

Gnarled Oak

an online literary journal



Issue 8: The Somnambulist's Notebook
Apr-May 2016



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Gnarled Oak is an online literary journal publishing poetry, prose, artwork, and videos four times per year. This issue was originally published online from Apr-May 2016 and is archived at gnarledoak.org/category/issue-8/

Editor and publisher: James Brush

Cover art: "Dream of Flying" by Michele S. Cornelius
Title: from "The Somnambulist's Notebook" by Steve Klepetar

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longest night...

Archana Kapoor Nagpal

longest night...
and the candles
go dim

Ring-Around-Your-Dreams

Steve Klepetar

We are voices in the wind, scratches
on your windowpane. We live
without light in the heavy leaves of June.

When you wake in the night and your
back aches, or the shrill phone shrieks
and the line goes dead, our faces loom

in long shadows on your bedroom wall.
We are green ice spreading slowly
in your stomach's pit, the last bill you left

unpaid, the broken lock and the breech
in your brick wall. Together we have played
Ring-Around-Your-Dreams, and tumbled

into dirt. We have balanced you in our hard
and bony arms, sang to you of mice and dancers
dangling from ropes, feet just inches from the floor.

The Perigee Moon

Tricia Knoll

The star fell
on my lap's open book,

the one on diplomacy
and restraint of passion.

The fire started
burning words.

Smoke rose.
Ash breathed its way

into the night mist.
The perigee moon

condescended to pierce
fir tree shadows

that helped me pretend
all fires are equal.

Dream of Flying
Michele S. Cornelius



The Somnambulist's Notebook

Steve Klepetar

is filled with lies. He plays with moonlight
as it pools on the bed, twists its fibers

into gold. His name is hidden in the caves
of earth, his fingers filled with mist and grain.

He has taken the queen's daughter. With his
hand he has opened the door of a thousand lives.

Who has seen them dancing on the tongue
of darkness, swaying to the music of wolves

and frogs? Who has measured those automatic
steps? The sleepwalker sails, a particle through

a slit in the screen. His body stripes the wall
in two parallel lines, but when no one watches,

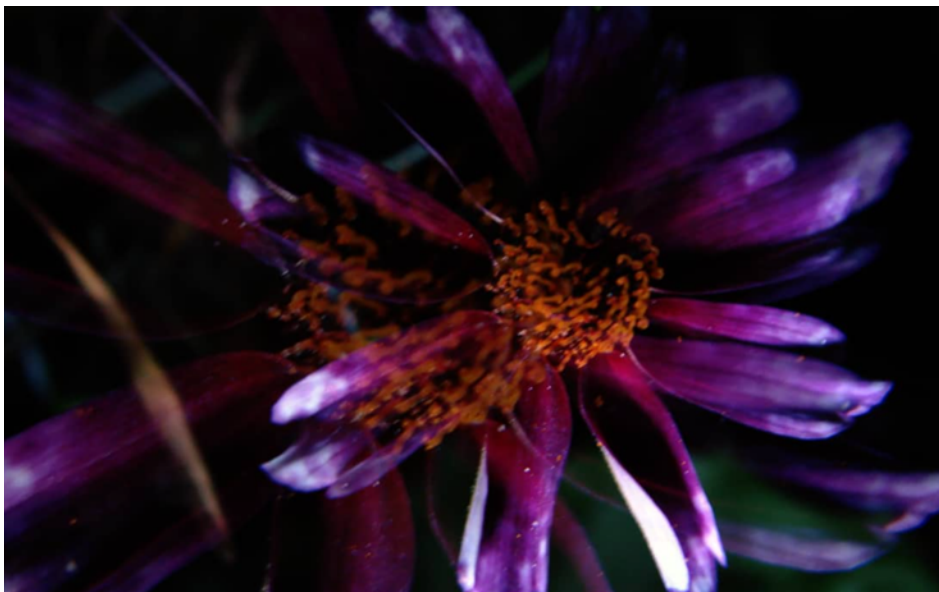
he streams, a wave rushing wrack and debris
to a black shore sharp with volcanic rock.

His dead eyes open, his tongue tastes the air.
His fingers scribble a code made of stones

and ash. What miracle has he found in the
borderlands but dust, broken houses and trees?

Joining the Lotus Eaters

Marie Craven



View Marie Craven's video "Joining the Lotus Eaters"
at <http://gnarledoak.org/issue-8/joining-the-lotus-eaters/>

Making Friends with the Bear

Jo Waterworth

We sit together on these sunny winter mornings
listening to birdsong, watching sunset, moonrise,
counting stars. He is warm, his breath damp on my neck.

When the days grow he will start to wander,
further each day, and I will climb trees to find
tidy nests filled with pearl-shelled precious eggs.

I will sweep out the cave we shared,
leave handprints on the rock
and walk out into the Summerland.

Pine

Arielle Lipset

I worship trees to lose myself
in hours, shaded over
with violet blooms. Sometimes

I spend a million days unwinding
in the purple, engraving myself
in a circle on the wood. Sometimes

I press my ear to hear
the whispers in the bark:

if you listen close, folklore
dews the summer air
and dizzies you with gin.

Sometimes, I throw myself over green,
green grass and feel for roots, seeking
a history the dirt swept over.

I dream that I'm a pine
rooted steady in the green,
my needled arms stretched
up to lilac sky.

How can I explain,
there is no world beyond the treetops.

The body that gleams in the depths

Luisa A. Igloria

Sometimes you can see straight to the murky bottom.
Once there were wishes thrown there, fitfully, flickeringly, wild
as an extra coin to spend on an extravagance like the future.
Once, a girl shut her eyes to the wind's insistent I-told-you-so.
I don't know if she found her way through the eye of the
storm and into
some other side; I don't know if her stubborn heart was
as strong
uphill as it was down. But then sometimes I see a cloud in
the shape
of a fin or a tail, and I remember her: how she used to sing
without words
and touch the whorls in the wood, as if they were levers to a
secret world.

Medieval saints could read hearts

Rebecca Valley

like braille. This was never the case
for Mother Cabrini. As a child she put her fingers
to her chest whenever there was pain
and pressed into it,

as if the muscle needed a reminder
of the real.

Perhaps she was too weak to bear
the sacred. She thought of the chalice,
of the font, durable vessels of the holy
beside her own blue-white hands.

In a dream she broke open her chest
like communion bread and rubbed her fingers
into the bleeding muscle of her heart,
looking for messages.

In another, a man she'd never met
turned wine back into water, but it was only
a trick of the light.

There were a few miracles.
Each morning when she came into the chapel
dozens of stained glass Virgins
cast their color on the stones.

Sweet Insanity

Ehi'zogie Iyeomoan

I love the smell and strong taste
of purple orange and white tablets
this man in white pours in my cupped palm
it smells like home before the war visited
and tastes like the gravy served
to us refugees in our own country
it will bring you back to your senses
a blue apron lady reassures
i like it here, i like it here
i don't want to go back there
you must return home
they chorus an anthem in my ears
your children miss you and
your stories and blah blah blah
i nod my head in a sluggish 'no no no'
in the background it's bobby mcferrin
doing his classic 'don't worry, be happy ...'
but it's only me hearing, listening
dancing, moving my body like not, to the
beats flying from his unseen drums
my slight tenor overshadowing his baritone
as my index finger takes charge
of his guitar in the empty air...
nothing makes sense to me after all
not even this blue uniform and
the silence it maps in my heart

Wasteland

Olivier Schopfer



Waiting

Marianne Paul

A moth is caught in the car. It flutters trying to escape through the back window, bangs uselessly against the glass. I open all of the doors, even the hatchback. Still it flounders, can't figure its way out, wings dull brown on the outside, bright orange underneath.

*all day long
wearing my sweater
inside out*

A year has passed since my sister-in-law was charged with my brother's murder. Between now and then, court appearances, bail hearings, a flurry of news reports, but for the most part, the days pass in an unsettling hum of normalcy.

*needle stuck
in the trough of the LP
of the LP of the LP*

Dragon's Breath

Mary McCarthy

I have never been at home here
so when the dragons rise
in rows behind the streetlights
I do nothing to show
I hadn't been expecting them

they are less strange to me
smoke and iron and ice
than you are
sitting here beside me
as though nothing unusual
breathes all around us

Murmurations

Jennifer Hernandez

Like winged licorice drops,
hundreds spill
across the pearly winter sky,
swoop simultaneously.
Down-then-up.
Connected by invisible threads,
flesh and sinew dot-to-dot,
shift in concert,
an inverse constellation.
Up-then-down.

To belong. To feel
such strength
in numbers, anise
bitter and sweet
on the tongue.
Or to be that lost
at dispersion,
strings twisted,
freefall imminent,
never – alone – enough.

Worried Man Blues

Harold Whit Williams

The afternoon sky had turned
All West Coast or something,
And summer was seeming to say
"Sorry for everything"
By way of breezes and gray clouds,
With a few teardrop pigeons
Falling from the Biology building,
Coming to rest or to roost
In some hedges I'd never noticed.
So I burrowed down deeper
Into the debtor's prison
Of my day job, and I thought
Of all the songs I wish I'd written.
And I played a few of them
Inside my head at low volume,
So as not to disturb those voices
In their slumber. But several
Woke anyway, and one sang
A ballad to silence the rest.
It was heartland in its origin,
Full of working-class sadness.
I've counted ten thousand verses
With no sign of it stopping.

Lilies of the Field

Marie Craven



View Marie Craven's video "Lilies of the Field"
at <http://gnarledoak.org/issue-8/lilies-of-the-field/>

Rural Road

Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco

A pink house;
a child,
kneeling in the dirt.

Clods of mud
like lakes on maps

stuck to the road.

Train

John L. Stanizzi

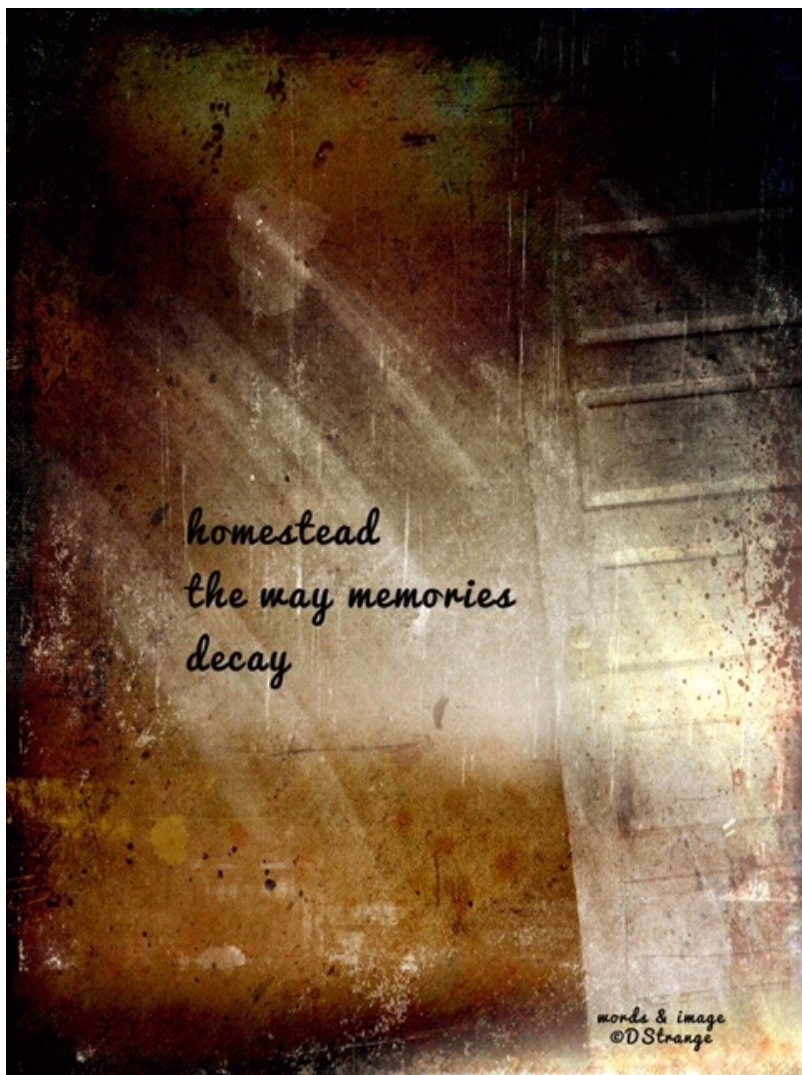
The train's grave whistle
ascends from every tree in the valley
spreads out in the sky everywhere at once
and I move quietly
through mansions of light
ascending along the clay road
dreaming all day
of impossible journeys

I've always done this

And as each light in each window pales
I wake and return
to the clay road
and a night sky full of holes
a reminder of what I chose
and what was chosen for me
as if they are somehow different

Homestead

Debbie Strange



high

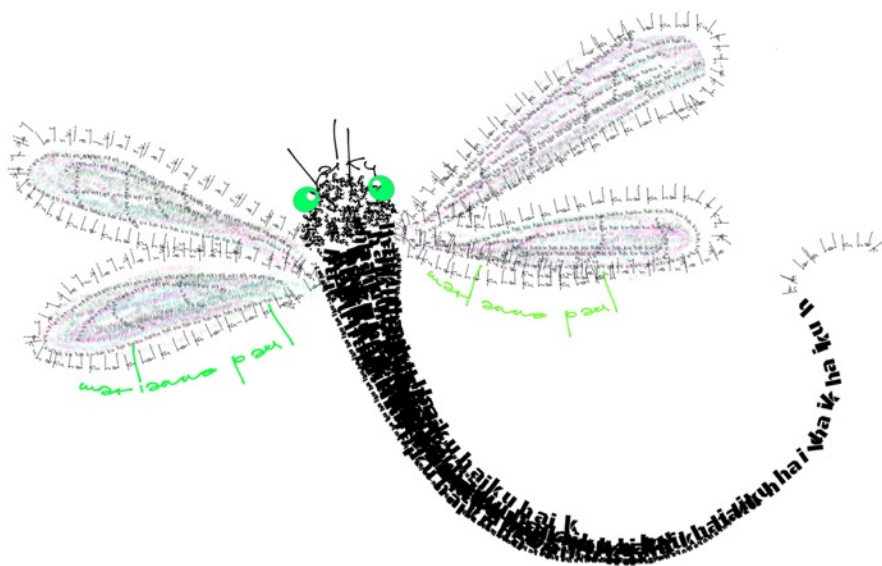
Güliz Vural

high
on the branch
the
snow-hearted
Sun

a// pomegranates smile

haiku haiku hai
Marianne Paul

haiku haiku hai
ku hai ku hai ku hai ku
hai ku-hai ku hai



Boy

Casey Stein & Jamie Wimberly



View Casey Stein & Jamie Wimberly's video "Boy"
at <http://gnarledoak.org/issue-8/boy/>

Towards a Larger Physical Stoicism

Harold Whit Williams

"Repair these losses, and be a blessing to us."

~Walt Whitman

Dust kicked up of a summer afternoon.
A boy grounds one straight to shortstop,

Takes off running. A wild throw high
Over first base. The boy sprints for second,

Another high wild throw into outfield.
A man, an older man, potbellied, laughing

Behind third base fence. The man waving,
Shouting. The older man still laughing,

Lighting his pipe. Both would imagine
Benny Hill's theme if they'd ever heard

Such a song. The ball with a mind of its own,
Rolling under the left fielder's legs to lay

Like a fossil in fescue. Tying run home,
The boy rounds third. The older man's

Laughter, sweet incense of pipe tobacco.
The man shouting Go! Go! The ball thrown

Wild from outfield. This boy sliding home
Kicking up dust of a summer afternoon.

Washes the Other

Todd Mercer

Try to dig thorns from your own hands.
Now let someone use both of theirs
to clear the fester that's too self
for The Self to maneuver.
What a challenge to disprove the value
of cooperation. May as well dog out
opposable thumbs. Thanks
for having my back. Glad to
cover yours. Get some shut-eye.
It's crazy to go this world solo
and sit constant watch. I could worry
the wood and infection from my own fingers,
but not quickly, perhaps not extract
the complete prickles. They break to pieces.
Or I ask for assistance. I offer it to,
what help these two hands can manage.
We should be freer with it, faster
to see the case for interdependence.
Try lifting yourself completely off the ground.
When that doesn't happen, call me over.

Winning
Jade Anouka



View Jade Anouka's video "Winning"
at <http://gnarledoak.org/issue-8/winning/>

Dear Zion Canyon,
Carolyn Martin

This is just to say thanks for Patriarchs
and peregrines, for rock-carved skies
and angels landing in your clouds;

for hanging gardens climbing through
Navajo sandstone, for maidenhair
wreathing through your river's writhe;

for staircases stepping down from Bryce:
a paradox of deserts, floods, droughts,
and terraces that end without a thought;

for prince's plumes and penstemon,
for the checkerboard I scaled as aspen
jittered gold in this early frost;

and, most of all, for straightening my bent –
the hazard of my poet's mind – to wrest
a narrative from your lyrical intent.

Reserving Judgment

Laura M. Kaminski & Saddiq Dzukogi

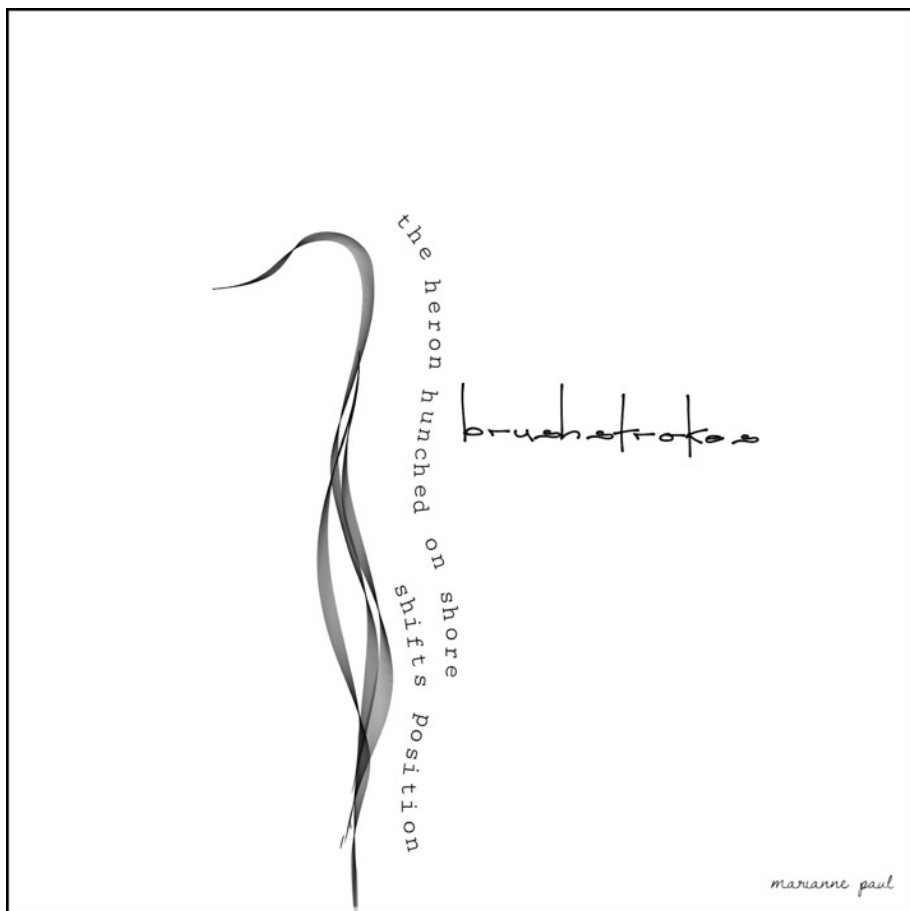
you do not even enter
an empty courtroom
with a voice
you take it off
and let it wait for you
by the doorstep
like a footwear

you do not even enter
an empty page
with an opinion
about what makes
a poem
you take it off
and let it wait for you
at the side of the desk
like a dictionary

later, perhaps, will
be a time for voice
later to check up
on definitions,
grammar
but for now, you
are alone
between the lines:

let your ink be
barefoot, let it
dance

brushstrokes
Marianne Paul



Compline

Luisa A. Igloria

"Will the bird rise flaming out of broken light?"

~ Karen An-hwei Lee

When your arms encircled my waist from behind,
I thought a bird had come to light on my shoulder—

and I could not speak immediately for feeling
how densely overgrown the floor of the forest had become,

how at odd times in the night a ringing begins
on the shore of one ear and echoes across to the other.

You walked across the barrier and met me at the gate,
and it took minutes for us to realize we were in tears.

Now, days after, I look around: everything the eye
picks out wants to be the color of a sunset, of clementines.

Imagine small words like fragments of bone:
ten of them strung together are called a *mystery*;

and I know I am unqualified, but sometimes
I dare to address the future in intimate terms.

Editor's Note

Simon the Cat likes to bite me sometimes. I don't really know why. I'm sure he has his reasons, and in the grand scheme of feline justice it all probably makes sense. I'm sure I wronged him weeks or months ago, and as with the US Supreme Court, it sometimes takes months to hand down a decision. The decision tonight: bite.

So I'm sitting here trying to come up with an editor's note worthy of this issue, and this cat is circling my legs, accepting head scratches and sometimes going for the cheap shot. Does he know he's going to the vet later in the week for his annual vaccinations?

Or perhaps he's telling me that I have nothing to add here this time because this issue is so wonderful. Why mess it up, James, he's saying.

So, I'll follow Simon's advice (he is on [the masthead](#), after all) and just say thanks to everyone who submitted, read, shared, commented and enjoyed this issue. I'm probably not supposed to say this as an impartial editor, but it's one of my favorites.

With gratitude and thanks,

James Brush, editor
May 2016

Contributor Bios

Jade Anouka is an actor and poet. She has performed her poetry in various venues across London and New York. Her first collection of poems has been published through Poetry Space and is called *Eggs On Toast*. Website: AnoukaPoetry.com

Michele S. Cornelius follows her lens to natural places throughout Alaska attempting to discover the meaning of life, reinterpreting it at her whim. Her website can be viewed at michelescornelius.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

Saddiq Dzukogi is a Nigerian poet and the author of three poetry collections in English. He is also Poetry Editor for the online journal *Expound*.

Jennifer Hernandez lives in the Minneapolis area where she teaches middle school, dreams of Mexican beaches and writes for her sanity. Her most recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Gingerbread House*, *Mothers Always Write*, and *World Haiku Review*. She has performed her poetry at a non-profit garage, a bike shop filled with taxidermy and in the kitchen for her children, who are probably her toughest audience.

Luisa A. Igloria is the winner of the 2015 Resurgence Prize (UK), the world's first major award for ecopoetry, selected by former UK poet laureate Sir Andrew Motion, Alice Oswald, and Jo Shapcott. She is the author of *Bright as Mirrors Left in*

the Grass (Kudzu House Press eChapbook selection for Spring 2015), *Ode to the Heart Smaller than a Pencil Eraser* (selected by Mark Doty for the [2014 May Swenson Prize](#), Utah State University Press), *Night Willow* (Phoenicia Publishing, Montreal, 2014), *The Saints of Streets* (University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2013), *Juan Luna's Revolver* (2009 Ernest Sandeen Prize, University of Notre Dame Press), and nine other books. She teaches on the faculty of the MFA Creative Writing Program at Old Dominion University, which she directed from 2009-2015.

Ehi'zogie Iyeomoan hides his emotions in words and in photographs. He is so in love with human shadows. He Tweets like a bird [@fulanibuoy](#), and can be followed on Facebook at /ehizogieiyeomoan

Laura M Kaminski grew up in Nigeria, went to school in New Orleans, and currently lives in rural Missouri. She is an Associate Editor at *Right Hand Pointing*. More about her poetry is available in her interview with [THE STRONG LETTERS](#).

Steve Klepetar's work has appeared widely, and several of his poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Recent collections include *My Son Writes a Report on the Warsaw Ghetto* and *The Li Bo Poems* (forthcoming) both from Flutter Press.

Tricia Knoll is an Oregon eco-poet. *Ocean's Laughter*, poems of a small Oregon town on the coast, is just out from Aldrich Press. Her chapbook *Urban Wild* investigates human and wildlife interactions in urban habitat. Website: triciaknoll.com

Arielle Lipset studied creative writing at Franklin & Marshall College. She currently lives in Prague, where she teaches English as a foreign language. Her poetry was most recently

published on Poets.org. Find more of her work at ariellelipset.com.

After forty years in the academic and business worlds, **Carolyn Martin** is blissfully retired in Clackamas, OR, where she gardens, writes, and plays with creative friends. Her poems have appeared in publications through the US and UK and her second collection, *The Way a Woman Knows*, was released by The Poetry Box, Portland, OR, in 2015. Since the only poem she wrote in high school was red-penciled "extremely maudlin," she is still amazed she has continued to write.

Mary McCarthy grew up in Pittsburgh, PA, studied art and literature but spent most of her working life as a Registered Nurse. She has always been a writer. She has great hopes for the future despite the horrors reported endlessly in the daily news.

Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco lives in California's Central Valley, where she works as a librarian. Her chapbook, *Various Lies* is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

Todd Mercer won the Grand Rapids Festival of the Arts Flash Fiction Award for 2015, the first Woodstock Writers Festival Flash Fiction Award, and two Kent County Dyer-Ives Poetry Prizes. His digital chapbook, *Life-wish Maintenance* appeared at *Right Hand Pointing*. Mercer's recent poetry and fiction appear in *Bartleby Snopes*, *Eunoia Review*, *Magnolia Review*, *The Lake*, *Literary Orphans*, *Main Street Rag Anthologies*, *SOFTLOW Journal* and *Two Cities Review*.

Archana Kapoor Nagpal is an internationally published author of four books – *14 Pearls of Inspiration*, *The Road to a Positive Life*, *A Haiku Per Day* and *The Fragrance of a Beautiful Life*. She often participates in short story competitions, and

her winning stories are now part of international anthologies – *New Love: Anthology of Short Stories* and *12 Facets of a Crystal*. She has seen her short stories, poems and haiku published in other anthologies as well – *A Pinch of Love, Peace and Humanity* and *Ripples of Love*. She has also been actively involved in the editing and book designing of these two anthologies.

Marianne Paul is a Canadian novelist and poet. In recent years, she has become fascinated with minimalist poetry, studying haiku, tanka, haiga, and haibun. Her work has been published in many contemporary journals, both online and in print. Learn more about Marianne's writing at literarykayak.com and on twitter [@mariannpaul](https://twitter.com/mariannpaul).

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](http://OlivierSchopfer raconte les mots).

John L. Stanizzi — author of *Ecstasy Among Ghosts*, *Sleepwalking*, *Dance Against the Wall*, *After the Bell*, and *Hallelujah Time!* His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Rattle*, and others. He teaches English at Manchester Community College. Find him online at johnlstanizzi.com.

Casey Stein fell into filmmaking at a very young age thanks to the influence of late 90's skateboarding videos, and soon branched out to explore all aspects of the medium. Equal parts director and cinematographer with roots deep-seated in the arts, Casey has always been around creativity and technology and is a sponge for all things associated. His short

film, *Boy on a Bike* won the 7th Annual Emerging Pro contest hosted by HDVideoPro Magazine. His work has been featured in numerous festivals around the world as well *The New York Times*, *Spin Magazine*, *Nowness*, *Fader*, and *NME* among others. Casey graduated NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Kanbar Institute of Film & Television and lives in Brooklyn, New York. You may spot him riding over the Williamsburg Bridge on his bike.

Debbie Strange is a widely published Canadian short form poet, haiga artist, and photographer. Her first collection, *Warp and Weft, Tanka Threads*, is available through atlaspoetica.org. She invites you to visit her archive at debbiemstrange.blogspot.ca.

Originally from St. Albans, Vermont, **Rebecca Valley** currently attends The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA as a student of comparative literature and history. Her poems have appeared recently in *These Fragile Lilacs Poetry Journal* and *Through the Gate*, and are forthcoming from *Clementine (Unbound)*. In her free time she enjoys flea markets, podcasts, and baking bread.

Güliz Vural is museologist and classical philologist. She lives and works in Ankara, Turkey. She is a francophone poetess of six books and she has many literary prizes in France: Prize Renée Vivien 2011, Grand Prize of Francophone Writing 2012, Special Prize of Jean Aicard 2012 etc.

Jo Waterworth lives in Glastonbury, UK, where she enjoys being a part-time mature student, sings with community choirs and writes poetry, sometimes. She has been published many times over the years, most recently and consistently in *Hedgerow* online magazine and by *Poetry Space*. She blogs at jowaterworth23.wordpress.com and jowaterworthwriter.wordpress.com

Harold Whit Williams is guitarist for the Austin, Texas rock band Cotton Mather. Recipient of the 2014 Mississippi Review Poetry Prize and a featured poet in the 2014 University of North Texas Kraken Reading Series, his collection, *Backmasking*, was winner of the 2013 Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize from Texas Review Press. His latest collection of poems, *Lost in the Telling*, is available from FutureCycle Press.

Jamie Wimberly is a long-time poet and visual artist. His poetry is published regularly, most recently in Haiku Journal, and he was named as one of the best poets on Twitter ([@haiku_america](#)). Jamie is also an award-winning painter, with his work nominated for the Whitney Biennial, and exhibitions in galleries in Baltimore, Washington, DC, and New York City. Poetry and visual arts have come together as part of the “poem video series” which entail collaborations with emerging filmmakers in an attempt to make poetry more accessible and relevant in a digital age.