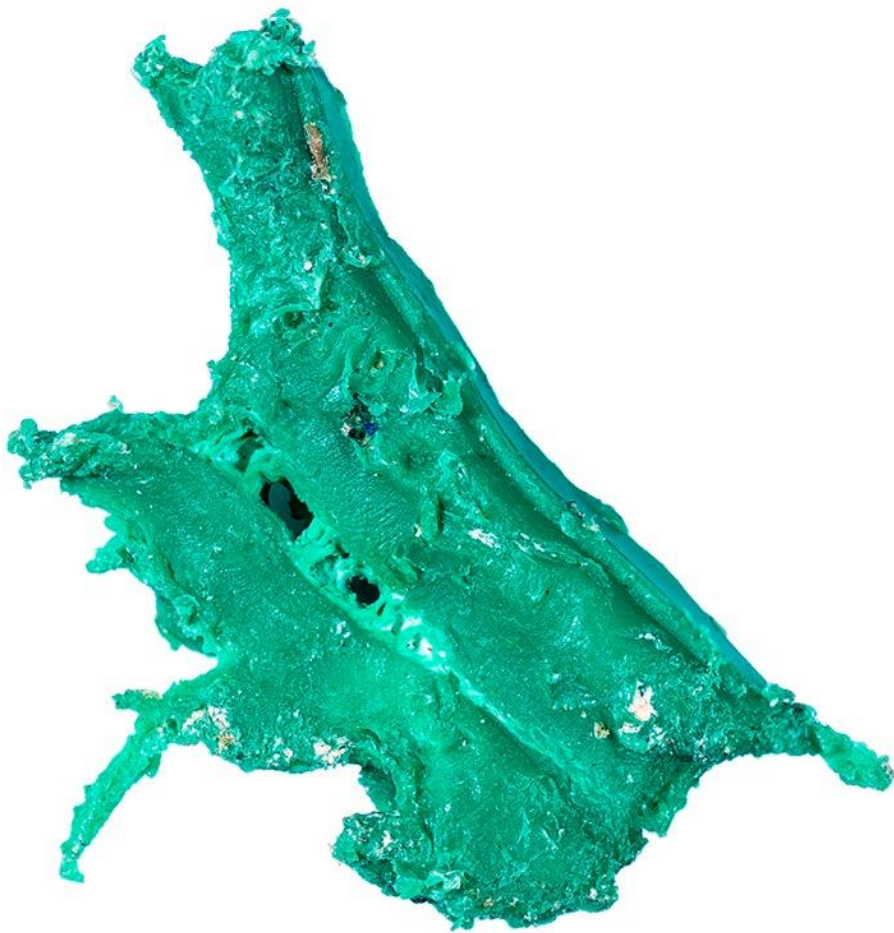


THE TIGER MOTH REVIEW

ISSUE 3





THE TIGER MOTH REVIEW

A biannual journal of art + literature that engages with nature, culture, the environment and ecology

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The Tiger Moth Review is an eco-conscious journal based in Singapore that publishes art and literature engaging with the themes of nature, culture, the environment and ecology. The journal publishes primarily in English, but also accepts non-English work and their translated English counterparts. We are committed to creating a space for minority, marginalised and underrepresented voices in society.

Editor-in-chief: Esther Vincent Xueming

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Cover image: *Plastic Fragment*, © Ernest Goh, Ayer Ayer Project

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Editor's Preface

It's that time of the year again, of the great migration. Migratory shorebirds from as far as Alaska, Siberia and Far East Russia travel long distances along the East Asian-Australasian flyway through Southeast Asia, making Singapore one of their pit stops. Visitors like the whimbrels, sandpipers and redshanks stop by what little mudflat, pond or field we have left in this increasingly urban island city, seeking shelter and sustenance before some push further South. Other visitors like the egrets also winter in Southeast Asia, migrating to Singapore for a time. This year, the small field in front of my house, which used to host flocks of migratory egrets, has been boarded up for yet another high-rise development. Everyday, I see it happening: the excavators, cranes and cement trucks occupy what used to be a temporary respite for these migratory birds. The earth is dug up, and the air turns sour and grave for a time. In times like these, it is easy to become bitter, to lose hope. But every day, I am learning from the best teacher, Nature, who shows me that all I need to do is to pay closer attention, to look and listen with intention. Yes, the field might soon be gone, but in this little pocket of time, while the land undergoes a transition, shifting from field to construction site, there can still be transient beauty. An intermediate egret takes to visiting in the mornings and late afternoons, choosing this patch as its hunting ground. It hops into the path of the excavator, and jumps out of the way just as the metal hits the ground. It flies into the long grasses nearby and dips its head for a meal. It is not bitter or resentful, just thankful and alive.

Hundreds of Asian openbill storks arrive from the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, a rare event in Singapore, as these birds usually forage in rice fields close to the Mekong and Chao Phraya River basins. Yes, there is much awe and beauty in these sightings, but one should also take heed and listen to the warning signs. Climate change is affecting the food source of these birds, who now alter their behaviour and movement, flying where they otherwise would not in order to survive. And in some ways, Issue 3 is like these birds, both omen and blessing. A temporary respite that can transform the attentive reader, although its message might not always bring joy. Like the migratory birds who call more than one place home, many of the contributors from Issue 3 have hyphenated identities, occupying this third space and border zone of sorts with a mixture of tension and ease. *The Tiger Moth Review* is honoured to publish poetry and art by the likes of **Rolinda Onates Española** (The Philippines-Singapore), **Teresa Mei Chuc** (Vietnam-USA), **Changming Yuan** (China-Canada), **Yasmin Mariam Kloth** (USA-Egypt), **Lee Soo Jin** (Korea-Singapore), **Nandita Mukand** (Singapore-India), **Donia G. Mounsef** (Lebanon-Canada), **Shanta Acharya** (India-UK) and **Sheikha A.** (Pakistan-United Arab Emirates), as well as work from places never before featured by the journal, such as Borneo, Pakistan, Nigeria, Portugal, England, The Pacific Island of Guam and Belarus, all of which add a distinctive dynamism and hybridity to the issue.

Despite coming from different cultures and places, our contributors share pressing concerns; it is no coincidence that the tree, its lingering presence, wounding absence and symbolic meaning, is conjured and invoked by eight different poets and artists across time and place, just as Singapore visual artist **Ernest Goh** and American poet **Jennifer Currier** are both troubled by microplastics invading our beaches, food and bodies. The poems of **Hibah Shabkhez** (Pakistan), **Amanda McLeod** (Australia) and **Travis Stephens** (USA) take us into landscapes and histories of violence and trauma, and we walk out of the poem changed. We enter the Grand Canyon, the Sarawak rainforest, the Nile river, the Sonoran desert, the Mekong. We recycle poetry with **Craig Santos Perez** (Pacific Island of Guam), sing songs of blessings with **Kunle Okesipe** (Nigeria), soar through the falcon's eye with **Jonel Abellanosa** (The Philippines), listen for the birth of an aurora shining with **Sheikha A.** (Pakistan-United Arab Emirates). Like our migratory brothers and sisters with wings, we are in it for the long haul, we leave in search of sustenance, for meaning. We read and write and create to survive.

Esther Vincent Xueming
Editor-in-chief and Founder
The Tiger Moth Review

Birch

Birdy Asya

A birch looks at the sky,
Waits for news from the wind.
It wants to know
What is happening in other places?
The wind appears,
Gently hugging each leaf.
The birch stretches its branches
To its interlocutor.
The wind begins her story.

Nor Dread Nor Hope

After W.B. Yeats

Yeow Kai Chai

as you're slid into the pod, i feel neither pain nor relief, perhaps a slab of numbness. before dread hops in. thud, thud, like that bird. neither this nor the long shadow of reason raises one's hope for the reckoning: will you wake up and attend mine too? relive the last dribbling seconds, a realisation that this won't happen, no. dying is life's last assurance that draws out an animal yawp out of any sentient creature, as one eyes a field opening up beyond the railing, where a man holds the hand of his son, and a woman awaits their return from the other side. hers, his, mine – the entangling of hands and the end of another unwefting... another year dreading absences casually intruding like sunlight, and just when the brightness retreads, you, hoping against hope, wish the curtain would fall and all is revealed to be mere rehearsal, and many would not feel what i feel, each pinprick times a million more, whenever something she or he would do is mirrored by a stranger. he died. she would too, barely seven years later. many years on, breath heavy, one recounts the times the reunion has been reenacted, so the rose, in a deep violet she likes, may bloom again.

Beatitude

Kunle Okesipe

Blessed are the tongues of grass that mark
The advent of rains with a signature of green,

The needles of the spear grass in the warp
And weft of widower stubbles,

A file of palm trees and their epaulets of conical fronds,
A mob of hoodlum cowage in their ambushade.

Blessed is the subdued tang of basil in the mouth's siesta
And the siesta of basil after a meal of the evening sun.

To you, old morning, without a memory of a leaf's ash,
With a memory of smoke like a lost necklace,

Blessed is a joyous beginning,
Like the first flowers of a pubescent tree.

Copsing

Changming Yuan

Tall against the frozen sky
You stand as still as straight, your skeletons
Are the exquisite calligraphy
 Of an entire season
Your name is curly writ

Not in water
But with wind

Where It Stood

Anca Vlasopolos

tree our familiar
that one upon whose shape we rest our gaze in gladness
as nonchalantly as birds alight fly off
 taking its green gold froth its skeleton
 its yearly resurrection
 as part and parcel unfailing for all time

brought down

 in its place nothingness
limbs tore at the skies
 roots the ground
trunk thudded wounded the very earth

this empty shape this rent no raking over no new sod no sapling
will suture

 ever renewing shock to our gaze to feathered hope
 to winds now so very unopposed

yes what did you think
yes like those beloved
 leaving us to look on
 hollow air

Enchanted

Shuolat (Chan Shu Yin)

During a recce to Taman Jurong for a community art project, I came across this tree stump. From the girth of the felled tree, I could tell it was a big one, perhaps a Mother Tree that had supported the surrounding trees, sending signals and nourishment through her vast root and fungi network. After being cut, she still continued supporting other life forms, and was being supported by the trees around her, as observed by the rings of mushrooms, ferns and weeds growing out of her stump. It was truly an enchanting sight of nature's sustaining force, which I wanted to capture with this sketch.



© Shuolat (Chan Shu Yin)

Loch Aima

Hibah Shabkhez

I am best friends with a loch
That is turning red.
Corpses knock

Hourly for grace on its banks,
For sanctuary.
Guns and tanks

Riddle the human blood-bags:
Pierce them through and through.
My friend gags,

But turns to embrace
Each dead face.

Two Poems by Yasmin Mariam Kloth

Source

My parents grew up
on an island in the Nile.
On a map it's the shape
of a vessel docked
in blue-green waters. On a map,
the Nile flows North, the shape
of a lotus flower, arms
opening out to sea.

I took a boat once
between Luxor and Aswan.
There is no modern city
in this stretch of water and land.
How can there be
in a place where the river is older
than pieces of the sky?
How can there be on these banks,
where homes are sand, trees
waiting for the wind?

I stood on the deck, watched old worlds
float by. Men on feluccas
in white cotton looked at me
with the whites of their eyes.
They were kings.
They gave me riches
with their smiles, their faces wrinkled
by the sun, valleys of skin
in the valley of the Nile.

My parents didn't raise me here.
They brought their language,
their food, their music,
their hopes for family in luggage
unpacked in New York.
I would not understand
the source of what they left
for many years.

This is how I learned
how the felucca travels.
Light on water,
with a sail to the wind.

Banyan Song

Yasmin Mariam Kloth

My grandmother
made a home in the snow
when she knew nothing
of snow, transplanted from the shade
of Banyan trees.

In the years after
her husband died, her roots
grew low and dry.
She was easy to pluck
from her homeland, followed
children who'd already left
for new life.

I visited her there
in her apartment in Montreal.
Nothing had changed
in the years that expanded into spaces
an ocean's water could not fill.
My daughter hugged her in the entry
and she folded like a paper airplane
at the waist.
She had never been someone's
great-grandmother before.
This was too much love
for her heart to give.

The distance between
their generations is not age.
The distance is language and loss.
The distance is the root
of the Banyan tree, measured in meters
from its leaves to the earth.

My grandmother consumes
this knowledge
with a nose
in my daughter's hair.

Two Poems by Amanda McLeod

Lament for the Thylacine

We stand before it in silent reverence,
separated by a hundred years
and a glass case.
It looks worn out—
tatty around the ears,
exhausted by its existence
after death.

Tiny fingers wrap around mine
as we gaze together
at what once was
and will never again be.

We are still for long.

Are they really all gone?

Yes, loves.

Because people killed them?

Yes, loves.

I do not tell them
about how the last one
supposedly died
in a zoo
from exposure,
locked out of its den
one freezing Tasmanian night.

Years later, I stand
in a gallery, surrounded
by photographs taken
by Peter Dombrovskis
in the wildest heart of Tasmania,

and it comes to me.

I see
a striped flicker, a dark eye, a growl,
hidden in that wilderness.

For a moment, it is possible
to believe
that they might still
be out there.

Weightless

Amanda McLeod

When my heart is heavy, I come to the river
to let the water render it weightless, for a while.
The world reflects itself in perfect balance.
I watch waterbirds paddle, leaving concentric circles as they dive.
The ripples reach the bank like passing minutes, smooth and fluid.
I rub a pebble's smoothness against my coarse hand,
then toss it gently into the current.
There is a splash, a sprinkle of droplets,
each teeming with invisible life.
I flick them back into the river,
watching them fall like rain.
They remind me I too am small but vital—
a single part of an intricate puzzle in which every piece matters.
In the reeds, two frogs sing love songs to each other.
Dragonflies hang, dancing above the water's surface.
The trees rearrange their branches in the breeze
which is warm and light enough for my heart to float on.
I sit in the grass and let the sun caress my shoulders
until my heart and I are ready to shoulder our burdens again.

Property Line

Raymond Luczak

My friend walks me around his ten acres,
pointing out the pine saplings that have died
and the spruce fledglings that should survive.

Each spring he checks the wood stakes marking
the ones he'd planted the year before.
Each stake is a just-in-case tombstone.

He tells me how tall and how long each tree will grow,
and shows me the stump of a red pine,
knocked over from driving off the U.S. 45.

I survey each tall tree and ask him how much
a tree could be worth in an accident. The taller a tree,
the higher his estimates rise into thousands.

He notices a few saplings he'd accidentally planted
just over his property line. I glance around and ask
if neighbors would chop them down. "Not yet." He shrugs.

These trees, when tall and strong, will defend his honor.
They will bear shining armors of green and bark in battle.
It will take generations to root them out completely.

Tree

Lee Soo Jin

The tree in the southern land is big.
It grows much taller than in my home country.
When I saw the trees out of the taxi window from the airport,
first, I was surprised by their scale,
but soon, I was relieved by their big, green smiles,
soothing the reluctance of my move
from Korea to Singapore.

The tree in the southern land is generous.
Among the five elements in Ba Zi—
tree, fire, earth, metal, and water—
tree means generosity,
something I could not understand before.
My understanding ceased at the sacrifice of trees.
In Singapore, I first comprehended their generosity.

When the wind blows, it moves gently.
When the birds come, it holds out its arms and hairs.
It welcomes also the small insects.
It keeps being diligent with its own work,
bearing flowers and fruits.

Tree, you are comfort.
You are the greatest philosopher.
You remind me that you will live long and I will leave soon.
You are big and I am small.
Yet, you are kind to me.

General Grant Tree

John Delaney

What it must feel like to stand tall for so long
after the crowds have dispersed
and the hoopla is over.

We who are constantly fleeing
find in your scarred face
an upright sense of being,
refusing to be fuel to fire.

No pushover to a stiff-armed wind.
No bending to another's will,
like a mind
fixed on righting a wrong.

We who are consumed by desire
find in your thick spongy bark
an incombustible truth
rising higher

like an exclamation mark.

President Calvin Coolidge designated the General Grant Tree (Kings Canyon National Park) as the Nation's Christmas Tree in 1926. Annual holiday services are held at its base on the second Sunday of December.

The Origin: The Tree & Me & The Unborn

Nandita Mukand

Nandita Mukand's practice is concerned with how urbanization with its attendant lifestyle choices continuously change us as individuals, and by extension, transforms the collective psyche of our world. Drawing upon her interest in ontology, neuroplasticity, quantum physics and Buddhist texts, her work often explores observations of growth and decay in the wilderness in conjunction with the workings of the urban mind. She fashions urban materials into organic forms reminiscent of natural growth and decay. In other installations, she works with natural materials like dead plants, dried flowers and seeds. Whether synthetic or organic, building up the sculptures and installations often involves repetitive processes that are meditative. Ideas of growth and decay, layers of accretion and erosion as markers of time, resilience in the face of adversity, the grace imbibed in adapting organically to circumstances, and the beauty of chaos—these are some of the themes that form the backdrop of her artistic practice.

In *The Origin: The Tree & Me & The Unborn*, old trees exist longer than the passing of generations. It feels as though they have eavesdropped on the dreams and aspirations of those who lived in another age, just as they listen to the chatter of those who wander below their branches today. In the midst of massive change in our environment and ways of life, what really changes for us? The pace of change in today's world is rapid, yet it is perhaps these ancient trees which hold answers to eternal questions.

Newspapers with their myriad urban stories are dissolved into the work, reflecting upon the fact that our elaborate urban lives and stories will ultimately be subsumed into the natural order. Newspapers represent ideas of the everyday and the political, as well as the ephemeral. Organic materials (henna, turmeric, coffee, sand, grass, seeds, vegetable matter, beeswax) too find their way into the work, embodying ideas of instability and transformation.

Twenty five thousand seeds and pods from the forests of Spain line the walls, encapsulating pure potentiality. The potential for growth may remain dormant, yet is far more than what is visible to the human eye.

To find out more about the artist, visit www.nanditamukand.com.

The Origin: The Tree & Me & The Unborn (2017)

Pulped newspaper, vegetable and plant material, henna, coffee, turmeric, pine cones, cypress seeds, assorted seeds and pods

Dimensions variable



The Origin: The Tree & Me & The Unborn

© Nandita Mukand



The Origin: The Tree & Me & The Unborn

© Nandita Mukand



The Origin: The Tree & Me & The Unborn

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The Origin: The Tree & Me & The Unborn

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¹ The Straits Times (2018, November 2). *Myanmar rakes in fortune from human hair trade*. Retrieved from <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/myanmar-rakes-in-fortune-from-human-hair-trade>

² “Long hair...has deep religious meaning in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where monks and nuns shave their heads as a sign of humility” (The Straits Times, 2018)

³ 15 year old Za Za Lin describes getting her hair cut (The Straits Times, 2018)

⁴ Za Za Lin gets paid “the equivalent of US\$13 (S\$18) for the 51cm of hair she sheared off, roughly the minimum weekly wage in Myanmar” (The Straits Times, 2018)

⁵ The ancient city of Bagan, known for its Buddhist temples, razed by the Mongols in the 13th century. Go-Myanmar (n.d.). *The temples of Bagan*. Retrieved from <https://www.go-myanmar.com/the-temples-of-bagan>

⁶ 2008's Cyclone Nargis, Myanmar's worst natural disaster in recorded history. Georgia Institute of Technology (2009, August 10). *Flooding and damage from 2008 Myanmar cyclone assessed*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/07/090717104618.htm>

⁷ In 2017, “Myanmar earned US\$6.2 million (S\$8.6 million) from the export of hair equivalent to the weight of 1,160 average-size cars” (The Straits Times, 2018)

⁸ “Daw Khin Hla, 52, ...survived Nargis because of her long hair; it was caught in a tree after her house was swept away by the storm surge” Kyaw Ye Lynn (2018, May 17). *The tide was like a monster*. Retrieved from <https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-tide-was-like-a-monster>

rootless

Cara Ow

Emerald Hill amnesiac still searching for answers
on Google like *how to root* *cuttings in water* when
original earth insufficient⁹ felled the settler
 of nutmeg ambition,¹⁰ and called for rain—
forest again:
 floor of white-capped fungi feeding on frond
now skeletal sinks into soil, and finding
 the filed buttress of meraga, moves up
its latticed trunk light / dark / light
liana loops through, curling like a finger
 from fern to strangling fig hollowing its host
tree which, wilting, gives back
 to the ground it grew from— the chain repeats itself.
but not on Emerald Hill. the natives cannot return.
razed so thoroughly only their half-breed
 high breed
 hybrid offspring¹¹ are welcome
discoloured by days out of sun I stand, a lesser offering,
 some spine of stem, cut from instinct, my pale legs
using Googlemaps new roots, fine-haired, seeking home
 a 10 minute walk to plaster overlaying
 the colonial bruise of dead origins.
call for rain and I answer with my mother's voice:
 this a proposition for a propagation of people like me
up and down the street curb-sitting betel-nut spitting smiling red¹²
 talking bout our children on their 100th day¹³
the new ecology thriving as we envelope them
 indoors our arms the *pintu pagar*¹⁴
opening and closing ushering their noise upwards
 through the inner airwell.¹⁵ we throw the windows open and
shutters filter sounds to the ground but even as it attempts to return
the tarmac throbs over browned skin of indigenous earth
 and the birds do not forget their beginnings.
the weeds wilt away from me because of something
I do not remember. now white spotlight of a face peers out at me
 from behind their wall expat-owned and bought over.¹⁶
I'm only half the intruder, but as I leave I touch the ancestral carvings
 noting that they are flowers
 and they are stemless.
 they are rootless.

⁹ Tropical soil typically has “[low] nutrient status...[in] most tropical soils, the available nutrients are concentrated in the topmost, humic layers” Tagami, K. Twining, J. R. & Wasserman, M. A. V. (2012). *Tropical radioecology*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/tropical-soil>

¹⁰ Colonial settler William Cuppage gained ownership over Emerald Hill in mid-1937 to start a nutmeg plantation that failed shortly after. Kong, L. (2011). *Conserving the past, creating the future: Urban heritage in Singapore*. Singapore: Urban Redevelopment Authority.

¹¹ Indian, Chinese and Arab merchants intermarried indigenous women in pre-colonial Peninsular Malaysia; their mixed race offspring were known as Peranakans, meaning “locally born”. In the colonial years, the British favoured Peranakans for their lighter skin tone and for their ability to learn English quickly. Pue, G. H. (2017). ‘Our Chinese’: The mixedness of Chinese Peranakans identities in Kelantan, Malaysia. In F. Fozda & Z. L. Rocha (Eds.) *Mixed race in Asia: Past, present and future* (pp. 147-169). Oxon, UK: Routledge.

¹² Peranakans used to *makan sireh*—chew betel nut—which would stain the gums, mouth and teeth a bright red. Vasu, S. (n.d.). *Betel chewing*. Retrieved from http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_883_2004-12-17.html

¹³ Peranakan families celebrate their newborn’s 100th day as it signifies the likelihood of the baby surviving into adulthood (lived experience)

¹⁴ Characteristic of traditional Peranakan shophouses, the *pintu pagar* is a carved fence door located at the entrance. Virtual Collection of Asian Masterpieces. (n.d.). *Pintu pagar – ‘Fence door’*. Retrieved from <http://masterpieces.asemus.museum/masterpiece/detail.nhn?objectId=12077>

¹⁵ “Airwells are courtyards that are exposed to the sky, they provide natural ventilation and lighting to the interior of the [Peranakan] shophouse. They facilitate a comfortable indoor environment in our tropical climate.” Urban Redevelopment Authority (n.d.). *The shophouse*. Retrieved from <https://www.ura.gov.sg/Corporate/Get-Involved/Conserve-Built-Heritage/Explore-Our-Built-Heritage/The-Shophouse>

¹⁶ The traditional Peranakan neighbourhood of Emerald Hill is now a gentrified area bought over by mostly white immigrants or permanent residents. Lim, W. S. W. (2005). *Asian ethical urbanism: A radical postmodern perspective*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing.

Matilpi, British Columbia

Travis Stephens

There are log tows here that move
at a few miles an hour. They tie
to rock faces to await the tide.
Bears and deer are known to come aboard
the log rafts. Tug men trail lures
all the way. Caulked boots.
These men know
of places where old paint colors
the rock walls—fish, sunburst, faces—
colors as old as the sunset brush
on the canvas of the sea.

We anchored early
because the wind was blowing up Johnstone
Strait, up and into our faces.
This old ketch is comfortable and slow.
The charts are pastel, buff land
and gray waters jeweled with numbers.
Without effort, the anchor dug into the bar
in front of this inlet and held.
Across the bow, past the spit
of sand and shell, the whitecaps wait.

It was early so we took the dog ashore.
She bounded into the alder
as we gathered driftwood
for our tiny wood stove.
Look, you said, shell midden.
Oh. We looked at the deep alder,
wide-armed cottonwoods.
Do you think?
I'm sure.

There were no totems, of course,
no longhouses or huts. The illness
is two hundred years old.
The wind blows and blows.
Later, in a Canadian Coast Pilot,
we found a name: Matilpi.
Nothing more.
At first light we sailed on.

Grand Canyon, Medium Rare

James Madigan

Two weeks into a meatless diet,
I drove along Western Avenue, Chicago,
and noticed a billboard.
“Look at that steak!
Cooked my way, bloody in the center.”

Deborah laughed,
and pointed out it was a sign
encouraging visits
to the Grand Canyon.

Two billion years
of geological history
exposed
by the Colorado River.
Layers of rock: red, pink, brown.

The river will still cut through rock
200,
2,000 years later.
Will we still be there to observe
in wonder?

Millions of cows
belching methane.
Millions of acres of rainforest
cleared for grazing.
Billions of hamburgers sold.

Hometown Poké

Jennifer Currier

Using locally sourced,
freshly caught fish
in each compostable bowl.
“We know a guy”, the owners say.
Good ol’ Tony, of *Tony’s Seafood*,
a working man with leathery hands
that flake like the fresh fish
he catches each day.

If only being mindful
of the origin of our food
was enough.

Plastics that are in the environment for a long time take up contaminants from the air, from the water, and from the soil, and are known as ‘toxic rafts.’ Significant quantities of microplastics have been found in tuna, shrimp, and lobster. New research, presented at the 26th United European Gastroenterology Week in Vienna, found that microplastic particles were also present in every human stool sample they tested.

Plasticity

Ernest Goh

Ayer Ayer, translated as water in the Malay language, is an ecologically-engaged art project, which features four components, one of which is a photograph series, *Plasticity*, which allows viewers to get up close with microplastics.

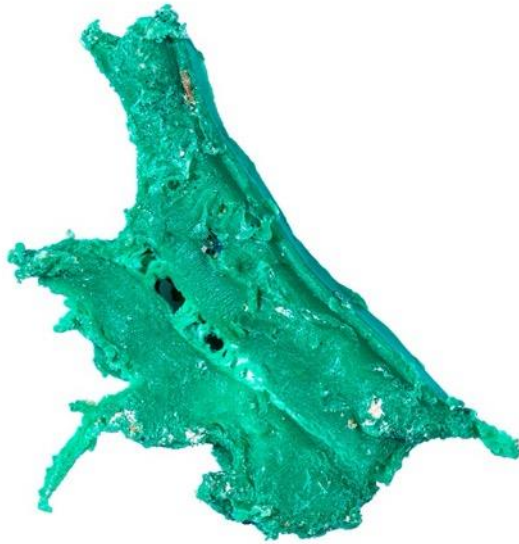
While working on an art residency commissioned by Exactly Foundation, I found a startling amount of microplastics along Punggol Beach, Singapore. Plastic microfibers are ingested by fishes, and microplastics have been found in human stool samples, suggesting its widespread presence in the food chain.

To bring awareness to this phenomenon happening on our very shores, I created a photography series which zooms in on the epic scale of plastic pollution via extreme close-up images of microplastic fragments, some just 2mm in size. Viewers can expect to understand microplastics more intimately through these magnified images, proving that the problem is as present in Singapore as it is elsewhere in the world. *Plasticity* hopes to educate the public and provoke them to consider their own relationship to plastic, and the role they play in contributing to plastic pollution in the world's oceans.

Find out more about Ayer Ayer Project: <http://www.ayerayer.com/>



Microplastic Bit #1, collected from Punggol Beach, size: 2mm
© Ernest Goh, in residency with Exactly Foundation, November 2018



Plastic Fragment, collected from Punggol Beach, size: 12mm
© Ernest Goh, in residency with Exactly Foundation, November 2018



Microplastic Bit #5, collected from Punggol Beach, size: 1.5mm
© Ernest Goh, in residency with Exactly Foundation, November 2018



Microplastic Bit #7, collected from Punggol Beach, size: 2mm
© Ernest Goh, in residency with Exactly Foundation, November 2018



Microplastic Bit #8, collected from Punggol Beach, size: 2mm
© Ernest Goh, in residency with Exactly Foundation, November 2018

Good Fossil Fuels

Recycling Maggie Smith's "Good Bones"

Craig Santos Perez

Earth is ruined, though I deny this to my children.
Earth is ruined, and I've ruined it
in a thousand carbon-intensive ways,
a thousand carbon-intensive ways
I'll share with my children. The planet is at least
fifty percent polluted, and that's a conservative
estimate, though I deny this to my children.
For every sea there is waste thrown into the sea.
For every sacred place, a place fracked, logged,
bombed into dust. Earth is ruined and the planet
is at least half polluted, and for every green
garden, there's a toxin that would poison you,
though I deny this to my children. I am trying
to sell them doubt. Any decent capitalist,
profiting from a climate disaster, squeals on about
good fossil fuels: This growth could be sustainable,
right? We could make this growth sustainable.

there are forest fires caused by a million things

Kate LaDew

some of them people
and one of those million things
is sunlight through a water droplet on a dry leaf.
as you watch your house burn down and everything in it,
is it better to have a beating heart to blame?
or god, who made the heart and made the water
and made the leaf and made the light
and poured them into the earth and shook until
you couldn't tell one from the other?

lo-cal

Joshua Ip

if calories are a western construct,
do they still count? if fat is a racial
predilection, should the sugar content
of a dessert be governed by an ethnic
committee? is this sentence just how
grammar used to make it? to what extent
is this all an exercise in branding? know your
place, bro. if you milk your dialect — those intolerant
of accent will be up in arms, and is a petri-dish
probiotic really patriotic? by which i mean
if a spoonful of yogurt contains multitudes
of culture, when are we due for a post-colon
cleansing? is the reason for your slow movements
a lack of moral fiber in your diet? is the beef
you have with this origin story grass-fed? we cannot even
walk on it, let alone smoke it. if left in dark
and damp conditions where the sun don't shine,
is this growth sustainable? which of these
metaphors are truly free-range and ethically sourced?
to what degree is it appropriate to apply taste,
if your application is in oral appropriation?
if this literature is the basic building block
of a balanced diet, if this literature is atomic,
why do we measure it by shelf-lives instead of half-lives?
you can lose one, as if an arbitrary
amount of weight, temporarily.
the other can only decay but will never die.

The Call of the Orang-utan

Christina Yin

In the forest, a woman is straining to give birth. She and her husband are walking to their fruit trees, when she is gripped with birthing pains. It happens suddenly and they are not ready. The husband runs back to the longhouse. But while he is gone, an orang-utan comes down from a tree and carries the woman up to her nest high in the forest canopy. It is cool there in the shelter of the branches and leaves. The orang-utan massages the woman's belly. She soothes her with crushed ginger.

Below on the forest floor, the woman's husband returns with a parang, but cannot find his wife. It is said that in the old days, the people had to cut open a woman's womb to deliver a child. The mother would die; that is how the story goes. It is not logical. You cannot ask how the longhouse people survived such harsh conditions. If every woman who gave birth had to die, how did communities survive with longhouses that numbered 40 or 50 doors, with each door housing a family of many children and close relatives within it?

Nevertheless, the story is that the orang-utan sees the woman in labour in the forest, far from the longhouse. So, the orang-utan takes the woman up to the tree tops and calms her. When the husband returns, the orang-utan gestures to him to put away his parang. She takes him up to the nest so that he might learn how to help his wife deliver a child naturally, the orang-utan way. The baby is born and the mother lives. Both are healthy. When they are recovered and ready to move, the orang-utan takes the mother and child down to the forest floor, and then the new father, who is now a midwife who will teach his relatives and friends how to safely deliver a child without endangering the mother's life.

It is believed that the orang-utan saved generations of humans. And for this reason, the longhouse people believe that they should never hunt or kill an orang-utan.

Others believe a different story. This one was told to me by the Iban forest guard Enggoh anak Glak whose Muslim name is Mohammad Irwan Abdullah. Enggoh's work with the National Parks and Wildlife Office in the early 1990s took him with a conservation education team to longhouse communities near the Batang Ai National Park in Sri Aman Division. These areas are known orang-utan habitats and the conservation education team worked to find out what the longhouse people believed and how they could help them understand why it was important to conserve the protected wildlife; the orangutan, in particular.

Enggoh was told this story by an old man at the Nanga Delok longhouse.

They said they cannot kill an orang-utan because that is their grandfather. I cannot tell you if this is just a nonsense story, but if you go to this longhouse, this Nanga Delok, they have a story about this one man, I think from this longhouse, quite a long time ago, maybe a hundred years ago.

He was walking in the forest when he met somebody, a stranger. So that man gave him a parang. They exchanged parangs and both of them introduced themselves. Then the stranger said he is an orang-utan. He's human, he said, but he is originally an orang-utan. "So now we've become brothers and sisters. I give you this parang, so next time, please tell your people not to kill an orang-utan because we are one family."

Because of that, these longhouse people never want to kill an orang-utan because they think they are their grandfathers. So, when this man is dying, he says, "Don't bury me. Just take me to this mountain and put me there." When he died, his relatives did what he asked. But when they laid him down where he had told them to, suddenly the body gone. Gone, gone, gone, gone... then after a few minutes, they heard the call of an orang-utan. So, they believe that this man died and became an orang-utan. But whether that story is true or not, that is what the old man told me. And the parang that is given to that man by the orang-utan is still kept by the people in this longhouse... Still, until today.

*

Have you seen the eyes of an orang-utan? Have you seen how he watches us and follows our movements? I've seen the orang-utan on the feeding platform at Semenggoh Wildlife Centre. He reaches to pluck a banana from the bunch or a yellow-orange papaya lying on the platform. He seems gentle and even lazy in his movements, but he is a wild animal, and not a pet. Those eyes are human, yet not human. Do generations of grandfathers come back in the form of orang-utans?

I asked Enggoh who told me the story of the orang-utan and the parang, and the grandfather who became an orang-utan, "Did you see the parang in the longhouse?"

This is Enggoh's reply:

"I never saw that parang, but the people don't want to kill an orang-utan. Maybe if they kill an orang-utan, they will get bad thing, maybe they will get a storm or something like that, rain for so many months, or maybe people died or something like that. So, they don't want to go against their promises."

I think about the story that Enggoh told me. Whether I'm at the Semenggoh Wildlife Centre watching the orang-utans feeding or taking a walk at an urban nature reserve, in a classroom with students or having dinner at home with my family, I think it's a good idea to keep our promises.

The people of Nanga Delok have kept theirs.

And today, the orang-utans still live freely in the Batang Ai area. Sometimes, if you're lucky, you can hear their call.

Two Poems by Elizabeth Spencer Spragins

Treasure

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, Manteo, North Carolina, USA

when a red wolf howls
the twilight winds remember
music of old moons
echoes in the wooded halls
lined with uncut emeralds

In 1987, the US Fish and Wildlife Service initiated a program to save the red wolf from extinction. More than 100 captive-bred wolves were released in the Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge over the next thirty years. Although the population grew to more than 200 wolves, numbers have plummeted over the last decade. Fewer than 45 animals remain, and the outlook for the program is uncertain.

Going Back

Fairbanks, Alaska, USA

a moose meanders
over remnants of the road
afame with autumn
leaves that cup the crimson cold
spill their silence underfoot

The Plain of all Delusions

Mário Santos

There is a road to the paradise southward, leading to a raw and desolate land, a lonely land of a cold and disconnected sobriety. A land gray and sad, almost without any color, without flowers and without dawns of light, abandoned to a huge and dark despair, to a lecherous and fruitless mystery. A land lacking in tenderness, that makes the birds suffer because they cannot inhabit it, and flowers do not dare to grow. This is the land where sometimes the rain paralyzes time in plots of silence, in a uselessness of confused laws, suspended in a void that eyes can never decipher. This land is only settled by corpses and silence: equidistant cemeteries from shamed consciences. And we learn to suffer with its anguish. And this is how we learn that paradise is always a little bit further down the road.

At a Streetcar Stop

Ahrend Torrey

Two old men argue
about last night's game;
I smell diesel and oil.

A young man sits
next to me, with his wife
and young boy, then flicks
a half-smoked cigarette
in the sand at our feet.

I look at the back of my lids
and imagine this spot
hundreds of years ago:
lush and tall with pines,
green and thriving.

When I open them,
a stream of cigarette smoke floats
above our feet
and a Snickers wrapper—

time burning and burning
amid two pink barrettes
and a Solo cup.

Two poems by Rachel Cunniffe

Abandoned

The shortest day in June
was a blackout at 4 p.m.
A coal-eyed dog
swimming in an inky sea.

The longest day in December
was a white sea at midnight.
Full moon reflecting
iron blue snow.

Rum weather—
a parentless, half-grown mammal.

Flood

Rachel Cunniffe

1

Water distends through brown fields.
The invisible vole and kingfisher endure
rain flattening grass. Snowdrops remain.

Webbed footprint—one-legged mallard?
A pheasant shoots a cacophony.
The soft-mouthed dog doesn't worry.
His time will come.

2

Come—will time? His worry doesn't dog this soft-mouthed
cacophony. Shoots? Pheasant, mallard?

One-legged footprint, webbed remains. Snowdrop, grass.
The flattening rain endures. Kingfisher. Vole invisible.
The fields brown, through itself the water distends.

Desert Meditations: A Lyric Suite by Charlene Langfur

i. Night Wind

This is how it is in the deep desert in the summer,
when the moon rises and the rabbits are out running
in the wild grass and I go out and breathe in the earth,
walk out into the dark, underneath the giant fan palms,
the wind blowing on my arms and legs after the unrelenting
heat, heat that never stops. I touch the bark of the mesquite
and the cottonwood trees when I pass them and I close my eyes,
trying to remember I am made of earth, the same as them.
Remember how I am in need of coolness and darkness
and sometimes a sky full of stars, clear to the eye
and the heart. How will I protect what I love about the earth
without remembering who I am in the dark and what I am
made of? And yes, the coolness runs all over me now
so I remember what it is like to stand tall with the trees
and take to the air and the century plants growing taller
each day in a lifetime when they only bloom once. I know this
and I know how the yucca will bloom soon with its white
silky flowers in the middle of one of the hottest places on earth.
Tonight the mesquite tree is covered with pods and I am
out in the world alongside it with the little power I have,
a woman whose power is slowly being taken away, a woman
loving what I am able to in a man's world. Standing in the wind
under a cache of stars touching what I can, earth, what is living on it
and what it gives back. I remember all this because this is
the best way to even up and stay true to who I am, breathing
the wild, night air, green leaves blowing in the breeze,
tiny purple flowers breaking open in the darkness.

ii. The Walk at 7 o'clock in the Morning

Past the barrel cactus covered with tiny flowers,
mesquite pods hanging over my head,
the snow on the mountain tops in the middle
of the deep desert even in the middle of May,
the Sonoran desert, full of cactus, wrens and black crows,
giant winged hawks flying low over the canyon.
This is how I have learned to begin again these days,
walking with my 13-pound honey-colored dog who sets
the pace for us both. I try to touch the rough bark
of the fan palms when I pass, the new leaves on the yucca,
the century plant growing straight, blooming once
in its lifetime, carefully bearing leaves and stem.
I am growing older but in other ways I am not, taking
it slowly, knowing how time takes the most patience.
My dog leaps in the desert grass as we pass and I move
along with her, rising slightly into the air as if the rise
was part of what she was, what we all are, moving forward.
And this is the way I am moving out into life, walking
out far and all the way back. Clouds embracing the mountains
like dreams from the night before. The sun breaking
in the east. We're moving across the sand, walking and
leaping and taking to the air. This is it, we are
exactly new on another day, head to toe.

iii. Caring for the Earth in 2019

How else to move forward now
without caring for the world around us?
Every day I walk out into the world
as far as I am able to go, my 13-pound honey-
colored dog by my side, wearing tie shoes
with support to steady me, keeping to a pace
and taking to the dry air, I breathe in, breathe
out. It's some kind of prayer of life is what
I think today. Later, watching the baby lizards
crawl over the rocks at night when I touch
the leaves of the palm trees, smooth, green,
the moonlight all over. In the morning
I know the black crows will be on top, clicking,
cawing, sending messages to each other
like old friends do. No end to talk. The wrens
in the heather taking in deep for safety;
cover is essential. On a hot day
in the dry desert world, life is breaking open over
and over. I see how the animals and the plants
get along in a world dedicated to apps, hand-held
maps, electronics of all kinds as if the world
was inside them. What is not seen are the baby rabbits
jumping in the wild grass or my dog leaping higher.
I walk out of the house, past
the drift of information on the computer screen,
and look at the flowers opening to the world around me.
The tiny yellow trumpet flowers, orange nasturtium,
delicate and rich, roses unfolding in the dark. In a country
of electric lies, I know sense of an inner map
of what surrounds me that matters.
Today I'll walk out to where the cactus
are about to bloom wild, orange flowers the same
as last year's. I'll walk to where the new mesquite
is loaded with little green pods, edible, full
of tiny peas, greener than I can imagine and here I am
a lesbian in America knowing exactly where I am
and what grows around me. I throw some of the petals
into the air and watch them take off like birds
wafting. This is who I am now. I stay and watch
them as long as I can.

Landscape and Memory

Erin Schalk

My practice takes inspiration from the physical landscapes found in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, as well as aspects of each region's compositional preferences and landscape painting traditions. Through processes of abstraction, I develop low-relief paintings and alter on-site photographs that seek to create a 'poetry of place' by capturing the intangible qualities of landscape: atmosphere, emotion and associated memories.

Visit the artist's website: www.erinschalk.com

Decomposition (2019)

Digital photograph

Dimensions variable



© Erin Schalk

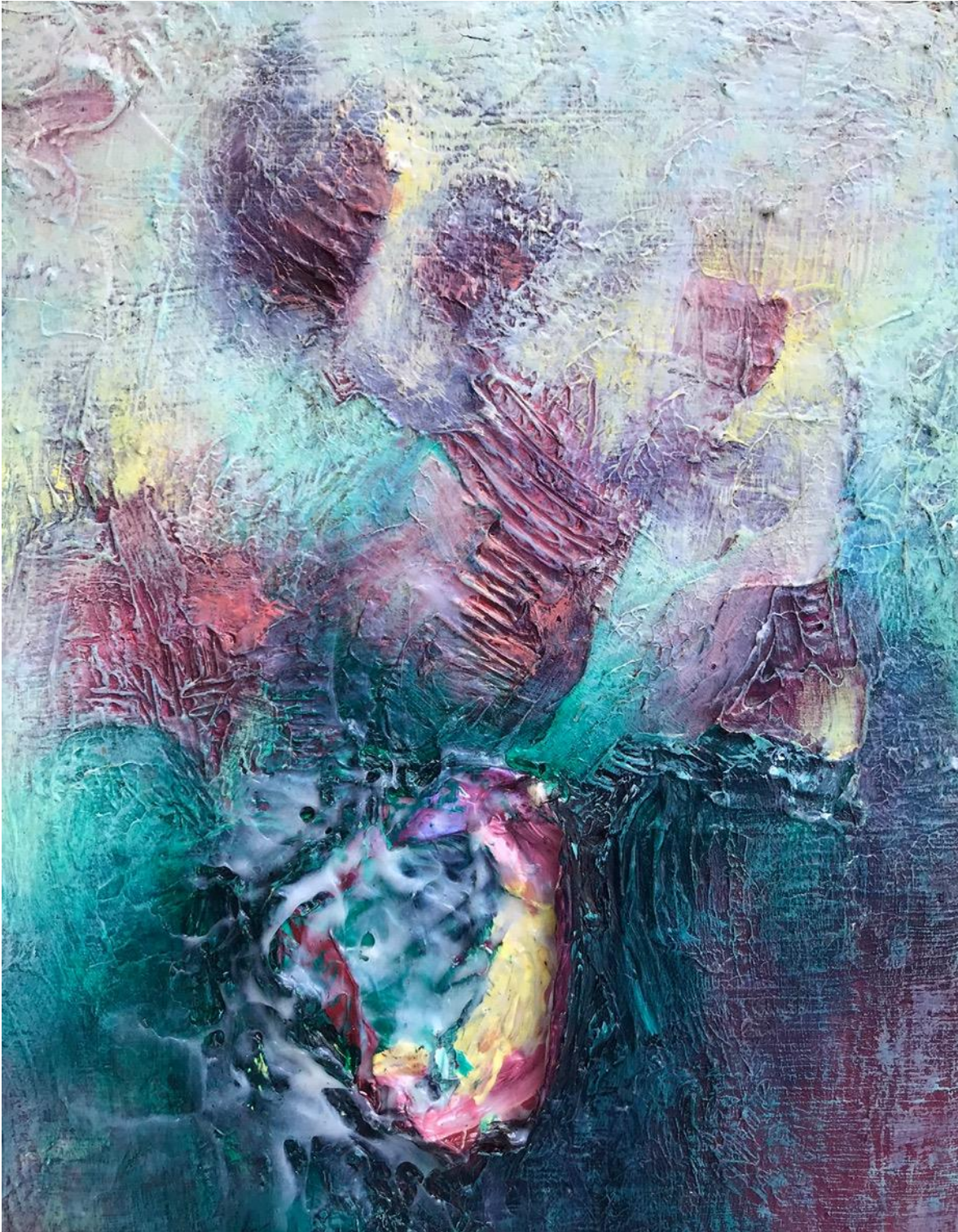
Preserve (2018)
Digital photograph
Dimensions variable



© Erin Schalk

New Bloom (2019)

Acrylic and mixed media on wood panel
16 x 11 inches



© Erin Schalk

Three Poems by Donia G. Mounsef

Black-Eyed Susans at Skerryvore I

“Despair is the damp of hell”
—John Donne

An apocalyptic forecast, a date
rhymed on invisible calendars,
a damp hell, where a hotel burnt
in suspicious circumstances at Skerryvore.
From the Gaelic, *An Sgeir Mhòr*,
a “great rock.” *Skerry*, from the old Norse,
sker, a small island unfit for habitation.
From Scotland’s remote reefs, to Ojibway Sands,
people buy reams of sedimentary rock
like bunched carrots at the market.
They think they purchase the history
and the silence
of the people along with it.

Islands taken from the Shawanaga
First Nation, handed over without
a shadow of a doubt to settlers
who roam on homesteads, steady
homes, oblivious of colonial
dispossession, succession,
a crime. I poured another tequila
lime, ran an extra lap, counted crabs
in a stolen trap, on tidal shoals.
Despair slowly removes a bolt
in the handrails of time, portents
future horror, loosens the crutch,
keeping us upright in our inner
storm, turns reverie into harpoons,
stabs the quotidian, scalds eyes with
silky rays of an ashen midnight sun,
borrowed from their ancestors.

Black-Eyed Susans at Skerryvore II

Donia G. Mounsef

The burden of contested lands never
sleeps. What are we doing here? Whose
waterway are we gleefully drifting on?
Gathering the edge of a summer solstice
in the turn of our paddle blades,
the everglades of rootless cull, coarsened
strokes of a past we could never belong to.

There are no palm prints on this wet rock
that sweats to the rhythm of the Anishnaabe
language—*Navanno-nibiimaang Gichigamiin*
(Great Lakes—the Five Freshwater Seas)—
a knot loops and frays in the viral archive
of rocks woven with Northern Lights, defaced
laramide, dispossessed vessels, wedged
in frozen, pristine, untouched ice-lakes.
A ghost ship of people who were here
first, whose phantoms moan sonic
textures on soft tundra, spitting warm
summer blooms of wild black-eyed Susans,
spreading nectar on forgotten limestone.

Frenzied Whalebone

Donia G. Mounsef

Does this shore know me, remember my feet
stomping in elation or trepidation, against
crystal scorch? Does it know the roll and
crest of seafoam, the murmur of rusted hulls
awaiting a miracle with ghosts of fishermen
sitting on broken deck chairs with bowed fishing
rods, corroded hooks on the pelagic floor?

If you tell the liquid form all your grief, will it
turn it into scintillating stars, shooting over
reticent seaboards, frenzied whalebone-shaped,
cutting tidelines into veins of light, shattered
pearls, briny seaweed, broken mastheads,
obnubilate seashells where you never know
if what's inside was dead or alive?

From Jupiter
Forrest Rapier

Off Florida's East coast, two shirtless boys
thump barefoot down a dock with bait
buckets & a hundred dollars' worth of gas.

Whitewater hit the slip—Perry
gunned after a school of Mahi Mahi
Austin spotted on his fish radar.

Nobody on the pier looked twice
when they hauled-off into a storm
the Coast Guard dubbed 'typical

South Florida'—heavy rain, thunder.
Nine days after they left Jupiter,
the Coast Guard found a boat

capsized eighty miles offshore
—one orange jacket tethered to a lifeline.
No one can predict a rogue wave.

Perry's mother said,
"These children are surrounded by water
from the moment they're born."

Did they bob near the wreckage?
Survive the first night's storm, float
in inky infinity like corks on a wine sea?

Five thousand miles across the world,
Hawaiian flower pistils pink
alight Kilauea cooled magma.

A flare shot from a shuteye
ocean—we hope you see us.
We're right here.

On the Back Page of Survival

Marcia Arrieta

I create a map—

where language is a sanctuary
& art a river through the canyon

the subconscious
draws winter to spring

alternative routes lead to
The Plain Sense of Things

nothing is sharply defined

The Falcon

Jonel Abellanosa

The sky's a stage. No exits, no
entrances. Precision
accelerates. No gyre widens
nor prey that's hidden. I

desire the zoom, the glide, splintered
light, sky a colossal
shadow. A tear moves, grasses part,
field like the Red Sea. I

imitate the half moon and dive,
hunger terminal as
velocity. Mountains echo
my shrill cry. Angling, I

aim at panic zigzagging, ground
pulling my claws. Wind holds
wingtips. I crack through tender flesh
and soar back to the eye.

Two Poems by Shanta Acharya

Snowy Egret

Smeared in ash, head bent in the morning mist,
one leg crooked, resembling an Indian yogi,

the snowy egret meditates beyond regret
and desire on the struggle to assuage hunger.

Perched on a boulder at the edge of the river
that keeps retreating every season, he waits—

a seasoned fisherman poised for a catch,
for a taste of flesh to freshen his mouth fouled

by plastic. Suddenly, he darts forward, dives in,
scoops a mouthful of quivering slivers.

Standing upright he savours the moment,
rapt in the dazzling company of clouds.

Lifting a creel of sunshine, he spreads his wings
with the grace of a ballet dancer retreating—

unaware of his separateness, one with the light
soaring on his back to the call of the universe.

Song of Praise

Shanta Acharya

Praise the sun, powerful yet unwavering
in its journey across the sky, light pulsing
through clouds, mists—life sustaining.

Praise the earth as it moves on its axis—
inner and outer cores holding on to each other,
partners on the dance floor, steady as they go.

Praise the stars in the constellation
for knowing their place, yet blessing all migrations.

Praise the moon always true, waxing, waning,
constant in its daily transformation.

If the sun and moon should doubt,
our world would immediately go out.

Praise day and night, mere limits of our perception,
death, a release from our earth-bound vision.

Praise plants sun-facing, light-changing,
breathing in carbon, green deities in meditation,
giving us oxygen, expecting nothing in return.

Praise water in all its forms, giving and taking—
blood flowing through continents of bodies.

Praise the sky, air, ether; praise the universe
for awakening us to worlds beyond our imagination.

Praise every species in our planet,
masterpieces each of evolution—
rich, rare and wild keepers of infinite secrets.

Praise the eye of the guest—clear, observant.
Praise the giver of life—almighty, benevolent.

Note: This poem is based on prayers from different traditions around the world.

Three Poems by Rolinda Onates Española

Stitches

Poetry abroad are stitches of words
Rhymes and rhythms of pain
Creatively sewn together
Behind closed doors
With tears of silent cries
Pen and paper are the only
Witness of heartaches
Disappointments and inequalities
People clap their hands
To a great masterpiece
To great words
Full of feelings
Yet nobody realizes
It's the truth
What she writes
Because here
People admire hypocrisy
Others use a platform of humanity
To disguise a false empathy
And they all applaud
Her sad poetry
Everyday

Poetry at home are patches of giggles
Rhythms of laughter
Rhymes of endless hugs
Unconditionally bound together
Inside this simple home
With screams of happiness
Where words are unscribbled achievements
Kindness and humility
Remain in silence
Where here
People don't notice
The great masterpiece
The great works
That are full of actions and expressions
Nobody can read it
Because it can't be written

It can only be felt
It can only be expressed
Without words
It's best in action
And this is poetry
A living poetry
At home, everyday

Take me home

Rolinda Onates Española

Please take me home
To the place where I belong
To the place of my sweetest memory
To the place where my love dwells unconditionally
To the place of my sanity

Please take me home
Where my children wait excitedly
Where my hand touches each of them magically
Where I'm the queen of this hierarchy
Where I can smile and be angry without hesitation
Where I can show my flaws and imperfections

Please take me home
Just take me home
For I know my loved ones are waiting
But I don't know who they are
I can't recognize the faces of my family
I can't button my shirt or count numbers
My home, I fail to remember
My name, I try to register
My mind falters
Though I try hard
I can't remember a thing

I know in my heart there's something
The most important thing
And I only remember
I need to be home
But I don't know where my home is
I don't know what home is
I still want to go home
So please take me home

Ang Bangka ng Aking Buhay

Rolinda Onates Española

Ang bangka ng buhay ko'y lalayag ng muli
Pabalik kung saan ang bahaghari
Na noon ay akala ko payak ang kulay
Kung kayat ninais lisanin at naglakbay
Sa pag-asang mga kulay ay titingkad
Kaginhawaan ang siyang hinangad
Nakita ko nga mga kulay na ginto at pilak
Nakakasilaw, nakakalulang galak
Pero bakit unti-unting naglalaho
Di ko man lng mahawakan ito ba'y balat kayo?
Di ko man lang maipon
Upang sa bangka ng buhay maibaon
Di ko man lng madama
Totoong kasiyahan dito sa ibang bansa
Kaya ang bangka ng buhay ko'y babalik sa kung saan
nagmula
Kaligayahan ko'y naroon lamang pala
Ako pala ang kulay na nagpapasigla
Nang simpleng tahanan ng katulad kong dukha
Dukha kung tawagin dito sa ibang bansa
Ngunit sa munting tahanan ako po ay dakila

The boat of my life will sail again

Rolinda Onates Española

The boat of my life will sail again
In due time, back to where the rainbow sets
Before, I thought it just consisted of plain colors
The reason why I wished to travel and leave
Was the hope of finding those sparkling colors
Convenience in life was what I sought
Indeed I saw gold and silver
Blinding and dizzying me with delight
Yet I saw each color slowly disappearing
Before I could even touch them
Oh what a disguise!
I could not save
So that I could keep it in my boat of life
I could not feel
True happiness in this foreign land
So this boat of my life
Will sail back to where it all started
To my true happiness
For I am the sparkled colors stirring
In the simple house of my plain people
Lowly they may call me
In this foreign land
Yet in my simple home
Mighty is my hand

Translated into English by the author

Mother of Waters, River of Nine Dragons

Teresa Mei Chuc

“Dam construction on the Mekong River poses a serious threat to the region’s economies and ecosystems. The only way to mitigate that threat is to end defiant unilateralism and embrace institutionalized collaboration focused on protecting each country’s rights and enforcing its obligations — to its people, its neighbors, and the planet.”

— Brahma Chellaney (August 2, 2019)

Sông Mê Kông, flowing from the Tibetan Plateau
through China, Myanmar,
Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam
and into the country of my heart

where the wild rice grows
and the villagers live and have lived
for thousands of years,

where the Irrawaddy dolphins,
the giant catfish and softshell turtles swim,

where the sarus cranes feed
on insects, seeds, fish in the river reeds,
and open their majestic wings to take flight,

where the lilies and lotus bloom,
where our ancestors are alive,

where the water buffaloes bathe
their thousand-pound bodies
submerged in the river of my soul,
their heads on the water’s surface,
curving horns pointing towards the sky,

where Sông Cửu Long,
River of Nine Dragons flow
through thick palm and green mangrove forests,
where the douc langur and white-cheeked gibbon exist,

and salt and fresh water mix,

I, your daughter, am forever connected to you
though thousands of miles away.

Glacial Fog

For and after Tighe O'Donoghue Ross

Sheikha A.

The long night is coming, as is the long day on the saddle
of autumn; the short dusk rides a golden armour on smoke;

the sun melts from low-hung amber ceiling –
broad as sound/taper as light – stalactites of heat

cracking at its base, their fall only to pierce
abdomens of gushing shores. Arching oceans

recede against a winning war with frost – the poles
of mammals – like the white husks on stars densed

by prismatic fog, the pyramid of evolution – existence
by evaluation, the chromosome of radiance enveloping

the sky's rims – multi-jewelled reigning string of gases –
there is more colour as the stake dives deeper into

the heart of the earth. And, this life, in the cobalt midst
of azure, the songs of stones on lips of birds, moss

and grass perfuming soils, and this breathing of stems
where the flowers rest, the glistening of pollen from

the sweat of bees, the regale of leaves on stooped
branches, the labour of rain from wombs of clouds,

above and beneath the gradual advent of collapse.
Listen close, nearby an aurora births from its shell.

Contributors

Sheikha A. is from Pakistan and United Arab Emirates. Her works appear in a variety of literary venues, both print and online, including several anthologies by different presses. Recent publications are *Strange Horizons*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Atlantean Publishing*, *Alban Lake Publishing*, and elsewhere. Her poetry has been translated into Spanish, Greek, Arabic and Persian. She has also appeared in *Epiphanies and Late Realizations of Love*, an anthology that has been nominated for a Pulitzer. More about her can be found at sheikha82.wordpress.com.



Jonel Abellanosa lives in Cebu City, the Philippines. His poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *That Literary Review*, *Poetry Kanto*, *The Lyric*, *The McNeese Review*, *Rust+Moth* and *Star*Line*, and nominated for the Pushcart, Best of the Net and Dwarf Stars awards. His poetry collections include *Meditations* (Alien Buddha Press), *Songs from My Mind's Tree* and *Multiverse* (Clare Songbirds Publishing House), *50 Acrostic Poems* (Cyberwit, India), and his politically progressive collection, *In the Donald's Time* (Poetic Justice Books and Art). His first speculative poetry collection, *Pan's Saxophone*, is available from Weasel Press.



Shanta Acharya won a scholarship to Oxford, where she was among the first batch of women admitted to Worcester College. A recipient of the Violet Vaughan Morgan Fellowship, she was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy for her work on Ralph Waldo Emerson prior to her appointment as a visiting scholar in the Department of English and American Literature and Languages at Harvard University. The author of eleven books, her latest poetry publication is *Imagine: New and Selected Poems* (HarperCollins, India; 2017). Her poems, literary articles and reviews have appeared in *Poetry Review*, *PN Review*, *The Spectator*, *Guardian Poem of the Week*, *Oxford Today* and elsewhere. Some of her poems are due to appear in *Here and There*, edited by Boey Kim Cheng, Arin Alycia Fong and Justin Chia (Ethos Books, Singapore; 2019). Visit her website: www.shantaacharya.com.



Marcia Arrieta's work appears in *Angel City Review*, *Anastamos*, *Hobart*, *Otoliths*, *Eratio*, *Empty Mirror*, *Eratio*, *DASH*, & *Whiskey Island*, and elsewhere. Her third poetry collection *perimeter homespun* is recently out from BlazeVOX and her fourth poetry chapbook *vestiges* is just out from Dancing Girl Press. She edits and publishes *Indefinite Space*, a poetry/art journal.



Birdy Asya lives in Minsk, Belarus. She is 22 years old and works as a teacher of German. Asya enjoys writing poetry in English, Russian and Belarusian, as well as essays in different languages. She also draws.



Poet Laureate of Altadena (2018 to 2020), **Teresa Mei Chuc** is the author of three full-length collections of poetry, *Red Thread* (Fithian Press, 2012), *Keeper of the Winds* (FootHills Publishing, 2014) and *Invisible Light* (Many Voices Press, 2018). She was born in Saigon, Vietnam and immigrated to the U.S. under political asylum with her mother and brother shortly after the Vietnam War while her father remained in a Vietcong "reeducation" camp for nine years. Her poetry appears in journals such as *Consequence Magazine*, *EarthSpeak Magazine*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Kyoto Journal*, *Rattle*, *Whitefish Review*, *Verse Daily* and in anthologies such as *New Poets of the American West* (Many Voices Press, 2010), *With Our Eyes Wide Open: Poems of the New American Century* (West End Press, 2014), and *Inheriting the War: Poetry and Prose by Descendants of Vietnam Veterans and Refugees* (W.W. Norton, 2017). Teresa is a graduate of the Masters in Fine Arts in Creative Writing program at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont and teaches literature and writing at a public high school in Los Angeles.



Jennifer Currier is a former dolphin trainer, English teacher, and desert dweller, now living in Providence, Rhode Island. She is *Motif Magazine's* food editor and writer, RI food tour's cultural ambassador, a blogger, author and world traveler. She writes about taking leaps of faith, traveling, and finding joy in everyday experiences. She is working on a book set in Greece.



Rachel Cunniffe is based in the North East of England, and has an MA in Writing Studies gained in 1995 from Edgehill University College. Working for 16 years stifled her creativity, and recently, she has been able to partially retire and spend more time writing again. She has been a member of several creative writing groups, one of which has been in existence since 1991. She lives with a large black dog and two cats.



In 2016, **John Delaney** moved out to Port Townsend, WA, after a lifetime in the East, where he was curator of historic maps at Princeton. Delaney has travelled widely, preferring remote, natural settings, and is addicted to kayaking and hiking. In 2017, he published *Waypoints* (Pleasure Boat Studio, Seattle), a collection of place poems. *Twenty Questions*, a chapbook, just appeared in July (Finishing Line Press, 2019).



Rolinda Onates Española is from Bacolod City, Philippines. She is co-editor of *Call and Response: A Migrant/ Local Poetry Anthology* (Math Paper Press). She spent six years working in Singapore as a foreign domestic worker, and is now back home in the Philippines. Her poems have won prizes at the Migrant Workers Poetry Competition, Singapore.



Ernest Goh is the founder of *Ayer Ayer*, an ecologically-engaged art project that creates at the intersection of art and science. His work has been commissioned by and installed at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, Singapore, collected by the Multimedia Art Museum Moscow, and also resides in corporate, public and private collections.



Joshua Ip is a poet, editor and literary organiser. He has published four poetry collections with Math Paper Press, won the Singapore Literature Prize for his debut, *sonnets from the singlish*, and placed in three different categories of the Golden Point Award. He has edited nine anthologies, including the *A Luxury We Cannot Afford* and *SingPoWriMo* series. He co-founded Sing Lit Station, an overactive literary charity that runs community initiatives including SingPoWriMo, Manuscript Bootcamp, *poetry.sg* and the world's first wrestling/performance-poetry hybrid, Sing Lit Body Slam. He received the Young Artist Award from the National Arts Council (Singapore) in 2017. He can be found at www.joshuaip.com.



Yasmin Mariam Kloth writes creative nonfiction and poetry. Her writing explores love, loss, place and space, and has appeared in or been accepted by publications including *Gravel*, the *West Texas Literary Review*, *The Tiny Journal*, and the *Willawaw Journal*. Yasmin lives in Cincinnati, OH with her husband and young daughter.

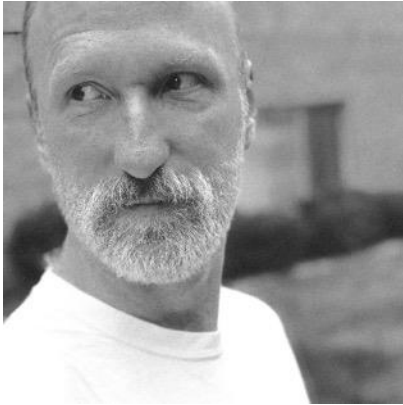


Kate LaDew is a graduate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a BA in Studio Art. She resides in Graham, NC with her cats, Charlie Chaplin and Janis Joplin.



Charlene Langfur is an organic gardener, a rescue dog advocate and a Syracuse University Graduate Writing Fellow. Her most recent publications include *Room Magazine*, *The Potomac Review*, *Common Ground Review* and a series of poems in *Hawk and Handsaw: Journal of Creative Sustainability*.

Soo Jin Lee is an artist, independent curator, and writer. Currently, she is a PhD student at the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Fine Art majoring in photography in Korea, and her Master's degree in Art majoring in photography and media in Germany. She is interested in the relationship between text and image narrative, and her research topic is on the autobiographical narrative in contemporary visual arts.



Raymond Luczak is author and editor of 22 books, including *Flannelwood* (Red Hen Press) and *Lovejets: Queer Male Poets on 200 Years of Walt Whitman* (Squares & Rebels). A ten-time Pushcart Prize nominee, he lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and online at raymondluczak.com.



James Madigan is an emerging poet, retired librarian and adjunct faculty at Illinois Institute of Technology, living in Oak Park, Illinois, USA. He completed his Master's degree in public librarianship at Dominican University, River Forest, Illinois. He studied poetry at Carlow College, St. Patrick's in County Carlow under Derek Coyle, and can be found at various venues reading his poetry in the Chicago area. His poetry is informed by his political activism. He was born in Chicago.



Amanda McLeod is an Australian fiction writer, painter, and poet. Her words can be found in *Elephants Never*, *Ghost City Review*, *Bonnie's Crew*, and elsewhere. She is also the assistant editor of *Animal Heart Press*. When she's not creating, she can be found searching for the quiet wild, or the perfect cup of coffee. Connect with her on Twitter @AmandaMWrites



Donia G. Mounsef grew up in Beirut, Lebanon. She is a Canadian-Lebanese poet, playwright and dramaturge. She splits her time on either side of the Canadian Shield, between Toronto and Edmonton where she teaches theatre and poetry at the University of Alberta. She is the author of a poetry collection: *Plimsoll Lines* (Urban Farmhouse Press, 2018), and a chapbook: *Slant of Arils*, (Damaged Goods Press, 2015), reviewed in [Fruita Pulp](#). Her writing has been published and anthologized in online and in print in *Mortar Magazine*, *Cordite*, *Pacific Review*, *The Harpoon Review*, *The Toronto Quarterly*, *Poetry Quarterly* and elsewhere. Her performance poetry and plays have been performed on stage in Toronto, Avignon, Montréal, Calgary, Vancouver, and Edmonton.



Nandita Mukand is a Singapore-based artist whose practice encompasses sculpture, installation and painting, and whose work has been exhibited and collected in Singapore and internationally. Her work was included in the *OpenART Biennale 2017*, Sweden and *Imaginarium: To the Ends of the Earth*, Singapore Art Museum. Other notable exhibitions include solo shows: *Mind(less) Wilderness* (2019), *Forest Weft*, *City Warp* (2017-2018), *The Materiality of Time* (2015) and group shows: *From Lost Roots to Urban Meadows*, The Private Museum, Singapore (2019), *Exploring BigCI*, Hawkesbury

Regional Gallery, Australia (2015), *Untapped*, Chan Hampe Gallery, Singapore (2016), *Fundacio L'Olivar Summer Exhibition*, Spain (2016). She has been awarded artist residencies by the Fundacio L'Olivar in Spain, the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, Australia and the Bilpin International Ground for Creative Initiatives, Australia, all of which have enabled her to deepen her research into the natural world.



Kunle Okesipe is a Nigerian poet and playwright whose poetry has appeared in *The Revolution (Relaunch)* and a number of anthologies. He has also won awards for his plays.



Cara Ow is anxious and alive. A fresh English Lit and Creative Writing graduate from the University of East Anglia, they're currently concerned about their ability to find a job... preferably before the end of the world. Having appeared in anthologies by Math Paper Press and Egg Box Publishing, as well as in Norwich-based publications like *Diaspora Diaries* and *Concrete*, they'd like to think their writing career's just taking off. Unfortunately global warming's getting in the way of their plans for the future, so Cara writes experimental poetry about it sometimes and cries quietly in whatever time's left.



Craig Santos Perez is an indigenous Chamoru poet from the Pacific Island of Guam. He is the author of four books of poetry and the co-editor of five anthologies. He teaches in the English department at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa.



Forrest Rapier is a recent MFA graduate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He is the winner of an Academy of American Poets Prize and has appeared in *Best New Poets*, *Texas Poetry Review*, *Verse Daily*, *The Greensboro Review*, among others. He is currently a lecturer in the English Department at UNCG.



Mário Santos lives in Lisbon, Portugal. He has a background in languages and the arts, and is passionate about new technologies. After many years working as a software engineer, he decided to quit his job and start writing his first novel, *A Máquina não Gosta de Gatos*, which was published in 2015 in Portugal by Guerra & Paz Editores.



Erin Schalk is a visual artist, writer and educator who lives in the greater Los Angeles area. In 2017, she graduated with her MFA in Studio from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Today, Schalk teaches and is in charge of an arts education program which provides tactile art courses to blind and visually impaired students. For more information, please visit her website at www.erinschalk.com.



Hibah Shabkhez is a writer of the half-yo literary tradition, an erratic language-learning enthusiast, a teacher of French as a foreign language and a happily eccentric blogger from Lahore, Pakistan. Her work has previously appeared in *The Mojave Heart Review*, *Third Wednesday*, *Brine*, *Petrichor*, *Remembered Arts*, *Rigorous* and a number of other literary magazines. Studying life, languages and literature from a comparative perspective across linguistic and cultural boundaries holds a particular fascination for her.

Read her blog: <https://hibahshabkhezicc.wordpress.com/> and follow her on Twitter @hibahshabkhez



Shuolat (Chan Shu Yin) is an artist and art therapist. Her art traverses the realms of nature, human's relationship with it, as well as existentialism and the human condition. Shuolat incorporates nature into her art therapy practice, Creative Earth Art Therapy, as she believes that nature and art have the power to heal. She can be found at www.shuolat.com.



Elizabeth Spencer Spragins is a poet and writer who taught in American community colleges for more than a decade. Her tanka and bardic verse in the Celtic style have been published extensively in Europe, Asia, and North America. She is the author of *With No Bridle for the Breeze: Ungrounded Verse* (Shanti Arts Publishing) and *The Language of Bones: American Journeys Through Bardic Verse* (Kelsay Books). Updates are available on her website: www.authorsden.com/elizabethspragins. An avid swimmer and an enthusiastic fiber artist, she lives in Fredericksburg, Virginia.



Travis Stephens is a tugboat captain who resides with his family in California. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, recent credits include *Gyroscope Review*, *Gravitas*, *Sheila-na-gig*, *Raw Art Review*, *Crosswinds Poetry Journal* and elsewhere.



Ahrend Torrey is a creative writing graduate from Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. When he is not writing, or working in New Orleans, he enjoys the simpler things in life, like walking around City Park with his husband, Jonathan, and their two rat terriers Dichter and Dova. Forthcoming this year, his collection of poems, *Small Blue Harbor* will be available from The Poetry Box Select imprint.



Anca Vlasopolos has published the award-winning novel *The New Bedford Samurai*, the award-winning memoir *No Return Address: A Memoir of Displacement*, four collections of poems: *Often Fanged Light* (Adelaide Books, 2019), *Cartographies of Scale (and Wing)* (2015), *Walking Toward Solstice* (2012) and *Penguins in a Warming World* (2007), three poetry chapbooks, a detective novel, *Missing Members*, and nearly three hundred poems and short stories in literary journals. She spent her professional career in Detroit, MI, and is now writing, reading and potting on Cape Cod, MA.



Yeow Kai Chai is a poet, prose writer, editor and music reviewer. He has two poetry collections, *Pretend I'm Not Here* (2006) and *Secret Manta* (2001). He co-wrote *Lost Bodies: Poems between Portugal and Home* (2016) and *The Adopted: Stories from Angkor* (2015) with three other writers. A co-editor of *Quarterly Literary Review Singapore* (QLRS), he was festival director of Singapore Writers Festival from 2015 to 2018.



Christina Yin lives in Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo with her husband, children and two mixed-breed dogs.



Before leaving his native country, **Yuan Changming** published monographs on translation. Currently, Yuan edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver. Credits include ten Pushcart nominations and publications in *Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17)* and *BestNewPoemsOnline*, amongst others.