Michigan State University Libraries
Short Édition

Water

Michigan State University Libraries Short Édition

Water

with contributions by

Liz Abeling
Philip Rösel Baker
Tim Bascom
Mary Elizabeth Birnbaum
Roger Camp
Craig Cotter
Shutta Crum
Matt Dennison
Jane C. Elkin
Diane Glancy
JoeAnn Hart
Richard Holinger
Eric Machan Howd
Elizabeth Hykes
Lorraine Jeffery
Karen Kilcup
Mary Kuykendall
Rachel Loughlin
Katharyn Howd Machan
Joan Mazza
Jessica Lee McMillan
Joseph Milosch
Nancy Nelson
Carol Nolde
Victor Pearn
James Miller Robinson
Hannah Rodabaugh
Anita Skeen
Scott T. Starbuck
Megan Stolz
Wally Swist
Patricia Waugh
Kelleen Zubick

Michigan State University Libraries
East Lansing, Michigan

Water

Published by Michigan State University Libraries
May 2023

Contributions to this work were accepted as part of a call for submissions from MSUL Short Édition's theme of "Water," in coordination with the MSU Broad Art Museum's exhibit *Flint is Family in Three Acts*, featuring the photography of Latoya Ruby Frazier.

Cover image:
painting by Stephanie Palagyi,
Accumulation, 2020,
oil on birch panel 24" x 36"
photography credit Pearl Yee Wong.
Used with permission.

Printed at the
Michigan State University Libraries
Hollander MakeCentral
Publishing Services

Contents

PHILIP RÖSEL BAKER

H_2O

Condensed boredom,
making random runs and random stops
down the drizzle-fogged school lab window pane.
Chemical formulae—the elements of tedium,
attempting to tattoo themselves into my brain.
But that was the way most teachers taught
in those days.

But then the moment came,
when I realized the raindrops consisted of molecules.
Suddenly I could see them, glistening like jewels,
jostling, translucent, mercurial,
rolling and tumbling like malleable marbles
through the murky lead pipe-work of routine school,
to burst rumbustiously out of the tap,
slapping and bubbling the light of day,
like twelve-year-old boys pouring into the playground,
set free by the bell to break up on the tarmac,
to cluster, pooling, separating, settling
to find equilibrium—well, at least
for a while.

Transparent grapes,
a trinity of secret pips—the magic shape
of the atom tetrahedron. Two of hydrogen, one of oxygen.
Why this should be, or whether there might be more
to atoms, remained beyond my reach.
The chemistry teaching of the day
did not encourage questions.

Much later,
I discovered the atom was a Russian doll, a haze
of electrons concealed inside, evasive as agents
pretending to ignore the fact they were being tailed,

casually blending into the crowd, easily foiling surveillance,
assisting the nucleus to pass itself off
as the innermost doll.

Till outed, that is.
Till shown to be harboring protons, neutrons
each one a doll in its own sweet right. And with plenty of space
between them. My water molecule, it seemed,
was not as fat with liquid matter as I'd previously
been led to believe. Inside, it was laced with emptiness.
Even protons, neutrons, could be prised and pulled apart
to reveal in the very smallest doll—a sea
of quarks. Quarks and anti-quarks
and gluons jumping into being from the total dark of nothingness
and vanishing, as if they'd never been. A tiny doll with, at its heart
an ocean.
Turbulence strong enough
for time to spool both ways. An ocean, confined
by forces ten times those that bind
a neutron star. And yet
uncertainty rules, at the heart
of matter.

The words on this page
can be broken apart into droplets of ink,
aqua and pigments combined into molecules,
each a matryoshka we unpack now easily
all the way down to the quantum.
But this does nothing to lead us back
from particles to human meaning.
Does nothing to explain how the words emerged
in the writer's mind, why they were written,
or where they might be leading the reader.
We have so far to go.

Does almost nothing to explain the relational
deeply vibrational moment of experiencing
a waterfall.

Visible thunder, self-transforming
shouldering air aside to leap
abandoned, suicidal, from the roaring limestone lip.
Eating the walls of the gorge that holds it.
Sheeting spray sideways like hard-gusted snow.
A piston repeating, blow, on blow,
where a rock blocks the flow, like a woman's fists beating
on her man's stubborn chest,
demanding understanding, testing his resolve.
Striking the place she'd caressed only hours before.
Raw spirit, bursting, spouting, cursing,
pile-driving over and over the same spot,
as if each blow was the first.

Downstream, passion spent,
unhiding what was really meant, to curl in whirlpools
round a boulder, she shrugs a glossy shoulder, where
the sunlight flashes on a wave, as if she forgave him at the bend,
where the trees let leaves trail in the water.
Leaves trailing like regret.
The river deepens, mirrors clouds, allows
emerald streaks to shine up, gesturing, seeking speech.
Silent signing through the glide of whorled fisheye eddies,
reaching out downstream, like love
reaches from our anchored bodies. We
have so far to go.

But then, we ourselves
are more than half
H_2O.

PHILIP RÖSEL BAKER

No Witness

A single drop of rain
splatters on dry sand. Not pure water,
but rain nonetheless. And more rain follows.
Wind whips droplets to urgent drumbeats.
The seashore pockmarks with tiny hollows.
Lightning cracks malevolent clouds
and the beach begins to drown in rain.
Hailstones pound islands of rock-strewn shore,
that still lie above water, miniature meteors
crunching the ground, while the wind rants
wild garbled snatches. A random patchwork
of pockets collects frozen marbles,
like balls in roulette.

Clouds tear apart, revealing gashes
of ochre and mauve in the ash-heavy sky.
The orange background glow of methane
yields to a flash from an angry volcano,
muttering thickly inland. Hailstones flicker
refracted colors, as they slowly melt into sand.
The tide retreats down the long, shelving beach
leaving pools where cyanobacteria thrive,
silently laying down lime-matted floors
in stromatolite citadels, doors swinging wide open,
balconies empty except for the odd sand grain,
corridors untrodden but for stray chlorophytes,
left high and dry.

The bickering storm rolls away
across violet waves, seeking the west.
In its wake, clumps of algae flex and extend,
tendrils stretching, reaching to absorb the fast waning light,
fueling new cells to clone themselves.
In a tangerine haze, the weak sun, sucked down

by the quicksand horizon, aborts. The beach returns to a peace
of sorts.

This is our Earth, before it was ours,
before the illusion of ownership evolved
to invade stromatolite towers, before a profusion of eukaryotes
stirred in the oceans.

There is light—but no eyes
for light to enter. No seeing life, of any kind.
No witness.

PHILIP RÖSEL BAKER

Virus

It's a child sea - artless, wild, petulant,
prone to cry easily, seized by wants it cannot speak,
by tides that peak, recede and are themselves drowned
by sheer walls of ocean, towering raw emotion,
rolling ramparts, roiling power, pulverizing solid rock
—the aftermath of toecap shocks,
that crack the sea floor from below, sending waves
to grow and grow in silent sumo rage.

On quiet bloodless afternoons, the warm sea,
arms outstretched, engages with the youthful moon,
that orbits close, so very close, that her acne'd
adolescent face, volcano-scarred, not yet displaced,
dominates the methane sky. She draws the sea
and it recognizes, reaches up towards her,
singing, rising, falling with her bell-like melodies.

A sea of possibilities. Bubbles form everywhere,
seething, bursting — gas enclosed in liquid membranes
—foamed in wave-crests, surging, swelling breakers,
smashed on shoreline rocks, on teeth that unlock,
spawn more short-lived globules — self-organizing
models for the shape organic life might take.

Abandoned, in the orphan shallows, a game,
whose rules have written the players, begins
—a dividing game. Blind players, single cells.
No shell, self-organized. No sense of smell or taste,
but able to clone themselves. Microbial life, anoxic,
multiplying in wild abundance, engrossed
in the nameless game - expanding, thoughtless,
simply playing, for the sake of simply playing.

They are not alone.

With every wave that breaks
along the rough resisting shoreline,
the sea throws dice, combining, foaming
in infinite variations, revolving turns of chance
continually. Each breaker breaks uniquely,
and some have spawned rogue virions - hungry,
deadly, predatory threads, cloaked in proteins, spiked
and ready.

They too have woken to the game.

Prowling the busy, carefree crowds they wait
for a match their protein spikes can penetrate,
then strike the naive insouciant cell, that has no way
to protect itself. They inject themselves
like confidence tricksters, duping the cell to write
blank checks to the intruder's specification,
extruding them in bursts of thousands,
till overdrawn, deep in the red, tired and fevered
over the edge, the exhausted host expires,
while legion virus copies ghost off in the shallows,
to stalk new unsuspecting victims.

As the game takes off, microbial life thrives
and multiplies in the generously supportive sea.
And virions thrive too. A perpetual pandemic rains
and rains microbial corpses down through the water
to the sea floor, to decay. Washed in
by the returning tides,they make fresh seedbeds
for new life - blue-green algae, living from light,
fixing nitrogen, sighing out oxygen,
changing the meaning of sky.

Single-celled, they also die
from viral infection. New algae appear to replace
the dead in constant trial and error. No sense of loss,
no shiver of terror on recognition of the foe.
No recognition. Unable to plan, unable to think,

no awareness of self as distinct from others,
but alive to possibility.

The moon recedes and tides grow weaker.
Trillions of tides, quakes, slides heave up new land,
while oxygen gains the upper hand and the sky clears
and algae bask in stronger sunlight above the waterline.
Moisture cycles between sea and clouds and falls
as a new and different rain. The balance of power
slowly changes. Rules mutate.

Now single cells stumble on ways to retain
information, react to threats, learn photo-fit
identification. Confidence tricksters,
protein pranksters, smooth talkers of the lingua franca
can now be matched and taken out. They learn
to fight their corner.

With the beginnings of cell memory,
immunity is born.

And with it the scores between virus and cell
on the leaderboard look more equal now.
Virions play their tireless game of tag
among the players, but the players carry out
constant sweeps - learn vigilance, even
while they sleep.

Perhaps it had to happen.
If not in this sea, then in another. Sooner or later,
perhaps, continual dice falls had to uncover
this new combination of givens and chance.
Or perhaps this unlikely pairing, of two rival dancers,
might never have arisen, anywhere.
This equilibrium, that seemed to work perfectly well
and the restraining rules of this bagatelle
might have ruled out certain angles for ever.

But on this day, at this unique moment,
it happens. In an untidy tangle,
without self-aware mind, somewhere in the ocean,
ignorant of the heedless sky,
a virus,
just one of countless look-a-likes,
strikes but the cell's defenses trap it.
Imprisoned, but still alive, paralyzed, it waits,
pretense abandoned, unable to self-replicate.
A tense stand-off ensues. Since terminating the intruder
seems not to be possible, the cell waits too.
In each, the innate urge to survive, pulses fast,
leads them to barter. Without thought or plan
or speech, the virus negotiates a change of status
—from captive to partner.

Together, they create a symbiotic ***we***.
A new way of being, that works for both.
A cell with, at its core, a virus that, in time, will form
a nucleus. The ***we***
is gradually forgotten, habituated, learns to be
a new ***i***.

The first eukaryote, with the means to escape
the zero sum game, learnt by rote by cell and virus
—a new i with a future.
The potential now to transfer genes,
through sexual reproduction, to set new seed
for evolutionary networks, that will bud
with fish, with whales, with reptiles,
eventually with human beings.

Without this alliance between cell and virus
in the young, speculative, impetuous sea,
there will be
no ***us***.

DIANE GLANCY

Caddle (observationonwaterI)

Say there are birds on the sandbar in the river.
Say they will take flight.
They have taken their wings from the coat rack.
In the ditch beside the county road there is water.
In the water leaves are wet hands reaching to be lifted.
A tree is folded in a book.
Its branches like pages that can be turned down at the corner
you want to find again.

DIANE GLANCY

Quarter Moon (observationonwaterII)

Reading Yosa Buson, 1716–1784, Japan, I return to the farm—
The whale already taken got away: the moon alone—
translated by Hiroaki Sato.

I could see the moon as a whale swimming in the stars. The sky wide as a sea. In that place there was removal of object from its known place. I was not of them. But from another place had come there with my parents and would not stay. Those nights the kerosene lamp sat unmoving in the house. Before the electric poles poked the earth and carried wires that brought electricity to the place. Just that afternoon my grandmother chopped the head off a hen. Blood stained the stump where she worked. The plucked feathers flowered the dirt. It was a brutal act. The chickens still clucking knew they would be next. But terms shifted. There was displacement. The brutal somehow seemed holy. And the holy therefore brutal. A simple act of transfer.

The moon was a whale under the surface of the sea.

The whale was a moon breaching the dark field.

DIANE GLANCY

On the Sea There Is No Shade (observationonwaterIII)

By noon the sky has turned to cream.
The fish are rocking back and forth.
The sea has large, round eyes as if a basin or large bowl.
I write a letter on the oar.
I push the letter out to float.
The sea is and dark.
By night, the stars are kicking in the sky.
The heavens have a search light for a moon.

ERIC MACHAN HOWD

Greater Shore Concert Band

Asbury Park, New Jersey

reed players cursing the humid auditorium
hot halls and french hornists turning their spit
out of their coils as disgusted flautists look on
summers in folding chairs with Tambora Colbert
playing jazz licks on lacquered horns
the Duke and the Count buzzing on soft lips,
embouchures taking bebop lines and scat charts
to exit signs, Basie arrangements in Red Bank
theatres and Tambora and I laughing
at the oboist trying on blues, Tambora and I
cracking up and cranking Perdido
from bells aiming notes over the band,
ready to fire our music into the balcony,
his finger shaking vibrato into valves,
my finger shaking vibrato into valves,
Tambora and I, Tambora and I,
hanging out before rehearsals,
leaning into each other's shoulders,
laughing belly chants and making fun
of brittle clarinets
Tambora and I
aiming higher than Dizzy's bell-bending forty-five degrees
past balconies and hot asphalt sand-drenched
parking lots, parched boardwalks
and dry-rot dock bandstands
over breakers and moonlit Atlantic tides
past shipping lanes, beyond slick tankers,
along the submerged umbilical cords of Ma Bell,
toward heritage continents and lineage borders,
the Ghana jazz and British bop,
we blow hard, sweet intervals played to these shores,

our cheeks pregnant with Gillespie and Berrigan,
Armstrong and Hirt, we Miles and Maynard, we
Clifford and Severinsen, we music
and solo, a duet of diaphragms digging
this night, this weary night, we laugh
and send notes to the stars
create our language of Beethoven brothers
Tambora and I
triple tonguing small silver cups
hot mouthpieces melting into
the fermata,
Tambora and I,
we wail to the heavens, we wail
each other's birth, we crib
each other's notes and eye
each other through side glances
and the wry corner of knowing
what music can be between rests
what tuning can do between races
what two friends can create on the edge
of an ocean on a summer break

ERIC MACHAN HOWD

Mastheads on Dublin Bay

The boats on Dun Laoghaire harbor
sway with the storm, white caps
lick their hulls and bows.

Masts tick-tock in water
like freshly wound metronomes,
keep time for the visitors

who have come to discuss
business and communication,
the art of teaching

deals, contracts, and charters.
The sea spits out three student
sailors during their lesson, their small

vessels left churning in the harbor,
break against black jetty rocks. Media
was there, reporting to the whole island

how the children were safely returned
to their homes, how the west coast
was still flooded from Ophelia.

We walk against the harbor walls
toward James Joyce's tower, rain
soaks us as we search for rocks

and shells. One local identifies
what we had gathered: limpets, small
aquatic snails that adhere themselves

to harbor rocks to feed off algae,
tenacious, like the Irish hold
on this land. Stately Buck Mulligan

descends the tower to greet us
and offers dining suggestions.
He encourages us to re-examine

our choices, our hungers,
our tastes. He sends us forth
to Glasthule to meet three

witches that own a thrift shop
that aids the blind. They pry
into our lives, ask of blood types

and homeland. They give
everyone who visits them
a gift and need to know all

histories. They offer us an empty
box commemorating the sinking
of the *Titanic*. Shoes, soaked,

ruined, are placed in the box
and left with another store
that gives to those with cancer.

The bird on the conference windowsill
argues loudly as the researcher
presents on adjusting reading levels

to certain audiences, how goldfish
today have a longer attention span
than the average human. The grey

skies lighten for a double rainbow
and for one moment, the harbor
settles down, the music of the masts

slows, and the winds drop their volume
to a low haunting howl
as we leave for America.

ERIC MACHAN HOWD

Undertow

We argue over the memory of words
and how you were taken by the ocean
in Key West and buffeted between
black rocks and rip currents until fear
led you to a world beyond me.

Such are the days of the long-married
bickering over the details of recollection
breaking over each other's words in
conversation and pulling each other out
beyond the edge of tattered histories.

Just yesterday two boys were pulled
by the sea as they tried catching waves
off Asbury Park and nobody noticed
their small hands clawed dark sand
as breakers stifled their panicked screams.

What blessings gravity gives us daily
the pull of bed at night for our bones
apples felled and bruised for sweet cider.
No one expects the moon to do anything
but shine for lovers parked along the beach.

ROGER CAMP

Swimming after Midnight

for Joe Macaluso

It didn't feel any different from daytime,
gulping deep breaths of night air
and pulling handfuls of tropical water
to propel myself forward.
I halted a mile from shore. Adrift,
I allowed my body to float
until it faced the island, the pitiful lights
of Kalihiwai a bobbing apparition.
Absent forehead, Kauai was faceless,
no skyline brokered land from sky.
Only inkiness.
I may as well have been a mite,
fallen off a quill, floating in an inkwell.
Beyond the island's sunken shoulder
beneath my restless feet, a thousand tepid feet,
the seabed. The first warning
of a grim shark's attack
would be a violent snap of my leg
followed by a succession of choking yanks,
salt water expelling out my nostrils
like a marine iguana.
I flashed on my true scale in the night ocean
a meaningless spec afloat in a watery universe
imagining myself to be
one of the five million microorganisms
contained in a teaspoon of sea.

ROGER CAMP

Tarzan's Lost Soundtrack

Deciding on a swim
a herd of plunging pachyderms
form a necklace
trunk to tail across the lake

as our frail boat floats
between mainland and island,
a whitewashed crouton
in the pea green soup.

Oblivious to maritime right-of-way
these weighty water nymphs
gorge our course
emerging dripping

onto an island, stripping it bare
for a jungle snack.
Instead of the cinematic mixing
of jungle noises of the Kookaburra

our ears are assaulted with the trunk twisting,
fiber wrenching, molar crushing,
churning of cellulose,
a grinding organ of digestive grumbles

that rumbles this Indian jungle.

ROGER CAMP

View from the Bridge

I was leaning on the railing,
contemplating my life in the way
bridges seem to draw one into reflection.

The sun was at my back,
my shadow in the water below,
a distorted view of my dark side.

A skidding mallard
rippled through my shade
purling me out of focus.

Something half sunken
drifted into my being,
a slough shed by a snake.

If only I could do the same,
a molting that would cast aside
my life's hide

releasing pure reflection
that would permit me
to see my way clear,

clean to the bottom.

RICHARD HOLINGER

The Pillboxes at Cap Ferret

From the station where the train from Paris dropped us,
we hiked to the beach and saw naked men and women
take to sand and water like newborn turtles climbing
out of nests and waddling into surf they lent themselves to
for as long as their flippers floated them safely over
the increasingly darkening depths.

We saw there, too,
the Third Reich's pillboxes, built to stave off invasion
from Allied landing forces, cold, gray, cement bunkers
built into dunes where Germans hunkered down,
their binoculars trained on the empty sea. One rounded,
pyramidal bulk looked bleak and barren as a sarcophagus.

Why "pillboxes"? I wonder, too lazy to google it,
or maybe simply not wanting to give the Nazis
the time of day to look it up.

For me, a pillbox
organizes my daily meds, one week at a time,
boxed in Wake Up, Noon, Afternoon, Bedtime,
the squaring of days helping me continue
to breathe without oxygen tank or pacemaker,
the aged, doddering dolt trying to bolster his body

against invasion of heart disease, diabetes, prostate cancer,
and a thousand other enemies coming for him
from across the channel under the cloak of clouds
and darkness, guns and artillery locked and loaded
to devastate and incapacitate before going ashore
in droves too overwhelming to be beaten back.

CRAIG COTTER

Preparing for Deer Season

When I stayed with my grandparents
summers

in Little Falls, New York,
a town of steep hills,

a modest house
9 Moreland Street

my grandfather drove to the bank
and home for lunch every day.

But before the leaves changed
he'd begin walking to work;

I'd see him puffing up the hills
in his wool suit,

sit down at the semi-circle counter
in their kitchen

to wolf-down a quick white bread sandwich
and glass of milk

before heading downhill to the bank.

*

The .308s he made us
weigh 8.2 pounds each.

They start the day light

but not after 8 hours hiking the heavily forested Adirondacks.

While his friends puffed,

Bill Snyder, bicycle manufacturer,
John Gillan, garbageman and handyman,
George Comstock, Iroquois,

my Grandfather Cotter
would glide through the mountains carrying his rifle,
hardly breaking a sweat.

He'd walk quietly through thick brush,
streams,
step over fallen trees.

*

When my father lost most of a lung to radiation,
and no longer had the wind to carry a rifle,

he was such a great shot
he carried a holstered .44.

Once he took the front leg off a deer with a first shot.
The next took the other front leg.

When he got to the young buck
still alive

he shot it a third time in the shoulder
aligned with its heart.

KAREN KILCUP

Ice Out

Ice whoops. In a week
the lake will be loose
as blood, throb with wind.
A pair of muskrats crack
freshwater mussels, suck
the gleaming flesh;
the chickadee pours
his dropping mating call,
the notes halves of a whole.

In the pale night, your pulse
ticks against my thigh.
Your torso presses like sun
on frozen water: turtles stir below,
fish ripple in silver fingers.
Your fingers taste as old as salt.

I want your eyes to mirror mine:
the gaze of the drowner
surfacing, blinded by light.

KAREN KILCUP

In Praise of Water

Makes you
cold, when you're hot, hot
when you're cold. Without
it, your tea is withered grass,
coffee brown powder, wine
deflated purple skin.
The tomato plant knows
its virtues, pulling it up into
swelling orange spheres,
sunshine in your mouth.

Become it: break unbroken
over granite rocks, swirl
around bends. Undammed,
contain multitudes of shining
finny shapes, green and silver
and lavender; move through
space, animate clarity. Travel
through lips, across tongue, down
throat. Become sweat, and tears,
and blood.

KAREN KILCUP

Three Boys at the Town Lake

Teen-thin, the boys search for stones to skip
or heave, testing shapes, sizes, heft,
drop the ones too large or thick, lift up
their prizes like medals—just right weight.
Two cheer as the dark-haired one thrusts
a disc that bounces lucky seven times,
two shout when the smallest one hurls
an agate boulder that plops among the lily pads.
Music blasts from a wireless speaker—
dance music, maybe, if no one were watching.

They're cheerful with the older woman when
she appears, launches her blue foam raft,
paddles out beyond their play and lies back.
They smile when she applauds the longest throw.

The tanned one launches a blow-up yellow doughnut,
following the fairest boy, his water-lily-pale torso
submerged, pinkish forearms carving water.
The third boy hangs back—he isn't finished,
can't find what he's looking for,
hasn't made the perfect throw.

Will the curly blonde be chubby later?
The tallest one marry twice, smoke and drink
too much? Will the third become a volunteer
fireman, or the town cop? Will they
forget these rocks, the water, sun,
each other?

ELIZABETH HYKES

I follow rain

I gather light bursts, the sudden jigs and jags,
straying fragments that glance off rocks and trees,
and sweep up startle, thunder-plucked from living things.
Clothed in newly washed, ozone-fresh garments,
I stack drift, wind-flung on racing tides.

I say little, prayerful or not.

I sometimes miss grumbled thunder bursts
that will hide in truths and falsehoods, but
I drop those I catch onto green and yellow leaves
as they ride the rushing water that runs its course
in spite of my best efforts to staunch the flow.
When I'm done, I follow along, waiting under
moiling skies to once more ply my trade.

LORRAINE JEFFERY

Plenty

Never ending slate-gray sky dripped
into more than a hundred Western
Oregon rivers that carved
my childhood.

Rubber soles squished on
varnished schoolroom floors,
umbrellas molding
in the corner.

When summer-pink skies
rained warm, and stretched
to the Cascades,
the rivers were ours:
native Kalapuya waters of
Willamette, Umpqua,
Tillamook, Siuslaw;
fur trader canoes plied
McKensie and Deschutes; and
settlers named their bounty
Applegate, Williams
and John Day.

Rivers all, giving life in their rush
to the Pacific. Young thoughts
were far downstream from history
and those who'd pioneered the
Land of the Empire Builders.
We swam, waded, threw rocks,
fished and floated rivers.

Never knowing desert places
of mesquite, juniper and cacti
where parceled water is channeled

into concrete ditches,
every precious drop
bound for alfalfa or wheat fields—
where water is life.

LORRAINE JEFFERY

Proustian Moment

Would you like water or something else?
Bottled, filtered, purified—
always something else!
You can add flavoring.
Why? Because water doesn't taste good?

In Virginia—a one-bedroom house,
dog shooed out of a cramped kitchen.
Mixer, nut chopper, mismatched bowls
spilling from two overcrowded shelves.

Lunch on a small clean table.
With a soft southern drawl—
Ah hope water is okay.
We nod.

My husband asks about people who have been
gone from Dante for many years.
I chew ham and cheese, reach for the water glass.

My eyes fly open and I stare at our hostess.
Even with no words—she knows.
It's well water, she says.

And I am transported home to Oregon's deep green,
drinking well water from the garden hose that fills
our cow's cool, moss-covered barrel.

I had forgotten water
that tasted like ambrosial
icy streams flowing in
deep untouched caverns.

MARY KUYKENDALL

Nature's Cure

"If only everyone knew the simple joy of tasting cool, clear clean water." That was the answer my great uncle Henry had for everything going wrong—from world wars to genocide to divorce to just a bad day.

He would say this as he dipped his wooden ladle into the mountain stream running through his house. His great-great-grandfather Nicholas had settled in this Appalachian hollow 250 years ago. According to his note in the old family bible, he chose this hillside because of its spring.

Now 82, Uncle Henry is still living in the cabin Nicholas built directly below the mountain spring. Two wings were added over the years and his father had even added a garage. Uncle Henry had all the amenities plus some he said he didn't need such as the big plasma TV set his son had given him.

But even though there was infrastructure in his hollow now for all the houses and trailers lining the road and foothills, Uncle Henry never gave up his mountain stream for city water. He had saved enough land from what had been handed down to him from the original hillside farm to have a garden as well shutter himself in with trees so he had no need for curtains.

Uncle Henry had even piped some of his mountain spring water down to the road so his neighbors could help themselves to his holistic solution to life's woes. In just 30 years, the sounds of whippoorwills and farm animals in the valley below had been replaced with lawn mowers and barking dogs. There were times when he wondered if there was some undiscovered plant that Mother Nature had wisely infused with birth control. It was needed now.

But Uncle Henry was not a recluse. He enjoyed the company of his neighbors, most of them relatives including me.

My uncle also used the running water from the mountain spring to irrigate his garden when summer rains were scarce. He had even piped it so it could be channeled into rows, taking pleasure in knowing the plants would soon enjoy it as much as he was.

He would invite us up to share in his garden, particularly on rainy summer days. He would tell us to throw away our umbrellas, strip down, and enjoy the refreshing reminder of our place in nature and how peaceful the world can be. After recanting how his father used to look out over his corn fields and watch the parched corn blades pocketing out to receiving the nourishing rain, he would point to his garden. "If you took the time," he would suggest, "you could see the green tops of buried carrots, radishes and potatoes spring upward for the rain. Even now you can see the red tomatoes, green and yellow peppers and even the spotted bird egg beans happily showing themselves off in the glistening rain."

He would tell us how his grandmother used to set out a couple of old wash tubs to collect water for her flowers.. He would help her punch tiny holes in used cans, fill them with water and place them beside her flowers during dry periods so they could slowly have their summer rain.

He would recall how his grandfather, rarely missing a forecast of rain, would scurry to gather the cut hay so it would not mold in the field. Afterwards, he would relax and enjoy letting the summer rain wash off the heavy sweat he got hurrying the hay into the barn.

"And it wasn't like we kids didn't enjoy a good drenching, too, after working up a sweat" he would say when he knew he had our attention. "Our job was to get all the stray chickens back in the coop. Unlike ducks, they do not like rain and that's why ducks never smell like wet chickens. Another job we had at the coop was laying some boards across wet loose ground which contained a lot of chicken manure. In a couple of days—especially when it got hot—worms and large night crawler worms would find their way up to refresh themselves under these cool, damp boards. When you pulled up a board you had to dart fast to grab them because they would quickly head down their tunnels to escape the heat of the sun. We not only

used the worms for fishing but sold some of the larger night crawlers to fishermen along the river."

He would admonish us never to forget that even the worms as well as fishermen knew the answer for having a good life: Cool, Clear, Clean Water.

Uncle Henry ran his hand down the smooth handle of the cherry ladle, now burnishing a deep burgundy patina. He figured it had been made by Nicholas. He still had the stone trough in his kitchen which his ancestor had built to hold running water before it made its way to the garden. Uncle Henry said it still served as his best refrigerator. He still had a milk cow. Every morning he would fill his crocks and know that by suppertime, he could run his finger across the top and scoop up gobs of cream. Uncle Henry also raised rainbow trout in his spring-fed trough. He blessed them as they darted among his crocks when he fished one out for dinner. He did not like frozen fish.

Over the years people just stopped complaining to Uncle Henry about government corruption, terrorism, crime or greedy Wall Street bankers and CEOs. They knew Uncle Henry would recommend a drink of his cool, clear, clean water or a summer rain bath to get rid of hate, jealously, pride, avarice and all those wants of what other people have.

But now Uncle Henry is feeling the doom and gloom of world pressures. His cool, clear, clean water is being threatened. Mountain-top removal of coal was coming to his part of the Appalachians. He had relatives who had to move because the hollows were filled with sludge, the streams polluted with acidic runoff and many of their homes worthless from dynamite damage. At least, in the old days of underground mining, many had jobs. But it only took a few engineers to blow the tops off the mountains. Drilling for gas was not the answer. He had read how they could easily drill more than a mile down into the earth and then go sideways using water and chemicals to explode the Marcellus shale to get gas.

When Uncle Henry heard the widespread fracking process in Pennsylvania had released so much methane that one lady had

actually been able to set fire to the drinking water coming out of her well, he was devastated.

Uncle Henry understood the need for energy. He enjoyed his electric lights and he had even grown fond of that huge, glaring plasma screen. But he also felt all that black gold money the politicians liked could be spent on wind and solar power.

He looked up at his mountain springhead. The sun was shining on it. The trees were swaying in the constant breeze. A summer rain began to fall. Uncle Henry stripped down, and with ladle in hand, he headed for his mountain spring where he could enjoy nature's bathe and nature's beverage.

We knew what he was going to say when he went up there. "If only everyone knew the simple joy of tasting cool, clear clean water." Now he was adding: "Problems can be solved. Why can't everyone realize Mother Nature has the answer? It is blowing in the wind and shining on us."

JESSICA LEE MCMILLAN

Laws of Reflection

I die in calendar boxes, inked
with black holes. I forsake
organic speeds, unable to admit
light, as to admit is to confess.
In the laws of reflection, outgoing
rays equal in-coming.

I am a blackout curtain
opened a crack for updates,
for crafted futures.
I stream light in crepuscular tunnels
of a handheld device.
By the pool chair, my LED screen
tasks in surrogate tenses.

Secondhand sun beams
off the glass curtain of the building,
races through window, tangles
in waves and reflects on the ceiling
in an aqualit mosaic
where I bend in the moment,
wistful, not so much
for unreachable light
but mourning what I deflect.

When I am light
in water I am a conduit
of beam and crest.
Like crosshairs of dream
—for a moment—
I am Earth's prism
in unmitigated wavelengths.

Then I look at the clock
and exit the pool,
unreadable and corona rimmed.
I wrap the towel around me,
and become the memento mori
of the dark universe.

JAMES MILLER ROBINSON

Beach Burial

They are burying a seven-year-old boy
In a shallow grave in the gray sand
Just above flattened heaps of kelp
And the white foam of afternoon waves
That lap onto shore at regular intervals
On a beach of the blue-green Gulf
Beneath the soaring wings of pelicans
And flutter of seagulls.

There appears to be a sister about nine,
A pair of twin brothers about five,
And a baby sister no more than three.
They work diligently packing sand
Into a cement paste with buckets of ocean
Brought by the twins' brigade as they run
Like Aztec messengers between the grave

And white foam of broken waves
Where they dip buckets and run to pour
The immortal mixture of water and salt
Over palm-packed sand and protruding head
Under the supervision of an elder brother
Who must be about twelve or thirteen.

A young woman in a black satin bikini,
Her waist and buttocks wrapped
With a sheer scarf-like skirt,
Leaves her table beneath its striped umbrella
With her platter of nuts and chopped mango
Half-eaten, her glass of shrimp cocktail empty,
And kneels beside the buried,

Pats his cheek with the palm of her hand
As he closes his eyes to absorb
The lasting sensation of the moment,
Proving trust in siblings and faith in family.
She uncovers hands on his stomach in a posture
Like Chac Mool, raises him, brushes away sand
Caked on his skin, leads him knee-deep
Into the ocean, and pours handfuls of saltwater
Over his chest, back, shoulders and head
Until his entire body glistens gold.

SCOTT T. STARBUCK

Day I Rescued Kenny from the Tualatin River, OR

Crawdading off the dock at Cook Park,
I heard one of the Meador brothers ask
"Where's Kenny?" as we all looked at bubbles
where he had been.

"He can't swim," offered someone.
I leapt to the edge of the dock
and waved my nine-year-old hand along
until my fingertips felt something

in the muddy current
which gripped me as I raised him
to surface, and we hauled up his
gasping and coughing frame.

"I nearly drowned," he eventually said.
"I couldn't see anything."
Kenny sat on the shore above
reflecting like a Buddhist monk.

We continued lowering bacon-
tipped hooks on lines
and filling jars of small
lobster-sized tails to fish with.

Later, his mother gave us a pizza
as a reward, and we laughed
and joked as the young do
before they understand the long silence

of many times there was no hand up
or rescue, and can never be.

MEGAN STOLZ

Marine Ancestor

First sponge bath screams, cold
air after wet washcloth. Once
umbilical cord is lost, first
submersion in warm water, a return

to a nine-month swim. Perhaps our first
known sound is a splash. My
pregnant body preferred water:
balance, grace, buoyancy—

my limbs could move as
I'd remembered. When my
two-year-old wears floaties, she
is fearless, her body propelled

in liquid freedom while, fishlike,
her older brother somersaults
backwards and forwards underwater.
I swear I've spotted flippers.

KATHARYN HOWD MACHAN

Wild Peacocks on the Loose

Like at Jeanne's.
Like before the hurricane
tore and flooded and buried and stripped.
Like when I visited her one March
and their good strong claws made love's own thunder
on her metal roof as they sought mates.
Like the colors in old fairy tales
princes and princesses wear to impress
each other, themselves, the writers of stories
who *ooh* over purple and *ah* over green
that shimmers amethyst emerald light
and watches with myth's deep blue eye
defying hands' transgression. Like
the early world, the one before houses,
before people learned how to cage:
God's brilliant birds who know how to flee
when oceans rise in retribution,
when black winds roar in rage.

JOEANN HART

Inheritance

Les licked the air, and sat up straight. The National Guard had arrived that afternoon, shop clerks and bankers in soldier garb stacking sandbags, protecting downtown at the cost of intensifying the blast here along the creek. He could feel their fear. He felt his own now. Water was already grinding at the earth beneath his ledge. Wished he had some nips.

No. Not yet. He needed to wait for the homeless family who camped under the bridge. He had to warn them. It was life or death. Or life and death.

He closed his eyes and saw a silver dragon charging down the canyon in a fury on the hot wind of the foehn. A red dragon had burned the trees and shrubs in the mountains last summer, allowing snow melt to rush down unimpeded. Then there's the secret ingredient to any disaster. Dust. It rises up from exposed ground, gets blown on the snow, accelerating the melting, which creates more ground, which blows more dust. The system will keep repeating itself, and then the system will keep repeating itself.

After a wildfire in another county, two inches of rain fell and it took just forty-five minutes for the flow of water to rise from 60 cubic feet per second to over 2000. He calculated the snow melt. How long did he have? While place and space can be measured as matter, time can only be measured in relation to space: The distance light travels. What was the distance to the floodgates up in the mountains? That was the time allotted.

In other words, if he stayed too much longer he was fucked.

It was all so familiar. His chromosomes remembered the Pleistocene, the great melt twenty thousand years ago, an inundation so sudden it submerged early human settlements and left behind oral histories of a flood. Les used to believe that it was only the futility of that first flood that prevented the gods from sending a second, but now he was

not so sure. They've reimagined the future without us. If that's what had to be, so be it. Water will swallow people, cities, and continents, but it will also swallow our grievous mistakes.

An angel appeared. A quiet one, wings long, slender, and slate-gray, folded like a dove's. He was surprised one could find him without a trail of empty nips. She waited with her head down. She has all the time in the world she says. All the time, measured any way he wanted. He had no time, he said, and she laughed, raising her head to look him in the face. He saw eternal love, but pity too. "Climb high or die" she said. "When the water comes down from the mountains it will be like a fist." She turned and stepped onto the roiling water, walking away until she disappeared into the billowing mist.

He stood up to leave, bumping into a dark, smirking angel, wings slamming open and closed like cemetery gates.

Coming for you.

Les found the metal shepherd's crook he used to collect trash and brandished it at the angel, holding it high. He knew what had to be done. He had always hoped that one day he would be saved by love washing over him, but he saw now, he could only be saved by letting it wash through him. "Love it or leave it," he yelled. The smirking angel gave him the finger as it backed into the creek, sinking beneath the turbulence.

As Les stored the crook on a low branch of his cottonwood tree, he saw crazed birds flying out of the canyon. He felt brush snapping, animals running for high ground, and knew that water had begun rushing like a freight train through the burnt land in the mountains. What was coming was explosive. A hawk plunged down from the heavens, its screech drowned out by the roar as it snatched a rabbit hoping to escape, driven out into the open by fear, the flood a shopping opportunity for those with flight. Talons dug deep into the rabbit's flesh, and Les felt his shoulder bleed.

The land was breaking up. Time to go. The family he waited on must have figured it out and gone elsewhere. But just as he turned to climb to safety he saw the mother way up by the bridge. She stood at the

top of the path and looked down at the creek. She held a grocery bag in one hand and a baby carrier in the other. Les shouted at her to run, but as she moved, she slipped down the embankment to where the earth melted away, and the water tore the carrier from her grip. It floated. It was floating, even as he heard the water blast out of the canyon. Les yanked himself up into the cottonwood tree by the crook just in time, then leaned over the rising water on the branch, holding tight. He lowered the crook into the water. The baby carrier was a swiftly moving thing, but he understood his purpose in life had condensed to this moment. In defiance of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, it was possible to measure speed and position simultaneously, so that the carrier's handle became perfectly aligned with the hook, nearly pulling Les in. He tightened his upper arms around the branch and used both hands to pull until he could grab the carrier's handle. Saved. The baby was his. He looked into the eyes, the silent, open mouth. Pure fear. "It's Earth, little one. I'm here, and I'm sorry."

RACHEL LOUGHLIN

Peninsula

Did I imagine you
Like lonely children
Conjure friends
To come bleary beside
When the whole house is sleeping
When no one else ever
Set the alarm in the dark
To stand in the low breakers
intent watching the horizon
For the first kindling
Of impossible light
Seeing me
Like I was made of the same fire
But willed into being
Because I so badly
Needed it to be true
Always rising and setting
On separate shores
Of the same ocean
A thin scrawl of sand between
Easily flooded by every storm
But asking that
Even if we had to build
A house on stilts
Above always rising tides
Even if it didn't last
That this view:
A mere hour
Of incandescence
Would be worth It

TIM BASCOM

Wave Theory

Coming down the steep zigzag trail in the forest, terra firma is still underfoot, and though the stairstepped Pacific-coast pines are quite different than the cottonwoods of our midwestern plains, they are still trees and we are still ourselves, a family living in a slightly heightened but normal state, minds prone to distraction—cellphones, baggies of trail mix, yesterday's quarrels.

On the beach, though, all distractions fall away. There are no deadlines or commitments. The waves come and go, come and go, hushing the internal racket. They chant an unfamiliar yet familiar mantra—say the same thing until it is everything: Be here, shshsh. Now, shshsh. Here, shshsh.

Even as we stand on the sand, gazing toward Asia, the waves take us out with them. We float away on the rhythmic, rise-and-fall breath-of-the-planet.

Earth, air, water, all come together here on the Oregon shore, chilly under gray hovering clouds. And those three primal elements conjure up the fourth, glowing in the soul. Near naked, we dive into the waves. They swallow us up, too frigid for thought. But when we step out, we are candle flames in our skin. Alight and utterly alive.

SHUTTA CRUM

He Tells Me He Loves Another

The waters of the creek are tannin suffused.
I can't see the bottom—and on the shore
there's a hole opening, my feet are sliding in.

Leaves twist in the sluggish current,
not knowing which way to go.
When I turn to you, I see you have already gone
into that lone cerebral country
where landscape is logical and merciless.

You will trample over the precisely laid-out fields
of your mind until you've found a few weedy words
to yank out—roots and all, to offer me.

VICTOR PEARN

Essay on Water

for Reg Saner 1928–2021

I

Is the ocean's
salty water potentially potable?
Out of respect
for my thesis advisor
I'll try not to imitate his successful,
intellectual style of articulate writing;
comparing and contrasting our lives is
like comparing and contrasting a constant,
and everlastingly
expanding cumulus above
a yellow desert-cactus blossom.
Although, both he and I
were born in the same
sabbath shire of
downstate Illinois,
where rain always fell heavy
after a loud thunder.
We both played tag
with friends
near the Illinois Braille
and Sight Saving School.
We both had a kidney removed.

II

He preferred hiking alone
in the desert
because the wind
didn't have much to say

there, unlike the wind talk heard
in Rocky Mountain aspen groves.
And the original desert dwellers
Anasazi always built
their incredible habitat
near water.
When Reg put a letter into my file
arguing against continuing
for the doctorate I thought, "that is narrow minded";
I now realize
it was compelled by his fatherly facet
his reason:
"He has two small daughters to provide for."

III

He and I are graduates of Illinois University.
He in Champaign; me in Springfield,
then known as "the Berkeley"
of the Midwest. He accepted a Fulbright
and studied in Italy;
I refused the Illinois Fulbright offer, from Professor
Dennis Camp who was also the curator of
the Vachel Lindsay House, so I
did not go to Paris to write poems.
I always felt guilty about Professor Camp
when I learned of his suicide
thinking, "If I only had accepted the Fulbright,
would he be alive today?"

IV

If I had, I might not be in Colorado.
Reg Saner might not have been my professor.
He wrote "Essay on Air," and "Essay on Earth."
And so I carry on with "Essay on Water."
Oh, but I love the way "Essay on Earth," contains
the words: the sound "say" and the visual "ear."

And people always mispronounce names.
Strangers call him "Sane-r," but he called himself "S-honer."
Because I knew him
I hear his voice
when I read his essays and poems.
So you might ask, "What on earth
does this have to do with water?"

V

That's what I'd like to know.
Back when I was a grad student
Reg came to my poetry reading,
introduced himself to me.
I enjoyed his writing courses.
Six years after I'd graduated
he invited me to go with him to a
reading in Denver.
Afterwards he introduced me
to Mary Oliver.
I'd been teaching at
a Denver university.
Shortly afterwards I
received a call from
an English department
administrator saying
I could now come and register
for doctoral level courses
I didn't go back thinking,
"I am too old."

VI

In this "Essay on Water,"
and in the desert west now
water's a diminishing desperado.
Buffalo wallows, ponds, creek-beds, more sand than water.
Reservoirs. Shrink into wavy lines of dry air.

Cumulus collapse into blue
disappear, like a candleflame in a mine
out of oxygen.
Drinkable water…
decreases and decreases,
as the earth keeps on cracking and drying up.
Oh, yes there's, "Water, water, everywhere,"
rising in surf around the globe
steadily and steadily on the rise.

PATRICIA WAUGH

Water

H_2O molecules,
2 Hydrogen atoms and 1 Oxygen atom combined,
Science describes the inanimate,
The processes, not the soul,
I was a mermaid child,
I knew nothing of chemistry,
But I knew water,
I could float on it,
It would hold me,
But I couldn't hold it,
It slipped through my hands,
I could swim under it if I held my breath,
But I couldn't breathe it,
It cooled me from the heat of the sun,
If I stayed in the water too long my skin wrinkled and my lips
turned blue,
I could walk into it in slow motion,
I could move through it,
But not like I could move through air,
It pushed back,
I could drink it and it passed through me,
I could mix it to make things,
Water and sand became mudpies,
Water came down from the sky as rain,
Scrubbing the air clean,
Washing the grass,
Making me wet and slippery,
Water moved things,
Slowly over time with gently lapping waves,
Or quickly with rushing waterfalls,
Water's surface mirrored back to me the surrounding landscapes
and the cloudy sky,
Until I splashed and the reflection disappeared,

Water brought me joy and laughter
But there was always a hidden danger of water overwhelming me,
Stopping my breath,
And taking my life,
Water on my bare skin was soft and silky,
In my dreams I lived and breathed underwater,
Delighted at my newfound abilities,
In my dreams I moved on top of the water,
Skimming the surface without effort.
It had secrets to tell me,
Summer secrets were loud and raucous,
In the winter water became solid, cold, and quiet,
I could not float or swim or splash,
But I could stand on it and it didn't move,
There were different kinds of water,
Lakes and streams,
Oceans and swamps,
Swimming pools and ponds,
It was transparent,
I could see through it,
Yet it was also blue, green, or muddy brown,
It called to me through sunshine sparkles dancing on the surface,
Its waves were my favorite lullabies,
And they still are,
Now I use it to make my garden grow,
To wash my clothes and myself,
To make my food,
To take my medicine,
To make coffee and tea,
I know water,
Water is magic,
Water is life.

KELLEEN ZUBICK

Ritual

It must have been the circumscribed
aspect of the sunlight—
approachable, laid out in distortion
from the window on the pile,
the creamy den rug, a possibility
of just now, of squeezing in—
that led to such solitary extravagance:
bathing in a patch of sun,
a practice that starts
on the shadowed edge: swift lift of shirt
and shirk of anything under,
the *maille* of colder air roughing skin,
then stepping in—not testing
but outstretched, tall, full-measure
then sinking, knees to chest, soaking
in temporary wonderment
where she can weave her hands
through the motey air, lean
back and let the dazzling
countenance wash her hair.

WALLY SWIST

Redtail atop the Larch

How you shake out your broad wings,
cleansing them in the rain, how you keep
spreading those pinions with the storm
still beating down on you atop
the enormous larch, whose crooked crown
points skyward, all the while you release
your hoarse cry into the lashing wind
and rain, losing your footing on a branch,
then regaining your perch with the vice grip
of your talons, undulating your wings
again, washing away whatever it is
you are trying to clean, possibly oil from
the cove at the marina, cleansing
and cleansing each of those chocolate-brown
wings and shaking them off, as a taunt
or in a fury, over and over again in
expressive heaves and ripples of your body
atop the larch, making the racks of the highest
branches rock in the rain and the wind,
with you as avatar, an emissary of the divine,
in shaking your heavy wet feathers,
by just unleashing the wildness from
within you, from your aerie, pivoting
from one branch to another to continue
to cleanse those wings you raise in the air
one at a time, the rain falling harder
and harder to the rhythm of your dance.

MATT DENNISON

Wrappings

The dog without
sense enough
to realize he
should be
drowning
in the flooded
river instead
of dancing
in it like some
long-tongued
grinning idiot
finally sees
his hysterical
would-be
child savior
and stops,
stiff-legged,
water cascading
his back as he
gallops over
to lick those
tears in heartless
fantastic greeting
before dashing
back to scatter
the wrappings
of ecstasy.

HANNAH RODABAUGH

Habitat Diorama (Spectacled Cormorant)

Now we have whole prisons dedicated to the lost. We call these Habitat Dioramas, each painted scene cast in bas-relief against an artificial stillness. Stuffed birds in comical poses—a spectacled cormorant's neck bent like a scythe—an erudite gesture of Dinosauria before badly-painted water and lush forest. The dead awash in exposure as photogenic negative—unwilling as in flux—the reverse of film's intention. These look-alikes cannot stand in for the living no matter how much we try to make them—not even as apologia or placard for our guilt. The scenery cannot take us from this statuary to something moving, cannot breathe the salt air over us, the sea wailing beyond us; it will not get us to remember something lost. When an animal is lost, it's lost forever. The museum becomes an unlikely cemetery for all our buried hopes, all the worlds we couldn't save. The words we could have said to them unspoken in our throat.

HANNAH RODABAUGH

Last Sighting of the Dodo (Journal Entry)

> *We drove them together into one place in such a manner that we could catch them with our hands, and when we held one of them by its leg, the others came running as fast as they could to its assistance, and by which they were caught and made prisoners also.*
>
> *—Volkert Evertsz, 1662*

We watched them walking towards us, bobbing their heads,
black feathers waving like a flag; they were walking into
a future they'd never get to walk out of—a future of changes
done to any landscape, riveting clouds of steel over every
inlet, river, bay. We watched them walking towards us.
Caught one, twisted its leg till it cried out. Watched the
others run from trees. Watched them twisting in our nets.
We used them up, their breaths bubbling, bodies to the sea.
We twisted words and feelings, doomed them for irredeemable
gestures of loyalty. Carolina parakeets easier to kill when they
were flocked around their dead. We reward the selfless hero;
we will not reward the dodo. We reward our own emotions,
but we use them in most animals. We use them to defend
what we've always known, we've always been afraid of:
that the using of your kindness is the worst way of turning
your empathy against you, until you're broken in two ways,
and nothing that you know of can ever repair them both.

CAROL NOLDE

The Taste of Water

We poured water into the pump
worked the creaking handle
up and down, up and down
until pressure built,

forced the arm to press hard
as water rose, then gushed
a fountain from the spout.
Carefully we carried the bucket,

rivulets tracing its sides,
set it in the wooden dry sink.
The dipper we hooked over its edge
drifted to the bottom.

Unlike a chilled glass, the tin rim
imparted its own flavor,
mingled with minerals.
Grandmother relished its taste.

"Nothing like our water."
A child, I thought, "Isn't water, water?
Isn't it all the same?"
But no.

Maybe it was the feel of the dipper against the lips,
maybe the sight of the stream that rushed from the spout,
a pure outpouring from the heart of earth
that was ours.

CAROL NOLDE

Grateful

Each morning I plunge my hands into warm water,
let them soak, and like food stuck in the bottom of a pot,
arthritic fingers loosen, become flexible.

I'm grateful for the water that pours from the faucet,
the basement heater that warms it.
On the farm we drew water from a well,

heated it on the cook stove,
thought twice before we emptied the basin
in the kitchen sink, where I bathed

in the dark, lit by the overflow of light
from the living room where the family
gathered nightly for tv.

Once a week I washed my hair
in rain water caught in the cistern,
pumped into a bucket in the dry sink.

Was it the rain water arriving through clear air
or the vinegar we added to the final rinse
that left my hair silky and shining?

Now the air, no longer clear,
my hair, no longer silky and shining,
but I am grateful for water pouring from the shower head,

the shampoo and soap suds disappearing down the drain,
all from a giving source to a receiving source
I will never see.

NANCY NELSON

A Few PCBs

Last week the young woman who cut my hair kept up a steady stream of one-sided conversation while I sat in the chair. Callie grew up nearby in southeastern Michigan—a happy childhood playing in parks and swimming in lakes. She laughed, describing the Ford Lake of that time. "Oh yeah, we thought it was great—we'd swim around all day! I remember all the gas and oil floating on top. Didn't hurt me any, though. Not anybody else, either."

Pollution? Hailing from the Downriver area south of Detroit, I thought that was my specialty. The suburbs along the Detroit River and its tributaries are filled with factories large and small that have discharged chemical waste into the waters since the late 1800s. By the 1940s, nearly every trickle was fouled.

In the town where I grew up, the Frank and Poet Drain—we kids euphemistically referred to it as "the creek"—choked on bald tires, shopping carts, cardboard boxes, dead animals, and slimy sludge. Who cared? With no fear of what invisible agents might lurk in the bottom muck, we spent summer days poking around, netting crayfish, wading, turning over rocks. In a 1970s high school biology class, we focused an ecology unit on the Frank and Poet, only to classify its state as dismal (with a "poor distribution of benthic organisms").

The Detroit River stretches from the city itself south to Lake Erie. The towns along the river's twentieth century shore—the American side—were punctuated by Great Lakes Steel, Wyandotte Chemical Corporation, Monsanto, Chrysler Engine, Ford Stamping, and three coal-fueled power plants. Pennsalt Chemicals filled the air with stinking sulfur; McLouth Steel lit the night sky a glowing orange. The factories dominated our lives—jobs, houses, politics, public works, recreation, education, and the very air we breathed.

Built in the days when factory effluent seemed insignificant in comparison to the endless bounty of Michigan's lakes and rivers, these plants were regarded for decades as signs of progress. But by the

early ’60s, heavy contamination had spoiled the Detroit River so seriously that no one could ignore it. Fishermen threw back their catches—except for the folks who needed them for dinner.

On summer days in Trenton’s Elizabeth Park, my mom forbade me to put my feet in the river water that washed over rocks on the shore.

“It sparkles!” I said. My sandaled toes perched just inches above the water’s rhythmic lapping.

“No, it’s polluted!”

The word imbedded itself in my five-year-old brain as a bogeyman—poisonous, evil, life-threatening.

. . . . .

A recurring dream started then. I’m crossing Detroit’s massive Ambassador Bridge to Canada on foot, gusts of wind heaving the metal beams and cables up, down, north, south. Instead of passing over on a solid concrete walkway, I hop from rickety wooden slat to slat, trying to miss the gaping holes where rotten boards have fallen away. Far below the swaying bridge I can see the Detroit River—swift, filthy, menacing. Only fancy footwork keeps me on course. Miraculously, I cross the span and do not fall in. I awake, sweating.

. . . . .

The last few family trips to Lake Erie’s Sterling State Park found us on a beach littered with dead fish—alewives. Sometimes Mom allowed me to swim, but she warned, “Don’t put your head underwater.” She didn’t use the P-word, but I understood her meaning.

. . . . .

Ford Lake, where Callie swam, is man-made, the product of damming the Huron River between Ypsilanti and Belleville. Such a lovely name—”beautiful town,” in French. Ford Motor Company named the lake, of course. One of the company’s components plants, now closed, rests, solid and visible along the water’s edge. Adjacent

lies Belleville (originally Edison) Lake, also artificial. Damming provided hydroelectric power to Ford and other industrial concerns, which sent their unpleasant by-products burbling directly into the lake and then downstream, unhindered.

We kids splashed in the prosperity of our forebears.

. . . . .

My junior year of college, Mom was diagnosed with breast cancer, had a brutal radical mastectomy, then chemotherapy. I ran back and forth—college, home, back again, struggling with classes. A young man—a chemistry major I was convinced was the great love of my life—graduated, leaving me behind for Harvard.

My dream visits me again in the night. I stumble on the Ambassador's rotten slats, stomach seizing, feeling the swinging expanse is more treacherous than ever. But once again I reach the Canadian side. To no one in particular I whisper, "I'm still here."

. . . . .

Again and again, my dream visits me, sustains me, right on cue. Mom dies, another boyfriend leaves me.

In my sixties comes another alignment of emotional slashings: my last child heads off to college, my father's long and painful decline into dementia ends in death. Divorce, after twenty-four years of marriage. I wallow in the isolated life of pandemic seclusion.

I'm awake this time when I console myself. I'm from Downriver. The river's heavy metals, polychlorinated biphenyls, and coal-fire residues have inoculated me, given me resilience. As always… I'm still here. I'm sure of this now.

JOSEPH MILOSCH

Song to Brigid

Song to Brigid,
Irish goddess of spring

After an all-night rain,
these Irish lakes are clear.
The trout are restless. They swim
near the shore and underneath
the shadows of the hooded crows.

The air is icy and clear.
After leaping for a fly,
a fish splashes, and under the water,
boulders take the shape
of a woman napping.

Driven by the arctic wind,
thunder clouds darken
over the farms in the far fields.
Lightning flashes, and
a small frog hops into the lake.

The land becomes quiet,
a chapel inside a church.
Are the lapping of waves
whispers of water fairies?

The muffled wind becomes
a creaking church door,
and the crows mumble their caws
as if they're not allowed
to speak their language.

Believe me when I say
that now rain falls into the lake
like pearls. Now Brigid
steps out heroic in her nakedness
and nobler than the sun.

JOAN MAZZA

The Scent of Memory 5[1]

Houses hold signature odors, combined
scents of what's inside—antique furniture
with their funk and fust of wood rot, old glue
of wallpaper, and abandoned mice nests.
Sound Beach bungalow, beloved summers
spent alone with mother, barefoot beach walks
where wet sand and salt water merge to lay
down memories of fishing, clamming. They stick
for good. In any rural country home,
those times return. Raw clams for breakfast,
evening walks with grape vine fragrance, the scythe's
release of sweetness from wild spring onions
clustered in the weeds. All your life you've been
searching for the way back to cricket din.

1 Part of a sequence of 24 sonnets.

MARY ELIZABETH BIRNBAUM

How Sleep is Shared

Time opens and closes like a morning glory.

I am standing in one of the two tubs
crowded in my small bathroom,
sequestered by a curtain. I wear falling water.
There is always a choice. In the other tub
my mother takes a bath.

Her face is shuttered to me, but evidently
she is occupying her body again,
since she and my aunt are talking together about when
the barn burned down on grandma's farm
and Annabel the cat burned her toes rescuing her kittens.

In the back yard, Merlin the polydactyl cat
takes a powerful leap so he can fly
over the forty-foot lily pond.

Snow floods the withered earth,
but my car is as red as summer.
When I open the trunk my raised garden beds are inside,
brimming with kale, collards, and Swiss chard in mid-leap.

The trunk is also a cooler, and I lift out
translucent pitchers of water to give my sister
glass after glass, because I can feel how thirsty she is.

Possibly to tip the glass is to greet lotus pose.

How easy to realize the body is only a postcard.
One side shows a landscape with figures, and on the other,
under a vague postmark, someone has written,
Having a strange time in a strange place.

Wish you were here.

JANE C. ELKIN

Thicker Than Water

I find my mother sitting lakeside on the dock in her Madras shorts with a pristine watercolor set from the dime store on her lap and a white sketchpad with the beginnings of a sunset scene. The way she dabs the brush from orange to red and back to orange again to create just the right syrupy shade of tangelo, it's magic. That bright orb shines through a wash of marigold sky to set off a teepee whose crimson comes straight from the box's eight pools of color. Having, in my six-year-old opinion, just mastered coloring, I am impressed and intrigued.

The black water at our feet is alive with damselflies like gliders in peacock and fuchsia, maneuvering on outsized diaphanous wings. They hover and dart, alone and in tandem, alighting on pontoon feet—oblivious of the double-winged dragonflies with their cargo-hold thoraxes and engines a-clatter. Such power from silvery veins of nothingness, it's almost enough to make me believe in fairies.

She's humming my favorite song, "Redwing", about a lovesick Indian maid, and when I join in, she improvises a harmony as the sun inches lower toward the treetops. After crowning the teepee with brown frame-poles and a black zigzag border the same as on Charlie Brown's sweater, she sets to work mixing black into the green of the palette to create a slurry for pine trees. The convincing beauty of her inverted V's is awe-inspiring, but I am distraught at the sullied pools of pigment in our new paint set—new no more.

She finishes her landscape with a carpet of sandy brown, then holds it at arm's length to admire. Looking from the picture to the stained pallet from which it was born, I see that the blue and purple spots of paint, the dragonfly colors, are the only ones that remain untouched. We must not have as much in common as I thought.

LIZ ABELING

Dear Cindy

Did you know what you took, when you moved her gardens?

Today, I was at a friend's house. At the edge of his property is a little gurgle of water, babbling and racing over smooth stones, and if you're quiet enough and you ignore the cars on the through-way below you can hear the same sounds that our river used to make. I hadn't realized how much I missed it.

You didn't know it was a river; you couldn't see it with my eyes, and that isn't your fault, either. You weren't four years old asking Grandma if there were fish that lived there, and you weren't seven and weeping when Grandpa pulled a particularly beautiful weed out from the cracks in the stone patio you'd later tear from the soil. You didn't spend hours imagining fairies dancing around the trees, turning mushroom caps into circus tents, weaving crowns of clover.

But that speaks to the point, I think: that place was never yours to take.

To you, I'm sure it was just a small trickle in a drainpipe, an eyesore if it was anything. And to be fair, I think that part's still there. I doubt you'd reroute tributaries just to remove a part of my childhood, even if you had those powers. Honestly, I doubt that much of what you did was malicious at all.

That doesn't mean I'm not angry, and it doesn't mean I forgive you, or that I think I ever can. It's just that I know we're all the heroes in our own stories, and while I can't see your reasons, I'm sure you had them, and I'm sure they felt very righteous and justified.

I hear you moved out of my grandparents' house, that you're living in a condo in Greenwich. I thought I'd feel relieved when you left that place, like it would let their ghosts rest somehow, but I finally visited their graves and I think they've been sleeping for a long time. I don't think either of them really hated you the way I did. I think it was me that was restless.

It's just that I tried driving by after my accident. So much got knocked around in me when I fell, reshuffled and buried and broken, but there were some memories I could tell were so very important and I wanted, so badly, to hold on to those. I thought maybe if I could just see their yard then something in me would wake up, and instead of the patio and the trees and the rhododendrons there was this rolling expanse of suburban green, and it looked just like the other lawns on the road, and if I didn't know it was the one on the corner, I'd have missed it.

You threw it away, just like the wrapping paper you teased her for keeping, like her boxes full of old letters and the perfume bottles she promised me. I wonder how quickly you did it, whether the landscape rocks and sixty-year rosebush shared a dumpster with the photo albums. I'm sure you thought their lawn looked beautiful, like that—mowed and uniform and tidy and quiet. I'm sure you meant to improve the place, clear the clutter, raise the property value.

I think it's the letters that bother me most. The rest is background noise, scenery. You can't throw away my memories, not really.

We only saved one box of Grandma's letters. It was a fluke, really, that we managed to get the ones we did. Grandma and Grandpa got separated for a while, you see, while she ran back to Kentucky to care for her mother and he stayed in New York to build their home. It's when he realized he wanted to marry her, and those letters carry the story of their engagement, the story of her mother's death, of their first plans for my uncle. The rest is lost: the letters from the exchange student they hosted for a year, from the World War II vets who, she'd admit coyly in later years, had sent my grandmother more than one proposal from the trenches.

I don't remember her digging them out often, but if she ever needed to, her whole history could be traced through those boxes, like prayers to another life.

I called the patio Secret Place, you know. It wasn't inventive, sure, but I was young. I've been looking at pictures, lately. I thought it was hidden from the road but that doesn't seem to be true. I thought the

stones were blue and pink and moss-covered, but the camera tells me they were gray.

Maybe it wouldn't be the same, even if you let it be. Maybe I couldn't really go back anyway. Maybe you didn't destroy anything that wouldn't naturally erode with time, and maybe growing up really does the changing for us. Maybe water is just water, and the river that birthed that little drainpipe trickle came from the same place as every river. Maybe I can visit them all here in Pittsburgh, when I walk under the bridges that span the Allegheny and watch the current twist.

The sound of that babble will be a little bigger, and a little louder—but it will be the same.

ANITA SKEEN

Tracks and the River

I grew up
with them,
the tracks
and the river,
coal trains
chugging,
tugs shoving
barges,
bodies of
black rocks.
Deep whistle
in the night,
tangible as fog.
Near the end,
my mother
named a train
the saddest
sound she knew.

Bike bumps
across the ties.
Hot summer
day. Dive from
the bent-over oak.
Cold dark
water. Swim
to the light,
seam in the day.

I'm stitched
with tracks
and the river:
bone and blood,
story and song.

ANITA SKEEN

Low Water Bridge

the family called it, the row
of planks nailed down to beams
that crossed the rocky stream
we drove over on our way to Goshen
Church. Sometimes the water trickled
across mossy stone, other times it gushed.

Crossing that bridge, we entered
my father's past. Much of his family
lay in the churchyard, granite stones
going back generations. His father
was not there, buried in a small plot
now on private land, loved ones lost

in the 1918 flu epidemic. Once,
as an adult, I found those fenced-in
graves, high on a hill, my grandfather
and a handful of family sheltered
by a century old black walnut tree.
Could I ever find them again?

One Decoration Day, when I was young,
at the cemetery we planted petunias,
geraniums, marigolds. A storm rolled
in, thunder reverberating in the hills.
The angels are bowling, my Mother said.
We packed up, piled in our new 1955

Ford Fairlane, turned down the winding
road. At Low Water Bridge a torrent
rushed over boards, rising over the banks
onto the road. My father halted, decision
to be made, Mother and my grandmother
urging him not to cross. In memory, I see

the muddy water swirling, much like flash
floods in arroyos in the southwest,
my grandmother's fear rising just as fast,
my mother saying, Johnny, don't try it!
The bridge was old, boards rotted. I imagine
us a ship as water seeps under the door.

My father, ten years out of WWII, a Purple Heart
and Bronze Star in his dresser drawer, makes
the platoon sergeant's decision: we're going on.
We can't back up. We can't stay put. Water
pours down from the sky, up from the stream.
The car crawls forward, turtle-like, all of us

hunched in our protective shell. My grandmother's
hands steeple in prayer. Mother makes tight fists.
Daddy's hands grip the wheel, at 10:00 and 2:00,
his body a rocket about to pop. I watch through
the car window as brush churns by. We rock
like a covered wagon in prairie ruts, slosh on,

almost to the other side. We rise up
the incline, rise onto the gravel road, rise
out of the water, our ark safe from the flood.
Fifty years later, the bridge remains. I drive
to the cemetery alone, rattle over new boards,
scan the sky for clouds, check how low the water.

ANITA SKEEN

lyrical abstraction

after Helen Frankenthaler's Mountains and Sea (1952)

Splashes of blue, periwinkle and cobalt
wings lifting the image, bottom
to top, and green, sage
of the New Mexico desert,
early spring mountains in West Virginia

and red—apples, blood, lipstick
on a tissue, rubber boots for winters
long gone. Rising through the whirlwind,
wind-whipped color, fabric swatches,
a diaphanous shape, ghost

of a memory: my mother, most
of whose years were spent in mountains
with ice on winter roads, but who longed for
the ocean, waves repeating their coming
and going, curl and foam, and she out beyond

the breakers, side stroking, white bathing cap
blooming a blue dahlia, swimming back and forth,
and I'm a child on the shore (see sand dumped
on the paint?) watching, loving the bright suits
of the women, all-day sucker swirls of beach

umbrellas, even my sunburn (see splotches
of pink?) not thinking at all about waves
of pine, white caps of snow, the path (see
it curving, right to upper left?) that I follow
into the woods, into the future. And the past.

ANITA SKEEN

My Father Writes a Poem for My Mother

"When you write about your mother passing,"
he says to me from beside her bed where he has spent
the night, "and I know you will, be sure to say
last night it rained, that the rain she asked about
each day played for her on the moonsoaked river
and that, in the early hours, the birds
lit up the sky with song and the bush out front,
the bleeding heart, which all winter sagged
so sick and scraggly, opened out this morning,
the green leaves licked by tongues of rain,
the little hearts lined up like get-well cards
on her dresser scarf, and that out back,
there on the east side of the house,
where the bud has been so small
and tight, the amaryllis burst this morning
into bloom, and that it's raining
still, it's raining still."

ANITA SKEEN

Swimmer

When I heard my mother's voice
for the last time on the phone
I said I'd be there soon.
"That'll be nice, honey. Bye."
Then she stopped smiling, stopped
eating, stopped talking about the rain.
Before I arrived, she was already swimming
the channel of dreams toward that beautiful shore,
awash in the waves of a soft blue blanket,
the deep breaths of her last laps
audible in the room.

As a kid, I remember watching her
at Daytona Beach, out beyond
the breakers where my father and I rode
the canvas raft, swimming up, then back,
white bathing cap bobbing like a gull
on the blue. I never feared for myself,
dumped under by the churn, rising
with a mouthful of crushed shell,
sputtering to breathe, but I was anxious
that my mother swam too far out, too far away,
that the current was too strong,
that she could not swim back.
Her stroke was sure, steady, unfaltering.
Even though her father drowned,
she loved her buoyancy in the ocean.
She did not believe in evolution.
I believe she retained fins.

When I saw the surf swelling,
thunderclouds rumbling in, I called
to her as she stroked back and forth,
back and forth. She never heard my voice.

She heard the hymn of the waves, rejoiced
as they rose beneath her like a final
heartbeat, lifting her on their feathery curl.
"Mother," I called, as she dipped
out of sight, "Mother, swim back."

CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

Liz Abeling is a writer hailing from Pittsburgh, PA. She spends most of her daylight hours haunting a cubicle in a glass company, but when she's more interesting, she's also the CNF editor for *After Happy Hour Review*. Her work can be found or is forthcoming in *The Fiddlehead*, *Bat City Review*, and *Metonym*.

Philip Rösel Baker lives in a converted barn in a remote hamlet in the East of England, UK. Each poem he writes is a milestone on a personal journey of discovery. He reads and performs them live at a poetry bar in Ipswich, and they have been published on websites and in anthologies, most recently in *On a Knife Edge*, a collection of poems about climate change. Last year, he won the George Crabbe Poetry Prize.

Tim Bascom's newest book, *Climbing Lessons*, is a collection of brief playful essays about the father-son bond in his Kansas-based clan. Bascom is the author of four other books, including two prize-winning memoirs: *Chameleon Days* and *Running To The Fire*. Today, he directs the Kansas Book Festival and teaches writing through the Iowa Summer Writing Festival.

Mary Elizabeth Birnbaum was born, raised, and educated in New York City. Mary's translation of the Haitian poet Felix Morisseau-Leroy has been published in *The Massachusetts Review*, the anthology *Into English* (Graywolf Press), and in *And There Will Be Singing, An Anthology of International Writing* by The Massachusetts Review, 2019. Her work has appeared in *Lake Effect*, *J Journal*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Soundings East*, *Barrow Street*, and other literary journals. In 2022 Mary received two nominations for a Pushcart Prize.

Roger Camp lives in Seal Beach, CA, where he muses over his orchids, walks the pier, plays blues piano and spends afternoons reading under an Angel's Trumpet with a charm of hummingbirds. When he's not at home, he's photographing in the Old World. His work has appeared in *Pank*, *Rust+Moth*, *Gulf Coast*, *Southern Poetry Review* and *Nimrod*.

Craig Cotter was born in 1960 in New York and has lived in California since 1986. His poems have appeared in *Southword* (Ireland), *Chiron Review*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Court Green*, *The Gay & Lesbian Review*, *Great Lakes Review*, *Hawai'i Review*, & *Tampa Review.* His fourth book of poems, *After Lunch with Frank O'Hara*, is currently available on Amazon. Fore more information, www.craigcotter.com.

Shutta Crum's poems have appeared in many journals since the 1970s. A Pushcart Prize nominee, her chapbook *When You Get Here* won a gold Royal Palm Literary Award. Her newest book is *The Way to the River*. Her books for young readers include 13 picture books and 3 novels—all published traditionally. She edits a monthly newsletter: *The Wordsmith's Playground*. For more information, www.shutta.com.

Matt Dennison is the author of *Kind Surgery*, from Urtica Press (Fr.), and *Waiting for Better*, from Main Street Rag Press.

Jane C. Elkin is a language teacher and singer inspired by a long memory for minutiae. A graduate of Bennington Writing Seminars, she has published one chapbook, *World Class: Poems Inspired by the ESL Classroom*, and other musings in such publications as *Popula.com*, *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, *Ruminate*, and *The Best of Ducts.com*. Her major work-in-progress is *Mother's Ink: A Momoir in Handwriting Analysis*. She splits her time between the Chesapeake Bay and coastal Maine. To learn more, visit http://www.jcelkin.net

Diane Glancy is the author of *Island of the Innocent, a Consideration of the Book of Job*, *A Line of Driftwood, the Ada Blackjack Story*, and *Home is the Road, Wandering the Land, Shaping the Spirit*. *Psalm to Whom(e)* is forthcoming in 2023.

JoeAnn Hart is the author of a collection of short environmental fiction, *Highwire Act & Other Tales of Survival*, which won the 2022 Hudson Prize and is forthcoming from Black Lawrence Press in September 2023. She is working on a novel from which this story is extrapolated. Her work explores the relationship between humans, their environments, and non-human creatures.

Richard Holinger's work has appeared in *Southern Review*, *Witness*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Hobart*, *Iowa Review*, *Boulevard*, and has garnered four Pushcart Prize nominations. Books include *North of Crivitz* (poetry) and *Kangaroo Rabbits and Galvanized Fences* (essays). He has a PhD in Creative Writing from UIC, and has taught English and creative writing on the university and secondary school levels. He lives northwest of Chicago far enough for fox, deer, and turkeys to cross his lawn.

Eric Machan Howd (Ithaca, NY) is a poet, musician, and educator. His poems have appeared in such publications as *Slant*, *Slab*, *Stone Canoe*, *River City*, and *Nimrod*. He recently published his fifth collection of poetry, *Universal Monsters*, through the Orchard Street Press. He is currently working on an erasure project using a work by author H.P. Lovecraft.

Elizabeth Hykes is a retired Clinical Social Worker who has used writing to manage the many thoughts and feelings each day showers on her throughout her life. She has been published in *Plum Tree Tavern*, *Humans of the World*, *Sepia Quarterly*, *Paddle Shots* and others.

Lorraine Jeffery has won numerous prizes and published many poems in journals including *Clockhouse*, *Canary*, *Rockhurst Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Orchard Street*, *Two Hawks,* and *Bacopa Press*. Her first book is titled *When the Universe Brings Us Back*, 2022, and her chapbook titled *Tethers*, by Kelsay Books, will be forthcoming.

Karen Kilcup, a New Englander with long farming roots, is the Elizabeth Rosenthal Excellence Professor of American Literature, Environmental & Sustainability Studies, and Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at UNC Greensboro. Her forthcoming poetry collection *The Art of Restoration* was awarded the 2021 Winter Goose Poetry Prize, and her forthcoming chapbook *Red Appetite* received the 2022 Helen Kay Chapbook Poetry Prize.

Mary Kuykendall is the author of *River Roots*, a collection of thirty-seven short stories about growing up in West Virginia. It won the 2008 George Garrett Award and was published by Texas Review Press. She has written over 250 short stories: some published by small press and others read at venues such as the Faulkner Festival in New Orleans, the Chicago Book Fair, and Soul-Making in San Francisco.

Rachel Loughlin graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University where she received the Undergraduate Poetry Award. She is a graphic designer, eternally optimistic gardener, runner, muralist, and writer living in Richmond, Virginia. Rachel explores the intersections of nature, sensuality, and deconstructed spirituality through her poetry. Her work appears in *Pure Slush Books*, *Green Ink Poetry*, *Paddler Press*, *Flora Fiction Literary Magazine*, *Moss Piglet*, *Fathom*, *Plum Tree Tavern*, *Kind of a Hurricane Press*, and others.

Katharyn Howd Machan's most recent published collections are *Dark Side of the Spoon* (Moonstone Press, 2022) and *A Slow Bottle of Wine* (Comstock Writers, Inc., 2020). A professor in the Department of Writing at Ithaca college, she lives in Central New York with her beloved spouse Eric Machan Howd. After many years of coordinating the Ithaca Community Poets and directing the national Feminist Women's Writing Workshops, Inc., she was selected to be her county's first poet laureate. Her poems have appeared in numerous magazines, anthologies, textbooks, and stage productions, and she has edited three thematic anthologies, most recently a tribute collection celebrating the inspiration of Adrienne Rich.

Joan Mazza worked as a medical microbiologist, psychotherapist, and taught workshops on understanding dreams and nightmares. She is the author of six books, including *Dreaming Your Real Self*. Her poetry has appeared in *The Comstock Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Slant*, *Poet Lore*, and *The Nation*. She lives in rural central Virginia and writes every day.

Jessica Lee McMillan (she/her) is a poet and civil servant whose work has appeared in *The Humber Literary Review*, *Train Poetry Journal*, *Pinhole Poetry*, *Lover's Eye Press*, *Blank Spaces*, *SORTES* and

others. Her first chapbook is coming in Fall 2023 via Rose Garden Press. Jessica lives in New Westminster, BC, with her little family, large dog, and shelves of books and records.

Joseph Milosch has four books of prose and poetry. *A Walk with Breast Cancer* was selected for a San Diego City Library Local Poet Award. His book *Homeplate Was the Heart & Other Stories* was nominated for the American Book Award and the Eric Hoffer, best Small Press Publication award.

Nancy Nelson has published several essays in Michigan newspapers and other publications. Two memoirs describe her high school years under the spell of a charismatic teacher and college study abroad in Spain. The 2017 Screencraft Cinematic Short Story Contest selected one of her short stories as a quarterfinalist. A former epidemiologist, she now live in Ann Arbor. Find more at nancynelsonauthor.com.

Carol Nolde lives in Westfield, New Jersey, where she taught English and creative writing and for many years was an associate editor for *Merlyn's Pen*, a national magazine of teenage writers. Her poems have appeared in many publications including the anthologies *Knowing Stones: Poems of Exotic Places*, the second edition of *Love Is Ageless-Stories About Alzheimer's Disease*, *Child of My Child*, *Joys of the Table*, and *Forgotten Women*. Her chapbook *Comfort in Stone* was published by Finishing Line Press 2014, her chapbook *Things Live After* by Finishing Line Press in 2018, and a full-length book *Emblems* by Finishing Line Press 2020.

Victor Pearn's writing has appeared in over 200 magazines. He received the 1984 Colorado University Poetry Award. He was writer-in-residence at Quincy University, and lives in Fort Collins, Colorado.

James Miller Robinson has three chapbooks of poetry: *The Caterpillars at Saint Bernard* (Mule on a Ferris Wheel Press), *Boca del Río in the Afternoon* (Finishing Line Press, and *The Empty Chair* (Finishing Line Press). He is an independent legal/court interpreter of Spanish registered with the Alabama Administrative Office of

Courts, and serves as an assistant editor of *POEM*. His recent work appears in *Pensive: An International Journal of Spirituality and Art* and *Third Wednesday*, *Blue Collar Review*, and *I-70 Review*.

Hannah Rodabaugh is the author of three chapbooks, including a collection of ecological elegies. Her writing appears in *The Indianapolis Review*, *Camas Magazine*, *Glassworks Magazine*, *Blueline Magazine*, and *Berkeley Poetry Review*. She's received grants from the Idaho Commission on the Arts and was an Artist-in-Residence for the National Park Service. She teaches at Boise State University and The Cabin.

Anita Skeen is currently Professor Emerita in the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities at Michigan State University where she was the founding director of the RCAH Center for Poetry at MSU and is the series editor for Wheelbarrow Books. She has been the Coordinator of the Creative Arts Program at Ghost Ranch for forty-one years, and the Fall Writing Festival for twenty-three years.

Scott T. Starbuck's Trees, Fish, and Dreams Climateblog at riverseek.blogspot.com has readers in 110 countries. He taught ecopoetry workshops the past four years at Scripps Institution of Oceanography. His book of climate poems *Hawk on Wire* (Fomite, 2017) was selected from over 1,500 books as a 2018 Montaigne Medal Finalist at Eric Hoffer Awards for "the most thought-provoking books."

Megan Stolz's writing explores loss, relationships, and spirituality. She studied creative writing at the University of Baltimore and Hollins University. A Californian with familial ties to the Midwest, she lives in Northern Virginia with her family. Say hi on Twitter @megan_stolz and find more writing at meganstolzeditorial.com/creative-writing.

Wally Swist's books include *Huang Po and the Dimensions of Love* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), selected by Yusef Komunyakaa for the 2011 Crab Orchard Open Poetry Competition. His recent poetry and translations have appeared in *Chicago*

Quarterly Review, *Hunger Mountain: Vermont College of Fine Arts Journal*, *The Montreal Review*, and *Poetry London*.

Patricia Waugh loves the red dirt and simmering sun of Alabama where she was born and the cool green summers of Michigan where she was raised. She can't say the same for Michigan winters. They bring her no joy. Patricia's parents moved to Michigan when she was four, but she spent every summer in Alabama with her grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins. Alabama is still the home of her heart even though Michigan is where she lives and she loves both places. She also loves to write and hopes you enjoy her poem, "Water", as much as she enjoyed writing it.

Kelleen Zubick's poetry has appeared in a number of journals including *Agni Online*, *Barrow Street*, *december*, and *Dogwood*. She received an MFA in Creative Writing from Arizona State University and she lives with her family in Denver and directs health strategies for the national No Kid Hungry campaign.

THIS ISSUE'S CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

(ANNOUNCED JULY 2022)

Exploring the theme of Water

Michigan State University Libraries Short Édition, an innovative publishing platform affiliated with the international publisher Short Édition, seeks short work (8,000 character max, about 1,000 words) exploring the theme of Water. Submissions accepted through December 16, 2022. Selected work will appear online and in MSU Short Édition machines, and will be considered for publication internationally. This call is in conjunction with the Broad Art Museum's 2022 fall exhibit, *Flint is Family in Three Acts*, featuring the photography of Latoya Ruby Frazier. Water, for our purposes, will be broadly interpreted and might include meditations on physical, social, racial, environmental, or other themes. We seek work that avoids platitudes and sentimentality, demonstrates a deep understanding of craft, and engages with fresh thinking.

Accepted submissions will be included in a print issue distributed to all authors and added to MSU Libraries collections. Work will also be compiled in a themed issue available on the MSUL Short Édition site.

Please limit submissions to one story, one short essay, or up to five poems. Poems must be submitted separately. For example, if you are submitting five poems, each poem must be uploaded individually. Each submission should include a short biography directly beneath the work. If you do not receive an automatic confirmation email for each submission, we have not received your work.

Please do not submit previously published work for themed issues.

MSU Libraries Short Édition, a platform that provides free on-demand printing of flash prose and poetry, is now accepting submissions. Submissions are open to new, emerging, and established writers. Accepted work will be included in all four MSU Libraries Short Édition machines and considered for national and international publication through Short Édition machines located throughout the world. All work should be less than 8,000 characters (about 1,500 words). Full guidelines are posted at: lib.msu.edu/shortedition/submit/.

The machines are currently located at the MSU Library (Main), the Broad Art Lab, the East Lansing Public Library, and the Capital Region International Airport. Writers do not need to be affiliated with MSU to submit work.

A collection of short works
exploring the theme of Water.

Liz Abeling
Philip Rösel Baker
Tim Bascom
Mary Elizabeth Birnbaum
Roger Camp
Craig Cotter
Shutta Crum
Matt Dennison
Jane C. Elkin
Diane Glancy
JoeAnn Hart
Richard Holinger
Eric Machan Howd
Elizabeth Hykes
Lorraine Jeffery
Karen Kilcup
Mary Kuykendall
Rachel Loughlin
Katharyn Howd Machan
Joan Mazza
Jessica Lee McMillan
Joseph Milosch
Nancy Nelson
Carol Nolde
Victor Pearn
James Miller Robinson
Hannah Rodabaugh
Anita Skeen
Scott T. Starbuck
Megan Stolz
Wally Swist
Patricia Waugh
Kelleen Zubick

Libraries
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY