

# Gnarled Oak

*an online literary journal*



Issue 14: Chain of Years  
Nov-Dec 2017



## **Gnarled Oak**

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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 Nov-Dec 2017 and is archived at [gnarledoak.org/category/issue-14/](http://gnarledoak.org/category/issue-14/)

Editor and publisher: James Brush

Cover art: "The Last Day" by Christina Sng

Title: from "September 17" by Mary McCarthy

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# **A Night So Beautiful We Had to Burn Down the Senator's House #25**

*Darren C. Demaree*

How often  
we act out  
the play

in our heads  
& then polish  
the scene

so it can happen  
even brighter  
in real life

& when it's dark  
& we want fire  
for the world

to see us  
our naked anger  
we end up

setting  
the whole county  
on fire.

**at the port**

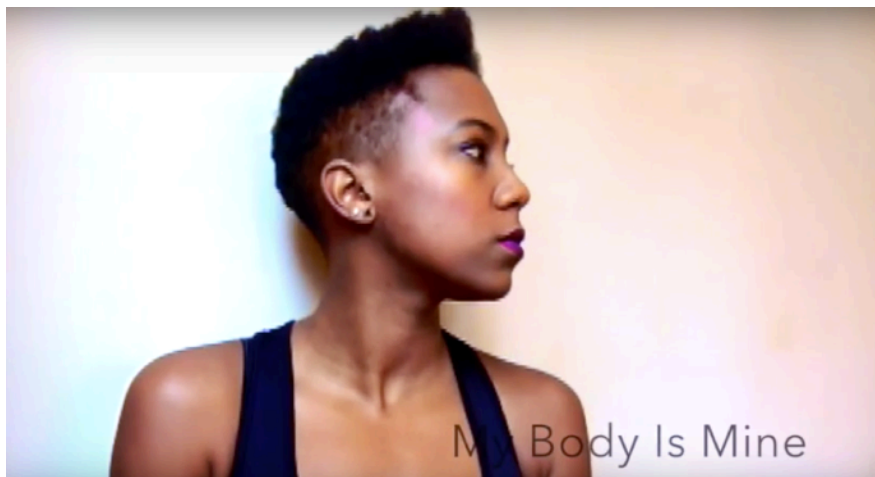
*Erin Leigh*

she sits  
at the port  
at low tide,  
scarred and  
scared and  
sacred,  
crying under her breath:

*rain was meant for dancing.*

## **My Body Is Mine**

*Jade Anouka*



View Jade Anouka's video "My Body Is Mine" at  
<http://gnarledoak.org/issue-14/my-body-is-mine/>

## **First Kiss**

*Elizabeth Moura*

My earliest memory was mother holding me over father's coffin telling me to kiss him. I did, and spent my life looking for dead men to kiss.

**notes on bones**

*Audrey Gidman*

*my sister says, last night I dreamt  
of poetry  
but I was naked  
and hiding.*

*I tell her  
this is poetry. she says,  
I didn't realize I was hiding  
where I had already been*

## **Felled Branches**

*Lee Nash*

felled branches  
the park  
gets a brand new sky

## **To Johannesburg, with love**

*Abigail George*

*(for Voldi and his love for opera)*

A flock of stars. Stars in her  
eyes. And so, I closed myself  
off to the outside world. The  
tired, miserable outside world.

And said this, that people have nothing to do with me

and I have nothing to do with  
people but I fell in love with  
the city and the city fell in love with me. Boots, jeans and all.

The pulsing sun lit up something inside

of me. And I finally learned what it was to walk on  
the kingdom  
of dry land. To clasp that

tender prize of pure rain in my hands.

## **Breaking Through**

*Olivier Schopfer*



## **First Grade Activist**

*Marie Craven*



View Marie Craven's video "First Grade Activist" at  
<http://gnarledoak.org/issue-14/first-grade-activist/>

## **How the Grateful Dead Got Their Name**

*Steve Klepetar*

Don't believe this story. It is fake news.  
Jerry Garcia did not return from the land of the dead  
with three pennies in his hand,  
touched by those subtle fingers, rubbed smooth.  
I didn't free him from his coffin on the sea.  
When he came to me, dressed in white,  
paler than before, we didn't walk along  
the high road, we didn't stop and go inside a church.  
No princess, no dragon, no heads on spikes.  
None of that happened. We sat down to drink coffee  
in a Starbuck's near my house,  
though I would have preferred the Local Blend.  
"The wi-fi's better here," he said, and anyway, he was buying.  
He told me that it sucked being dead – the food is dry  
and there's no drugs – but at least he didn't have to live  
in America under Trump. Remember, this is fake news  
made up by that failing poet, Steve Klepetar. Sick guy. Sad.

**the animal inside it**

*Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco*

the animal inside it boiled away  
perfect  
seashell

## **In Twos**

*Stella Pierides*

Her glasses are on the night table. Propped up on two cushions, she is asleep, her mouth half-open, a bubble of saliva shifting on her lip with every breath. The ceiling fan purrs. A quiet room, otherwise. Tiptoeing near her bed I see a tiny fly approach her face. As if sensing it, she raises her arm, brushing against her forehead. I stop breathing. But she continues in her sleep, as if she is on a journey and this moment that just passed was but a momentary stop, a blip, a slight distraction.

no one  
in the mirror  
night of ghosts

## hand-flapping

Marianne Paul



hand-flapping  
he shows his happiness  
his own way

marianne paul

**street in a downpour**

*Diarmuid Fitzgerald*

street in a downpour —  
through a window  
the television flashes

## Halfway to What's Next

*W. Jack Savage*



**night pond**

*Enrique Garrovillo*

night pond  
the koi feeding  
on stars

## **In Darwin's Dream**

*Eduardo Yagüe & Matt Mullins*



View Eduardo Yagüe & Matt Mullins' video "In Darwin's Dream" at  
<http://gnarledoak.org/issue-14/in-darwins-dream/>

**autumn chill**

*Debbie Strange*



## **September 17**

*Mary McCarthy*

I had to come empty enough  
For all this open sky  
The iron earth  
Singing its reds  
Like an echo of my own  
Blood music  
I had to find room  
For silence  
For a new equilibrium  
Between stone and sky  
Where my chain of years  
Weighs nothing  
And I walk lightly  
In the shadow of  
Red desert dreams

## **October**

*Mark Gilbert*

Candy wrappers swirling like papery leaves,  
polystyrene pinecones,  
orange streets, red neon,  
black-lipped girls with hair made of straw,  
the rustle of traffic,  
broken glass in a concrete cornfield,  
the smell of old mushrooms.  
Bottle held close in the cold hand of a troll.

## **The Rivers of Flame**

*Steve Klepetar*

*"Beyond surprise, my ribs start up from the ground."*

*W.S. Merlin*

And I dance beneath your open window  
like a shadow between the shadows of trees.  
I rattle and I shake. I wake the neighbors  
and alert all the dogs, who pull  
against their chains and howl into the night.  
Come to the window, love, and see my collection of bones.

See my collection of bones, how they dance  
at the end of a string, how my feet stir the loose earth,  
how the wind sends my legs in the air.  
See how I juggle my arms, how my skinny neck bobs,  
how my shiny white skull grins at the sky,  
with its blob of moon and clouds, its smear of stars.

Hurry, because night is almost gone, and sirens  
pierce the neighborhood. Soon oaks and maples will revive,  
and that green will sting your eyes. Birds will balance  
on every skeletal branch. They are coming to push me  
back underground, where my song, now choked with ash,  
will linger forever, but only beside the rivers of flame

**slack tide**

*Christina Sng*

slack tide  
a perfect day  
alone at sea

## **Advice Dyslexic**

*Marie Craven*



View Marie Craven's video "Advice Dyslexic" at  
<http://gnarledoak.org/issue-14/advice-dyslexic/>

## **Practice of Leaving**

*Chumki Sharma*

I watch my body every night,  
how it practices leaving,  
the bed becomes a boat,  
the sheet a sail  
and the frame a prow.

I watch my body every night  
rehearse its last goodbye,  
how the stars lose their sway,  
rust weakens the locks on doors  
and windows become porous.

I watch how the cuckoo  
escapes the clock every hour.

## **The Last Day**

*Christina Sng*



*"The Last Day" – oil painting on canvas, digitally filtered*

## Editor's Note

Happy New Year, everyone. It snowed here last night, which makes it twice in one month, twice in one winter, and twice in the past three years, I believe. It's an unusual thing in central Texas. It doesn't stick, but it flutters down pretty and makes everyone stop what they were doing.

*Wow it's snowing, did you see the snow, how much did you get, what did your kids think of it?* These are the questions you hear repeated all through the next day. And then it dries out in the middle of the night and it's sunny and cold, cold enough for the bird bath to freeze, which is in itself a novelty since ice isn't usually seen outside of a drink.

And that's how 2017 ended around here. Surprisingly quiet and peaceful. Now it's 2018 and I wonder what this newest lap around the sun will hold. Hopefully a lot of poetry, a little more of it around here before we call it day. Best wishes to everyone in the new year.

With gratitude and thanks for making *Gnarled Oak* part of your 2017,

James Brush, editor  
Jan 1, 2018

## Contributor Bios

**Jade Anouka** is an actor and poet. She has performed her words around London and New York including featured spots with Apples & Snakes, Farrago and the Southbank Centre. Her first collection *Eggs On Toast* is published through Poetry Space and available to buy at [www.AnoukaPoetry.com](http://www.AnoukaPoetry.com).

**Marie Craven** (Queensland, Australia) assembles short videos from poetry, music, voice, stills and moving images by various artists around the world. Created via the internet, the pieces are collaborative in a way that belongs to the 21st century, with open licensing and social networking key to the process. In 2016 her video "Dictionary Illustrations" was awarded best film at the Ó Bhéal Poetry-Film Competition in Ireland. To see more: [vimeo.com/mariocraven](http://vimeo.com/mariocraven).

**Darren C. Demaree's** poems have appeared, or are scheduled to appear in numerous magazines/journals, including the *Diode*, *Meridian*, *New Letters*, *Diagram*, and the *Colorado Review*. He is the author of six poetry collections, most recently *Many Full Hands Applauding Inelegantly* (2016, 8th House Publishing) and is the managing editor of the *Best of the Net Anthology* and *Ovenbird Poetry*. He currently lives and writes in Columbus, Ohio with his wife and children.

**Diarmuid Fitzgerald** was born in 1977. In 2015 his first collection of haiku and tanka poems, *Thames Way*, was published by Alba Publishing. He is currently working on his second collection *A Thousand Sparks*.

**Enrique Garrovillo** is from Cebu City, Philippines. He currently resides in Dipolog City.

**Abigail George** is a South African blogger, poet, short story writer, aspirant young adult novelist and playwright. She briefly studied film at the Newtown Film and Television School in Johannesburg. She received two grants from the National Arts Council, Centre for the Book and ECPACC. Her fiction “Wash Away My Sins” was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She blogs at [Abigail George’s Blog](#).

**Audrey Gidman** received her BFA from the University of Maine Farmington. Her work can be found in *The Rush*, *The 2River View*, *Slippery Elm*, and *Smeuse*, among others. She currently resides in Maine.

**Mark Gilbert** is a published writer of short poetry and prose who was first inspired by Raymond Chandler and Jack Kerouac.

**Steve Klepetar** lives in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. His work has received several nominations for Best of the Net and the Pushcart Prize, including four in 2016. Recent collections include *Family Reunion* (Big Table), *A Landscape in Hell* (Flutter Press), and *How Fascism Comes to America* (Locofo Chaps).

**Erin Leigh** holds a BA degree in English Communication and a master’s in Liberal Studies with a concentration in English, and teaches post-secondary writing, research, and literature courses. Her writing has most recently appeared in \*82 *Review*, *Belle Rêve Literary Journal*, *Right Hand Pointing*, and *Tower Poetry*.

**Mary McCarthy** has been a writer, an artist, and a Registered Nurse. She has had work published in many online and print journals and has an electronic chapbook [Things I Was Told Not to Think About](#) available for free download from *Praxis Magazine* online.

**Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco** lives in California's Central Valley and co-edits *One Sentence Poems*. Her chapbook, *Various Lies*, is available from Finishing Line Press.

**Elizabeth Moura** has had stories, poetry and photos published in online and paper publications. She lives in a converted factory and works with elders in a small town.

**Matt Mullins** writes and makes videopoems, music, and digital/interactive literature. His work has screened at various festivals in the United States and throughout the world including Visible Verse, Zebra, Videobardo, Liberated Words, Rabbit Heart, and Co-Kisser. He has published poetry and fiction in numerous print and online journals, and is the author of the short story collection *Three Ways of the Saw* (Atticus Books). You can engage his interactive/digital literary interfaces at [lit-digital.com](http://lit-digital.com).

**Lee Nash** lives in France and freelances as an editor and proofreader. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in print and online journals including *Acorn*, *Ambit*, *Angle*, *Antiphon*, *Magma*, *Mezzo Cammin*, *Orbis*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Presence* and *The World Haiku Review*. Her first poetry chapbook, *Ash Keys*, has just been released from Flutter Press. You can find a selection of Lee's poems on her website: [leenashpoetry.com](http://leenashpoetry.com).

**Marianne Paul** is a Canadian poet and novelist. She won the 2016 Jane Reichhold Memorial Haiga Competition multi-media category, and the 2016 Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival Haiku International, Canadian division. To learn more of her work, visit [mariannepaul.com](http://mariannepaul.com) and [literarykayak.com](http://literarykayak.com).

**Stella Pierides** is a poet and writer. Her books include: *Of This World: 48 Haibun* (Red Moon Press, 2017) and *Feeding the Doves: 31 Short and Very Short Stories* (Fruit Dove Press, 2013).

Her haiku and micropoetry collection *In the Garden of Absence* (Fruit Dove Press, 2012) received a Haiku Society of America Merit Book Award. Currently she manages the Per Diem: Daily Haiku feature for The Haiku Foundation. Find her online at [stellapierides.com](http://stellapierides.com).

**W. Jack Savage** is a retired broadcaster and educator. He is the author of seven books including *Imagination: The Art of W. Jack Savage* ([wjacksavage.com](http://wjacksavage.com)). To date, more than fifty of Jack's short stories and over nine-hundred of his paintings and drawings have been published worldwide. Jack and his wife Kathy live in Monrovia, California.

**Olivier Schopfer** lives in Geneva, Switzerland. He likes to capture the moment in haiku and photography. His work has appeared in *The Red Moon Anthology of English-Language Haiku 2014 & 2016*, 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://Olivier Schopfer raconte les mots).

**Chumki Sharma** is a poet from Calcutta, India. She is a 2017 semi finalist of the Vine Leaves Vignette Collection Award and is the author of *Shape of Emptiness* published by the Vine Leaves Press, Melbourne.

**Christina Sng** is a poet, writer, and artist. Her work has received numerous accolades, most notably, second prize in The 2016 San Francisco International Competition for Tanka, third prize in the 2016 Annual Harold G. Henderson Award, nominations in the Dwarf Stars and Rhysling Awards as well as Honorable Mentions in the Year's Best Fantasy and Horror. She is the author of several poetry collections, including Elgin nominee, *An Assortment of Sky Things*, *Astropoetry*, *A Constellation of Songs*, *Catku*, and *A Collection of Nightmares*. Visit Christina at [christinasng.com](http://christinasng.com).

**Debbie Strange** is a Canadian short form poet, haiga artist and photographer whose creative passions bring her closer to the world and to herself. She is the author of *Warp and Weft: Tanka Threads* (Keibooks 2015) and the haiku collection, *A Year Unfolding* (Folded Word 2017). Please visit her archive of published work at [debbiemstrange.blogspot.ca](http://debbiemstrange.blogspot.ca).

**Eduardo Yagüe** studied at the Drama Art in Gijón (Spain) he, then he moved to Madrid, where he studied in the Corazza Studio for Actors and Hispanic Philology at UNED. He worked as an actor, theater teacher and many other jobs. He also wrote poetry and stories. In 2012 started to make videopoetry. He is interested in exploring and mixing the limits of poetic and cinematographic languages. He loves working with the actors in his videos, using them as a vehicle to talk about strong and deep emotions. His works and collaborations with poets and other video artists have been screened in videopoetry and videoart shows and festivals in Europe and America. Website: [eduardoyague.com](http://eduardoyague.com).