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PINESONG: AWARDS 2020

NORTH CAROLINA POETRY SOCIETY

# Pinesong

VOLUME 56

*Awards 2020*

North Carolina Poetry Society

Founded 1932

# Pinesong

*Awards 2020*

Volume 56

North Carolina  
**POETRY**  
SOCIETY

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For detailed information about NCPS membership fees and benefits, annual contest guidelines, current Board of Directors officers and committees, meetings, sponsored events, and the mission, bylaws and history of this non-profit literary arts organization, please visit us online: [www.ncpoetrysociety.org](http://www.ncpoetrysociety.org)

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## A STATEMENT FROM THE EDITOR

I write to you sheltered in place during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. When accepting the position to act as editor of the *Pinesong* poetry anthology, I could have never imagined the arrangement of winning contest poems would become a lifeline during such a trying time. While poetry often inspires, these poems have provided a refuge and an escape. My hope is that they will provide the same for you.

My congratulations to each of the winning poets and my thanks to the judges. In the words of Voltaire “Let us read, and let us dance; these two amusements will never do any harm to the world.” I wish you poetry, good health and great courage.

Sherry Pedersen-Thrasher, Editor

## 2020 PINESONG DEDICATION

*The 2020 North Carolina Poetry Society Pinesong Dedication Committee is proud to present as the 2020 Pinesong Dedicatee: M. Scott Douglass*

M. Scott Douglass is the publisher, managing editor, and book designer at Main Street Rag Publishing Company, which he helped found in 1996. He grew up in Pittsburgh, attended Penn State-Behrend and has a graphic arts degree from Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte. His poetry has appeared in such places as *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *Midwest Review*, *North American Review*, *Plainsongs*, *Poetrybay.com*, *Redheaded Stepchild*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Slipstream*, *Tar River Review*, *The Southeast Review (Sundog)*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Wild Goose Review*, and others. He's been a Pushcart Prize nominee and the recipient of a 2001 NC Arts & Science Council Emerging Artist Grant, which was used to publish his first full-length poetry collection, *Auditioning for Heaven* (an honorable mention for the 2001 Brockman Campbell Award). In 2010, the Poetry Council of North Carolina dedicated its annual, *Bay Leaves*, to M. Scott Douglass for his support of poets and poetry in the state of North Carolina. His cover designs have garnered two PICA Awards and a 2010 Eric Hoffer Award nomination for graphic design. His most recent poetry book, *Just Passing Through*, was published by Paycock Press in 2017.



*A note from Jill Raush, M. Scott Douglass Insider, who graciously provided accurate biographical information for this dedication and who is also graciously married to M. Scott Douglass:*

Scott, this award is the result of your hard work and efforts and always fearless spirit to contribute to the literary community. As I have seen personally, when you are not reading or writing, you are working on publishing a fellow poet. You never limit yourself, instead you break the boundaries and move ahead. As your friend, AJ, entitled you, Poetry Pitbull, you have earned that title and this award. Congratulations for your achievement! With all my love, Jill



*A note from Malaika King Albrecht, NCPS president, Heart of Pamlico Inaugural Poet Laureate, founding editor of Redheaded Stepchild, twig farmer and winch operator on Freckles Farm, and author of four poetry books, most recently The Stumble Fields:*

We are fortunate in our North Carolina literary community to have so many fine poets attending NCPS meetings and our sponsored poetry readings, but few have done as much to encourage, publish, and promote so many other writers as this year's dedicatee, M. Scott Douglass. It is not an exaggeration to write that Scott has published hundreds of North Carolinian poets in both his literary magazine and his press. If I were to ask the current members of the North Carolina Poetry Society today how many of you have benefited from Scott's work as a poet, an editor, and a publisher, I bet that nearly every hand would be raised in response. Certainly, I owe him for so much, including several books, but more importantly, he is my friend. Scott is the cranky brother all of us want over for dinner because it is never dull conversation when he is there. Who else has wrestled a lion once? Yes, a real lion.

*A note from Caren Stuart, NCPS Recording Secretary, poet/writer/artist/maker, and overly verbose letter writer:*

M. Scott Douglass stays a very busy man. He's a frequent attendee, contributor, and presenter at readings, conferences, and other literary events across the nation, tirelessly and enthusiastically promoting the work of poets and authors and the offerings of Main Street Rag Publishing Company. While Scott's straight shooting, "tell-it-like-it-is"ness borders on *EPIC*, his generosity of spirit is equally legendary. He's a delightful speaker and workshop leader always game to share his wisdom and insights (and fabulous stories!) while answering all manner of writing, submitting, and publishing questions with good humor. He's weathered the storm of years of being on the receiving end of my own poetry submissions (and ridiculously long, rambling letters) to *The Main Street Rag* quarterly print magazine and his kindly finessed, encouraging responses to my work continue to be some of the acceptance (and rejection!) letters I'm proudest to have received. In addition to being a very fine poet himself, Scott has the vast wealth of knowledge, eye for quality, attention to detail, and passionate enthusiasm for supporting and publishing the works of others which

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allows him to continue being a champion to writers across the state and beyond.

*A note from Bill Griffin, NCPS Treasurer and M. Scott Douglass fanboy:*

The world needs more people who know what they like and why they like it, and who aren't shy about telling it. Sound like anyone we know? Malaika, Jill, and Caren have said everything that could possibly be said about Scott Douglass and his huge importance to the Carolina poetry scene. I agree with every word they've shared but I want to say more about Scott's baby, *Main Street Rag* (baby, heck, it's old enough to find a girlfriend and move out of the basement). I came to writing poetry late in life and I didn't know doodly, so I subscribed to *Main Street Rag*. I've just dug that first issue out of my MSR collection bin, Vol. 4 Nr. 4, Winter 1999. Saddle stapled! As I read it, I find the poems just as fresh and alive and personal as they were over 20 years ago (and the nude photographs are, yeah, I'd forgotten about those). Scott Douglass has had a vision for poetry that can speak to people in the midst of their complicated humanity, that can comfort and challenge that soars and dives and never leaves the reader behind. He has stuck to that aesthetic from the beginning and he still does. Thanks, Scott for engaging me in poetry. For teaching and entertaining. Thanks for publishing my first MSR poem (Vol. 7 Nr. 1 Spring 2002) and for helping us all know better what we like, and why. And for not being shy.

Congratulations, M. Scott Douglass  
2020 Pinesong Dedicattee!

Thank you for so much!



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## THE POET LAUREATE STATEMENT

**Final Judge:** North Carolina Poet Laureate Jaki Shelton Green

NC Poet Laureate **Jaki Shelton Green** is founder of SistaWRITE and 2014 inductee into the NC Literary Hall of Fame. She received the 2010 Fine Arts Emerald Award (Raleigh LINKS), and in 2009, was selected first NC Piedmont Laureate. She was honored with the Sam Ragan Award for contributions to the Fine Arts of North Carolina in 2007. In 2003, she received the North Carolina Award for Literature and was inducted into the North Carolinian Society. She is the author of (Carolina Wren Press) *Dead on Arrival*, *Dead on Arrival and New Poems*, *Masks*, *Conjure Blues*, *singing a tree into dance*, *breath of the song*, *Blue Opal*, a play, and *Feeding the Light* (published by Jacar Press). She is the co-editor of two anthologies: *Poets for Peace* and *Immigration, Emigration and Diversity* published by Chapel Hill Press, Inc.

Her poetry has appeared in numerous publications such as *The Crucible*, *The African-American Review*, *Obsidian*, *Poets for Peace*, *Immigration Emigration and Diversity*, *Ms. Magazine*, *Essence Magazine*, *Kakalak*, *Callaloo*, *Cave Canem African American Writers Anthology*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *27 Views of Hillsborough*, *Solo Press Anthology*, *The Sound of Poets Cooking Anthology*, *What Matters Anthology*, *Home is Where: An Anthology of African American Poetry from the Carolinas*, *When Women Waken* (Women Writers, Women Books) and *Literary Trails of North Carolina*.

About the contest, Jaki wrote:

“Emily Dickinson said, ‘Tell all the truth but tell it slant.’ That slant has been my personal landscape for bringing the subjects that matter to me deeply onto the page. I have several questions that I pose to myself and other writers when appraising poetry... How does the poet create an intentional world inside of the lines that executes vivid sensory details, musicality, and depth that inform the story content? How does impactful sparse language become another breath in-between the lines; enabling descriptive imagery that is strong visual representation to render the reader speechless? Format, line structure, tone, excellent command of language, arrangement of emotions and the ability to spin sounds should offer memorable celebrations of poetics that open up an

intellectual and visceral wellspring that begs to be read over and over again.... Take me somewhere I've not been. Teach my heart a new way of hearing. Awaken all of my sensory preceptors through re-imagined journeys on the page. Teach my ears to dance."

**Preliminary judge:** Michael Rothenberg

**Michael Rothenberg** is the Florida State University Libraries Poet in Residence. He is editor and publisher of the online literary magazine BigBridge.org, co-founder of 100 Thousand Poets for Change, and co-founder of Poets In Need, a non-profit 501(c)3, assisting poets in crisis. His most recent books of poetry include *Drawing The Shade* (Dos Madres Press), *Wake Up and Dream* (MadHat Press), and a bi-lingual edition of *Indefinite Detention: A Dog Story* (Varasek Ediciones, Madrid, Spain).

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2020 POET LAUREATE AWARD FINALISTS

"Frank O'Hara Gets Dirty in Bull City" by Hugh Findlay

"My Father and I Have Nightmares" by Janet Ford

"River in Your Living Room" by Jeanne Julian

"Arachnidaea" by Stephen C. Pollock

"Thematic Variations on GFCBA" by Connie Ralston

"The 4th pillow" by Erica Rothman

"Margie Skips a Grade" by Maria Roupail

"Corresponding with Richard Wilbur" by Melinda Thomsen

"Watching the Watcher" by Christina Xiong

---

 THE POET LAUREATE AWARD

**Winner: Joyce Brown**

## Elegy for Joe

*d. November 26, 1938*

His brother Jay

*Drafted to War, December 3, 1941*

*Down among the groundlings, among the beggars and rakers of the garbage,  
profound passion is enacted. And the circumstances that provoke it, however  
trivial or mean, are no measure of its power.*

~Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*

He'd come down to borrow shells again  
 For that old gun they'd passed from farm to farm.  
 She'd given them freely, adjuvant to schoolboy plot.  
 He'd laughed, toed the dirt, shook sun-faired hair,  
 Walked on up to play at being child,  
 Not farmer's boy, born to hoe and seed  
 His years away in hard-packed clay.  
 Close-tied brothers, yoked by birth and soil,  
 Ruled by stern dark faces, duty-locked,  
 They'd steal some time to hide from father's brow,  
 They'd find themselves a secret day of youth,  
 Puff fake tobacco out from family eyes,  
 Cross the field behind the rock, beside  
 The favored tree, where boy-tromped ground  
 Had marked their only ownership of self.  
 How could she have known to tell him, "No,  
 I'll save your life young Joe, stay with me.  
 Don't walk on up that rain-red road.  
 Don't pause to laugh and lean on sycamore.  
 Don't prop that joint-loose gun against its trunk.  
 Don't lay such sorrow at your brother's feet.  
 Go home and slop the hogs, build chicken coops."

But boys will play in chance's fiery field.  
They'll puff and blow on rabbit weed, and then  
They'll practice bad-boy jokes and stoic sneers,  
Their shotguns talismen of work-free worlds.  
One shift of leather sole against wet bark:  
Farm boy flesh flashes into myth.  
Brother's throat-wrenched scream against the blood  
Rings forth the patriotic passion he'll be  
Praised for soon, a boy whose skill was aimed  
Toward squirrels and hares for Sunday feasts.

Legends grow of Sweet Joe's dying words:  
"Don't leave my sisters like you left me.  
Show you love them like you never showed me."  
Shades of Christ in pleas of bloodsoaked boy  
Free and cleansed from sins of boyhood's pranks.  
Guilt stain piercing the aunt who'd handed the shells,  
Tainting the farmer who'd lent the ancient gun,  
Soaking the boy who'd tried to stop the blood,  
Absorbed in family farms, tasted through years of kin  
Who heard of martyred Joe, his smile, his death.  
It burns still, flowing in blood of family veins,  
The iron-red taste unstopped, unthwarted, unchecked

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2019 SUSAN LAUGHTER MEYERS FELLOWSHIP AWARD

*Winner: Benjamin Cutler*

## **Self-Portrait as an Oyster from the Clarenbridge Oyster Bed in Galway**

I have no pearl, but you have  
never wanted one—only to pucker

my pearlescent skin with lemon.  
See how I quiver at this acid touch?

This is how you know I am  
good, how you know I will

fill your mouth with cool ocean.  
But do you know how

many have come before me, pulled  
from this bed where river meets sea,

where fresh meets salt—  
and for how many seasons of harvest?

Even Yeats, in his dark and ancient  
tower, must have known us—Yeats

who loved a woman above his station  
and then her daughter, too,

who was the image of her mother.  
Perhaps they tasted my kind as well,

but I am not a meal for poets  
or lovers, daughters or mothers. Taste me,

yes, but you will not be filled.  
You will not remember me



by white stone or stony shell  
but by the mineral-sweet surf

on your tongue—a brine  
which will linger until washed away

and, like evening tide, another  
rises to your lips.

O how like a gray moon I shine  
and wane, sliding into your horizon

—replaced by another dawn.

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*Adult Contests*



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THE ALICE OSBORN AWARD

*Poems written for children from 2-12 years of age*

**Judge:** Carolyn Guinzio

**Carolyn Guinzio** is the author of four collections, most recently *Spine* (Parlor Press, 2016) and *Spoke & Dark* (Red Hen, 2012) selected by Alice Quinn as winner of the To the Lighthouse/A Room of Her Own Prize. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Agni*, *Harvard Review*, *Boston Review*, *Bomb*, and many other journals. Her photographs have appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *New American Writing*, *Fiction International* and elsewhere. She lives in Fayetteville, AR and was the text editor of the online project *YEW: A Journal of Innovative Writing & Images by Women*.

About the contest, Carolyn wrote:

“In reading the entries for the Alice Osborn prize, I was transported back to a time when I read poetry to my young children. There are so many ways to appeal to children through poems—but all of them are rooted in the pleasure of language: ways you can use it, what it can do and how it can make you feel. I loved the energy of these poems, and I feel grateful to have been given the chance to read them. In choosing ‘In the Attic’ as the winner, I went back to the poem that kept haunting me with its quietness, suspense and reverence, the repetition working like a fragment of memory almost out of reach. I also want to mention ‘Baby Bird in the Daisies’ for its melancholy marking of what for many children is the first experience with death. The many worthy poems made this task as difficult as it was rewarding.”

*Edward Garvey***In the Attic**

The day is unimportant. A quiet winter day. A father climbs the stairway to a bedroom, the bedroom to an attic. His son follows just to follow, stopping on the final step, waiting on the bedroom edge.

The task is unimportant. Yet another simple task. Something upstairs is needed down. The father enters first the closet. The son enters quickly after, first the closet, then the attic. His father clears a path.

The box is unimportant. A box too heavy, opened wide. As the father looks deep inside, the boy looks past to walls in shadow. Pausing, moving slowly forward, he watches careful step by step.

The attic is unimportant. The attic only rarely seen. Walls marked by studs, each fixed in place. Then a corner not a corner – instead a rounded arc of sturdy brick. He asks his father, “What is this?”

The chimney is important. This chimney oh so narrow. Yes, wide enough for smoke to pass, into night, the fire below. But how could he worm such heavy weight? And his sack of treasure, even larger?

The day is unimportant. A quiet winter day. A father on his knees, his son turns back around. The closet light falls between them like a stream. The father turns to see his son step surely, into light.

*Arlene Mandell*

## **Baby Bird in the Daisies**

I found a baby bird,  
*lifeless*  
on my doorstep,  
and buried him tenderly  
in the darling daisy patch.

I never saw him  
among the other birds  
who come to feed every day.  
This little life, so precious,  
must have gotten lost  
--from his parents, from his home--  
and through a guiding spirit,  
found his way to me.

I said a prayer  
over the earth  
where I put his tiny body,  
telling him softly  
I would remember him,  
and cradle him in my mind.

I told him this  
so that he did not die  
without being loved.

*Les Brown*

## **That Time I Sat on Arthur Dellenger's Tractor**

Arthur Dellenger's rusting 8N Ford tractor  
sat catty-cornered near our mailbox  
where he left it in the mowed hay stubble  
of our field when he went home for supper.  
Daddy said I was too little to drive.

A short walk down the gravel driveway  
was permitted by Momma because  
it was the same as going to get the mail.  
I went down there and knee-crawled  
up on Arthur's padded red seat

that had some stuffing coming out,  
pretending to drive like Arthur,  
turning the wide black steering wheel  
this way and that. The clutch and brake pedals  
were out of reach of my short legs, but I pushed

air through my tight lips making tractor sounds,  
pulling knobs and pushing buttons. Suddenly  
the tractor roared to life, growling like a rabid dog.  
It didn't move, but rattled as the motor kept running.  
More frantic pushing buttons, pulling knobs

didn't stop the roaring. One knob made the motor  
louder. One knob had the letters CHOKED on it.  
Pulling that knob as far out as it would go  
made the motor start coughing like Daddy did  
when he smoked his Camel cigarettes.

It sputtered, puffed blue smoke and died.  
Momma asked why my eyes were red.

*Joyce Brown*

## **Playing in the Garden**

Snake slithers slyly by  
hoping I won't speak.  
He's green as peas and broccoli,  
things I don't like to eat!

"Oh I won't hurt you Mr. Snake.  
Why are you so shy?"  
"Because, dear child, I know your kind  
And I don't want to die!"

"Oh don't be silly, Mr. Snake,  
Just look in the mirror and see  
You don't look so good to eat.  
You're far too green for me!"

"But critters like me who crawl on by  
just doing our household tasks  
scare people like you who're bigger than me.  
They don't even bother to ask!

Truth to tell we help them out  
by eating bugs and rats.  
We're here to grab a munch or two.  
and then we'll quickly scat!

So tell your parents, my pretty one  
we wish only joy and peace.  
We won't touch your broccoli.  
And we'll never eat your peas!"



*Martin Settle*

## **Camels for Two**

If you ever decide to marry  
never buy a dromedary.  
A camel with a single hump  
means someone's sliding off the rump.

The bactrian, on the other hand,  
can ride two across the sand.  
Now you know what's best to do  
"Would you like one hump or two?"

---

KATHERINE KENNEDY MCINTYRE LIGHT VERSE AWARD

**Judge:** Jeff Worley

**Jeff Worley** is a Wichita, Kansas, native. He is the current Kentucky Poet Laureate. He has written six book-length poetry collections, including *Happy Hour at Two Keys Tavern* in 2006. The collection was a co-winner in the Society of Midland Authors Literary Competition, won the 2006 Kentucky Book of the Year in poetry at the Southern Kentucky Book Fest and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

About the contest, Jeff wrote:

**Judging a Poetry Contest**

I want a poem, first, to be understandable.

I want a poem to delight me.

I want a poem to surprise me.

I want a poem to make the familiar unfamiliar.

I want a poem to make the unfamiliar familiar.

I want a poem that makes a lively music.

I want a poem that will settle into my neural trace; find a home there.

Is this too much to ask?"

*Nick Sweet*

## **Ruse de Cezanne**

Our first date was a gallery show  
"The Fruits of Paul Cezanne"  
Though more than 40 years have passed  
The memory lives on

I knew Art was her major  
Since I knew nearly nothing  
I researched the artist's work  
To try to slide by bluffing

The first one was the painting  
"Peaches, Pears and Grapes"  
I spoke of Cubist influence  
Cast of light and shape

She found the pears enchanting  
Called them "naked gems"  
"Diamonds in the buff? I asked  
She laughed and took my hand

Eventually I knew she'd find  
My expertise baloney  
Would I get "A" for effort  
Or dismissed as a phony?

Thank God she chose the former  
And as I climbed the ladder  
Of art appreciation  
She taught me beauty mattered

Even more than box scores  
Of which I was so fond  
Since then I've shared her loveliness  
Merci, Monsieur Cezanne

*Jeanne Julian*

## Goodbye and Keep Chilled

*after Robert Frost's "Good-bye and Keep Cold"*

This saying goodbye on the tipsy brink  
 (I'd be over the edge with one more drink)  
 reminds me of other narrow escapes,  
 in my passionate youth on those hapless dates  
 when one more kiss would have sadly led  
 to a tasteless tangle in a loveless bed.  
 Leaving this last dram of chardonnay  
 for next night's glass is the only way  
 to make sure I'll wake up clear-eyed, steady.  
 With one last sip, I know I'm ready,  
 and firmly replacing the cork, I store  
 my tall green bottle in refrigerator door  
 with milk and O.J., plugged airtight,  
 between 45 and 50, Fahrenheit.  
 (Nothing's worse than a wine gone sour  
 from improper storage on kitchen counter.)  
 "How often already you've had to be told,  
*Keep cold, dear wine, goodbye and keep cold.*  
*Let darkness and cellar temp prevail*  
*'til again it's time for a shared cocktail."*  
 Let me assure you that won't be at breakfast.  
 I like my wine, but I'm not reckless,  
 preferring to pair it not with cornflakes  
 but with salmon or pasta or sautéed crabcakes.  
 For now I'll sleep, by day I'll work.  
 I won't dream of it dreaming there in the dark,  
 waiting for someone to pop its cork....  
 Yes, this parting is such sweet sorrow,  
 But something has to be left for tomorrow.

*JeanMarie Olivieri*

## **Husbandry**

Husband number 1 was my ticket out of town  
away from the local factory which swallowed  
hopeless high school graduates.

When we got to Vegas, I gave back the ring  
and told him, kindly, "It ain't no thing."

Husband number 2 was my sugar daddy.  
He earned a living from the poker tables  
and wore me like decoration.  
But when he hit a losing streak  
I left town with a computer geek.

Husband number 3 was my baby daddy.  
It was all coos and cuddles until  
we argued about dishes and diapers.  
He gave me a boy but not a better life  
so I left him, and he found a better wife.

Husband number 4 was the high school coach.  
I went to all the hometown games  
to cheer on the team and whet his whistle.  
It turns out that he was not a good lay  
but my kid didn't need a dad anyway.

My son is grown with a wife of his own  
and I'm starting to feel that familiar itch.  
Hey Good Looking! Wanna get hitched?

*Martin Settle*

## **The Worship of Dog**

who knew in our evolution  
as smooth as we are  
how much we would miss fur  
its comfort, its gleam in the sun  
its sensation on our hands  
more stimulating than prayer

who knew indelicate claws  
could open such fine cracks  
burrow deep into loneliness  
nudge a man to hope  
convert a soul from numb to feel

self-consciousness is not grace  
it does not wriggle  
it does not leap when fetching joy  
its ambivalence hesitates before  
rolling in the grass  
gnawing a bone to marrow  
mating naked outdoors  
playing the fool

the oneness we seek in our religious paths  
the dog has sniffed out long ago  
with a martyr's loyalty  
a votary's obedience  
a priest's sacrament of flesh and blood

I am sorry, dear God,  
your sacred name  
is best prayed backwards  
and your most effective incarnation  
that dwells among us  
speaks no words

*Jo Ann Hoffman***Generations**

## I

What My Mother Wrote in 1927

*A girl of twenty dreams of these:  
 A tiny house 'mid poplar trees,  
 A book, his pipe, a curled-up cat,  
 His after-shave, his brown felt hat,  
 and near the fire, an easy chair.*

*When summer fades and winter stings  
 And dark days lighten into spring,  
 She dreams of bonnets, bottles, bibs,  
 And in a nursery, in a crib,  
 A silken infant sleeping there.*

## II

What My Granddaughter Writes in 2020

*A girl of twenty thinks of these:  
 her weekend plans, the G-R-Es  
 more pepper spray, new M-P-3s  
 workout routines, a data freeze  
 her 10-year goals, depleted seas  
 and getting highlights in her hair.*

*When graduations rise and fall  
 and years fade backward, each like all,  
 she tires of travel, competition,  
 reports, reviews, market position,  
 thinks, instead, of their small house,  
 his presence there, his steady vows,  
 and somewhere in a future fog*

HONORABLE MENTION

---

KATHERINE KENNEDY MCINTYRE LIGHT VERSE AWARD

*she sees a swing set, and a dog,  
a virtual job, a rocking chair,  
two telephones, a Swiss au pair  
and in her office, near her chair  
a silken infant sleeping there.*

HONORABLE MENTION



**Judge:** Julie Warther

**Julie Warther** serves as Midwest Regional Coordinator for the Haiku Society of America, is an associate editor at The Heron's Nest and was instrumental in establishing The Forest Haiku Walk in Millersburg, Ohio and the Seasons of Haiku Trail at The Holden Arboretum in Kirtland, Ohio.

Julie wrote about the contest:

“It was a pleasure to read the haiku submitted for this contest! In my selections, I was looking for a two-part structure with a strong juxtaposition of the two parts where neither was simply a renaming or summary of the other part, but rather a separate something that added resonance. Each of the winning haiku shared one moment of awareness. From it, a whole story could present itself in the reader’s mind. I believe an effective haiku is one that leaves room and invites the reader in. I hope you enjoy these crystalline moments.”

---

BLOODROOT HAIKU

*kj munro*

empty begging bowl  
the universe  
in a grain of rice

*Carole MacRury*

death watch—  
icicles on the eaves  
shrinking

---

BLOODROOT HAIKU

*Tracy Davidson*

scent of pine  
if only memories  
were scrubbed so easily

*Glenn Coats*

crickets at dusk  
half a basket  
of unripe apples

---

BLOODROOT HAIKU

*Ed Bremson*

sun rising  
on a school mourning...  
the long cortège

**Judge:** Amelia Martens

**Amelia Martens** is the author of *The Spoons in the Grass are There To Dig a Moat* (Sarabande Books, 2016), and four poetry chapbooks, including *Ursa Minor* (elsewhere magazine, 2018). She is the recipient of a 2019 Al Smith Individual Artist Fellowship from the Kentucky Arts Council; her work has also been supported by a Sustainable Arts Foundation fellowship to Rivendell Writers' Colony and by the Kentucky Foundation for Women. She met her husband in the Indiana University MFA program; together they have created the Rivertown Reading Series, *Exit 7: A Journal of Literature and Art*, and two awesome daughters.

About the contest, Amelia wrote:

“It was a pleasure to read each of the entries; the courage at the center of each poem submitted gives me a greater sense of hope than I’ve felt lately. In my reading I looked for clarity of voice and image; I wanted to be in the poem, to feel the tensile tests of our human experiences. The poems that I found most successful used sensory detail and were economic in their language. I also appreciate thoughtful line breaks, where the poem uses white space to expand or suspend a thought on the page.”

*Hugh Findlay*

**Nam, Man**

In the green flesh of Happy Valley  
I lay in ambush  
waiting for them to come  
like birds into glass

With me  
I have my dog  
because I say he is mine  
and I have named him Fuckit

And the jungle dawn is late rising  
And the tree above me  
pisses a black gel  
down my back

I am a lung that throws bullets  
like air  
like planting seeds  
through their cancerous minds  
as they drop into rice paddies

This is how I deal with it:  
scared and mad  
cuz scared means still alive  
and mad means staying that way

Later, in the red sweat of morning  
I will ooze down Happy Valley  
into its folds of skin  
and me and Fuckit will breathe green seeds  
like splitting atoms



*Kathy Ackerman*

## **Waiting for Results**

It's routine. Turn 40, have a mammogram.  
Find a lump. Have another.

We don't know the tiny dot on the quivering screen  
hasn't been there always. It is very small.  
may not change at all, may be meaningless  
and half a year is not too long to wait and see.

Because it is threatened I have fallen in love  
with my own flesh, my mediocre breasts  
now are honeysuckle, rosehip  
tropical sea and rainbow.

They are desperately alive under my clothes,  
my palms.  
I know now they know everything:  
temperature, dew point, pressure.  
They resist synthetics for the softer cheek of cotton.

They arrive everywhere before me.  
They sense everything.

I will honor them.  
Routinely I will thank them: flesh and symbol  
for every moment they are mine they are mine.

*Eric Weil*

## **My Mother Quits Smoking**

*Jan. 12, 1964*

The gray ceramic horse's head ashtray  
with a fluted mane held her Alpines,  
thin smoke rising as she painted or read.  
I don't recall pretending to smoke  
stale butts, put off by lipstick and the smell

my father tolerated for love. One pack  
per day, neither more nor less: discipline—  
or budget—as much as habit. When  
the Surgeon General issued his warning,  
the green and white package disappeared

the next day. No fussing, no angry outbursts,  
no gum or mint substitutions. Gone  
without a word. Until her friends  
had quit or died, the horse head stayed  
on the coffee table, a clean totem.

*Kenneth Chamlee*

## **Please Stand**

Praise to the people who read directions  
before assembling the bookcase, and praise to the people  
who don't and say, "Where does this piece go?"  
Huzzah to lovers of multi-lane freeway, its interposing grass  
and routine facilities, and hip-hip to drivers happy  
when roadwork shunts them onto a shoulderless byway.

We salute all ritual beginnings—green flags  
and baptisms, the elegant unfolding of napkins.  
We salute the impulse too—ordering the novel entrée  
or taking an uncleared trail. Hallowed are  
all humble acts of courage: hands  
trembling over a keyboard, waving a child  
off to school, unpacking a suitcase  
that has just been packed.

We honor the private ceremonies of continuance, when  
just getting dressed is a prayer. Honor upon all uncheered miles  
pedaled or run in the rain. Honor to those who show up,  
who keep promises made in public, keep the ones  
silent and heavy as snow.

Praise for the rich soil of hope, for the precious seeds,  
and for hands working, many hands, more than enough.

*Glenna D. Wolfe*

## **A Day Different**

The green-clad nurse bustles and chatters,  
almost as nervous as I, in the surgical  
prep room. A shot in my arm  
is anodyne for us both. The orderlies  
squish in, wreathed in quiet smiles  
and a wheel on the gurney squeaks –  
“Mol-ly” it says, “by gol-ly,”  
it answers itself. I giggle.

Chart on my chest, we maneuver right,  
then left, an alley-length of hall. Nurses  
squelch by on rubber soles. Flushing noises.  
A metal lid bangs down. Someone's cell  
phone plays Willie Nelson. Through  
the heavy double doors we bump, into  
extreme lights where all human tissue  
becomes clear, we hope, as it is parsed  
and scrutinized. The surgeon breathes  
my name. I am known here. He reminds  
me which organ is to be flayed and why.  
*Go on, rub it in.*

*Last chance to disagree, to jump up and run,  
to smack those swinging doors hard. I nod.  
Though I wear a warm blanket, I'm shaking,  
gritting my teeth. The liveried doctor looms.  
My right eye leaks one tear which runs  
into my ear. This large man lays his warm hand  
on my shoulder, dabs at my wet cheek. I sigh.  
“...ninety-nine, ninety-eight, ninety...”*

**Judge:** Brendan Walsh

**Brendan Walsh** has lived and taught in South Korea, Laos, and South Florida. His work has recently appeared in *Glass Poetry*, *Indianapolis Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Baltimore Review*, and other journals. In 2019 he launched Living Things: The Great American Poetry Crawl, sponsored by Sutra Press, which harnessed the fellowship of writing by connecting to independent literary communities up and down the East Coast.

Brendan wrote about this contest:

“‘Disposable Rant’ asks us to consider how we routinely normalize and, at our worst, deify, our obsessive consumption. We rationalize purchases with appeals to branding, which introduces a new classification of gods--‘the demi-god of biodegradable’ provides comfort for the exact same impulses which transform ‘trees to tissue’ and ‘salt our soil to sponge.’ The author’s adept language, gorgeous phrases, and compact lines challenge the notion that consumption, so long as it makes us feel good about ourselves, is moral and sustainable. We all know, however deep inside we’ve buried it (probably beneath mountains of paper cups and plastic bags), that what we’ve so easily purchased at the store ‘never truly degrades.’ As a rebuke to common conceptions of societally conspicuous consumption, this poem is savvy, playful, and urgent.”

*Kathy Ackerman*

## **Disposable Rant**

Dear strangers, I beg you to bring your own,  
but you won't because this is America.  
There is always enough.

God of ecology, guide me in my purchase of cups

god of trees transformed to tissue,  
scratch pads, search warrants, god  
of forests I cannot see for the trees I wish to preserve  
as though they live forever

god of Styrofoam that lives forever  
salting our soil to sponge

god of steel workers,  
blister steel, Klean Kanteens  
flesh burned by molten splash  
like the hands I want to protect  
with paper sleeves on my paper cups

god of plastic, plastic, plastic  
even the demi-god of biodegradable  
lies for it never truly degrades  
while it degrades entirely our earth and seas

see that sand, sift that sand through your fingers  
look close among the shellbits ground by surf and time  
that sand in your hand is what remains,  
degrading all it can  
our beaches made of plastic sand.

*Paloma A. Capanna*

## **Junkyard Gives up Secret Accounts of Massacre in Iraq**

*400 pages of interrogations were found  
by a reporter at a junkyard outside Baghdad.  
"An attendant was burning them as fuel  
to cook a dinner of smoked carp."*

*NY Times, Dec. 14, 2011, by Michael S. Schmidt*

The same thing happened on 9/11:  
they slipped out. Mmm-hmm.  
Words will do that—slip out.

Just when you think you've bombed a building  
Just when you think it's all smoke and grey ash  
Words start floating down like smart bombs

Words like "memo" and "message," meet "love" and "Happy Birthday!"  
Numbers too, those sneaky things,  
just fly right out, upon a breeze

So no, it doesn't surprise me  
transcripts were found near a cooking fire, near  
an old man cooking fish, near a trailer in a yard

Left behind and marked TOP SECRET, with red pen and yellow, too  
FROM: Col.                      TO:                      RE:  
Testimony on Haditha, "piled bodies," "slit throats," and "children"

There was "you know" – over and over  
"I don't know" – now, and again  
then more "piled bodies," "soccer fields," the "women" and "old men"

But isn't it funny, too, in an eerie sort of way:  
Try though we might to run from our violence  
Words will find their way out.

---

THE RUTH MORRIS MOOSE SESTINA AWARD

**Judge:** Julia Beach

**Julia Beach** received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and a Master of Fine Arts from the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa. She lives and works in New England as a graphic designer and content writer. Her poems and reviews have appeared in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Osculum*, *Barren Magazine*, and *Flypaper Lit*.

About the contest, Julia wrote:

"Among the sestinas submitted for the Ruth Morris Moose Sestina Award readers will find an array of voices; some speaking with tenderness or humor toward the objects of their affection while others grapple with the impending loss of cherished loved ones. Stories, elegies, and even an ode or two found their way into this highly ambitious form. From pop culture and folklore to deeply personal and modern-day struggles, each of these poets found a way to bring something transformative to these poems."



*Mary O'Keefe Brady***Starbucks Sestina**

Clouds billow unadorned above tangled traffic  
 like Marilyn's skirt above the subway grate  
 or a poof of air escaped from coffee machines  
 steaming milk for lattes and cappuccinos.  
 Starbucks lines circle the sidewalks  
 where passersby bustle with briefcases and umbrellas.

Dodging puddles and poking each other with over-sized umbrellas,  
 they weave in and out of stalled traffic,  
 clogging sidewalks  
 with their humanity. Trains rumble below the grate  
 as caffeine-starved workers hurry to their cappuccinos,  
 make a beeline to the hunkering machines,

ignore the blank sea of faces, cogs in machines,  
 swarming like beetles under armor of black umbrellas  
 or worker ants delivering cappuccinos  
 to Italian overlords. The traffic  
 never ceases, grates  
 on finely wrought nerves. Wet sidewalks

succumb to treacherous sidewalks  
 as clouds unleash torrents and machines  
 crescendo their high notes like opera singers, great  
 high-pitched hissing sounds that even over-sized umbrellas  
 cannot deflect. A break in traffic  
 allows me to cross the street, my mind focused on cappuccinos,

fixated on cappuccinos  
 and cannoli-clotted sidewalks  
 and bistro tables on cobbled streets with no traffic  
 no machines  
 no gargantuan umbrellas  
 harsh words or unkind gestures to grate

on sopping wet nerves unable to grate  
on anything without that first sip of cappuccino.

Battling umbrellas

block my entrance, obstruct the sidewalk  
in front of my favorite Starbucks. Machine-  
like I buzz through this uncaring human traffic

and approach the great, mighty cappuccino  
machine that banishes traffic,  
outlaws umbrellas and unfurls empty sidewalks.

*Tracy Davidson*

## **Where Bluebirds Fly**

In my garden, an injured bird  
balances awkwardly, testing its wings  
for damage. Satisfied, it takes flight,  
slowly circling up and up into the sky.  
I watch it soar through the pink and blue,  
until a speck against the fading rainbow.

I shiver, in spite of the woolly rainbow-  
coloured scarf around my neck, its bird  
motif the shade of peacock blue.  
I wait until the sun finally wings  
its way below the horizon, and the sky  
becomes ink as moon and stars take flight.

Back indoors, I see my daughter descend the flight  
of stairs, humming "Somewhere Over the Rainbow,"  
having watched *The Wizard of Oz* on Sky  
for the umpteenth time. She flaps her arms like a bird,  
pretending her wasted limbs are wings,  
pale skin showing between the black and blue.

She smiles, as always, refusing to feel blue  
about her condition, even as the cancer takes flight  
within her body, those bad cells on devil's wings.  
Where I see only dark cloud, she sees a rainbow,  
always just out of reach, where a tiny blue bird  
waits to guide her up into the sky.

I am far from ready to let the sky  
take her. This Christmas will not be blue,  
despite the dread hovering over us like a bird  
of prey or angel of death. They can take flight  
somewhere else for now. She is my rainbow  
and I will keep her safe within my own wings

---

THE RUTH MORRIS MOOSE SESTINA AWARD

as long as I'm able. She says she wants water wings  
for Christmas, and a telescope to view the sky,  
and for God to send me a double rainbow  
when the time comes. She says she'll be in the blue  
arc, looking down and waving before she takes flight,  
following the path of that tiny blue bird.

My own tiny bird will have her own wings  
and with each passing flight that crosses the sky  
I'll look at the blue, knowing she is the rainbow.

*Lee Ann Gillen***Competitors**

Clouds scud the sky as I sail on my bark  
 with the love of my life. On this April  
 morning, we sit surrounded by the scraps  
 of sailing. The cushions and coolers push  
 us. Her golden hair shines as the sun spills  
 from behind a cloud. I help her to jump

up on the dock. As we stroll, my thoughts jump  
 to the tension with neighbor, Max, whose bark  
 although worse than his bite, threatens to spill  
 over into my romance with April.

Her feelings toward me, I cannot push.  
 I float in a sea of broken dreams, scraps

of memories. No! I must clutch those scraps  
 and fragments of our life together. Jump  
 this ship of despair and seek her out; push  
 my case, a bitter medicinal bark.

I cherish plans for my life with April.  
 Details of travels together would spill

from my lips, but still secret. I can't spill  
 my plans just yet. Something special, not scraps.  
 Her heart holds my happiness. Oh April,  
 through any detour, I would crawl or jump  
 waiting to hear your warm, welcoming bark.  
 Feel your soft, silky retriever paws push

on my chest. Max, next door, won't stop his push  
 for your love. His big feet snarl in a spill.  
 I shut my windows, that incessant bark.  
 A ball firm in his mouth from backyard scraps.  
 He thumps both paws and his hindquarters jump.  
 I won't let him come twixt me and April!

---

THE RUTH MORRIS MOOSE SESTINA AWARD

Me selfish? I care so much for April.  
Her gold eyes dart from me to the nose pushed  
up against the fence. Will she really jump  
from my affections? Does her heart still spill  
over with love and longing for this scrap  
yard Romeo with his passionate bark?

I unhinge the latch gate and April jumps  
into Max's scraps. They tumble and spill.  
I push the gate closed: an echo, her bark.

*Robert Keeler*

## Naughty Cocklebur, Artful Iris

Damn! Sand in my shoes and on my left sleeve  
 a rabid cocklebur with stem. I'll bet this prickly object  
 latched on when my coat pillowed our recent tryst.  
 Well, inside my vase sit last night's mementos—two bright irises.  
 Rough bur lying with smooth flower: an echo of old rites: man praising  
 woman. Oh, we've drifted out to sea so far, so fast—I only meant to charm.

What's the essence—my God!—of her bewitching charm?  
 When we're apart, my heart's long out on my sleeve,  
 and for a lovely gutter worm I have more praise  
 than for that singular moon. Apart, I'm keen for rovers who'd object  
 their deftness onto her, who sing, What hair. . . so soft. . . my lovely Iris.  
 Don't heed them, please. You'll be most rewarded at our coming tryst.

Damn all women—and her! At first, with purest thoughts, they tryst  
 a man's gentle, lamblike nature, but when they commence to charm,  
 with sighs and perfumed hands, his iris  
 swells to match the girth of mighty Bunyan's sleeve.  
 Then his nature changes; intentions veer to base. No wonder they object;  
 in woman's mind, it was purely his design. In penance, men can only praise.

Joy, ache, joy—where does the balance rest? That I cannot praise.  
 Now, hooked like a dumb fish, I flounder toward tomorrow's tryst.

But I wonder, how goes the object  
 of my sweet contempt? I'll bet she lolls in some chic shop; she draws a charm  
 slowly back and forth across a slender wrist, while at her sleeve  
 a seamstress deftly pins and shapes a cloth of many-colored iris.

Last evening, beside our bower, I knelt to wrench two yellow irises  
 from steaming mud. For you, I offered, your blessed soul to praise.  
 She reached, but, when she glanced along my arm, recoiled: *Your sleeve!*  
 It's caked with muck. Go away, clean yourself; tonight will be no tryst.  
 I stared and choked, but then I swear she worked her charm:  
 her gaze went level, her lips occult, and I could no further object.

---

THE RUTH MORRIS MOOSE SESTINA AWARD

Balls! Just to hurl this wretched vase against a nearby stony object!  
The bur, of course, would fall; the blow would smash her pale irises.  
Calm, calm! She'd be so...startled, she might withhold her youthful charms.

    Last night, after—so blissful. She kissed me, whispered,  
our earthborn bodies. Heaven's not for us, dear; it frowns upon such trysts.  
She leaned to me and raised her mouth; her hand pulled up my sleeve.

Rough cocklebur lying along smooth iris—a charm, a talisman, to praise  
our love and bind us close? Well, bless hell! Tonight, for sure, another tryst;  
my only object there, to savor a deepest consolation of her tender sleeve.



**Judge:** Dr. Marcia L. Hurlow

**Dr. Marcia L. Hurlow** has been a professor at Asbury University since 1983, teaching journalism, creative writing, linguistics, and TESL. Her articles on teaching writing, interviews with writers, and travel have appeared in both academic journals and popular magazines. Dr. Hurlow's individual poems, short stories, and creative non-fiction have been published in more than 300 literary journals. She has six collections of poetry, which have won national competitions. She has also won national and state-wide fellowships in poetry, including the Kentucky Al Smith Fellowship, twice.

About this contest the judge wrote:

"How lucky I am during these contentious days in our country to be asked to read poems about love! The contest entries included poems about romantic love, familial love, and unrequited love. Many besides the five winning poems will stick in my mind for a long time.

To restrict my choices to these five winning poems I used two criteria: 1) authenticity, and 2) poetic language and structure. As I sorted through these poems, I first looked for authentic feeling. "Authenticity" may seem like a vague idea, but there are indicators. I think that specific details in a poem make it more believable and convey more emotions. Of course, the details should be pertinent to the point of the poem, not simply a mass of particulars.

Second, I looked at the language and structure of the poems. Is the language musical and precise without calling undue attention to itself? Does the structure of the poem, whether a formal form or a nonce form, work to guide me effectively through the meaning and attitude of the poem? The craft underlying so many of these poems was a pleasure in itself, and my sonnet-loving soul had a hard time leaving some of these out of the final cut.

In the winning poem, 'My Father Listened,' the setting and characters are very clear, with no distracting or irrelevant details. The speaker remembers the childhood desire to pray properly before meals, but instead making errors that the siblings mocked. The father has the lovely sensitivity to take the child away from the pressure of praying in front of the brother and sister at the table. He takes the child to a closet and puts "his warm hand" on the child's head, as if providing his own blessing. The father's loving act allows the child to pray. The structure of the poem augments the powerful statement. The short lines, with two to three accented syllables, suggest the halting speech of the child. The narrow lines also made me think of the narrow little hall coat closet and its "wooly" privacy.

Again, I feel very grateful to have read these poems, and encourage all of the poets who submitted to the contest to continue to write on this worthy theme of love. We have never needed these poems more."

*Jo Ann Hoffman*

## **My Father Listened**

When I was small  
my brother & sister  
mocked me  
when I tripped  
over the prayer  
before meals.  
I would cry.  
I wanted to pray  
my very best.  
So my father  
took me  
into the coat closet  
in the front hall  
& closed the door.  
*Say the prayer*  
he whispered  
into the wooly dark,  
his warm hand  
on my head.  
I dropped my halting  
words into the long  
candle of light leaking  
from under the door  
& my father listened.

*Kathy Ackerman*

## **Blondie's Howl**

Our guide on the Rio Frio is in love  
with a howler he calls Blondie,  
spontaneous color break,  
freak of nature, one in two million.

He calls her out on every tourist cruise  
if the rain has stopped and she is hungry.  
He imitates the howl of the male  
as if somewhere in his diaphragm  
there beats a vestigial primate heart,  
in love since the beginning.

His own heart breaks to know  
she is rejected by male and female too.  
Black is the only way to be  
in this jungle.

So he carves her from a rosewood block,  
smaller than his palm  
so when he folds his fingers down,  
he holds her body wholly.  
He makes her strong but sad enough  
to steal the purse of sympathy.

We take these duplications home  
all over the world,  
Blondie's only chance  
at reproduction.

*Patricia Deaton*

## **At Play**

She signs my autograph book  
and I am so excited until her brother grabs it  
out of my hands and runs, looking back  
to see If I will chase him.

I yell '*stop, thief*', cut him off by the hemlock,  
'rough him up' a little until he escapes  
with the book and I yell '*stop*' once more.

She starts calling from the swing set,  
"Announce me, announce me again"

So, I call through curled-fist megaphone

*Here today, for your viewing pleasure,  
Princess Charlotte Aquilar,  
high on the trapeze, after years of practicing.*

How long have you practiced?

*Since she was 'zero' years old, ladies and gentlemen  
She's worked all her life, six long years, to get this far.*

*Now watch her death-defying act high above the ground-  
no safety net to catch her if she falls. Wow.  
The judges give her a ten. Yay! The crowd loves her.*

He runs by again, just out of reach, laughing, *I got your book.*

And for a while, it continues. She's famous and a three-year-old  
remains at large with an imaginary autograph book  
that we pretend he has swiped.

*Laura Alderson*

## **Backstory for the Beautiful Abandoned**

I

The wedding glistened  
white, solemn  
anything not quite perfect  
in its own way  
perfect.

At the table in the corner  
his jaw iron her gaze  
a steady line. Driving home  
through wet streets not  
one word.

The essence of control.  
Then seized by late, raw need  
the car window lowers  
his rented evening shoe  
sallies forth, careens  
comes to ground  
at peace  
in the intersection.

II

The wedding  
glistened  
everything perfect  
in its own way.

A shy duet  
a willing chorus.  
Then sallying forth in the car  
so new against each other  
so close and good.  
A plot: Who says we have to?  
One rented evening shoe sails out  
in teasing tumble  
the next aloft  
in joy.

*Mary Hennessy*

**The best courage is against all odds.**

*let me go first because I know the way*

~Emily Dickinson [adapted]

The boat of habit docked  
between the trees.  
Leave candles burning in every window,  
mama's angel on his knees.

Do you remember  
the sea? I touch your gray head  
and ask. A smile like window-light  
spills across the bed.

To go. The salt taste and wild  
terror, yes, remember the sea.  
Leave the candles burning in every window  
Mama's angel on his knees.

The sweet boat of habit docked between  
the trees.  
Let the candles burn in every window  
Leave mama's angel on his knees.

The salt taste and wild  
terror. Yes, remember the sea.  
Leave the candles burning in every window  
Mama's angel on his knees.

**Judge:** Pamela Johnson Parker

**Pamela Johnson Parker's** flash fiction, poems, and lyric essays have appeared in journals such as *Iron Horse Literary Review*, *New Madrid*, *American Poetry Journal*, *diode*, *Anti-*, *Poets and Artists*, *Gamut*, *Spaces*, and *Muscadine Lines: A Journal of the South*. Parker received her MFA from Murray State University, where she taught humanities, creative writing, contemporary poetry, and forms of fiction. She serves as the prose editor of the literary magazine, *Alligator Juniper*.



*Barbara Blanks*

## **In My Defense**

My brother was the favorite—it made  
me crazy. I was first born. Mom and Dad  
neglected me except when I was bad.  
“Our Cain is raising hell again” dismayed  
me. I’d retreat outside to work my spade.  
My crops were sumptuous when ripe. Egad!  
I thought the Lord would favor me, be glad  
I sacrificed my best. But Abel played  
me for a fool and slew the purest lamb  
as tithe. The Lord brushed mine aside—a heap  
of trash. He wanted blood? Forget the sham  
of equal love. He held my labor cheap.  
I showed them both! Cast Abel down, by damn!  
I sowed him—left him for the Lord to reap.

*Melinda Thomsen*

## **The Sun's Uprising**

*response to John Donne's "The Sun Rising"*

*Busy old fool, unruly, Donne,  
you're such a pain.*

Pull back east-facing drapes and greet the sun.  
My job's to brighten the day, so why complain?

Even school kids are up and gone.

The snails and ants have faster gaits  
than you, for it's already an hour past dawn!

God knows your Sunday's sermon cannot wait,  
so please wake up your mistress for me, as well,  
and let me resume my daily carousel.

Really? You prefer to roll in bed,  
scorning my rays

to bask in your sweetie's shining eyes, instead?

Why not enjoy this morning's full display  
of a fuchsia defined horizon

and swirling flocks of trilling starlings?

The earth doesn't slow to a cedar resin's  
pace at your flat, or refrain from its whirling.

It's Copernicus's law we abide by.

Excuse me, but you've got the wrong bad guy.

Okay, I see how she's your moon,  
and I'm a pest.

This afternoon's eclipse should change your tune  
and usher in some darkness to your nest.

This spinning system can't ignore  
its duty, so don't risk your health

or sanity with chatter calling for

more sex. Rather, enjoy my prince's wealth  
of dew's tipped roses with your dearest friend  
and let love blossom until the stars descend.

*Kenneth Chamlee*

## **What the Famous Writer Said**

'Do not confuse a shoe with juicy steak'  
Seems reasonable but rather unneeded advice.  
I can't imagine liking at any price  
a loafer on the grill, an odd mistake  
I'd need be passing drunk or daft to make.  
Maybe a sly reversal—a pair of iced  
ribeyes used as sandals might suffice  
for a bloody day, but there'd be dogs to shake.

So what's it all about? A metaphor  
of self-delusion, haste, or treadless schemes?  
After weeks at sea Columbus' crew  
thought the difference less profound; their hunger  
effaced all lines that sense and compass knew.  
Sometimes, all you have to eat are dreams.

*Stephen C. Pollock*

## **Nasal Biopsy**

Nurse says there's a mass. I hear  
a requiem, see gothic arches where  
alae and columella frame a nare  
and its twin. Is it malignant? Ushering this fear  
to my cathedral, I marvel how breath is born of air  
at the portals, inspiring the choirs comingling there.  
The priest wafts in, hovers in his shimmering chimere,  
but as he places the wafer on a tongue of gauze to share  
with Pathology, I have to wonder: Is it fair  
that a god should mete out grace or despair  
in proportion to fealty, that the hereafter (if not the here)  
should hinge on professions of faith? Does this square  
with cycles of nature? And what of those who dare  
to breathe in silence, mutes in the kingdom of prayer?

*Ron. Lavalette*

## Separate Ways

She likes to travel, leaves him alone for days at home;  
and he, reclusive, easily a hermit, gladly stays at home.

She likes to wake to the sound of surf and a foggy sea,  
imagines him waking up in the mountain greys at home.

*Fog is fog*, he tells her on the phone; *it all burns off*—  
but when she leaves, he finds himself in a haze at home.

He makes the bed and cooks the meals. He's got his flutes  
and drums and all the other things he plays at home.

Still, he hopes he remains Her Beloved Poet, immersed  
in words and searching for the perfect phrase. At home.

**Judge:** Sarah McCartt-Jackson

Kentucky poet, naturalist, folklorist, and educator **Sarah McCartt-Jackson** has spent decades developing her craft, dedicating her art to exploring the natural and cultural world that encompasses all who share in planet life. Her poetry has appeared in *Indiana*, *Bellingham Review*, *Journal of American Folklore*, *The Maine Review*, *NANO Fiction*, among many others. In recognition of artistic excellence, she received an Al Smith Individual Artist Fellowship from the Kentucky Arts Council, and has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Of this contest, she wrote:

The language in “A Fall Language” makes of autumn trees a moving poem. The poem carries us from cold woods to our own humanity through deft line movement at a meditative pace. Even when the poem ends, “There is so much // left to say.” So much, indeed. The poem intrigues with what goes unsaid. It touches the reader “with what is bare” between nature and humans, and it challenges us to pause in those vacant spaces which brim with possibility.

*Benjamin Cutler*

## **A Fall Language**

The trees in fall begin to feel one another  
for the first time—the wind-

breathed and leafless bend  
of branched body against branched body.

This sound is nothing like the voiceless dead  
shudder of bones, but a language—old

summer-held secrets whispered in earnest  
before the cold and white silence: all they have

weathered and wish to weather,  
each lost leaf a dry and dropped syllable.

When there are no green words left  
to warm us, doesn't all language

sound like one desperation rubbing  
against another? Listen. There is so much

left to say. So much left. So much. So we  
should reach and touch each other

with what is bare—with what remains  
of us—if we are to speak our hope at all.

*Andrew Taylor-Troutman*

## **Kinship**

*For Frances*

This fall, here in this cathedral of woods,  
where joys are as common as pennies,

I catch myself barely breathing,  
fearing I might break the spell.

For under these spires of trees,  
the gentled son has taken the hand

of his unbridled brother  
as carefully as a fallen leaf.



*Lucia Walton Robinson*

## **Deep Stony**

Sometimes I think the lake was my true mother,  
letting me play on her bosom, soothing my cares  
with glory, light, and bounty of creation:  
dappled dawndeer, swimming otterstreak, snapping turtle  
and the friendly paint; heron-swoop and gull-soar,  
wily trout and lurking cantankerous pike; sun-spark glinting,  
storm cloud overshading; spruce-image, God-mirror,  
toe-cold sand-soft swamp-muck suck of weeds,  
lily pad's green salver, modest drooping willow,  
awkward crash of crawdad setting greenpurple beetle darting.  
Here I found flight and grace, the soar of sail,  
sunshaft kissing trembling tree, swift moontrail  
of canoe through lightbeam, small girl treading Godsilver,  
and sudden threat of storm, near drowndeath  
snatched in time for friendlier sails, but owing proper  
homage, love, and fear. On her and by her and in her  
I grew strong, filtered my sorrow, fed from her unfathomed  
secret spring, blessing and renewing earth and me.

---

THOMAS H. MCDILL AWARD

**Judge:** Adam Day

**Adam Day** is the author of the forthcoming collection of poetry, *Left-Handed Wolf* (LSU Press; March 2020), *Model of a City in Civil War* (Sarabande), and *Badger, Apocrypha* (PSA). He directs The Baltic Writing Residency in Sweden, Scotland, Blackacre Nature Preserve, as well as the Stormé DeLarverie residency for underrepresented writers. He is also publisher of the literary and culture magazine, *Action, Spectacle*, and editor of the forthcoming anthology, *Divine Orphans of the Poetic Project* (1913 Press).

*Martin Settle***Remnants**

*Thinking is polytheistic.* ~Paul Shepard

1

monadnock  
in Stone Mountain State Park  
a partially buried skull  
with nimbus of vultures  
climbers go up a fissure  
like scientists with tape measures

2

visitor center displays  
a mounted black bear  
old saint of religions  
of caves and rebirth  
homesteading tools cover walls  
artifacts of early conquest

3

at the trailhead a coke machine  
begs offerings from pilgrims  
I climb in silence  
through oak-hickory forests  
blaze-marked trails  
make it difficult to forget  
human presence

4

a scent draws me from the path  
into a moss-covered ravine  
she is there before an overhang  
goddess in white cymes  
backlit by a filtered sun.  
her name is not in my tree guide

---

THOMAS H. MCDILL AWARD

5

I am lost  
gratefully for awhile  
making my own path up  
to the summit  
smooth igneous rock is pocked  
with islands of pine  
I take off my socks and shoes  
for a closer grip

6

in humility of no roads  
the view is almost virginal  
I imagine wilderness without end  
filled with numinous nooks  
I want to build a cairn  
but among the rocks a soda can  
new god that is ubiquitous

7

when the park closes  
the sun sets with colors  
of a polluting presence  
the moon rises  
and a cult of remnant creatures  
come out of sacred groves  
they worship in the ancient ways  
beneath a haloed moon  
the moon that was a god  
before the boot prints of monotheism

*Stephen C. Pollock*

## **Steve's Balloons**

In our dreams,  
dreams are like balloons—  
light and round and always, always rising.

As I drove through Haw River,  
a one-church town in the South,  
I caught a glimpse of their maker  
and stopped to reflect.

The store was boarded up,  
its gravel parking lot weedy  
and empty of cars,  
and I saw where plastic letters  
had been taken down from the faded roof,  
leaving a less faded stencil of the words  
STEVE'S BALLOONS.

He must have grown up here,  
this namesake of mine,  
amid these rural ruins,  
the porches in disrepair,  
the cracked pavement and telephone poles  
and the strip mall the locals regard  
as their special version of Eden.

I imagined the boyish optimism  
that inflated his hopes  
and buoyed his faith  
that a worn and weary town would find  
perpetual cause to celebrate.

---

THOMAS H. MCDILL AWARD

I saw then that balloons are not at all round  
but are shaped like tears,  
that a dream is not so much  
that scrap of rubber on the ground  
as the breath that once filled it.



*Student Contests*





*Principe Nzayiramyia*  
*5th Grade*  
*Teacher: Jami Miritello*

## **The Round Soccer Ball**

So much depends upon  
a round soccer ball rolling  
down the field beside the goalkeeper  
while the crowd cheers gooooooooooal!!!

*Gray Fickling*  
*5th Grade*  
*Teacher: Cristina Quathrone Landis*

## **Clyde**

Clyde is a  
majestic creature.

Every inch of him  
is smothered in fur.

Lying on the  
old oak floor  
drenching everything  
with slobber,

his eyes  
are flickering  
with sunlight  
from the living room  
window.

The fierce creature  
waits, patiently  
waiting  
for me.

*Hailey Williams*

*4th Grade*

*Teacher: L. Beauchamp*

## **The State Fair**

I am the candy apple burning bright

I am the sweet cotton candy so soft and light

I am the funnel cake with the whitest powdered sugar on earth

I am the kettle corn that you crunch on

I am the caramel so lovely and sweet

I am the Ferris wheel you see in the depths of the night

I am the bear you won as a prize

I am all those things

I am the STATE FAIR.

*Muna Uchendu*

*5th Grade*

*Teacher: C. Mullins*

## **Sea Creatures**

Reef Shark waits for its prey  
Minnows skitter and hide away  
Dolphin splashes water in the air  
Angelfish swims around with flair  
Turtles swim in a bunch  
Barracuda looks for a munch  
Goldfish thinks of all the fun it had  
If it wasn't in a bowl, bored and sad

*Olivia Smith*

*4th Grade*

*Teacher: Rachel Zeigler*

## **Mythical Creatures**

Look at all magical creatures  
with all their special features  
unicorns, mermaids, dragons and more  
and every day I keep believing more and more

I believe in unicorns  
with their magic horns  
so they can be happy  
when the sun glows

I believe in dragons  
with their fiery roar  
and their history makes me think  
that they are not a mystery

I believe in mermaids  
with their pretty tails  
because it makes me think  
of all their shiny scales  
I also love their blue and green  
because it goes with the ocean bling

I believe in fairies  
with their garden homes  
and the way they make friends  
with my mom's gnomes

I hope you enjoyed my short little tale  
about why I think some mythical creatures are still out there

*Alexandra Leszczuk*  
*4th Grade*  
*Teacher: Sarah Hartman*

## **A Day in the Life of a Frog**

A trio of frogs,  
Green and orange  
Hop, jump, swim  
All day.

Sit on a lily pad  
Stick out your tongue  
And try to catch  
A fly.

Take a leap into the water  
Swim, swim, swim,  
Around in the pond using  
Webbed feet

Spring around, leap, jump, hop,  
Slurp at flies for dinner.  
Croak out, amphibians,  
In the still night of summer.

*Gray Fickling*

*5th Grade*

*Teacher: Cristina Quathrone Landis*

## **If You Stayed in Cabin Six**

Feel the cold  
concrete floor  
Look above at  
The grand vaulted  
ceiling  
Hear the giggling  
over an intense game of  
Uno

If you stayed after  
the smoky campfire  
you may smell a faint  
scent of toothpaste  
You might not hear the  
crisp crunches of vinyl bunks  
while girls toss and turn in their sleeping bags,  
trying to find sleep

You might wake  
to freshly fallen dew  
as bodies illuminate  
with excitement  
as they think  
of the adventures  
ahead

*Anna Berens*

*5th Grade*

*Teacher: Joe Brantley*

## **I Want to Be There**

I want to be there when the deer  
Leap through the forest as the sun  
barely reaches the horizon

I want to be there to see  
the giant trees tower over  
the ground in the darkness

I want to be there to see  
the hawk soar over the emerald  
green forest in the golden sky

I want to be there to see a  
mother bear guide her cubs  
to their den

I want to be there to see  
the forest awake from its  
long sleep and bloom  
with Spring



Delaney Osborne

4th Grade

Teacher: Diane Williams

## Storms

The wind is howling like it is trapped in a small bottle  
It's like the howl is its cry for help  
The wind is swishing through the air

Then comes the drops of rain  
they start to come harder beating on the ground  
Then you see a flash like a camera taking a picture

The flash is bright and fast like a light running away  
Then comes a rumble  
You can't see it but you can hear it

*Sanjana Solanki*  
*5th Grade*  
*Teacher: S. Hughes*

## Hopeful Beginning

A burning fire rages,  
the uncontrollable flames  
Consuming things,  
in an inescapable cage

A few days later,  
the fire is defeated  
The struggle gone too,  
the water is victorious

But the ash stayed,  
where there was once life  
Only barren landscape remains,  
the small trees covered up

However, hope emerges,  
rising from the ground  
Tiny, though reassuring,  
a green sprout out of the soil

Now fertile and nutrient rich,  
the soil is home to many  
The roots reach deep  
Where plants once were  
A lush forest is created.

*Megan Perry*

*7th Grade*

*Teacher: Carissa Smith*

## **The Earth and Us**

life  
made up of  
luscious green  
deep blues  
and many creatures  
that we have known for so long  
do not change it now  
for it will take a terrible turn  
we have been warned  
change is the word that we seek  
but how  
how must we make a difference  
our universe  
delicate yet strong  
was made for us  
we are the change  
we are the difference  
we have destroyed  
and now we must fix  
if we could only realize  
what we have created  
must be turned around  
or we will suffer  
and our life  
will be no longer;  
we must protect  
we must remain  
we must love  
this is our responsibility  
our one and only  
our earth

*Raya Robertson*  
*8th Grade*  
*Teacher: Kim Carr*

## **Lightning**

Wisps of skinny white arms  
Reaching towards the dark abyss  
As if they are giving the sky a kiss  
Crackling sounds  
Boisterous mounds  
Of the snippets of environmental thread  
Finding their way  
Through the sky's open head  
The lightning lights up the night  
Sending down all your kites

*Nadya Kotlyarevska*  
*8th Grade*  
*Teacher: Kim Carr*

## Ode to My Violin

My mom one day brought me to a shop  
To purchase another one like it.  
To see the one,  
It was a blessing.  
Passion flooded my veins,  
As I caressed that sleek, glossy wood with my hands,  
Grazing every crack and crevice  
Every string,  
Every peg.  
And the music flooded out,  
At last unrestrained.  
Like golden tendrils of the rising sun  
Wrapping around everything, putting life in a trance.  
A trance you never want to wake from.

And the other half to it was just as magnificent  
Lustrous, curved,  
The master of sound.  
It raced across the strings  
Like a wild stallion galloping through a flowering meadow  
Violent.  
Yet still graceful.

And though the pair may have caused me to empty my pockets,  
Caused me to scavenge every crack and crevice for shiny metal coin  
I bagged up the unbreakable pair and went home.  
That magnificent violin and bow.  
An inseparable pair.  
Working in harmony, like all living things.  
Producing the most beautiful music for the world to hear.  
And they were in my hands, waiting to be used.

*Lela Ward*

*8th Grade*

*Teacher: Kim Carr*

## **Sensitive**

The leaves were once blowing in the growling wind by the touch of human, they disappeared just like how the grass slowly turns brown in the winter. Instead, things changed instantly. The flytraps tightly grasp its prey just like a mother and her child would. Flytraps do not catch their prey every time.

*Avery Anderson*  
*8th Grade*  
*Teacher: Kim Carr*

## **Flood Prison**

Iron boots  
Locked around his feet  
Watching fish zip by  
Downstream.

Their narrow eyes  
Saw nothing but the rain,  
And the impending flood.  
Not the chains-  
The pendant of dependence;  
The silver of slavery.

As he struggled, he saw  
They would not help  
And foresaw a future of  
Lungs drowned in black water.

So he closed his eyes,  
Released his ties,  
And suspended himself in the river.

Deep in the ocean,  
They welcomed him eagerly.

*Katherine Lyons*  
*8th Grade*  
*Teacher: Kim Carr*

## **Being Aware**

I watch the world around me daily  
The beauty of nature and life surround me  
The sun glints off the stained-glass windows  
And the wind sends swarms of leaves flying  
The charge of cars on endless streets  
Is the rushing of water through narrow rivers  
The sound of reality escapes me  
I stop, listening  
People turned into distant sound  
Their minor warnings and cares disappeared  
I kept watching  
It consumed me  
Darkness, devouring my light  
My leaves turned to ash  
And then nothing  
If only I had watched  
If only I had listened



*Kenna Zhang*

*6th Grade*

*Teacher: Katherine Levinthal*

## **Stars Shine Brightly**

As the last glowing light disappears  
Behind the ocean  
In the painted sky  
Of darkness  
You can see the stars  
Twinkling—  
Like glitter scattered on  
A wet canvas  
Of colors of dark violet and blue black  
Glowing light comes from the sky  
Orion looks at you and smiles—  
The stars shine brightly

*Alex Pomeloy*  
*8th Grade*  
*Teacher: Kim Carr*

## **Eggo**

An ovulated ova, however hard it tries,  
Will always be unfertilized.  
Ovarian, operculated, ovulated ova.  
Does the ovulated ova make you shiver?  
Does it?

The mixed meal is not cool!  
The mixed meal is exceptionally tender.  
Never forget the enthusiastic and tender mixed meal.

Just like a pheasant people, is the poult.  
Does the poult make you shiver?  
Does it?

*Emily Yang*

*11th Grade*

*Teacher: David Hill*

## **bao**

my father stood in the yellow-light kitchen,  
his hands kneading dough  
as feather-white as my mother's coat. the watch  
on his wrist shone with the light of many years past,  
the one faithful companion of his.

my mother stood opposite to him, cleared  
a space on the table and set to work.  
her hands, once calloused  
from years of farming, moved with a roughness,  
a purpose as precise as her fingers on the microscope slide.

my brother watched them with keen eyes,  
pinched the corners of the dumplings  
as another man's mother might have done for him.  
smile, she might have said, teeth as white,  
as blinding as the camera flash.

my mouth moved too quick, fueled by  
years of separation and the desperate yearning  
palpable on my tongue. words spilled like wildfire, fingernails  
digging crescent moons into dough  
soft enough to be starlight.

the water boils. we do not say the words  
home is an unspoken promise,  
love a silent vow.

*Lauralee Hurst*  
*12th Grade*  
*Teacher: Hazel Foster*

## **Ambiance**

The windshield wipers danced faster than my eyes  
    could follow the road. A hypnotizing waltz,  
    swirling the raindrops on the glass.  
Your soft, muffled voice kept my tired  
    eyelids open, talking over the storm  
    through the muted speakers of my car.  
The gentle rolling thunder lulled me into a dangerous  
    calm, a heartbeat so faint.  
    but still beating, still awake, then finally home.  
A year passed, and I hear the same thunder  
    through a different speaker; the artificial noise  
    puts me to sleep at night.  
But if I needed it now, your voice wouldn't be there  
    to wake me up or remind me  
    to keep my hands stuck to the wheel,  
so my body would collapse into the dashboard  
    and stain the leather a deep red  
    that even the rain couldn't wash away.

*Charles Canady*  
*Undergraduate at Methodist University*  
*Professor Robin Greene*

## **Insignificant Ant**

I played god as a child,  
used sun and magnifying glass  
as a weapon,  
my judgement ministered upon ants  
because I could  
watch each one smoke  
and char black,  
cringe under a death ray  
for my amusement -  
wee lives lifted up to heaven  
like burnt sacrifices.

No one told me  
when I got older I'd  
remember each ant,  
each precious murdered  
ghost crawling over my brain like honey,  
taking apart my conscience,  
each carrying a portion of me  
on its back to justice.  
Under the high-powered light  
of condemnation,  
this ray of guilt  
is too much-I can't pay it.

God forgive me,  
I char black  
and burn.

*Baker Sanders*  
*12th Grade*  
*Teacher: Hazel Foster*

## **Sour Sayings**

I have been waiting a long time  
for life to give me lemons  
to supposedly make lemonade.  
Where does life find such  
extraordinary lemons?  
The tangy fruit has been named the  
star citrus of life, winner of all citrus  
medals of freedom and such. Because  
the request was not orange juice or  
grapefruits, I would be a fool to pass  
up on a bitter lemon dropped in my lap,  
since I never have the urge to  
pick them alone on a weekend maybe.  
Of course, first I must wait for that lemon  
to fall from somewhere, anywhere, and  
maybe sugar and water will drop, too.  
I will make the lemonade, sure, brew up  
a pitcher like the kids at the comer  
in the neighborhood, but who plans to drink it?  
It could be lemonade for one, as I have never been  
good at sharing, but if I am forced to share, then  
someone shall be the lucky victim.  
What if I were to come across  
lemons all alone, I must assume it  
was life's passive aggressive way  
of asking for a tall glass of  
lemonade, then I cannot refuse.  
I will squeeze those lemons by hand,  
juices flowing, eyes watering, and  
serve it to life, pulp and all, because I hear  
lemons are good for the gut.

*Matilda Ziegler*  
*9th Grade*  
*Teacher: Hazel Foster*

## **Away**

We race into the sunlight,  
far away  
from this small town  
that my mother loves and I do not  
because I came up to the roars of cows giving birth.  
Now I am alone on a bus  
but the flowers are blooming  
and reaching towards the light  
like I reach for a good life.  
They say I should fast after winter  
but I shall feast on spring.

*Nathan Creech*  
*9th Grade*  
*Teacher: Hazel Foster*

## **Winter is Approaching**

The sun filled days creep  
colder and shorter  
like a dying star  
slowly losing flame  
while trees saunter around gaily,  
and colorfully,  
leaves,  
orange and red,  
meandering  
into the chilly evening.





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BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST WINNERS

**Kathy Cantley Ackerman's** most recent collection of poems, *A Quarrel of Atoms*, was the winner of the 2019 Lena Shull Book Award from NCPS. Her other books include *Coal River Road*, *The Heart of Revolution*, and three poetry chapbooks. She serves as Dean of Arts and Sciences and Writer-in-Residence at Isothermal Community College in Spindale, North Carolina, and lives on a loblolly farm in Polk County.

**Laura White Alderson** grew up in Pensacola, FL, on the Gulf Coast, and Chatham, VA, in Virginia's Southside. Her poems have been published as a chapbook and broadside by the Geryon Press of Binghamton, NY, through an NEA grant, and in *Pinesong*--a million thanks. She earned her BA at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, studied for a seminal summer at Oxford University, and won a Masters in English Writing from Hollins University. As a journalist, her articles have appeared in *National Geographic Traveler*, *National Wildlife*, and *Redbook*. She never majored in English. She was a spelunker and has bagged three fourteeners. Trained as an oil painter, she once interviewed Andy Warhol. She writes in Raleigh, NC.

**Barbara Blanks** is the author of seven books, including *Traveling Sideways*, and *Unstable*. Her work appears in a variety of publications and anthologies. [www.barbara-blanks.com](http://www.barbara-blanks.com)

**Ed Bremson** is a haiku poet who has won awards in Japan, Mongolia, India, Bulgaria, Croatia, the US, and elsewhere. In 2017-2018 he was chosen three times "Haiku Master of the Week" by NHK World, Japanese TV. Ed lives in Raleigh, NC

**Joyce Compton Brown** has published poetry and art in numerous journals. Her chapbooks are *Bequest* (2015, *Finishing Line*) and *Singing with Jarred Edges* (2018, *Main Street Rag*). She is working on several projects involving family and small-town life and is interested in the music of Blue Ridge culture. She plays the banjo at a modest level and was recently keynote speaker at the national conference of the American Gravestone Association.

**Les Brown**, an artist, potter, and writer, has short stories and poetry in journals including: *Kakalak*, *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel*, and *Moonshine Review*. His first chapbook, *A Place Where Trees Had Names* (Redhawk Publications, 2020), focuses on his Appalachian childhood. A retired biologist and Pushcart nominee, he lives with his wife and cat in Troutman, NC.

**Paloma Capanna** is an attorney and former candidate for federal office who writes about injustice, including poetry about war. Recent prizes in poetry, short fiction, and essay were awarded to her by The Writers Workshop of Asheville and Carteret Writers. Recent publication credits include *Shoal*, *Flying South*, and *Kakalak*. Paloma, and her partner Kevin, live in Beaufort, NC, where they are the proprietors of Downton Antiques, LLC. Paloma is currently editing the manuscript of "Alyce," a YA fantasy about a young girl finding the courage to defeat spiritual forces that threaten her village and the surrounding woodland creatures.

**Kenneth Chamlee** taught English at Brevard College for forty years. His poems have appeared in *The North Carolina Literary Review*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *Ekphrasis*, and many others, including six editions of *Kakalak: An Anthology of Carolina Poets*. He has received three Pushcart Prize nominations and regularly teaches for the Great Smokies Writing Program of UNC-Asheville. Ken lives in Mills River, NC.

**Glenn G. Coats** lives with his wife Joani in Carolina Shores, NC. His recent collections are *Degrees of Acquaintance* (Snapshot Press 2019) and *Furrows of Snow* (Turtle Light Press 2019).

**Benjamin Cutler** is an award-winning poet and high school English teacher living in the mountains of western North Carolina with his family and cat. His poems have appeared in numerous literary publications, including *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *The Lascaux Review*, and *Pembroke Magazine*, among others. He is the author of the full-length collection, **The Geese Who Might be Gods** (Main Street Rag, 2019).

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BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST WINNERS

**Tracy Davidson** lives in Warwickshire, England, and writes poetry and flash fiction. Her work has appeared in various publications and anthologies, including: *Poet's Market*, *Mslexia*, *Atlas Poetica*, *Modern Haiku*, *The Binnacle*, *The Great Gatsby Anthology*, *WAR*, and *In Protest: 150 Poems for Human Rights*.

**Patricia Deaton** lives in Valdese, NC in an old converted community store building. She attended Poetry Hickory at Tasteful Beans Coffee Shop for over ten years and is in a poetry group there with well-known NC poet Scott Owens and other published poets in the Hickory area. She has a finished novel and has published short fiction, poetry, and non-fiction. She also won a second-place prize in 2010 in the NC Poetry Society's contest for a poem called "Grand," which was about her granddaughter. Now this award-winning poem is about her granddaughter's two children, Elias and Maria, her great-grandchildren!

**Hugh Findlay** lives in Durham, NC, and would rather be caught fishing. He drives a little red MG, throws darts on Thursdays, reads and writes a lot, dabbles in photography, and makes a pretty good gumbo. His work has most recently been published in *The Dominion Review*, *Literary Accents*, *Tiny Seed Literary Journal*, *Bangalore Review*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, *Wanderlust*, *Montana Mouthful*, *Souvenirs*, *Dream Noir*, *Proem*, *San Pedro River Review*, *New Southern Fugitives* and *Arachne Press*. @hughmanfindlay

**Edward Garvey** started writing poetry, fiction, and drama in high school, and started college as a creative writing major. After a brief 45-year diversion within the wonders of science, he is now back to writing full-time. He and his wife and family have lived in Orange County since 1989.

**Lee Ann Gillen** has written off and on for several decades and has poems published in *Pinesong*, *Bay Leaf*, and *Windhover*. She enjoys reading and writing for children and young adults, and often includes nature and humor in her poetry. Her love of music prompts her to search for sounds and rhythms in her poems that make them sing and dance. She lives in Chattanooga, TN.

A nurse most of her adult life, **Mary Hennessy** returned to school late and fell in with a community of generous, word-crazed people. Her poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies. One was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and included in the play *Deployed*. One rode the R-bus line in Raleigh. She won the North Carolina State Poetry Contest.

**Jo Ann Hoffman** is a former communications director whose publications include short fiction and poems in literary journals, including *The Merton Quarterly*, *Pinesong*, *Kakalak*, *Flying South*, *Prime Number*, *Red Clay Review* and *New Verse News*, among others. A native of Toledo, OH, she and her husband now live in Cary and Beaufort, NC.

**Jeanne Julian's** chapbooks are *Blossom and Loss* and *Relic and Myth*; her full-length collection, *Like the O in Hope*, was published by The Poetry Box Select (2019). Her poems have appeared in *The Comstock Review*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Naugatuck River Review*, and other journals. She helps to coordinate Nexus Poets' monthly open mic in New Bern, NC.

**Robert Keeler** was born in St. Paul, MN; lived in jungles of Colombia, S.A., up to age twelve; Duke, BS Mathematics NCSU, MS Computer Science UNC, MBA UCLA, Certificate in Poetry UW; Honorman, U.S. Naval Submarine School, "SS" (Submarine Service) qualified, Vietnam Service Medal, Honorable Discharge; Member IEEE, AAAS, AAP.

**Ron. Lavalette** lives on Vermont's Canadian border. His poetry, flash fiction, and creative nonfiction has been very widely published in both print and online forms. His first chapbook, *Fallen Away*, is now available from Finishing Line Press. A reasonable sample of his work can be found at EGGS OVER TOKYO <http://eggsovertokyo.blogspot.com>

**Carole MacRury** resides in Point Roberts, WA, a unique peninsula and border town that inspires her work. Her poems have won awards and been published worldwide. She is the author of *In the Company of*

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 BIOGRAPHIES: ADULT CONTEST WINNERS

*Crows: Haiku and Tanka Between the Tides* (Black Cat Press 2008) and *The Tang of Nasturtiums* an award-winning e-chapbook (Snapshot Press 2012).

**Arlene Mandell** is a native New Yorker who spent many loving years teaching in the Head Start Pre-K Program in the inner-city schools of Lower Manhattan. A permanent relocation to the Grandfather Mountain community and the camaraderie of Sue Spirit's Writing Workshop inspired a love of writing.

**kj munro** cultivates poetry in the incomparable Yukon. Her debut poetry collection is *contractions* (Red Moon Press, 2019).

**Mary O'Keefe Brady** is the author of *Time Out* (Finishing Line Press, 2015). Her poems have appeared in the *Peregrine Journal*, *Kakalak*, *Rising Phoenix*, and *The Poetry Society of South Carolina Yearbook*. She lives in New York's lower Hudson Valley and travels frequently to Charleston, SC and Prince Edward Island, Canada.

**JeanMarie Olivieri**, of Hillsborough, NC, a former corporate writer, now applies her knowledge of words and grammar to freelancing and poetry. She believes that poetry can change the world. She has been published in several anthologies and online poetry journals.  
<https://jeanmarieolivieri.wordpress.com/>.

**Stephen Pollock** received the Rolfe Humphries Poetry Prize in his senior year at Amherst College. His poem "Syringe" was shortlisted for the 2018 Live Canon International Poetry Competition and was performed at the awards ceremony at the Greenwich Theatre in London. His work has appeared in *Poeming Pigeon* and *Ink to Paper*.

**Martin Settle** is a writer, and assemblage artist, who resides in Charlotte, NC. He has published four books: *The Teleology of Dunes* (Main Street Rag, 2015), *Coming to Attention: developing the habit of haiku* (Main Street Rag, 2016), *The Backbone Alphabet* (Xlibris, 2017), and *Maple Samaras* (Wild Leek Press, 2018).

**Nick Sweet** has been a freelance stagehand since 1977. Included in his 146 productions is the historical outdoor drama “Trail of Tears” at Oklahoma’s Cherokee Heritage Center. He was named Senior Poet Laureate for Oklahoma (2010) and Texas (2013) by the Amy Kitchener Foundation.

**Andrew Taylor-Troutman** grew up in Raleigh and is now the pastor of Chapel in the Pines Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill. He is the author of four books, including *Gently Between the Words: Essays and Poems*. He and his wife live in Chapel Hill with their three children.

**Melinda Thomsen** lives in Greenville, North Carolina, with her husband, Hunt McKinnon, two cats, and two chickens. She is the author of *Naming Rights and Field Rations* from Finishing Line Press, and her full-length poetry collection, *Armature*, was an honorable mention winner for the 2019 Lena Shull Book Award and will be published by Hermit Feathers Press in late 2020.

In 1960, when Hoosier **Lucia Walton Robinson** left Duke with an M.A. in Elizabethan drama heading north for a career in publishing, she thought North Carolina might be a lovely place to retire. After five decades spent editing books, raising two interesting people born in the North, and teaching in a Gulf Coast college, she came to roost and write near the Carolina coast and her daughter, writer, editor, and Duke alumna Addy Robinson McCulloch. Publication credits include *Kakalak*, *The Road Less Traveled*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology Vol. VII*, *Split Rock Review*, *The Penwood Review*, and *Indiana Voice Journal*. Poems have won prizes in Charlotte, Chicago, and Indiana.

**Eric Weil** lives in Raleigh. His poems have appeared in journals ranging from *American Scholar* to *Poetry*, from *Dead Mule* to *Sow’s Ear*, and from *The Main Street Rag* to *Silk Road*. He has three chapbooks: *A Horse at the Hirshhorn*, *Returning from Mars*, and *Ten Years In*.

**Glenna D. Wolfe** is a long-time resident of Chapel Hill, NC, and is so grateful to have had the halcyon experience of life here. She has had poems and creative non-fiction published in a number of journals and anthologies. In 2019 she produced a 300 plus page memoir for her family—and still writes almost every day.

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## BIOGRAPHIES: STUDENT CONTEST JUDGES

### SHERRY PRUITT AWARD

**Benjamin Cutler** is an award-winning poet and high school English teacher living in the mountains of western North Carolina with his family and cat. His poems have appeared in numerous literary publications, including *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *The Lascaux Review*, and *Pembroke Magazine*, among others. Benjamin took first place in the 2019 NCPS Poetry of Love and Poetry of Witness contests and is the recipient of the 2019 Susan Laughter Meyers Poetry Fellowship. He is the author of the full-length collection, *The Geese Who Might be Gods* (Main Street Rag, 2019).

### JOAN SCOTT AWARD

**Pat Owen** went from the left-brain world of legal publishing to the right brain of world of poetry. Her work has appeared in *Gulf Stream Literary Magazine*, *Louisville Review* and several anthologies. She was a finalist in the Atlantic Review International Poetry Competition. Her debut poetry collection, *Crossing the Sky Bridge* was published by Larkspur Press in 2016. Her second collection, *Orion's Belt at the End of the Drive* was published by Accents Publishing in 2019.

### TRAVIS TUCK JORDAN AWARD

**Priscilla Webster-Williams** lives in Durham. Her poetry has garnered several awards, including the 2016 Rash Award in Poetry sponsored by *Broad River Review*, and The Poet Laureate Award from The North Carolina Poetry Society. Her poems have appeared in publications such as *Broad River Review*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *The Main Street Rag*, *Pinesong*, *Soundings East*, and *Unlocking the Poem*, and her poetry and collages have been featured in art exhibits and at festivals for cancer survivors.

### MARY CHILTON AWARD

**Christine Lloyd** graduated from UNC Chapel Hill with a degree in English and Creative Writing. She's worked for publishing houses, bookstores, libraries, and everything in between. Currently she works for the Teaching Resources Center at UNCG. Though her main form of writing for herself is prose, she deeply appreciates the way poetry can resonate between people of all walks of life. She believes poetry is something that makes you feel.



**DEDICATION HISTORY OF ANTHOLOGIES:**  
Award Winning Poems AND Pinesong

- 1987 Christine Rose Sloan
- 1988 Carolyn S. Kyles
- 1989 Sallie Nixon
- 1990 Leon Hinton
- 1991 Samuel LeRoy McKay
- 1992 Gladys Owings Hughes
- 1993 Margaret B. Baddour
- 1994 Shelby Stephenson
- 1995 Sam Ragan
- 1996 Ron Bayes
- 1997 Sally Buckner
- 1998 Mary Belle Campbell
- 1999 Elizabeth Grier Bolton
- 2000 Ellen Johnston-Hale
- 2001 Marie Gilbert
- 2002 Ray Dotson
- 2003 Ruby P. Shackelford
- 2004 David Treadway Manning
- 2005 Lois Riley Holt Wistrand
- 2006 Marsha White Warren
- 2007 Susan Laughter Meyers
- 2008 Ann Deagon
- 2009 Sharon Sharp
- 2010 Libby Campbell
- 2011 Bill Griffin
- 2012 Guy & Carolyn York
- 2013 Bill Blackley
- 2014 Sara Claytor
- 2015 Pat Riviere-Seel
- 2016 Scott Owens
- 2017 Kathryn Stripling Byer
- 2018 Kevin Morgan Watson
- 2019 Ruth Moose
- 2020 M. Scott Douglass

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