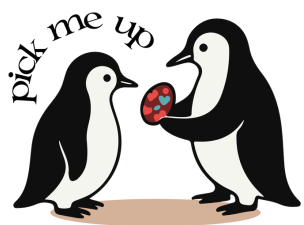


Laura Buxbaum
Tara Campbell
Litsa Dremousis
Tresha Haefner
Brenda K.
Benjamin Karren
Sarah Laskin
David Lee
Cora McCann Liderbach
Valerie Linet
Lorette C. Luzajic
Ellen McGrath Smith
Don Narkevic
Maria Odessky Rosen
Meggie Royer
Carla Schwartz
Sarah Seybold
Sharon Suzuki-Martinez
M. Benjamin Thorne
Robin Turner
Diane Webster



PAINTED
PEBBLE
LIT MAG



Issue 8, Summer 2026

submission guidelines

Our submissions are open the full months of October,

- January, April and July of each year.
- We welcome work on any subject, including and beyond works celebrating reading, libraries, and books.
- New and established writers are welcome. 18 years or older, please.
- Please find our full submission guidelines on our website.

PaintedPebbleLit.com

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Photo by Daria Lemesheva from Unsplash

Meggie Royer (she/her) is a Midwestern writer and artist. She has won numerous awards and has been nominated several times for the Pushcart Prize. She thinks there is nothing better in this world than a finished poem. Meggie's most recent poetry collection, *A Violet Stretch of Sky*, was published by akinoga press in 2025. Her work can be found at <https://meggieroyer.com>.

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Sarah Seybold's poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *ZYZZYVA*, *The Dodge*, *SWWIM*, *Thimble*, *Stirring*, and elsewhere, and her poetry has been nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize. She lives with her husband and daughter in Columbus, Ohio. Instagram: @sarahseyboldwrites.

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Robin Turner makes poems and poem-like things in Dallas. Her chapbooks: *bindweed & crow poison* (Porkbelly Press) and *Elegy with Clouds & (Kelsay Books)*. Recent work appears in *Anacapa Review*, *Unlost*, and *Pithead Chapel*. She is a teaching artist currently working with writers from the Cancer Support Community of North Texas.

Diane Webster's work has appeared in *North Dakota Quarterly*, *New English Review*, *Studio One*, and other literary magazines. Micro-chaps were published by Origami Poetry Press in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025. She was a featured writer in *Macrame Literary Journal* and *WestWard Quarterly*. Her website is: www.dianewebster.com

about us

Painted Pebble Lit Mag is a journal founded with the aim of publishing quality short form writing. Like "little" pockets of kindness which exist solely to help one another, we think small works can have a big impact. Our mission is to celebrate our wonderfully diverse world of writers and readers by reaching them wherever they are.

Each issue is published both online and as a PDF, each available for free. We hope readers like you will help bring our lit mag to any place someone might enjoy finding a bite sized read.

Share it with friends! Keep a copy for yourself! Pass it into the hands of a kindred spirit who might like it! Please visit our website if you'd like to download the free pdf to this issue to keep, print, or share.



Made to Share

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Valerie Linet is a poet/gardener/therapist living in New York's Catskill Mountains. She writes to tell the truth, and to cultivate beauty where she can. Over the years, her work has appeared in various publications, and she has been awarded several poetry prizes.

Lorette C. Luzajic writes about art, memory, travel, and illness. Her work has appeared in hundreds of journals, numerous anthologies, and in translation to Arabic, Urdu, and Spanish. She is the editor of *The Ekphrastic Review* and *The Mackinaw*. Her latest book is *Disgust* (Cyberwit, 2025), a collection of flash.

Ellen McGrath Smith teaches at the University of Pittsburgh. Her books include *The Dog Makes His Rounds*, *Scatter*, *Feed*, and *Nobody's Jackknife* (West End Press, 2015). Her work has won Orlando and Rainmaker awards, and has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The American Poetry Review*, and other journals. www.ellenmcgrathsmith.com.

Don Narkevic: Buckhannon, WV. MFA National University. Poetry appears in *The Trillium*, *Agape*, *Blue Collar Review*, *Dappled Things*. In 2022, Main Street Rag published a novella of poetry, *After the Lynching*. In 2024, The Potomac Playmakers produced *From Birth*. In 2025, the author won the Ziolkowski Poetry Prize.

Maria Odessky Rosen is a lawyer by day and spends the rest of her time reading, writing and dancing. Her poems, short stories, and essays have appeared in magazines, journals and books. Her short story, "The Key," won Reedsy Writing Contest of the Week (June 2026).

contributors

Laura Buxbaum lives and writes in Maine, where she also raises dairy goats, makes music, and runs in the woods. Her poems appear in *Thimble Lit*, *Rat's Ass Review*, *Brawl*, *Gyroscope*, *Verse-Virtual*, and others. Her chapbook, *Roadkill and Other Encounters*, will be published by Kelsay Books in the fall.

Tara Campbell is a writer, teacher, and fiction co-editor at *Barrelhouse*. Publication credits include *Masters Review*, *Wigleaf*, *Electric Literature*, *CRAFT Literary*, *Uncharted Magazine*, *Daily Science Fiction*, *Strange Horizons*, and *Escape Pod/Artemis Rising*. She's the author of two novels, two hybrid collections, two short story collections, and a chapbook of sestinas.

Litsa Dremousis (she/her) is the author of *Altitude Sickness* (Future Tense Books). *Seattle Metropolitan Magazine* named it one of the all-time "20 Books Every Seattleite Must Read". *The Believer*, *Bright Flash Literary Review*, *Esquire*, *McSweeney's*, *NPR*, *NYMag*, *NYT*, *PEN USA*, *Pangyrus*, *Pictura Journal*, *The Rumpus*, *WaPo*, et al.

Tresha Faye Haefner is the founder of the online writing community, The Poetry Salon, and author of *When the Moon Had Antlers* (Pine Row Press 2023). She is also the winner of the Robert and Adele Schiff Poetry Prize, Pangea Prize, and other awards. Find her at thepoetrysalonstack.substack.com

As a child, **Brenda K.** used photos/keywords in TV Guide and Mom's magazines to write micro-stories in the margins of those publications. She'd then bestow her masterpieces to her family. She now seeks a larger audience than that of her childhood. Brenda lives in SoCal with her husband and teenage daughter.

Benjamin Karren is a poet and native Vermonter currently residing in Arizona. His poems and prose can be found in *Lindenwood Review*, *Unbroken Journal*, *Sheepshead Review*, *Shot Glass Journal*, and *Onion River Review* among others. Check out more of his work on Instagram: [@ben.karren1](https://www.instagram.com/ben.karren1).

Sarah Laskin (she/her) is a poet and creator-artist. Her work has appeared in *Painted Pebble Lit Mag* and *Whale Road Review* and was nominated in 2025 for Best of the Net. She works in wildlife conservation and lives in Washington, DC with a fabulous dog.

Cora McCann Liderbach

Smitten with Sea Turtles

Follow me
three fathoms down
to cool Pacific twilight,
where a leopard-spotted Hawksbill
meanders Maui's Mother Reef,
probes coral
for floating flakes
of one-time jellyfish or sponge,
nibbles, and moves on.
Watch her surface,
pull enough air in her lungs
to outweigh the sea
and sink deep—
hang motionless, flippers limp—
till she feels the need to feed
or breathe. Heavy as granite,
lithe as Graham,
she's serenity in motion
for those who worry
on the world's
concrete
crust.

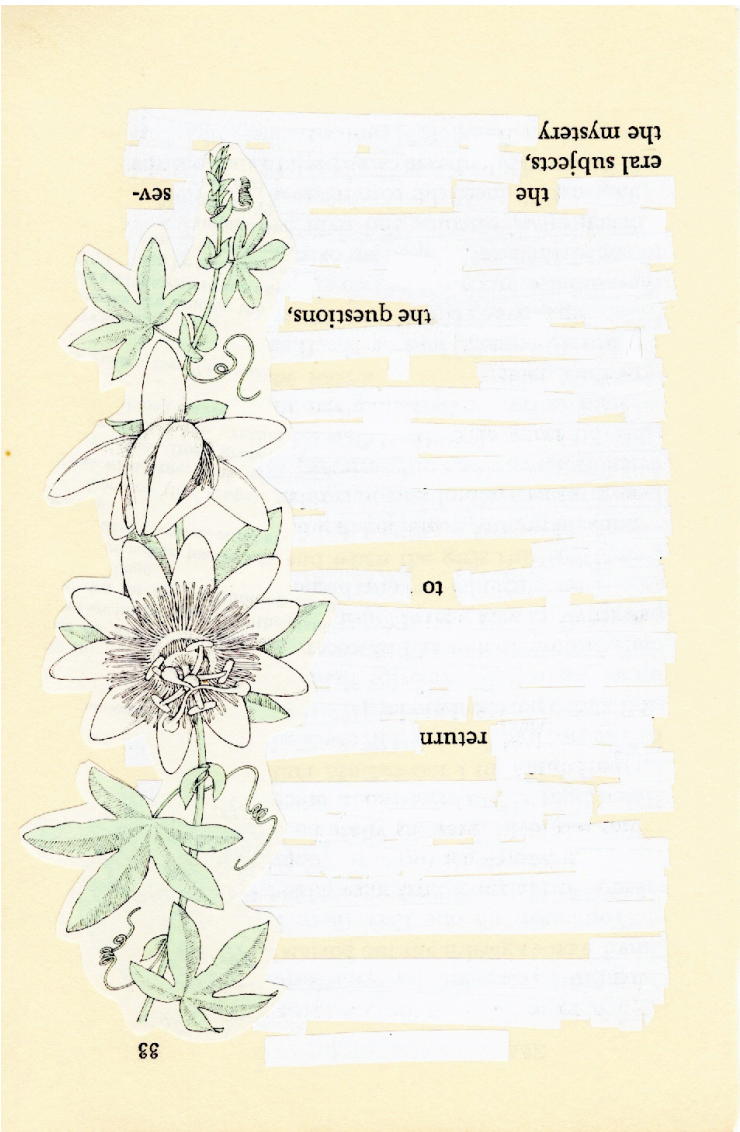
Sarah Laskin

Night Life, Bonaire

No flashlights, just the full moon. No need to move, they'll come within an inch of you. A shimmer broadside, a glint of scales, almost blinding - first tarpon of your first night dive! Sparks of bioluminescence shoot from your fingertips when you point and giggle, gurgle - *there! there!* a school of silver to your right darting and dancing. To your eyes the reef is a slurry of browns and deep reds. But to the coral denizens it's a neon disco, a biofluorescent Studio 54, all glow-stick headbands and glitter platform boots, 14-year-olds in 1981 minidresses trying to look like cool 16-year-olds who've seen it all. There's no pounding music here, no Ziggy Stardust, no Go-Gos, no Blondie. Just the swish swish of breath in and out, in and out on your regulator. Just the thump thump of your heart beating behind your breastplate. Anemones sway gently to the back and forth of the current. Big-eyed rockfish peek out of reef holes, recede back into protected nooks. *Look, there! There!* A manta ray in a shaft of moonlight dares you to follow it into the depths of the sea. 14-year-old girls' safety rules still apply. Don't swim off with strangers. Make sure you can breathe. Stay with your buddy.

Robin Turner

return to the questions



Lorette C. Luzajic

Pantone: North Africa

The souk, jasmine and cinnamon. Gentle brine on the breeze, and orange blossoms, and blush wine. I stretched out like a starfish in my raspberry brocade bed at my east gate hotel. The ceiling was a labyrinth of flowers. I asked my hosts if I could borrow a corkscrew: the concierge wrinkled his elegant nose in consternation. And the chef who served my full fish eye-up on a dazzling blue ceramic swirl of a plate frowned and shook his head, wagging a finger for emphasis. I wandered through the markets again to find a booth of requisite sundries and amenities, savouring pistachio pastries from Kasserine on the way back to my room. The men smoked and leered, but I didn't care. At dawn, there were a thousand cats, marmalade and mangy and mewling, sipping milk and tenderness on tiny saucers all the way through the market maze. I chose shiny brass plates engraved with names for everyone: cheery camels adorned with rainbow ribbons. Olives, everywhere, and sprigs of bright mint. Up the coast I roamed in the turquoise seaside ruins of Carthage, the crimson sun and Sanderac conifers swallowing sky and skin. The gods there before all this and after.

Ellen McGrath Smith

Cool Jade Water

She blithely stepped off the cliff,
dropping into the cool jade water I loved.

That was the dream, and she
was my mother. I jumped in after her

and pulled her to a rope ladder. Hold on,
I said from behind her, her frail body

dead weight against my chest.
There were so many rungs

heading up toward the sun.
Next day, the doctor tells her

her blood glucose is way too high.
At lunch after, she orders dessert.

M. Benjamin Thorne

Archaeological Exhibit: "1980s Swimming

Pool"

Tab, mystery elixir
and weight-loss tonic
of decidedly un-hipster moms
Bugles, conic sarcophagi
of mummified fingers fresh
from Marco Polo rituals
Jellies, rainbow boats
to ferry fading childhood
into adolescent afterlife

Tresha Faye Haefner

To Daughter

After Jacqueline Lyons

To daughter is to duty.
To swear loyalty to the country of your parents.
To believe without quotation.
To populate each passport with the sayings of your feet.
To daughter is to speak the language of the father,
to darn the worries of the mother. To drive the oxen into
the wilderness,
feeding on the mean hope of the future.
To daughter is to break free from whatever they've left,
or didn't leave,
to fall farther and farther from glory
to grow a new constitution from the allspice of a voice,
to spin your own nebula from their wounds.
To make a salad of dying,
to root the father like the heart of the world tree,
to lift the mother to the arc of the moon's invisible bow,
to raise yourself
to the stature of a very tiny star.

Sarah Seybold

Tornado Season

Freight trains roar over the trailer roof.
The light above the stove went out.
Terrified, I huddled under covers,
my little sister asleep beside me.

Without seeing her or hearing her voice,
I felt my mom's presence in the dark
as she rifled through my messy dresser
where I kept the small yellow flashlight.

I wonder if she felt my presence
as I tidied the tray beside the bed,
rearranged the unread newspapers,
hospice brochures, her notebook, and pen.

How scared she must have been.
A single mom out in the country,
alone in the trailer with her two girls.
Searching for a light in the storm.

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez

Memoir of a Water-Bearing Worker

There's nothing more tragic than getting older but not wiser. I'm surrounded by bitter shriveled bitches. When you are as old as me, fifty days, you can speak your mind. But I'm a grub next to our mother, Phoebe, the queen. She's been alive forever, at nearly five years. Phoebe means "Radiant One." She is Goddess to us. As for me, I am a water bearer for our family. Without water, we would starve or get roasted alive. You don't get to collect water or flower food unless you've worked your way up from nurse to housekeeper to architect to bouncer. My brothers said Mom gives the most dangerous work to the oldest ladies like me to get rid of them. Waspshit. Those himbo drones don't understand work at all. My entire life has been about work. Work gives your life meaning. Lately though, I've slowed down. After being hive-bound since hatching, I can't get enough of the mud and new leaves and the sweet breath of sunshine. Yet, I might never have noticed if not for Beatrice. Beatrice is the sunflower bee I met while foraging for water. She has these gigantic pollen pants! But more stunningly, she built underground tunnels to raise her children all by herself. *I'm my own queen. We are all solitary queens in my*

land, she said. I laughed, at first. We are supposed to be social animals who need a strict hierarchy. Nevertheless, the more I see, the more I know my home is not a cramped honeybee hive, but this puddle-luscious world, this sky. My tummy full of water, my body becoming light.

We were headed to the Sheremetyevo airport. This would be the last ride in our dearly beloved 1980 grey Lada. Dirt and dust enveloped the car, the air, and us, but it didn't matter. Mama and I kept looking over our shoulders. Papa kept his eyes rigidly on the road and his leaden foot on the gas pedal. We tried to calm Chernuska, whose nervous meowing made us more jittery. I opened the rear window and looked at the road that led back home. It was crooked, cracked, and pot-holed, but at that moment it was so dear to me. *Dosvedanya*.

Road

Maria Odessky Rosen

the nowness of laundry
its smell of sun-warmth
and ozone, caring nothing
for the next word or even tomorrow.

Tara Campbell

A Curious Powerful Fire

it's
like
your
body has
forgotten
how to work
its own thermometer,
it's disavowing all knowledge of
that former ease, comfort in mind and
your own flesh, how to regulate itself, it flushes
skin burns then freezes, sweat growing clammy in
twisting sheets at night, then you shiver, as though some chaotic
woman behind the screen has forgotten how all the bits and
pieces work, all instructions now gone, just the charred ashes,
arcane woman flipping switches, freezing/roasting you until
sweat trickles down your shivering back and you hate this
long-hidden woman until you discover she no longer
cares what anyone else thinks and you realize
not really giving a shit anymore is
a curious powerful fire

Tara Campbell

The Breast

under treatment is
scared and burning red-
itch swollen forming its own
hot gravity warping time folding
the woman's universe around itself
the disease grew in *silence* sneaking
greedy scheming in *silence* left to
its own division in *silence* for so
long until only time only time
only time only time will
tell who will win

Laura Buxbaum

You come home for a visit and hang your
laundry out to dry

"Oh let there be nothing on earth but laundry"
-Richard Willbur, *Love Calls Us to the Things of This
World*

And if the tenderness of your shirt
on the clothesline isn't enough
still it recalls to me the days
of tiny shirts flying in place.

And when predictive text says
embrace is the next word
must we
embrace the shirts and shorts

warm and golden on the line?
Who can predict
the next world? Hold
a sock to your cheek,
remember the days when the only

prediction was sunshine
or not, dive in the ocean
or not.

How do we hold
one another in the warmth
of this world, embrace

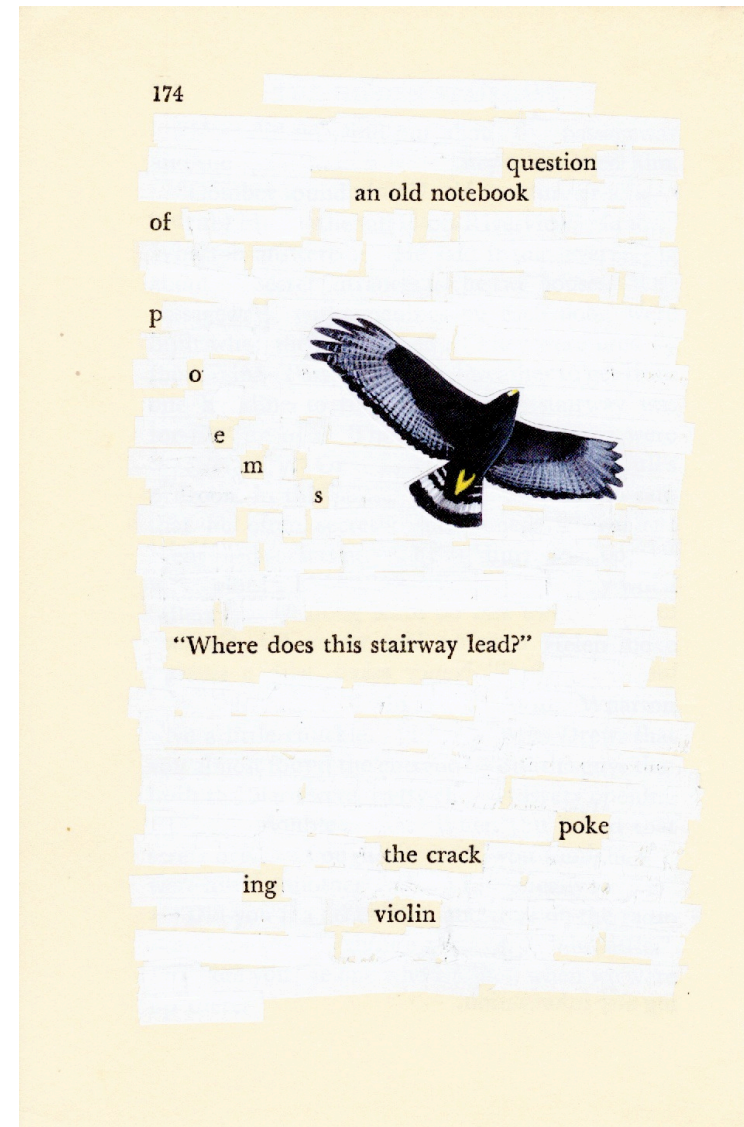
Benjamin Karren

Gravel Pit Exile

I feel an obligation to visit the old garnet dump truck
pushed into retirement at the edge of the gravel pit.
I often pat its corroded hood and picture its prime,
vigorous paint and an eight-cylinder humming lullabies
nourishing a neighborhood with soil and concrete.
Now long-lived with rust disintegrating its body,
one of its headlights poke-eyed and its skin faded,
the Mack Dog hood ornament is the last flicker of life.
I stand at attention this August afternoon, as cicadas play taps,
it slips into a final slumber atop a bed of Japanese knotweed.

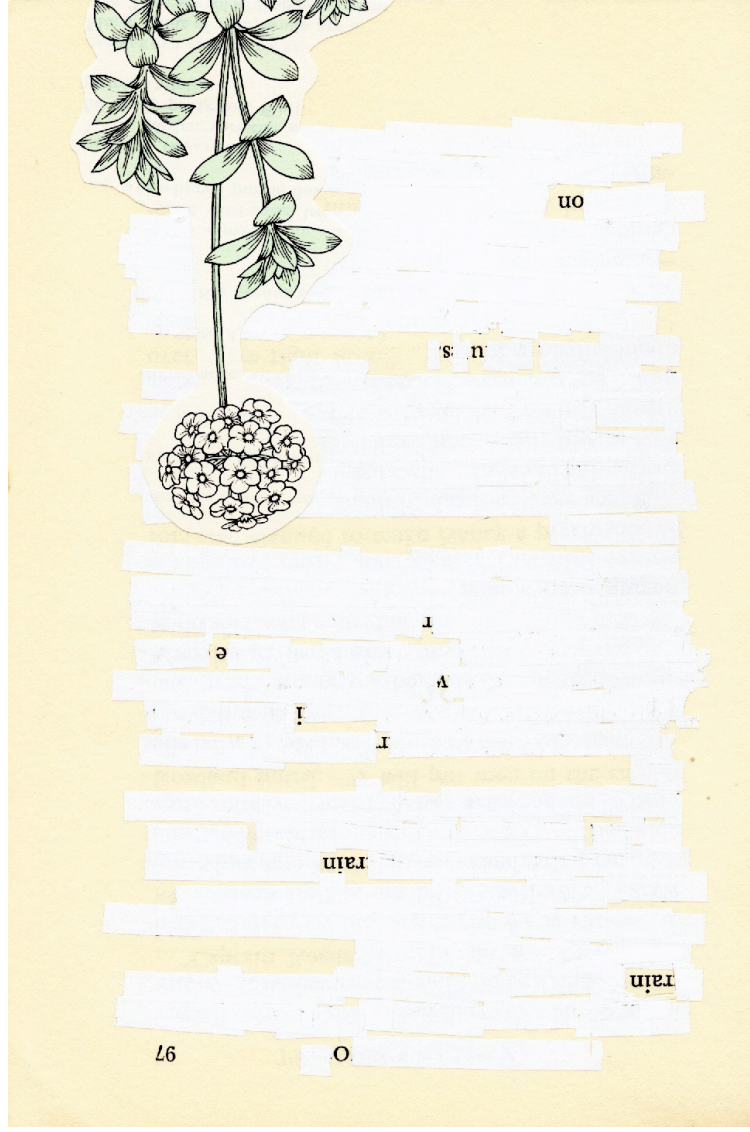
Robin Turner

question an old notebook of poems



Robin Turner

O rain



Don Narkevic

Fossils

As kids, we dug at an outcropping
of gray slate looking for fossils,
unearthing ferns that fanned out
in search of a long-ago sun.
We rubbed thumbs over the ribbed
remains, a Braille for the language
of leaves relieved of their rustle
and replaced by their stony silence.
In my open hand I weighed the ages
and questioned the impression
of my short life, wondering if others
would discover something that lasts.

Carla Schwartz

Astronaut

Hoping to drop in from the sky like Mary Poppins,
blue satin umbrella hooked between my fingers,
I was ready for takeoff, excited to show my friend
who lived across the street.

As I took off, the steel grill
of a Nova smacked my head, struck my ear, plunged
me and my umbrella into the sea of our driveway.

A capsule in the ocean,
I couldn't stand, couldn't walk—
Damaged nerves, they said.

At three, I didn't know a car could do that—
steal all my hearing from my left ear,
sink my chances of ever becoming an astronaut.

David A. Lee

The Bulletin Board

On the community center's bulletin board
someone has tacked a photograph of a tabby
and a note: Lost. Answers to Mango.
Below it, flyers for piano lessons,
a block party, a missing bicycle.

I think about the quiet places
where we hang our hopes:
keys on a hook, wedding pictures,
a half-mended sweater on a chair.

A paper crane flutters next to a poem
about rain in early June.
Some people pin their hearts here,
others just errands.

Finches

On my deck
a hawk swoops down
and grabs a finch
in its talons, a cruel and natural
abduction.
I scream:
“NO!”
The hawk leaves.
The finch lives!
I bring it water
and crushed nuts
and breadcrumbs
on a saucer
from my late grandmother.
She always protected me
from hawks and their talons.

Thumb

Awkward on the dance floor
at a party with ballerinas.
Tree stump.
Sturdy workhorse.
Also, absent-minded page-turner
and sacred mudra-maker.
Maybe they envy your freedom.
You appear agreeable enough
when you stand up straight,
but still—always in opposition,
made for a life of tree-swinging, grasping
and now texting.
It was you who taught me Right from Left,
made me feel powerful as a girl,
how you wiggled away when wrestling
to escape being crushed.
And in your sly resistance,
determined to write your own name,
you knuckled that pencil
as if it were a life preserver.

Brenda K.

Dandelion Wishes

A perfectly puffed dandelion, released to the breeze with a breath. Wispy seedheads, little parachute wishes dressed in white—Barbie wish, freedom wish, Easy-Bake Oven wish, best friend wish, feathered bangs wish, mommy be okay wish, mommy be happy wishwishwish. Her mom, weeks later, on her hands and knees, pulling and cursing the weeds before they bloom.

Meggie Royer

Witness Protection

Collin made himself a snack in the kitchen, a ham sandwich with kettle chips and caramel corn. Collin's name had not always been Collin, but his father had told him to forget his previous name, that all children shed theirs early on.

The blue sky rose through the half-moon window like an arc of water. His father promised one day they would go fishing. They would buy minnows and nightcrawlers at a bait shop along a highway. He would show Collin how to attach a line and tie the hook. If they were lucky, they would catch something and fry it in butter for dinner.

The sweetness of the caramel corn cut through the saltiness of the chips. Opposites attract, his father had said. Just like his mother. She was somewhere in a bright green house with a garden that had peonies larger than Collin's head. Collin did not know this for certain, but he pictured it often.

He liked snack time, and he liked watching the shooting stars that occasionally crossed the sky like sparrows. He wanted to tell other children about his favorite birds, but his father taught school for him at home. His father told him lots of stories, and sometimes

Collin couldn't keep track of them or figure out who the characters were.

Collin finished his snack and put his plate in the sink. He thought of how the fish would break the surface of the water, like a secret, like something shedding.

Diane Webster

Handlebar Streamers

On the bike's handlebars streamers
flap, clap in wind
like a sprinkler cascading water
onto a dry lawn and soaking dirt
awakens the smell of moisture;
a peacock strutting
fanned tail feathers,
ohs and ahs;
like fireworks radiating
multicolored explosions
across the night sky
streamers twist,
untwist, speed
tickle my pumping knees.