

Gnarled Oak

an online literary journal



Issue 15: Walking through Clouds
Mar-May 2018



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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 Mar-May 2018 and is archived at gnarledoak.org/category/issue-15/

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Contents

Poetry — Robin Turner	1
old friends — David He	2
Haiku for the Lost — Marie Craven	3
mosquitoes — Ben Groner III	4
night party — Blessed Ayeyame	5
Black ants carrying — Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo	6
Moth — Mary McCarthy	7
Leaves — Olivier Schopfer	8
That Great City — Grove Koger	9
on the edge of town — Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco	10
Upside Down — Tiffany Shaw-Diaz	11
through my eyelids — Bill Waters	12
stormwater drain — Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy	13
we're still expecting — Chibùhè Obi	14
rainy afternoon — Praniti Gulyani	15
Fog — Meghan DePeau	16
fog blanket — Devin Harrison	17
summer's end — Hifsa Ashraf	18
Coal Bucket — Gareth Culshaw	19
Crushed Bits — Jeff Bagato	20
the darkest — Jan Benson	21
Deprived — Daya Bhat	22
And still you remain — H. G. Warrender	23

Ice — Mike Gallagher	24
a bridge — Robert Witmer	25
solstice night — Debbie Strange	26
Spring Again — Fabrice Poussin	27
Solar Therapy — Marie Craven	28
Consider pigeons — Kris Lindbeck	29
Job 30:29b — Laura M. Kaminski	30
Missing birds — Steve Klepetar	31
birds feed off of me — Jamie O'Connell	32
two crows — Kris Lindbeck	33
Arr. for viola — Jean Morris	34
Through the Woods — Aliisa Hyslop	35
I end up at the same place — Chumki Sharma	36
Everything Ends With Amen — Laura M. Kaminski	37
Editor's Note	38
Contributor Bios	41

Poetry

Robin Turner

She's fond of kicking the door
wide open entirely too late at night
wearing wild hair and her take-no-prisoners red boots—

Let's get this party started!

What can I do?
She won't take no for an answer.
Insists I call her Roxanne.

In the morning I will have to explain again
to my husband why I came so late to bed.

old friends

David He

old friends—
I add more sugar
to the tea cups

Haiku for the Lost

Marie Craven



View Marie Craven's video "Haiku for the Lost" at
<http://gnarledoak.org/issue-15/haiku-for-the-lost/>

mosquitoes

Ben Groner III

mosquitoes...
pumpjacks plunge into
parched land

night party

Blessed Ayeyame

night party

black insects crowd

a white bulb

Black ants carrying

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo

a millipede body,
a paper dragon, bound

home from our festivals.

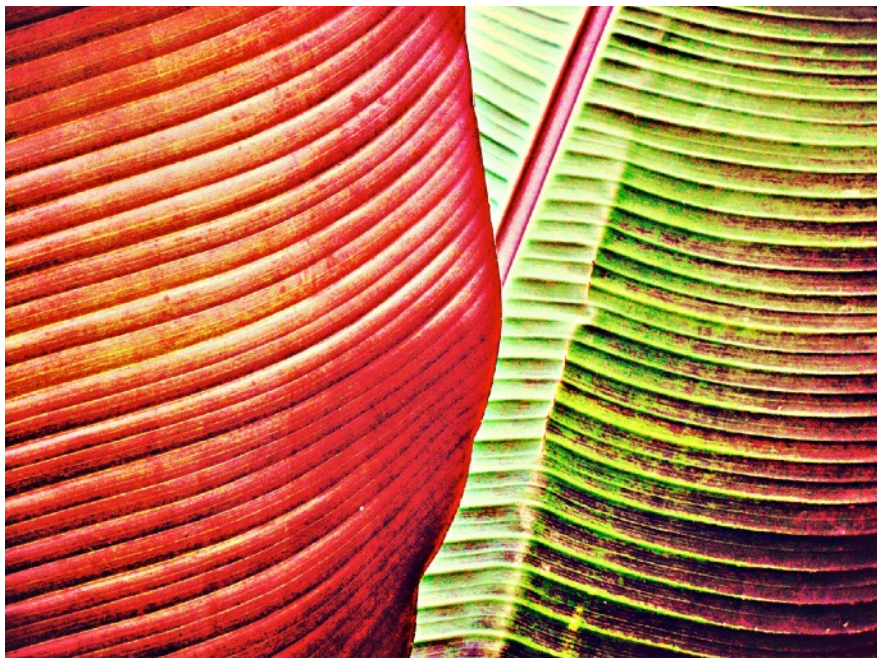
Moth

Mary McCarthy

Luminous
reflection of the moon's
cool elegance
another light floating
across night's dark acre
out of place
clinging to my wall
unmoving or unable to move
one curving underwing
half torn off
casualty of a night bird's hunger
broken, still beautiful, shining
here in daylight
where you don't belong

Leaves

Olivier Schopfer



That Great City

Grove Koger

We had been marching along the shore day after day, slower and slower it seemed, but we were approaching the city—that great city!—at last. Yet when we awoke the next morning, dizzy with hunger, we were astonished to see the city's towers shining brightly in the sunlight far behind us.

on the edge of town

Elizabeth McMunn-Tetangco

on the edge of town
coyotes
telling all our secrets

Upside Down

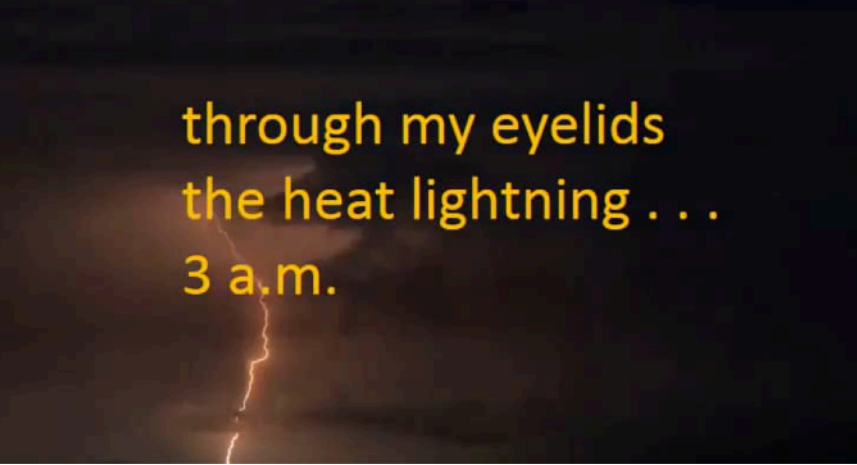
Tiffany Shaw-Diaz

What if the monster in your dream is just you?

same coin
the shadow
and the self

through my eyelids

Bill Waters



through my eyelids
the heat lightning . . .
3 a.m.

View Bill Waters' video "through my eyelids" at
<http://gnarledoak.org/issue-15/through-my-eyelids/>

stormwater drain

Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy

stormwater drain

men fishing

bodies

out

we're still expecting

Chibùhè Obi

we're still expecting
some survivors home
—paper smoke

rainy afternoon

Praniti Gulyani

rainy afternoon...
how scattered the sky
in all those puddles

Fog

Meghan DePeau

We are plodding up the hill to the school's playground
and the three-year-old who peers through his black
ringlets to see the world is holding my mittened hand,
is interrupting my answer to ask his question a third time;
I will inhale slowly, answer him evenly, the same way, hoping this
time he will let it sink in. *For real. We are walking through clouds.*

fog blanket

Devin Harrison

fog blanket
my boots sink deeper
into the forest

summer's end

Hifsa Ashraf

**summer's end—
the shadows get shorter
at a cemetery fence**



Coal Bucket

Gareth Culshaw

In my hand
lies a handle

which holds a bucket,
that keeps a million years

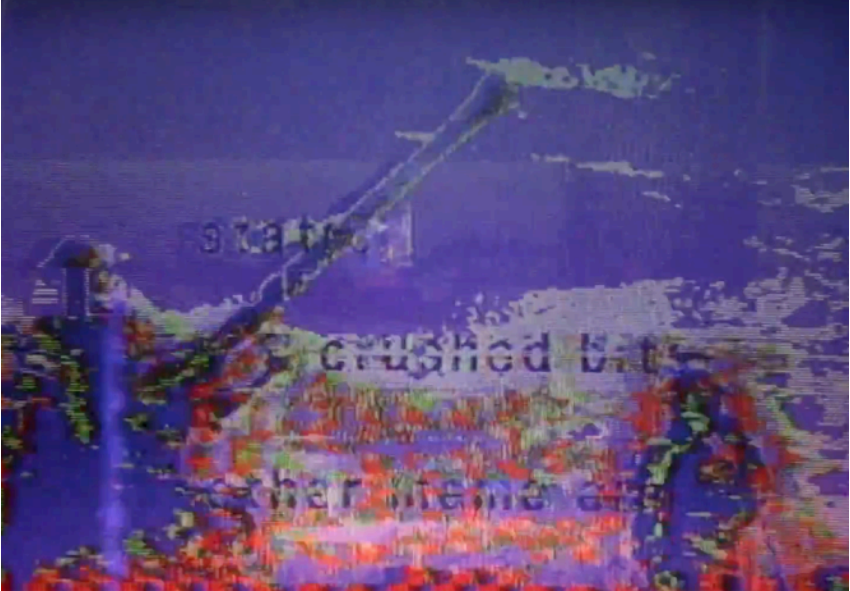
of weight. Clunked together
like old people on a bus.

The collected waste
of crust and wood.

Skin of the earth
dangles from my grip.

Crushed Bits

Jeff Bagato



View Jeff Bagato's video "Crushed Bits" at
<http://gnarledoak.org/issue-15/crushed-bits/>

the darkest

Jan Benson

the darkest
corner of a closet
cut upon cut

Deprived

Daya Bhat

it's the season of betrayal again
ripe mangoes in the bazaar
none I can eat

And still you remain

H.G. Warrender

And still you remain the moon / pulling ever-gently on my tides.

Ice

Mike Gallagher

Our coldest snap
in fifty years
I skated then
on frozen lakes
with not a thought
of broken ice;
this time around
on solid earth
i dread the thought
of broken bones.

a bridge

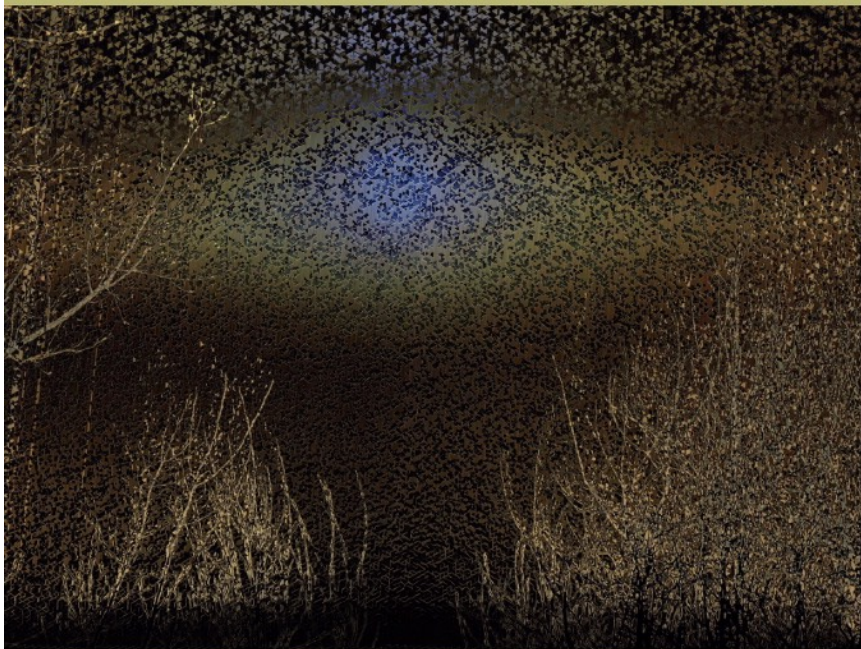
Robert Witmer

a bridge
spanning a frozen river
I sign the DNR

solstice night

Debbie Strange

solstice night



the scrivening

of trees

words/images © Debbie Strange

Spring Again
Fabrice Poussin



Solar Therapy

Marie Craven



View Marie Craven's video "Solar Therapy" at
<http://gnarledoak.org/issue-15/solar-therapy-2/>

Consider Pigeons

Kris Lindbeck

Consider pigeons
with their silly feet
and stoplight eyes
their feathers' rainbow shine
like oil on a puddle . . .

Then suddenly
one flies
wheels and dips on silver wings
fine as any falcon

So, my poetry

Job 30:29b

Laura M. Kaminski

after Iskandar Haggarty's 'Erasures' in Moonchild Magazine

No angel-wings for me.
Instead, a barred owl's.
I long to be able to move
through day and night
in silence.

Missing birds

Steve Klepetar

Missing birds –
echoes in the empty trees.

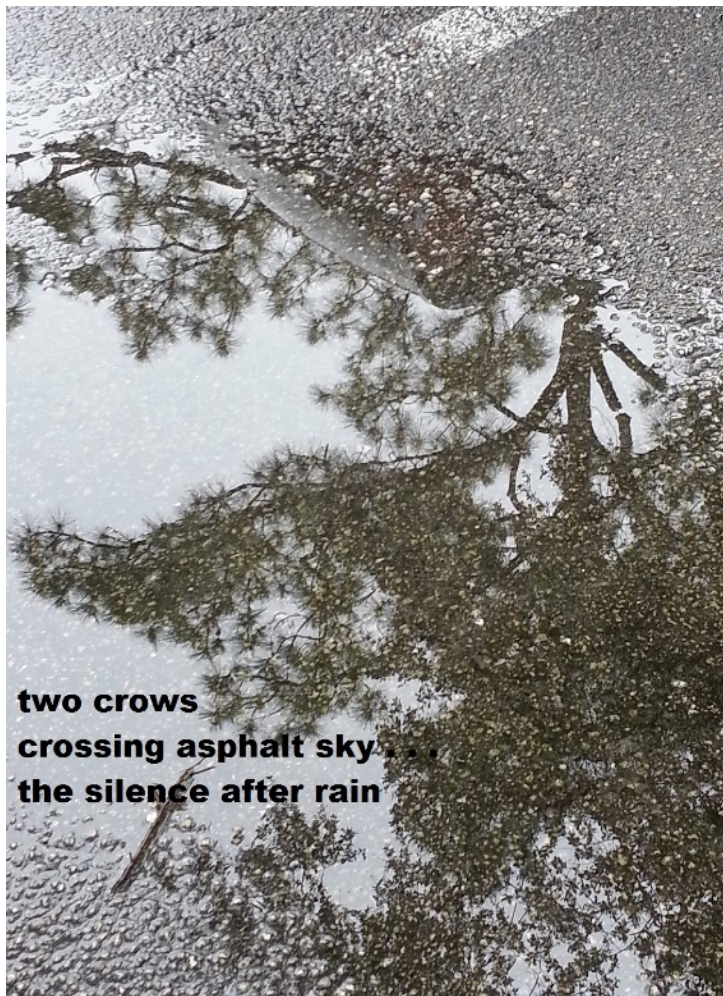
birds feed off of me

Jamie O'Connell

birds feed off of me:
break my eyes
& swallow the tide

two crows

Kris Lindbeck



**two crows
crossing asphalt sky . . .
the silence after rain**

Arr. for viola

Jean Morris

the cello suites
are unsurpassed

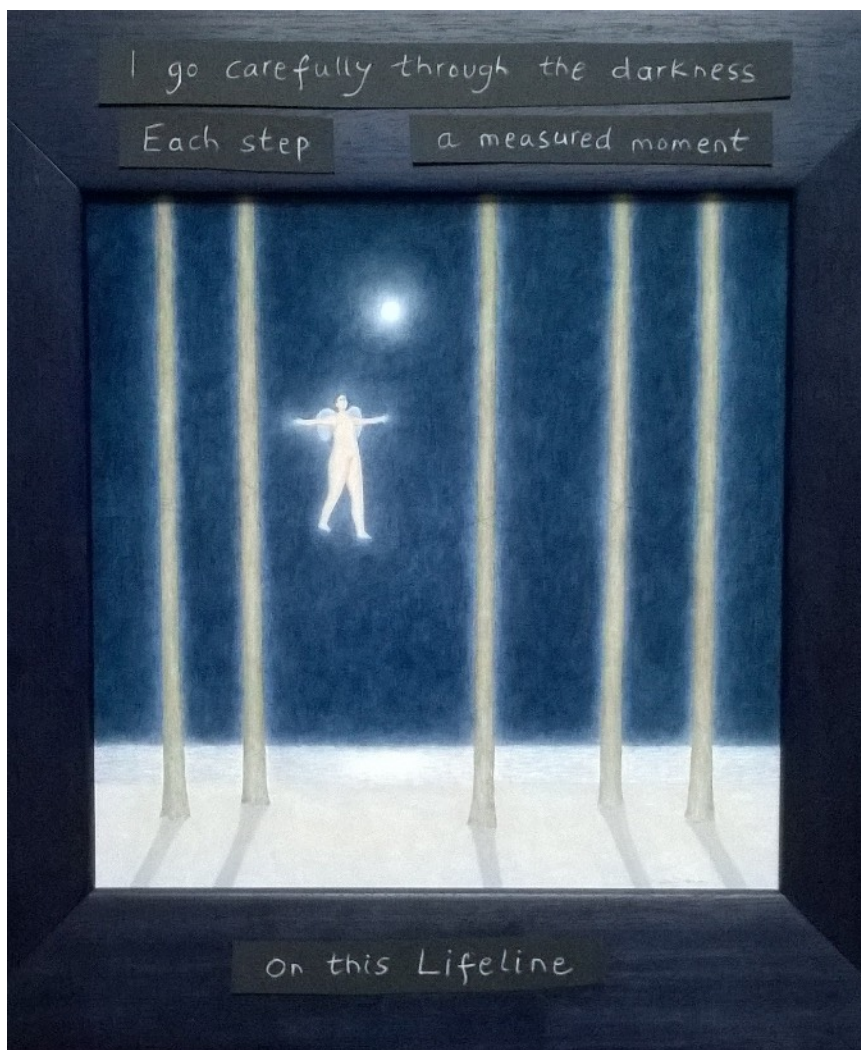
yet something
in the way this lands

familiar yet different
every note

a leaf eased early
from a tree

Through the Woods

Aliisa Hyslop



I end up at the same place

Chumki Sharma

I end up at the same place
where I had lost myself.
I call out to me, go looking to find
those bones I had set on fire,
traces of self I had left behind
into the ether as rising smoke.
How do you find old smoke?
How do you know where it travelled?
The kite skips into the sky.

Everything Ends With Amen

Laura M. Kaminski

Conversation is communion.

Pay attention: G-d is speaking.

Pay attention: someone's praying.

Same with poems.

Everything ends with *amen*.

Editor's Note

Four years ago, when I was putting together the acknowledgements page for the collection that became *Highway Sky*, I was saddened to see that so many of the wonderful online journals that had published a fair number of those poems were no longer active. They had all done good work, but the editors had moved on.

I was eager to try to give something back to the online poetry community from which I had gotten so much when I started to write poetry seriously in 2009. And I had this site that wasn't doing anything, so late in the summer of 2014, I started rebuilding the site. I didn't do anything more original than just steal ideas I liked from various journals that had been gracious enough to publish my own work.

Not sure anyone would submit, I sent emails out to writers and artists whose work I admired and to my surprise I got enough responses for the first issue. And then more and more over the years. At first, I think I knew most of the people who submitted but it wasn't long before I started getting submissions—wonderful submissions—from writers and artists whose work was new to me.

I suppose I figured it would stay small, maybe last a year or so, but it grew and developed an international following. For four years, I have had the delight of having an inbox full of wonderful work, and the often painful and exhausting experience of having to return a lot of work that I liked.

The experience of editing a journal for the past four years, a true education in the four-year college of art and literature, has taught me so much. So much about the work that editors put into a journal that is above all a labor or love, but also a

renewed appreciation for those who submit. It is to the individual writers and artists who entrust a particular journal with their work, who graciously allow an editor to publish their work that so much thanks should go.

And so I wish to thank in general all those who submitted to *Gnarled Oak* over the years and for those who gave me the distinct honor of publishing their work. Seriously, I am grateful because without you this never would have gotten off the ground.

Specifically, I would like to thank the following:

Angie Werren who kindly responded to my pleas for submissions to get the first issue going with so much fine work that really set the standard;

Erica Goss who sent in the very first unsolicited submission—you made my day and gave me more confidence than you'll know;

Olivier Schopfer whose images have graced many a cover and even more issues;

Jean Morris for such a wonderful variety of work and for catching typos and errors, your close and careful reading has always been appreciated;

Laura M. Kaminski for your tireless support and promotion, I am truly grateful as well as for all the wonderful poems you let me publish;

and finally,

Marie Craven and Debbie Strange, true frequent fliers, each of whom had work in nearly every issue right from the start. Thank you for considering this journal worthy of your work.

And to everyone who read *Gnarled Oak* on a regular basis, who retweeted and shared and liked and otherwise helped promote this journal, you have my thanks.

Gnarled Oak has been fun, and it has been an education, but at the end of the day, it's time to move on. This has been a labor of love, but I am excited to get back into my own work for a while. And so a thank you to the writers and artists who helped make this last one so special. You've truly allowed me to wrap this up in fine style.

See you 'round the 'net.

With gratitude and thanks,

James Brush, editor
May 31, 2018

Contributor Bios

Dennis Andrew S. Aguinaldo teaches at the University of the Philippines Los Baños and blogs at [tekstong bopis](#). His works have appeared in *Plural*, *Epizootics!*, *Transit*, *Bukambibig*, *{m}*, and *The Cabinet*.

Hifsa Ashraf is from Pakistan. She writes short stories, and poetry in different languages (Urdu, English, and Punjabi). Her haiku, senryu, tanka, and haiga have been published in different online journals. She won third place in the Annual Tanka Contest 2017 by Mandy's Pages. Her short stories have been published in a UK-based English magazine.

Blessed Ayeyame is a Nigerian who is fascinated by the written word, and he writes to share in this fascinating experience.

A multi-media artist living near Washington, DC, **Jeff Bagato** produces poetry and prose as well as electronic music, and glitch video. Some of his poetry has appeared in *Empty Mirror*, *Futures Trading*, *Otoliths*, *H&*, *Ex-Ex Lit*, and *Zoomoozophone Review*. His published books include *Savage Magic* (poetry), *Spells of Coming Day* (poetry), *The Toothpick Fairy* (fiction), and *Computing Angels* (fiction). A blog about his writing and publishing efforts can be found at [jeffbagato.wordpress.com](#).

Jan Benson is a Pushcart Prize nominated haiku poet living in Texas. Her work is in translation in seven languages. Jan is a member of The British Haiku Society, and Poetry Society of Texas. She has work listed in the Living Senryu Anthology and at The Haiku Foundation poet registry. [@janbentx](#)

Daya Bhat from Bengaluru, India enjoys writing. She has written a book of poems and a few short stories. Blog: [Prose/Poetry...](#)

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/mariecraeven

Meghan DePeau's work has appeared in *Right Hand Pointing*, *One Sentence Poems*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Common Ground Review*, and *Freshwater*. She won CGR's annual poetry contest in 2016. She also received the Outstanding Young Poet Award and won the annual writing contest at Manchester Community College in 2016.

Gareth Culshaw lives in Wales. He has his first collection out in 2018 by futurecycle.

Mike Gallagher, an Irish poet, lived in London for forty years. His poetry has been published worldwide and translated into six languages. He won the Michael Hartnett Viva Voce award in 2010 and 2016, the Desmond O'Grady International award in 2012 and was shortlisted for the Hennessy award in 2011. His collection [Stick on Stone](#) was published by Revival Press in 2013.

Ben Groner III (Nashville, TN), recipient of Texas A&M University's 2014 Gordone Award for undergraduate poetry, has work published in *Appalachian Heritage*, *New Mexico Review*, *Gnarled Oak*, *Third Wednesday*, *The Bookends Review*,

and elsewhere. You can see more of his work at bengroner.com/creative-writing/

Praniti Gulyani is from New Delhi, India. She likes writing haiku and haibun and has work featured in many online journals including *Modern Haiku* and *Bones Haiku Journal*. Praniti has also had her work selected for publication in the *Red Moon Anthology* by Jim Kacian.

Devin Harrison – Vancouver Island, Canada

David He has been working as an advanced English teacher for 35 years in a high school. So far he has had twenty short English stories published in anthologies. In recent years he has had haiku published in magazines like *Acorn*, *The Heron's Nest*, *Presence*, *Rocket bottles*, *Frogpond*, *A One Hundred Gouges*, *Shamrock*, *First Literary Review-East*, *Modern Haiku*, *Frozen Butterfly* and some international magazines. He has also had tanka published in *Tanka of America*, *Skylark*, *Ribbones* and *Cattails*. He lives in Gansu Province, China.

Aliisa Hyslop is a Finnish/Scottish artist, living and working in Edinburgh and the Scottish borders. She has exhibited her paintings in many solo and group shows, in UK and abroad, touching people from all walks of life, with their particular mixture of reality and imagination. Her works are visual expressions of a deeper experience, and with poetic imagery portray feelings, moods and emotions in a dreamlike and otherworldly way.

Laura M Kaminski grew up in Nigeria, went to school in New Orleans, and currently lives in rural Missouri. Her most recent collection, *The Heretic's Hymnal: 99 New and Selected Poems*, is forthcoming from Babylon Books / Balkan Press in 2018. More about her poetry is available at The Ark of Identity.

Steve Klepetar is relocating from Saint Cloud, Minnesota to the Berkshires in Massachusetts. His work has appeared widely and has received a number of nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net, including two in 2017. The most recent of his eleven collections include *A Landscape in Hell* (Flutter Press); *Family Reunion* (Big Table); and *How Glass Shatters* (One Sentence Poem Chapbooks).

Grove Koger is the author of *When the Going Was Good: A Guide to the 99 Best Narratives of Travel, Exploration, and Adventure*, and Assistant Editor of *Laguna Beach Art Patron Magazine*, *Palm Springs Art Patron Magazine*, and *Deus Loci: The Lawrence Durrell Journal*. He blogs at [World Enough](#).

Shrikaanth Krishnamurthy is a psychiatrist from Bengaluru India, living in England. A trained vocalist and a composer in Indian Classical Music, he writes in Kannada, Sankethi, Tamil and English languages. His haikai writings have been published in reputed journals and anthologies and won prizes, worldwide. He is currently the Editor of the *Blithe Spirit*, journal of The British Haiku Society.

Kris Lindbeck has been writing poems on Twitter, mostly haiku and tanka, for about eight years. A few are published in *Bright Stars*, *An Organic Tanka Anthology*, *Bones*, *Prune Juice*, and *Skylark Tanka*. You can see more [@krislindbeck](#) on Twitter and [Haiku etc.](#)

Mary McCarthy has always been a writer, as well as a visual artist and a Registered Nurse. She has had many publications in online and print journals, including *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Three Elements*, *Earth's Daughters* and *Third Wednesday*, and has an electronic chapbook, [Things I Was Told Not to Think About](#) available as a free download from *Praxis Magazine*.

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.

Jean Morris lives in London, writes, edits, translates, takes photos and is a guest contributor to the [Via Negativa](#) poetry blog. Another musically inspired poem of hers was recently published in [Writers' Cafe Magazine](#).

Chibūihè Obi has been published in *Brittle Paper*, *Expound Magazine*, *Praxis*, *The Kalahari Review* etc. A Pushcart nominee, he's the winner of the Brittle Paper Anniversary Award, The Inaugural Babishai Niwe Haiku Prize, and currently on the Gerald Kraak award shortlist. He teaches Literature to high school students and is experimenting with micropoetry and minimalist photography.

Jamie O'Connell currently lives in the Bay Area, where she received her MFA in Writing at California College of the Arts. Her work has been featured in *Menacing Hedge*, *Troop Zine*, *Newfound*, and *Forth Magazine*, and exhibited in College Avenue Galleries in Oakland. She spends most of her time with her majestic zebra-striped dog, Daisy.

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English at Shorter University. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in *Kestrel*, *Symposium*, *The Chimes*, and dozens of other magazines. His photography has been published in *The Front Porch Review*, *The San Pedro River Review*, *Gnarled Oak* and more than 300 other publications.

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](#).

Chumki Sharma is a poet from Calcutta, India. She is a 2017 semifinalist of the Vignette Collection Award from the Vine Leaves Press, Melbourne and her collection of poems [Shape of Emptiness](#) has been published by them in September 2017.

Tiffany Shaw-Diaz is an award-winning poet who has been featured in *Modern Haiku*, *Frogpond*, *Acorn*, *Presence*, and many other publications. She is the founder and director of The Co-op Poetry Lab. To read more of her work visit [after pink](#).

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 [Warp and Weft ~~ Images and Words](#).

Robin Turner is the author of *bindweed & crow poison: small poems of stray girls, fierce women* (Porkbelly Press, 2016). A Best of the Net and Pushcart Prize nominee, her work has most recently appeared in *Psaltery & Lyre*, *3Elements Literary Review*, and in the magical *White Rock Zine Machine*. Robin works, plays, and daydreams in Dallas, Texas.

H.G. Warrender is an author living in upstate New York. She has published one book, *The King's Decree*, with several more on the way.

Bill Waters, a lifelong poet and writer, lives in Pennington, New Jersey, U.S.A., with his wonderful wife and their two amazing cats. You can find more of his micropoetry at [Bill Waters ~~ Haiku](#).

Robert Witmer is an American who has resided in Tokyo, Japan, for nearly 40 years. A semi-retired professor and petanque aficionado, he looks forward to trekking again in the Himalaya mountains, where he once recited Whitman to the lovely woman who became his wife. His first book of poetry is titled *Finding a Way*.