel  
pinfeathers  
stretch all the way down the front of my arms, and I whisper  
no, you can't have me yet. I hold the wings and claws and feet  
and pointed beaks  
tight and still and quiet inside me, murmur promises of a day  
when I'm so old and tired myself

that there'll be nothing left to hold it all in.

## The Lesson

*Natalie d'Arbeloff*



View Natalie d'Arbeloff's video "The Lesson"  
at <http://gnarledoak.org/issue-6/the-lesson/>

## Somnolence

*Yesha Shah*

A boat shaped autumnal leaf knocks the evening window. I open the pane and inhale lungfuls of the crisp breeze.

With each season of the ochre yellows I have begun to resemble the old oak: the parchment skin and sharp increase in the number of grey hair. Earlier, I used to keep a count of those greys, but now they have proliferated beyond the self-undertaken census stage. All the same the grey cells of my brain are functioning like unlubricated cogs, rusty with the monotony of a drab routine.

The other day, I put oil in the wok on a high flame of the gas burner for deep frying and left the kitchen to answer the phone. A few minutes later the pungent smell of smoke fills the house. The flames from the wok were licking the ceiling. I tried to scrub clean whatever could be washed but the white wall putty soaked up the stubborn soot. Deeper it penetrated the surface, the more I attempted to remove it.

I feel aghast each time I enter the black-grey kitchen. In a few days time, perhaps I will get used to it just as one gets used to the lack of love.

wedding ring...  
the white mark it leaves  
on my finger

## the heart's trails

*Herb Kauderer*

I

dried tears  
leave salt tracks

shed Rorschach faces

nurture memories  
released  
from hard service  
as prison guards

II

roller coaster hearts  
fly so fast

vision blurs  
breath catches

without focus  
tightened muscles  
cannot guide

bodies flung  
at every curve

& hearts collide  
without design

III

in a field  
of dried stalks  
of past loves

lies a wicker cornucopia  
woven from  
the hollow reeds at hand

invisible  
until spring

**untide**

*David Kelly*

untide

the sea just drifts

away

## Herring

*Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco*

If they are right  
and the ocean fills the street  
I'll shut

the door  
and watch

for herring  
out the window. (Schools

of silver, chandeliers  
of thinning

rain.)

The afterimage softly  
bleeds out

into nothing,

light and line and melting  
sun.

## Ripples

*Olivier Schopfer*





## Resting

*Mary McCarthy*

I can smell the sun on your skin  
taste the salt sea water left  
on your lips  
as we lean back  
into the afternoon  
as though it could hold us  
safely in its arms  
forever  
as though nothing could pull us  
out of this light

back to the dim rooms  
where debt and obligation  
line up in columns  
long and dark enough  
to occlude our dreams  
and no one comes to whisper  
sedition in our ears  
with words strong enough  
to break us back out  
into the heat  
into the light

## **Rush-hour**

*Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy*

Riding down a busy road in Bengaluru... a street dog standing by the side, suckling two of her puppies... sniffing the third one, lying on its side, dead. The two carry on tugging at her teats.

weekend retreat...  
how quiet this world  
outside me

## **Closed Sign at Bill's Bait & Beer**

*Trish Saunders*

Bill's family came to Hawai'i from China in 1921. They settled on the worst farmland on O'ahu. Bill remembers running through parched sugar cane fields as a boy.

Saturday mornings, Bill drove the family's Model-T to Honolulu. The back seat was loaded with papayas, coconuts, and sugar beets to sell at Waikiki hotels. Kitchen managers weighed and thumped the fruit, then counted four or five dollars into Bill's hand. Sometimes 25 cents was added to pay for gas for the trip home.

Bill remembers Mother, Father, and Uncle drinking tea by candlelight late into the evening; talking quietly or, more often, sitting in silence.

"Go to bed, son," Mother chided gently when Bill padded into the kitchen.

Ten years passed. Bill's family sold the farm and opened Lock's Bait & Beer on the North Shore. Hawaii was a territory then. Nobody cared about fishing licenses.

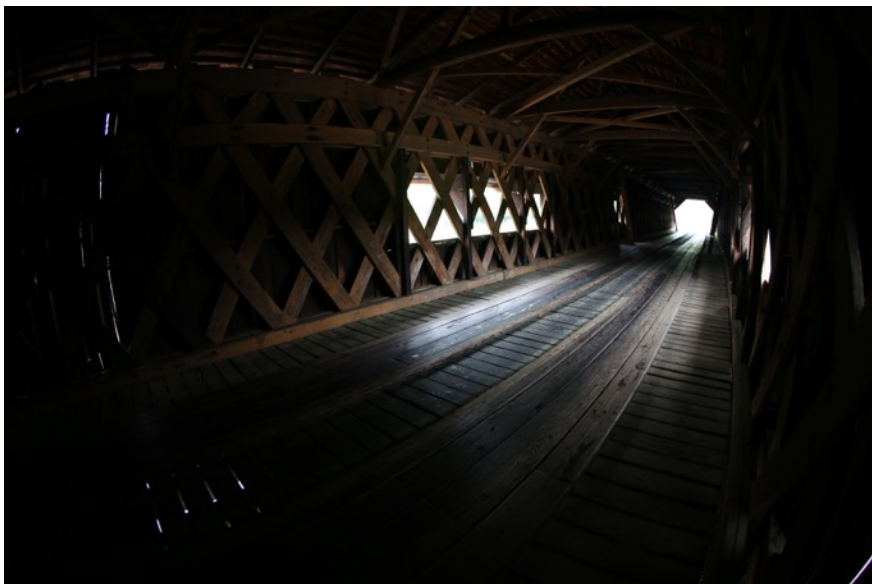
At sunrise, locals lined up to buy bait and beer on credit. Bill recalls seeing men and women standing by the shoreline, straw-hatted, throwing nets in the ocean.

If opah refused to bite, fishermen couldn't pay. Nobody minded. Locals settled up when fish cooperated.

"We did things differently then," he says.

## Discovered/Uncovered

*Fabrice Poussin*



## Reading Whitman on Roque Island

### *Dervishspin*

It is unfashionable to honor those who came before us,  
and yet I sit in the house  
of George Augustus Gardner,  
of Isabella Stewart, reading the only book of poetry I can find.  
It's like he speaks to me, here in the drawing room,  
to a life lived on the edge of privilege,  
on the edge of belonging,  
on the edge of a great good fortune.

There are no stevedores now, few butcher boys or drovers  
but I hear their song and I remember their voices as my own.  
Unlock my soul.

Give me the voice of farmers,  
of the unpaid intern trying to grow wiser than her birthright.  
Give me the voice of the lobstermen, of the housewife  
making jellies in her kitchen, of the ambulance driver  
picking up drunks and meth addicts one more time.  
Give me the whistling song of the carpenter keeping time  
with his hammer.

Uncle Walt, your grass is under my feet, your words are  
in my head.

I know I am an uneasy guest  
on this green and holy island.

## **found poems**

*Duncan Richardson*

i found a poem  
by a copy machine  
about a bruised boy  
and a mother sleeping  
through his pain

i found a poem  
in a classroom  
about a doctor opening  
a file of cold results  
and whispering the warm name

i found a poem  
at a railway station  
etched into chrome  
i chiselled it out  
and carried it with me  
on the train

## Mural with Matching Sky

Jean Morris



## Mural with Matching Sky

On the corner by the pub car park is a new mural after van Dyck's *Venetia Lady Digby on her Deathbed*. Let me count the ways this work inspired by a portrait of a dead woman paradoxically fills me with happiness.

Huge and bright and apart from the rose mostly blue, it's by the German artist Claudia Walde, aka MadC, a woman of bold vision and talent and about the age Venetia Digby was when she died in her sleep in 1633.

What Claudia did here is such a surprise: a nifty project, these “old master murals” by street artists talking back to their chosen works in the gallery have flashed up on blank walls and gable ends all over Dulwich, but

none has taken my breath, none makes me stop and smile and ponder each time I see it the way this does – a mistressful meeting of past and present, private and public art, death and unrestrained but not unthinking life.

///

Links: [Venetia Lady Digby on her Deathbed](#) by Anthony van Dyck | [MadC](#) | [Dulwich Picture Gallery](#)



## **Pinned**

*George Yatchisin*

To pierce, to find peace,  
it's all we ever care for.  
One solid wire coiled  
and carefully caught  
brought Walter Hunt  
a patent in 1849 as if  
no one before had hoped  
to pin hard and hold  
and leave nothing barbed.  
At least till the punk  
with a pin through his flesh  
snarled a no like a gun  
with its safety off, like love.

**Transmission**  
*Marie Craven*



View Marie Craven's video "Transmission"  
at <http://gnarledoak.org/issue-6/transmission/>

## Sister Speed Racer and the Silent Brides of Christ

*Michael Whiteman-Jones*

It's midday, and there aren't many other cars on the road. It's also cloudless and sunny—if you can call Indiana's low-altitude, watery haze sunny—and so sticky hot that I'm cursing my battered Ford's broken air conditioning. The edge of the earth is visible in all directions, a shimmering indistinct line that barely separates land from sky. Everything looks pale and flat, even the occasional cow or tree. It's all weathered cardboard and faded paint. A poorly done stage backdrop.

A small black dot appears on the horizon in my rearview mirror.

I glance at the dashboard. The speed limit is 75 mph, but I've set the cruise control to 79 because I've heard state troopers will overlook an extra 4 mph. Cruise control was invented in Indiana by a blind man. I think I know what inspired him. He sensed the unwavering monotony of this place in his inner ear and it frightened him. He needed to flee to a place with texture. I don't want to be here, either. Nobody wants to be here. They want to be anywhere else, and quickly. No wonder more interstate highways connect in Indianapolis than in any other U.S. city.

The dot gets bigger, and I can see it's a car, pale blue like the sky above me but with an unmistakable man-made metallic sheen. A Chrysler sedan. It's gaining on me. Whoever's behind the wheel is driving like he's late for an appointment in hell with the rebel actor James Dean, who was born in Indiana but got out before the boredom killed him, only to die in a fiery car wreck a few years later.

I shut off the cruise control and let my speed drop to 75 without braking. Cops don't usually drive Chryslers, but I don't know what they do here. If it's a trooper, I don't want him to see my taillights blink. I don't want a speeding ticket. Another ticket. Now I'm sweating and paying more attention to the car in the rear view mirror than the road ahead of me. That's stupid, but I'm mesmerized by this approaching missile.

In an instant, it's behind me, veering into the passing lane like it's surging toward the checkered flag at the Indianapolis 500. I figure it's going 120, more if that's possible. As it pulls beside me, a turbulent gust of air shakes my Ford. I turn my head to see the wild man who's not afraid to drive a boxy sedan at suicidal speeds.

But it's not a man.

It's a nun.

Sister Speed Racer is blowing by me with split-second ferocity, but time drips like cold honey and I see everything with stop-frame accuracy. Her tunic is blue, a shade darker than the car. She's wearing a white scapular over her shoulders and a white coif with stiff white wings similar to the ones worn by certain orders of French nuns, except shorter, and less aerodynamic looking. She's sitting ramrod straight, eyes fixed on the road, both hands clenched on the wheel, one at 10 o'clock, the other at 2 o'clock, like they teach you in driving school. There's another nun next to her, and two more in the back seat. They're young. Staring straight ahead. Not talking. Looking grim.

As they pass, the nun in the passenger seat swivels her head like a mechanical doll to glare at me. Her eyes shine black, and she scowls. Scowls. I look away self-consciously. Seconds later, the car is a dot again, this time ahead of me.

I slump into my seat, confused. Why are four nuns tearing through the countryside like they're being chased by demons? Where are they going? Why?

The highway stretches in a straight line toward an unseen abyss.

My stomach pitches and my mouth goes dry.

I don't want to be here. I desperately want to stop the car and turn around. Yet I'm following Sister Speed Racer and the Silent Brides of Christ directly into the white-hot heart of this place.

The thought is chilling. I shiver, and suddenly notice that the stripes dotting the pavement are whipping by like bullets. I've absentmindedly pressed the accelerator to the floor, and I'm going 95, 96, 97. I blink and swallow hard, setting my cruise control back to 79.

The wind outside my open window growls like a hungry wolf.

End of the Road  
*Debbie Strange*



## Editor's Note

When I was very young, living in Virginia, my dad woke me up in the middle of the night to go outside and look through the telescope. He had it pointing at Saturn, and for the first time, I saw the rings. This was back when the Voyager probes were sending images back from the gas giants, the days of Skylab and the Viking missions. Back then, it was easy to imagine that someday I would travel to the planets.

Those starry nights along with thrilling days spent at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum ignited one of the longest running passions of my life: astronomy.

Eventually, Skylab fell, the Moon got farther away, NASA went from exploring to transporting, the speed of light remained inviolable, and I gave up on thinking I would ever travel the stars. But I kept reading. I kept peering out through the telescope, every winter staring for hours on end at the Pleiades and the star nursery of Orion.

In college I took a bunch of astronomy courses. I'm no astrophysicist, and these were the kinds of courses geared for non-science majors so the classes were filled with an interesting mix of people trying to satisfy science credit requirements without having to do math, potheads looking to have their minds blown, and people like me who grew up on *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, Pioneer, Viking, and Voyager. Looking up in wonder at the universe.

My love of observational astronomy developed into a fascination with the bizarre nature of theoretical and quantum physics that always led me back to astronomical weirdness: neutron stars, quasars, magnetars, black holes, radio galaxies. Thinking about this stuff is to ponder the very

nature of existence, and it always made me feel like I was studying metaphors as much as the physical universe.

That sense of wonder has never left me. When I look at Hubble images, sunsets and mountains on Mars photographed by rovers, or the moon hanging in the bare elm branches on winter nights, I can't help but be amazed and filled with curiosity and wonder. Needless to say, Laura M. Kaminski's wonderful poem "Cosmology" captures that perfectly and spoke to me very deeply and not just about what's up there, but what's in here (picture me tapping on my heart).

So it seems literature and art are part of cosmology too in some sense, I think. Not in the physical way, of course, but on the human scale where we attempt to know and understand the universe and our tiny corner of it as we whirl around on this "pale blue dot" as Carl Sagan so aptly described it.

We look out the window and there's that world out there. And we try so hard to make sense of it. That's how this issue felt to me... a cosmology made of twenty-seven ways of knowing. Parts of a grand theory, maybe.

Thank you for being a part of this, and as always...

With gratitude and thanks,

James Brush, editor  
Feb 2016

*Confession: I realized as I was writing this that about half of it had already been written and posted to my blog ten years ago, so I repurposed some of what I'd written then. Here's the old post: [The Universe in a Nutshell](#)*



## Contributor Bios

**Darrell Urban Black** is a visual artist living and working in Frankfurt, Germany. He was born in Brooklyn, New York. His artistic pursuit started at an early age, around five years, and he has been creating artwork ever since. In the past, he had many local, national and international group art exhibitions having artwork permanently displayed in a number of art galleries, museums and other institutions in America and Germany. See more of his work on [his artist website](#).

**Sandy Coomer** is a poet, mixed media artist and endurance athlete. Her poems have most recently been published or are forthcoming in *Clementine Poetry Journal*, *Apeiron Review*, and *Hypertrophic Literary Magazine*, among others. She is the author of two poetry collections: *Continuum*, a chapbook published by Finishing Line Press, and *The Presence of Absence*, which won the 2014 Janice Keck Literary Award for Poetry. Visit her website at [sandycoomer.com](#).

**Marie Craven** is a media maker and musician from the Gold Coast, Australia. She has been engaged in online collaboration since 2007 and has contributed to works with artists in many different parts of the world.  
Website: [pixieguts.com](#)

**Natalie d'Arbeloff** was born in France, has British and American nationality and lives in London. She is a painter/writer/printmaker/book artist and sometimes makes other things. Her work is in public and private collections internationally. Visit her at her online at [nataliedarbeloff.com](#) and [Blaugustine](#).

**Holly Day** has taught writing classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minnesota, since 2000. Her poetry has recently

appeared in *Oyez Review*, *SLAB*, and *Gargoyle*, while her newest poetry book, *Ugly Girl*, just came out from Shoe Music Press.

An eye surgeon by profession, **Angelee Deodhar** is a haiku poet, translator and artist from India. Her haiku, haibun and haiga have been published internationally in various books, journals and on the internet. Reviews of *Journeys 2015*, an anthology of International Haibun edited by Angelee Deodhar, can be read [here](#) and [here](#).

**Dervishspin** lives with her husband and 3 cats in a cohousing community in Berlin Massachusetts. Under her mundane name, Dervishspin studied poetry at Mount Holyoke College with Christopher Benfy and Mary Jo Salter. She has not quit her day job.

**Laura M Kaminski** grew up in northern Nigeria, went to school in New Orleans, and currently lives in rural Missouri. She is an Associate Editor of *Right Hand Pointing*, and the author of several poetry collections, most recently *Dance Here* (Origami Books, an imprint of Parrésia Press Ltd, Lagos, Nigeria, 2015).

**Herb Kauderer** is an associate professor of English at Hilbert College, and has published a lot of poetry. More can be found about him at [HerbKauderer.com](http://HerbKauderer.com).

**David Kelly** lives and works in Dublin, Ireland. He started writing haiku in 2007 and has been learning more about the spirit of Japanese short forms ever since. He has been published in a number of print and online journals.

**Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy** is a psychiatrist from Bengaluru (Bangalore) India, living in England for over a decade. A trained vocalist and a composer in Indian Classical Music, he writes poetry in several languages including Kannada,

Sankethi, Tamil and English. He is particularly interested in haiku, tanka and other allied genres. Many of his writings have been published in various reputed journals, and won prizes. For him, writing is not only a means of expression, but also a form of therapy to overcome day to day stress.

**Joan Leotta** has been playing with words since childhood. Joan recently completed a month as one of Tupelo Press' 30/30 poets. She has published or has work forthcoming in *Red Wolf*, *Thynks*, *Knox Literary Magazine*, *A Quiet Courage*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Silver Birch* and *Postcard Poems and Prose*. In addition to her work as an award-winning journalist, short story writer, author, poet and essayist, Joan performs folklore and one-woman shows on historic figures. Joan lives in Calabash, NC where she walks the beach with husband Joe. She collects shells, pressed pennies and memories. Find her online at [joanleotta.wordpress.com](http://joanleotta.wordpress.com) and on [Facebook](#).

**Kim Mannix** is a poet, journalist, and short fiction writer living in Sherwood Park, Alberta. More of her writing, and many of her rambles, can be read at [makesmesodigress.com](http://makesmesodigress.com).

**Mary McCarthy** has always been a writer, but spent most of her working life as a Registered Nurse. She has only recently come to discover the vital communities of poets online, where there can be a more immediate connection between writers and readers than is usually afforded in print.

**Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco** lives in California's Central Valley, where she works as a librarian. Her poems have appeared in *Gnarled Oak*, *The Mas Tequila Review*, *Paper Nautilus*, *Word Riot*, *Hobart*, and *The Potomac Review*, among others.

**Jean Morris** lives in Dulwich, south-east London, UK, where she writes, edits, translates from French and Spanish and takes photos. For the past six months she's been contributing to the [Via Negativa](#) group poetry blog.

**Fabrice Poussin** is assistant professor of French and English at Shorter University, Rome, Georgia. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in France at La Pensée Universelle, and in the United States in *Kestrel* and *Symposium*. His photographic work has also been published in *Kestrel*, and is scheduled for upcoming publications as well.

**Duncan Richardson** is a writer of fiction, poetry, radio drama and educational texts. He teaches English as a Second Language part time in Brisbane, Australia. Find him on [Facebook](#).

**Trish Saunders** writes poems from Honolulu, Hawaii.

**Olivier Schopfer** lives in Geneva, Switzerland, the city with the huge lake water fountain. He likes capturing the moment in haiku and photography. His work has appeared in *The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2014* as well as in numerous online and print journals. He also writes articles in French about etymology and everyday expressions at [Olivier Schopfer raconte les mots](#).

**Yesha Shah** lives in Surat, India with her family. Poetry has long since been her passion. She started writing Haiku and allied genres about two years back. Her verses have found place in various online and print journals.

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**Michael Whiteman-Jones** is a longtime journalist and editor who has won a few press awards that he keeps hidden in a box in the basement. He believes there is more truth in fiction than in facts, and in recent years, has written several hundred thousand words of short stories and essays on an iPad with his thumbs—a feat that probably truly deserves an award, or at least a visit to the chiropractor. He lives with his wife and family in Denver, Colo.

**Christopher Woods** is a writer, teacher and photographer who lives in Houston and Chappell Hill, Texas. He has published a novel, *The Dream Patch*, a prose collection, *Under a Riverbed Sky*, and a book of stage monologues for actors, *Heart Speak*. His work has appeared in *The Southern Review*, *New England Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Columbia* and *Glimmer Train*, among others. His photographs can be seen in [his online gallery](#). He is currently compiling a book of photography prompts for writers, *From Vision to Text*.

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