

A photograph of a forest path leading to a lake, with trees framing the view. The path is covered in fallen leaves and leads towards a body of water in the distance. The trees are mostly bare, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The sky is overcast and hazy.

Three Drops
from a Cauldron

Issue 28

Three Drops from a Cauldron

Issue 28

November 2019

Edited by Kate Garrett

Poems, stories, and art copyright © 2019 Individual authors and artists

Issue copyright © Kate Garrett

Cover image is 'Trees in Bootham' by Janet Dean

Image copyright © 2019 Janet Dean

Three Drops from a Cauldron

Issue 28 / November 2019

Pomegranate	8
Raven Feather	9
the black dahlia ruminates	10
Beast	11
The Gods of Essex	12
Witch	13
Wicked Witch	14
Shaded Paths	15
Hangover in Tír na nÓg	16
The Keeper's Wife	17
Rothiemurchus	19
Invisible cities	20
Finias Falias Gorias Murias	21
We Are Haunted	22
The Domovoi	24
A Movement in the Shadows	26
Portal	27
The Boy Who Wanted the Moon	28
The Snowman	29
Winter Scene	30
Power Rests at the Conjunction of Death & Springtime	31
Lost	32
Song for Clíodna	33
In the Darkest Depths	35

Blood Magic	36
PMT Virelai	37
Dreamcatcher	38
On Her Eighteenth Birthday	40
Toffee Apple Red	41
Wicked Queen	42
Red	43
Winter Solstice	44
The Lady in Green	47
Anne Neville Reflects	48
WAKE...interrupted	49
In debt	50
Gold	51
The Sockra Tree	52
in the stew pond	54
Belly of the Beast	55
Celtic Merrow	57
The Suited Prince	58
The Gargoyle Speaks	60
Gargoyle	61
Biographical Notes	62

Pomegranate

The meadow
opened to swallow her,
hungry for her wide eyes
and unbruised heart.

Some say she was tricked
into eating it,
I believe the moment came
when she looked upon life

with its treachery and poison,
knew it like a lover,
and it broke open a kindness
she had not known before.

No longer victim, but Queen,
a friend to winter's silence,
she welcomes swallowed souls
with their wounds and stuck screams.

When the red fruit arrives
pluck those plump seeds,
the fields will lie rotting for a time,
knowing you will have to stay a while.

Christine Valters Paintner

Raven Feather

I combed out my hair
like an aphid eats ladybugs,
like my brother eats venison,
because it's natural.

It looks holy.

No updos, no gems,
no mirrors, no reflection.
My uterus contracts,
the clan continues.

Jennifer Hernandez

the black dahlia ruminates

you broke my body
open, baring my secret crimson,
and left
just as the soft down

and (i rose) to your caress
which rendered me ugly, wanting
i felt so alone
just as the soft down

rose to your caress (you were
gone). a door slammed shut.
return my voice

come back (i am)
scraped open, raw (no longer myself, but my death)
(you left me, like you always do)
shattered, blood-soaked
open on the january ground
(for some other good time girl)

eyes like obsidian stones
(pathetic)

my traitor lips
grinning
to my ears

Jessica Drake-Thomas

Beast

is the thunderclap of Grandfather Sun
clad in a thicket of hauberk bark
In a solitaire sky
 behind nebulous doors
he backstages rain over pulleys of tarns
 a basketful of shards interwoven by parquet
He harnesses the river of the great horned snake
from the four wind summit of Ancillary Space

Who is she who notches this Taliesin falcon
 She spinning wheels mesquite into a woodland veil
To her monsooned spirit who patchworks these beams
 knotted to his wingspan like a hirsuit quilt
I toast her familiar whose shoulders hunchback
 She speaks to the grain, to the medicine of things
to a pocketful of journey bell curved on string

Chuka Susan Chesney

The Gods of Essex

We have strange gods in Essex.
The circle dancers never marked our card;
The Wild Wood never cloaked our hills.
Our bones are made from clay, not stone or iron.
We look to rivers, gravel and the sea

But we have gods, and demons too.
The gods of fire, who fuel boy-racers,
Keep a tender eye on Bradwell.
The gods of earth, to cup the harvest in their hands.
The gods of hearth, to supervise the urban sprawl.

Our vampires are the sullen sort
That suck the colour from a maiden's cheek,
Retiring to their mudflats with the sunrise.
Black Shuck leaves his paw-prints in the sand,
And Jenny Greenteeth haunts the river weed.

Edward Alport

Witch

Who says that witches don't love,
that their blood is as black as tar
skulking in earth, that their eyes
see only our skeletons?

Who says that witches eat others' souls
and bury their own underground,
that they fry our happiness for breakfast
and eat jealousy for supper?

Who says that witches scratch trails
in tender flesh with poisoned fingers,
that pity rots their intestines, that murder
brings them back to life?

Who's seen a witch? The smell
you think is hers is in your breath.
Her blackness is your hate gone cold,
her poison your own greed.

Don't hide from her. Look at yourself
in the mirror you've always veiled.
See your cadaver with her eyes,
see how she brings it to life.

Susan Jordan

Wicked Witch



Paul Nixon

Shaded Paths

Transition yourself from that dark path onto my light.
Your soul transferred through song and dance.
This witchcraft won't hold for long.
Though long enough to be taken completely.

Take that dive young one.
The teachings of your parents cannot assist in dark abyss.
So sayeth a spell transfixed.
Blight onto you, bringing you here, the sea of us shining so bright.

Rickey Rivers Jr

Hangover in Tír na nÓg

When the party's over, they giggle,
Bow out, spin off out the windows,
into the walls, back to the paintings,
Shrink away and slumber in flowers
Upon the coming dawn. Has it really been
an entire night? The sun burns my skin as
never before, the gold pillars glint as if to say
don't worry we burn too, and the music
weaves in and out of my head like
punch drunk ghosts.

My back crackles like I'm made of wood,
my cloak is tattered from fuzzy memories
of the frolic it took to get down the steps,
and fairy food does not agree with me.
Literally. Their fruit grow eyes and keep
bickering amongst themselves about me.

The selkies slip on their coats
the trolls return to rock and moss
and the—I should say Good People—
have gone back into the day world.
I'm still on the floor with worn out bloody
shoes and a knotted flower wreath.
How did I get here again?

Ellen Huang

The Keeper's Wife

The Keeper's wife: this is what the landfolk call her, as though she's no name or character of her own. Other women would mind this, she knows, but she doesn't bother. It's what she is, after all. The thing they call her.

It's just the two of them on the island, her and her husband, and that's how she likes it. Five years married, and both still as flush with love and luck as newlyweds. She smiles each time she thinks of him. As she scrubs the front steps of salt and dirt. As she kneads the bread. Peter, with his wardrobe of threadbare cardigans, each one thin as paper at the elbows in spite of her endless darning. Peter, with his craggy face and crooked smile that lights her from the inside like a bulb. Peter, who rubs her cold feet at night, who cups her ankles in his chapped hands with care.

She was fiery, once. He has cooled her with his calm. Now she keeps house and washes his clothes while he tends to the lamp, signals the boats. Another wife might pine for soap and roses away from the town on this scrubby island. Not this wife. She loves the smell of wind and salt, loves the wrecked land they inhabit. She loves the smell of her husband, too, a mix of paraffin, grease, and sweat. She loves the days when she takes a scarf to the island's highest point and lets the red silk fill with wind. She's a keen sense of smell, and would swear far countries gift themselves to her on the breeze. India. America. Ireland. The smell of hot feet and spice markets. Of popcorn and hotdogs. Of wheat fields raised on loam and light.

She is capable of anything, once she is shown. Has taken to this life with aplomb. Their cottage is neat as a pin, and she mends their clothing with the tidy stitches of a surgeon. Peter has taught her, also, to fish. To mine the sea for its gifts, and bone and fillet the catch. She is deft in her work. Quick with her knife. Bucket after bucket fills up with guts, a red slurry she'll keep to fertilise the carrots and onions, the herbs she tends with a mother's touch. The fish she peels of their winkings, fries with butter and wild garlic in a copper-bottomed pan. It's a simple life. Every

night she thanks the ceiling for it. Whatever God is responsible. Whatever star.

Once a month, the rowboat brings supplies from the shore. Milk and flour. Eggs boxed in straw. Cotton for mending. Paraffin. Bait. The Lighthouse Keeper's wife is shy of men, and stays inside, away from the windows and the news from the town. Waits for Peter to bring her the crate. He never forgets to order her creams. Her skin gets dry here, peels in sheets unless she butters it soft with emollient. She works it into her body, assigns Peter the spots she can't reach. The wings of her shoulder blades. The knuckles of her spine.

Her sealskin, she knows, is locked in the trunk at the foot of their bed. Peter wears the key on a chain at his throat. She has told him many times there is no need, she would never leave, but his love makes him cautious. Sometimes she misses her old life - of course she does - but she would miss this more. The wand of the lighthouse beam on the water. The sound of the rain. The way he pronounces the name he gave her, unable to bring his human tongue in line with the language of her sisters.

Darling, he calls her. Bringing her fish, or a square of lace. Peeling her, shivering, from her flannel nightdress. *Darling* like a blessing; *Darling* like a wish.

Cheryl Pearson

Rothiemurchus

I can't hear the forest's heartbeat, yet relentless it thuds through my blood. Insistent, it marks time, and frames dark, shaded places unaudited by human eye and mind. Here, I mutate, change from host to guest, cede control with each invited step. Shadows cast, realign my core design, woman to wild creature. In rare pools of beamed light, tree sprites spin and dance. I am entranced, pinned to the fragrant, needled floor. Their magic mayhem leaves me unsure, I doubt if life away from this embracing space still exists at all.

Ceinwen E Cariad Haydon

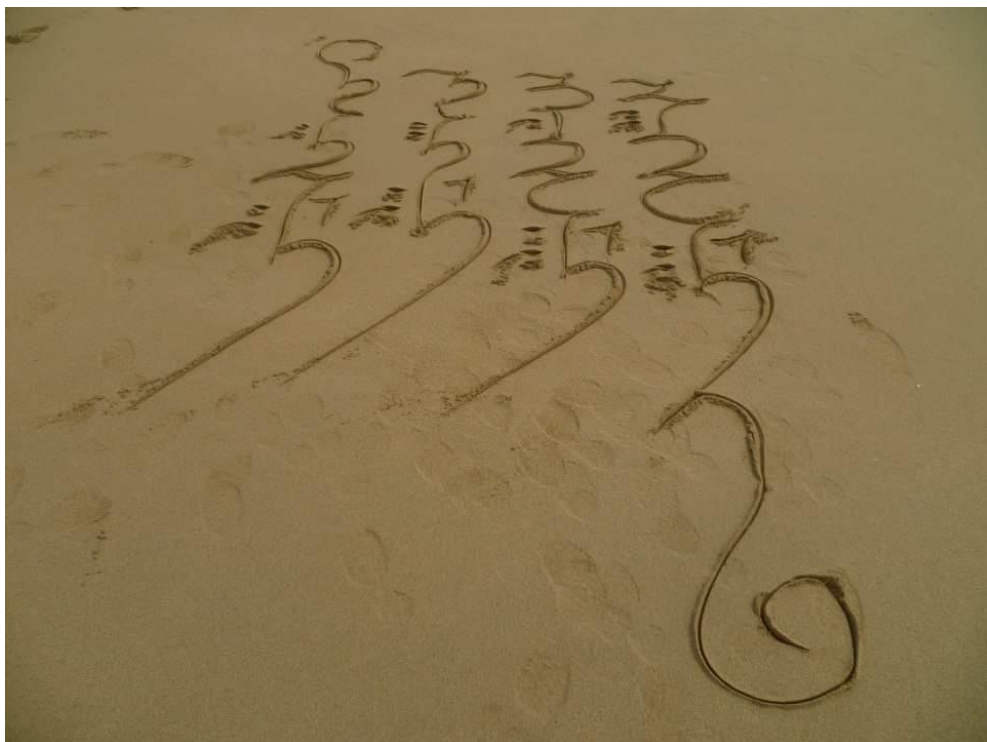
**Rothiemurchus – a great pine forest in the Cairngorms*

Invisible cities

Finias Falias Gorias Murias,
thy names are writ upon the sand.
They will survive the tides of time,
indelible upon the strand.
Imperishable in the mind's eye
thy gleaming towers eternal stand,
and I will walk among them at last
when life leads my steps beyond this land.

Peter Clive

Finias Falias Gorias Murias



Peter Clive

We Are Haunted

Another door locked,
this time it was you,
and we think the same thing:
Maybe there's a ghost.

One night when I left my bedroom –
officially a guest bedroom, but it holds
my computer, my books, a bed I like –
the door locked from the inside.

I unbent the question mark curve
of a hanger to poke the knob.
Maybe there's a ghost
who needed to Google his name.

But today when I was gone,
this time it was you.
The basement door locked
you from the rest of the house.

In the ravaged basement, you
found something to jimmy it open.
"Another door locked,"
you said as I walked right in.

And we think the same thing,
although I speak it: haunted.
Then my reflection at the window
startled me and disappeared.

Which of all these interior doors
might lock next? Is it so easy

to shut ourselves out, in? As simple
as going out the front or back door.

Maybe there's a ghost.
And we think the same thing:
This time it was you –
another door locked.

Ronnie Sirmans

The Domovoi

I can't sleep. I knock over the ash-tray in an attempt to snuff out my fourth—maybe fifth cigarette. It gets all over my pillow. I clean it up and by the time I finish, I am even more awake, I light my fifth—maybe sixth cigarette. I feel a cold pain in my toe followed by a pinched cry of "STOP SMOKING."

I rip the covers away from my legs to find a small man in wrinkled skin and a gnarly beard glaring up at me. He has two little horns with a great big bump between them. He has my eyes. There is a little blood on the tips of his sharp yellow fingernails. He growls and begins climbing up my leg, scratching as he goes. I kick wildly.

"Sto-o-o-p Smo-o-o-k—" it tries to say before being flung to the floor. He stands up, not more than half a foot high. He stomps around, kicking up dirt that isn't there.

"Who the fuck are you?" I demand.

The crusty little man looks up, "who am I?" he crawls up into bed, "who am I! This is my house, MY house. You have no respect—no respect. You demolished the old furniture; you painted the walls and now I can't find my way around! Anywhere around!" he rubs the lump between his horns. I pull my feet up a safer distance away. One of my toes is blue. He glares at me.

"And everything you own smells like cigarettes! Cigarettes, cigarettes! You give nothing, and I can't take anything that won't stink up my hole. It stinks. It is all stinked up! Go away!"

I look down at my cigarette, red tipped. I snuff it out.

"I'm leaving! Gone—leaving."

The old man begins hobbling to the door. He turns.

"You'll be sorry." He hobbles out. I think for a moment, then jump to the door and peek around the frame. The little man has his hands in a hole in the wall that I've never seen. He is pulling out a multitude of objects and placing them in an old IKEA bag we forgot to toss out.

Last thing he does is reach deep in the hole and pull out an equally horned, equally evil little thing in a nightgown. It slaps at his hand and then eyes the IKEA bag.

“We leave now!” the little old man cries. “We are leaving!”

The other creature turns and looks at me. “Is that the smoking one?” it says in a much sweeter voice.

“YES!” the horned little man roars, “they are all smokers. Smoking everywhere, smokies-smokers, the whole bunch. We’re leaving.”

The sweeter one, I assume is female, turns to me.

“Shame on you!” she pipes at me. I don’t know what to do, and so I shrug and hold out both hands as though I might try to help with some misunderstood problem of the universe. The little man throws the IKEA bag over his shoulder and gives me the finger.

“Colonialist!” he says and him and the other hairy little creature walk off into nothing.

Benjamin Davis

A Movement in the Shadows

Is that you swirling shadows
in the corner of my room?
Are you churning up my guilt
So it congeals into rank fear?
Are you blotting out the lamplight
and my hope for shreds of peace?
Is your hate so strong in death
that it destroys my sleep?
Am I cursed to feel your hurtings
in all solitary moods?
Do you damn me while still living
for what cannot be undone?
If I cannot ease your torment
While still walking in the sun
Then know that I will find you
When I am also gone.

Ed Ahern

Portal

There was a clearing just inside the woods
where we'd go to talk to ghosts.
I preferred the other, an old mass grave site
tucked a few feet behind the tree line,
but this one was more popular.

They said it was a portal to hell.

They said two children died in a fire
or a murder
or a murder by fire.
They said you could sometimes feel them
take your hand or wrap their arms around your wrist.
If we were lucky, we'd catch it in a thermal take
or spot movement in the laser's rays.

You'd never guess that hell was a few feet away
when I sat on the old wooden planks
of the covered bridge, marked by soldiers' boots
and blood and tired, aching feet,
and talked to a boy who was once almost my age.

But we'd warn everyone:
Don't go past that point.
They rarely listened.
Once I nearly crossed the line
but something, fear, a warning,
a blue blip of a hand pressed against my spine,
held me back.

I still don't know if I believe in the portal,
but I remember the in-between of that clearing.

Juliette Sebock

The Boy Who Wanted the Moon

There was once a boy who wanted the moon, wanted its white coin face, its circumference of silver. How he cried for the moon in its many phases—the slender, curved hair of crescent on the black sheet of sky, the moon with its half-face, with its one eye shut, the other half split, lost, nowhere to the young boy. With the crescent, he thought it would be nice to curve his body into the cradle and be held there, safe.

He thought of how the moon must hold its breath to become bigger, how the moon must eat the stars and hold them in the hollows of its cheeks the way squirrels do. What, after all, could there be up there for the moon to gobble besides stars and air? He thought that when it was a crescent, it must be starving, hollowed by hunger. He wanted the moon to eat him, hold him in the basin of its stomach, safe. He thought that when the moon was expanding, it must be pregnant with something, it must be eating something to create itself. He wanted to create himself.

He watched the moon day after day and cried for the moon in its darkening. He thought it must have been stolen by another who admired it as he did, who wanted to be inside the moon, hung on the curved dome of sky, within reach of the incessant stars. He wanted to see where the moon went during those twelve hours of day, where its mouth and eyes were, how it took things into its stomach. Most of all, he dreamed of how it would feel to be able to disappear at day, how cool it must feel inside the moon's mouth, in the shadow of stars, away from the hunger of the world—what it was to be a dark light.

Laura Stringfellow

The Snowman

That morning you conjured life using scrapings of snow
around Condren's yard where shaded drifts lay untouched
by the morning sun. Your mittens were ankle socks;
your mother's bobble-hat a constant avalanche on your eyes.

You rolled and heaved those cotton-boulders,
struggling to stack them, worked until your cheeks thawed,
and the socks sagged from your frost-bitten hands.
When you were done you dressed his body with a woolen scarf.

He inhaled mulched leaves through a parsnip nose,
uttered words you were sure through an orange-peel mouth.
His raisin-black eyes saw a truth that I refused.
His arms were twigs and his legs were rooted - he was perfect.

Sun-rays crept up over the slates of the estate,
burned his skin, consumed his fragile body like cancer,
melted his beautiful flesh to sludge. You stood
helpless and wept. The red scarf trailed in his grave-puddle.

Clifton Redmond

Winter Scene



Janet Dean

Power Rests at the Conjunction of Death & Springtime

he stole me away, they said,
he plucked me from the earth
like a daisy & tucked me in
the darkness behind his ear.

how can a flower bloom down
in the depths? they cried, she'll
wilt & she'll fade & oh what a shame,
to lose a pure, pretty thing.

but they forget, they all forget
that I am the queen of both
pistil and penance, my throne
running red with juice & justice.

you call it forbidden fruit, but I?
I am the master of the master
of the dead & he pays worship
in the space between my thighs.

you cannot break that which was
forged in sunshine & bone marrow,
she who pours the brackish river
water in open, broken mouths, &

you cannot steal she who plunged
herself face first into the darkness, she
who snuck into the garden & anchored
her power in pomegranate seeds.

Annika Sood

Lost

Ariadne you will weep an ocean deep
enough to become your own island.
But remember cheetah-spined Theseus
was a mortal man who abandoned you
at the first glimpse of complication, spun
from your flaxen hair. The thread you gave
to save a hero who made promises emptier
than an urn. Mourn. But know tomorrow

you will stir to a god with Poseidon-blue eyes
kissing salt from your wrists. Thirsty to entangle
with a woman whose passions swell with the tide.
He will teach you to kneel only before worthy beings,
unravel at the centre of your labyrinthine heart
and crown your busy head with the brightest stars.

Helen Cox

Song for Clodna

In the first dawn we looked eastward
Your gulls still lulled in the gloom
Your peach arms swept smooth arcs of grace
You rocked us in nets of foam

On the second morning your gulls bragged
Of a kingdom built outside of time
And your dolphins jackknifed gleefully
And our wake fell fast behind

The third noon we plumbed a new course
While your gulls laughed on the mast
And your fingers of glittering diamonds
Promised infinite light and dark

On the fourth afternoon you rested
Slow and slippery you spun
Winking in palest silk ripples
Undulating in blondest sun

At fifth dusk you were transparent
Sleek creatures spiraled beneath
Amber ignited your sapphire skin
We sighed and slept and dreamed

All sixth night your gulls were silent
Roosted far in the other world
The pole star bobbed and the porthole moon
Pulled you up in a waltzing roll

At seventh midnight we sang to you
A shanty of virgins and fish
You answered by tumbling aboard us
Churned our hearts in the press of your kiss

By eighth dawn your passion crested
In sluicing and swallowing towers

We clung and we crawled and we clambered
Till you finally flung us ashore

On the ninth day sailors went missing
Your gulls brought word of them
Drinking honey rum from coral cups
Tangled smiling in your bed

Nicole Rain Sellers

In the Darkest Depths

Be not afraid of whirlpools,
of strong winds, and murky waves.
Fear the creature that dwells
in the darkest depths,
the ice-shackled Kraken,
that threatens to surface
and your soul to keep.

With your every stroke
in the cheery water green,
it stirs in its slumber,
veins on its eyes' centuries-old husks
that its sight cumber
crack and open gleaming red
wounds that see
the surface of the moribund sea.

It breathes and floats,
free in a jet of bubbles
that ripple the surface.
You laugh and splash
a smile cracks your face,
and It is wide awake,
husks gone, bloodshot eyes
aimed at your shimmering shadow.

You wave at the camera,
somewhere on the shore,
the rain of droplets
dew on your nape.
It hurtles at the surface
toothless mouth agape.
Green water turns black,
then white.
You scream.

Erna Grcic

Blood Magic

My blood spills
as her vacant mouth taunts.
She summons walls: daggers and swords
around my chamber

Hecate and Isis
whisper my silent song.
The whorls of my palm
trace my spell in braille.

Molten lava surges –
I spiral –
Walls crumble.

Monica Kagan

PMT Virelai

Rise and fall, disputes to barter,
Ebb and flow warlike seas charter,
Rules Moon.

Infant still to stir, and sleeping,
Curled, unsprung, quiet beginning,
New Moon.

Maiden's progress; motivations
To build empires, fuels expansions,
Wax Moon.

Mother brings to terms contentions,
Wrangles, haggles, peak assertions,
Full Moon.

Purging pushing pull of minds,
Is Crone's reflections on the tides,
Wane Moon.

Elysian monarch's adjudications
Conclude celestial abdications,
Waive Moon.

Sarra Culleno

Dreamcatcher

As she sat in her tower Rapunzel watched the shadows lengthening. She knew that when night came and they could no longer thrive out in the open; they would seep into her dreams.

It was part of the curse that kept her sealed within those stone walls. At night, the tower's interior would become so dark that not even the light of the full moon could penetrate it. It was for this reason that Rapunzel began to grow out her hair.

She grew it until it was long and tangled enough catch her nightmares. As the days went by she noticed that her hair began to writhe around on the floorboards. When she ran her hands through the strands her palms were left stained with something dark and oily, and when she attempted to tie it back it immediately sprung loose.

Occasionally, someone from the outside would stand at the foot of her tower.

'Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your golden hair.'

This was often followed by fits of laughter. Despite their mockery, Rapunzel was more than happy to oblige. After some time she stopped trying to clean the remains of these incidents; instead allowing them to stain each strand. After all, she always had admired her sister's red hair.

Soon after a few of these incidents had taken place, Rapunzel woke up to the sound of something sliding across the floor. It was only then that she noticed that a good portion of her hair was hanging over the window ledge. She tugged at it sharply, but it responded by dragging the rest of itself towards the window. When she tried once more she was forced to pull her hand away in pain, revealing several cuts on her hands. This was followed by a whisper from within the strands.

'Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your crimson hair.'

She remembered a time before the tower. As she told stories of faraway lands, her sister would let her brush her hair. She would often get through at least three or four tales in the time it took to tame it.

'When I grow up, I want hair just like yours.'

Every time Rapunzel said this, her sister would turn to face her before running fingers thorough Rapunzel's hair. She often whispered to her as she did this, allowing her own red hair to obscure part of her face.

'You shouldn't wish for something like that.'

Soon after she turned twelve Rapunzel woke up to find the floor of her room covered in thick red swirls. Her sister was nowhere to be found.

It was soon after this that Rapunzel was locked away. Now she stood in front of the window, listening to the whispers as they grew louder. Almost all of her hair was now hanging outside the tower.

'Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your crimson hair.'

It was then that Rapunzel noticed her old knife lying on the floor. She grabbed it and began to hack away at the hair just below the base of her neck. Instead of resisting, as she'd expected it to, great clumps of it began to fall. In fact, her once dull knife seemed to grow sharper as time went by. When she was done, she threw the hair that remained out of the window.

That night, strange creatures were sighted in the nearby town. Their twisted features were coated with a layer of red fur which they were able to lengthen at will, grabbing anyone who was unfortunate enough to pass by. Screams were heard as nightmares plagued every household, and red vines sprouted from the walls.

Meanwhile, Rapunzel ran her fingers through her short golden hair. Soon she fell into a deep, peaceful sleep from which she never wanted to awaken.

Aaliyah Cassim

On Her Eighteenth Birthday

She wakes muggy headed
It feels like
She has slept for a hundred years
Or more
Dog breath, moist on her cheek
Leaves a wet patch, like a kiss
'Vero Amore! You bloody animal
I suppose you want to be fed?'
Gingerly she peels away the crackly sheet
Her arm squalls
A smear of blood
'Oh my good God, I did it!'
She had thought it just a dream
More probably a night terror
A black vinyl fairy with a gun
Pricking her over and over
She wipes away the sleepy dust
Crusted around her mauve eyes
Inked deep in 'Dead Rose'
She sees
"FEEL THE MAGIC"

Adele Evershed

Toffee Apple Red

Yellowy apples ready to be dressed. She should be here by now. In time for the fireworks, she had said. Sugar. Syrup. Food colouring to give them some rouge. She looked lovely in red last week. Where is she? Heat the potion and dip the apples. Fit each with a shiny, translucent cape. Spin them; dress them in another layer. It's better when it takes longer to reach what's underneath. Something to wait for. She should be here by now. The fireworks have finished. Still waiting. Wooden sticks. Spear through the middle. Cut open at the core.

Charlotte McCormac

Wicked Queen



Paul Nixon

Red

Dark woods, deep woods, deathly woods,
Through them I rush-race-run.
Moon glows, moon shows, moon knows,
Soon I will be done.

Bog sucks, bog slurps, bog swallows,
Stealing the boots from my feet.
Briars snatch, briars catch, briars latch,
Determined we shall meet.

Water utters, water mutters, water blubbers,
Through rimed wetness I sloggyly go.
Rocks thrash, rocks slash, rocks gash,
Riving cracks into my soul.

Solid dirt, cold dirt, stinging dirt,
Toes digging in, I stagger up a knoll.
Trees shadow, trees shelter, trees shield—
Or so I have been told.

Wolves prowl, wolves howl, wolves growl,
Form a menacing circle round me.
Darkling eyes, devil eyes, demon eyes,
But only one will claim me.

Teeth show, teeth smile, teeth sink
Dagger fangs above my breast.
My master's kiss, my lover's kiss, my mate's kiss
Weeps river-red upon my chest.

Dark woods, deep woods, deathly woods,
Through them I rush-race-run.
Moon glows, moon shows, moon knows,
My life has just begun.

KT Workman

Winter Solstice

The fight is tonight.

We have waited through the old dark December days that close on us like a door, shutting us out of the light. At last the solstice spins the year back round. Round to the fight for spring.

After the marking tonight, I will spend next week collecting leaves and feathers for my older sister who is the wassail sacrifice this year. That blessing marks the start of spring, the awakening. The goddess stretches out underground and pokes her green fingers through. But first, we have to defeat winter.

Darkness falls – blue grey caught in the twiggy arms of the forest. My father lights candles and torches. We dash around the house with our brands, lighting honey wax candles that burn like August. We banish the grey from every room and nook before it takes hold. Mother took her hatchet to the forest edge today and brought home fur branches to decorate the house – to give us hope of green until Imbolc.

The whole village is lit. A fire roars in the dead green, every window tonight spills gold red light.

The first snow fell this morning, and now the forest is steel grey with it. It heaps on roofs and fences and glitters gold in the firelight. It has barely been light all day with the sky thick and the wind stings now, whipping the fire.

I am wrapped in furs like the rest of my people, ready for the spectacle. Our feet cramp and stamp on the packed snow. The cold air is spiced with the cinnamon, sharp smell of mead that we warm ourselves with tonight. It passes round and we all drink. An owl screeches above and flaps away, startled by the sudden emergence of two huge forms. The fight has begun.

Gathered around the firelit whitened green, a large man steps into the middle. He is festooned in the deep green leaves of holly and is glorious in red berries and green spears. The spirit of winter. He roars, lifting his holly wood club into the air with the strength to crush us all and I shudder and huddle close to my sister. She giggles and points, then I exhale

the breath I didn't know I held when I recognise the tattoos of John who keeps pigs by the bridge under all the holly leaf. He thuds his club on the ground and shouts a challenge.

The second huge figure advances. I don't recognise him. He is draped in green and brown acorns and I hear my sister gasp as our minds race each other; where did he find the green leaves of an oak in December? We grip hands. We know our gods and our spirits. There is a crack and roar echoing through the forest beyond and the man in oak and green paint winks at me. I squeeze my sister's hand as I now recognise the basket weaver, Arden, from the willow copse who wove me corn dolls in the summer.

The men are ready, but one is helped and is destined to win at last, as sure as earth moves.

In a cry and a rush, the men clash. Both are strong. They are locked grunting, straining and time stands still as their bodies push and quiver. There is a give, and the oak man topples forward, catching himself and spinning round to face his rival. Then the holly man's muscles clench and there is a blow – he has floored the man of oak. Winter is strong and hits hard here. He stands over the scattered oak leaves, chest heaving at his laboured breaths and sweat dripping like tears down his bare skin to mix with the blood from his holly piercings. We groan. We wait. Then a cheer as the oak man gets shakily to his feet, breaths deep and straightens. Another cry and rush as the men lock again and struggle.

The fight goes on. Our cheers die away as our tension piles and our breathing stops. Holly must be defeated for the darkness to eventually brighten and the wind's chill to ease. An incoherent cheer as the holly is knocked down and now the oak hunches over it, panting. Will it stay down? Holly hefts onto its knees using its club for balance and they swing again. It must be so. Winter will fight back here often over the coming months before it is finally banished.

I cannot feel my feet or fingers now and I have not realised the ache in my neck and back from the straight of watching for time which is drawn out on a long rope. The rope that binds us all in the cold dark over months. Still they fight. And now the solstice full moon rises above the

forest and floods the churned battlefield. As it hits the upturned branch of the oak's branch hammer, the oak man gives a wretched roar and slams it down.

We watch.

In the silence of the silver winter night, holly falls. Oak breaths hard and waits. We all wait, breathing thin threads of the night air. Then, from the forest, we hear it – the splitting crack and crash of heavy wood falling, the echoes thudding on cold waves through the still night.

Oak man straightens, then turns around. He leads us out of our village and into the bare, grasping arms of forest. Through the eyes and howls of the rustling trees, he leads us to our sacred clearing. We spread out and huddle round together, our hearts fattening. Oak man gestures and there, in the clearing, lies a splintered, fallen holly, spilling its blood red berries on the snow. Beside it, bathed in the silver light, grows a sinewy oak sapling.

We give thanks and douse the roots in sweet mead. The holly man scatters his leaves and we shout and cheer the oak, victor, in the moonlight.

The holly is defeated by the oak.

Winter is passing.

Chris Collins

The Lady in Green

The sin of passion is my crime.
I disgraced my name when I called him mine,
admitted love or a peccable mind,
got locked in a cellar with dust and wine.

My friends had shunned my face and name,
refused to hear a soul in pain,
a rat or two were all I had,
a knot of worms, an ailing bat.

Now dead I'm deemed, unseen I roam
amongst the children of each classroom.
I cross each child with a shaky hand.
Unblessed, I bless, an unhallowed urn.

An ivy embraced with arms of lust,
devouring walls with fissures and rot.
The school grew frail and pale and wan,
the giggles of children, a memory lost.

The blackened portal had lost its glass.
Street children peep to steal a glance
at a world they hope it teems with ghosts,
expecting a witch with a demonic host.

Your eyes now linger at my dress
whose emerald is weaved with blooming moss.
Each day we exchange a single glance.
Your tear has watered my mound of grass.

Susie Gharib

Anne Neville Reflects

Tewkesbury

4 May 1471

At Deerhurst Priory I peer
from windows. Heat shimmers.

In my mind's eye:
River Avon irised River Severn
a flash of kingfisher
earthworks embankments
ditches woods
hedgerows
of layered hawthorn warped
lanes Swilgate stream
darkening

archers arrows
swordsmen horsemen
rout

Colnbrook stream
an otter's whisker

frothing
mill weir
splashing sinking
drowned.

My husband dead. I was his for less
than a year. His blood becomes soil.

How do I feel? I don't know.

Edwin Stockdale

WAKE...interrupted

It isn't the knocking
that pauses supping lips
and ribald rugby songs from long lost
scrambles. Flutters at windows;
letterbox flaps and dragonflies seize
the room...my mother's body
in her Art Deco casket.

Mourners, statuesque in flickering
wings. Opening the lid, I'm canopied
as she leaves her human shell,
joins the swarm swirling around
our heads...out of the window
whispering farewells. The room sighs
as the coffin lid closes with a snick.

Irene Cunningham

In debt

Yɛ nyinaa yɛde wuo ka.

—My mother.

I speak to my mother about
her dead brothers & mother
says—

we're all indebted to death.

Henneh Kyereh Kwaku

Gold



Fabrice Poussin

The Sockra Tree

The sun was high in the sky and heat poured down over the parched land, so young Lucretius took some shade beneath the Sockra Tree. It was by no means the best tree for this purpose. In fact, because it had no leaves and never yielded any fruit, the Sockra Tree provided very little relief from the sun indeed. But, being one of the smaller and less important boys in the village, Lucretius always got the last pick when it came to matters such as these.

He yawned and kicked at the dusty ground. Life could be dull in the village. But just when Lucretius thought he would have to spend the whole afternoon alone, an old man approached the Sockra Tree.

“Good afternoon, Luke,” he said to the young boy. Luke was the boy’s nickname, so that’s what we’ll call him too.

Luke said hello to the old man in return. He was one of the village elders, so everyone respected him very much.

“Happy is he who knows not to ask for that which he would not himself care to give,” said the old man. After he had spoken, he looked up at the bare branches of the Sockra Tree, then down at Luke. “Hmm,” he said, before walking back in the direction of the village.

A few hours later, when the sun still burned hot, a young woman approached the Sockra Tree. She also greeted Luke and ruffled the young lad’s hair. He often received shows of affection like this.

“Do not be ashamed of your meekness, but nurture it. It is better to dine with a sow than be a king eating crumbs from the floor,” said the woman, looking up at the branches of the Sockra Tree. Luke looked too, but nothing changed on the tree, and after a moment or two the woman departed.

He was used to this, people approaching the Sockra Tree and making strange statements like the ones you’ve just heard. That’s because Sockra Trees are special. You see, myth has it that while no amount of sunlight and water, no quantity of care and attention, can possibly make the Sockra Tree give up its fruit, a single statement of true wisdom will

cause the tree to blossom into such abundance that an entire village could feast on its treasures for a year.

Because of this, Luke had heard many curious things in his short life. Things like: “Become the passerby, to still your thoughts is to embrace oblivion”; or “Light your lamp in darkness by all means, but better to light it by day, in anticipation of the coming night”; and “God is not a world-eater, the world is a man-eater, and that is the opposite”; even “Reject your profanity as your body does its vomit, do not be a dog and return to eat it.” But no matter what they seemed to say, it always happened the same, staring up at the barren branches before giving up a great big sigh and departing disappointed.

All alone now beneath the Sockra Tree, Luke looked up and shielded his eyes against the sunlight that shone through its boughs. He scratched his head.

“Sockra Tree,” he said, “I’ve listened to so many people say so many things. Many of them have sounded very wise indeed, a few have sounded downright silly, and yet they all departed from you empty handed. Why is that?” When the Sockra Tree did not respond, Luke continued: “It seems to me that after all the time I spend here in your shade listening to what the elders have to say, I should be the wisest person in the whole of the village. Yet somehow, when I really think about it, I’m not sure that I understand much at all. In fact, I don’t think I truly know a single thing!”

Luke ducked his head down, for the sun was very bright indeed and caused him to blink and rub his eyes. Suddenly he felt tired. It was almost time for him to get back to the village. But before he went on his way, Luke looked back up at the Sockra Tree one last time, and now hanging there amidst the lifeless branches, he beheld a single piece of ripe, perfect fruit.

Matthew Twigg

in the stew pond

we slither as one
slender lipped of sparkling skin
caught in dusk's shallows

clean the muck
from my gills

& in a bath of red wine
split me long
take my spine & skull

but know
i'm not your ginger
cinnamon, nor clove

i'm seaborne
weaned on marine snow
once my fins of glass
carried me past
your weirs & falls

Jonathan Rentler

Belly of the Beast

1.

All my beasties have flown the coop
lured by a dawn chorus of sugar coated

opium, part of a balanced breakfast.
That hissed effort of sitting up is sated

temporarily, this weed seized wrap of vessels
squeezing a cordial of unploughed blood, laying

one-a-penny in the fallows of worn out nudity,
revealing marbling & birthday regurgitations.

2.

I take middle age wherever I find it.
The scars I receive are hollow,

filled with zen quotations
and they that go down in ships

caught between the thunder machine
and a lash of barked faces.

In the air you will see ghost appear,
joints isolated with instant photography.

3.

I want, I want until the dark is an oven,
fear eats dialogue of the mind within itself.

I have been twelve men, scalped of a finality
of liner notes, twelve nudes dismantled,

a bare forensic ciceronian report. Sudden men,
sketched chinless, forgotten, sweating dead stars.

Twelve bloated men to whom sex is a scare story
to tell under blankets. Gone are the sudden nights,

companions seized via dictation, all that's left
are cork men bubbling over the concluding waves.

Grant Tarbard

Celtic Merrow



Paul Nixon

The Suited Prince

A long time ago, when the residents of Sol were still mostly living on the surfaces of planets, and humans still thought they might be the only sentient beings in the galaxy, there was an orphaned son of a spincity administrator who had lived his whole life in a mechanical suit because his own body was too weak. He was strong, confident, skillful, and charismatic, but he often wondered if it was truly him who lived his life or if the suit was the real man.

Despite his worries, he rose to prominence in the small spincity his father had once ruled over. He had an easy life, loved by everyone in the community. "Our little prince" they called him, even well into manhood.

One day, while gathering minerals from the atmosphere of Jupiter, the prince's small ship was struck by a meteoroid which damaged his radio antennae, and ruptured his fuel tank. He launched a distress beacon into the upper atmosphere and waited.

After a few hours of waiting, he saw a strange satellite. It was like nothing he'd seen before: a silver potato hanging in the turbulent, red mist of Jupiter's middle depths. He blinked and the object was upon him. Through the glass of his cock-pit he could see it was lumpy and covered with patches, as if it had been repaired many times. Clearly, it was an ancient ship or city station or research outpost, not some natural thing. It spun, and an airlock appeared on one inexpertly welded panel.

Having nothing else to do, the prince docked with the strange port, and debarked into it. The interior was sparsely lit, but there was no artificial gravity. From the interior layout, he was convinced that this was a derelict ship, but he guessed that it must have been very old, as the design was unrecognizable. Even the steering apparatus were of strange design, and he was fairly certain that those designs had not changed over much since man first learned to fly in Earth's atmosphere.

He searched the ship for some fuel that his own vessel could use, and tools to repair his ruptured tank. After an hour, he had located plates and a welding torch, but no fuel, so abandoning the useless supplies, he

started back toward his ship. His comrades would be along soon enough, he was sure.

As he approached the airlock, he heard a voice, "I can help you" it said.

A creature stepped into his path, it was a large chicken with steel feathers and a sword beak. It was menacing in appearance, but not threatening. "Your legs, your lungs, your heart," the chicken said, "I can fix them for you."

"What do you want in return?" the prince asked, knowing that strangers never gave anything freely.

"Only that you take me with you."

"This I will do," the prince said.

The chicken clicked its sword beak three times, and the prince slept.

When he woke, he lay on an inclined table, his suit discarded nearby. He was naked, but he was whole. He was breathing and pumping blood all on his own. His arms and legs felt strong. The chicken was nowhere to be seen. He rose unsteadily to his feet, and ran from the room.

He sprinted directly for the airlock, and began the separation sequence. As the doors closed, the chicken reappeared.

"You were to take me with you," the creature said simply.

"You have my thanks for my legs, lungs, and heart," the prince said, "but I cannot risk that you will be a danger to my people."

Just before the door hissed closed, the chicken clicked its beak three times.

When they found the prince, he was lying unconscious in his airlock: near death, naked, and no more able-bodied than when they had seen him last. He was long dead before anyone believed his story.

CB Droege

The Gargoyle Speaks

Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder.
My eyes protrude, quite an eye opener,
set wide apart, away from each other
they behold – down the gross of my nose
past lips that are parted – grotesques which are those
whose foreshortened bodies grow heads from their toes.
They pass to and fro, avoiding another
with similar slit eye – no more a beholder
of beauty than a gargoyle thought uglier.

Richard Westcott

Gargoyle



Sharon Bailey

Biographical Notes

Writers

Christine Valters Paintner is an American poet and writer living in Galway, Ireland. She is the author of twelve books of nonfiction on creative process and contemplative practice and her poems have been published in journals including *Crannog*, *The Galway Review*, *Tiferet*, *Anchor*, *Spiritus*, and *The Blue Nib*. Her first collection of poems, *Dreaming of Stones*, is published by Paraclete Press. You can find more of her writing and poetry at AbbeyoftheArts.com.

Jennifer Hernandez lives in Minnesota where she teaches immigrant youth and writes poetry, flash, and creative non-fiction. Her work has appeared in *Gingerbread House*, *Quail Bell*, *Rose Red Review*, and many other journals and anthologies. She has performed her poetry at a non-profit garage, a bike shop filled with taxidermy, and in the kitchen for her children.

Jessica Drake-Thomas holds a B.A. in English from Tulane University, an M.F.A. from Emerson College's Creative Writing program, and an M.Ed. in Teaching from the University of Arizona. She is a poet, tarot reader, blogger, and fiction writer. Her work has been featured in *Ghost City Review*, *Grimoire Magazine*, *Anti-Heroin Chic Magazine*, *24Hr Neon Magazine*, and *Mooky Chick*, among others. She is the author of a chapbook, *Possession*, from dancing girl press. She is the poetry editor at *La Scrittrice*, as well as a chapbook reader for BOAAT Press.

Chuka Susan Chesney has a BFA in Fashion Illustration from Art Center College of Design and an MAT from Occidental College. She is an artist, poet, curator, and editor. Her award-winning paintings and sculpture have been shown in galleries all over the country. Her poems have been published on three continents. "You Were a Pie So We Ate You", a book of Chesney's poems was the winner of the 2018 San Gabriel Valley Poetry Festival Chapbook Contest. In October 2018, Chesney curated the "I Pity da Poe" exhibition at the Hive Gallery in Downtown L.A. In November, Chesney hosted a poetry reading with [Don Kingfisher Campbell](#) at the YEAR ONE exhibition featuring [Loren Philip](#) and [Tomoaki Shibata](#)'s collaborative

art at Castelli Art Space in Mid City. Chesney's anthology of poetry and art "Lottery Blues", coedited by [Ulrica Perkins](#) will be published by Little Red Tree Publishing in 2019.

Edward Alport is a proud Essex Boy and occupies his time as a teacher, poet and occasional writer for children. When he has nothing better to do he posts snarky micropoems on Twitter as [@cross_mouse](#).

Until Jo Bell's life-changing online group 52, **Susan Jordan** thought of herself as primarily a prose writer. Since then she has gone on writing poetry as well as prose and has had poems published in a number of magazines, including *Three Drops from a Cauldron*. Her first collection, *A House of Empty Rooms*, was published in 2017 by Indigo Dreams and she is currently working on a second collection.

Rickey Rivers Jr was born and raised in Alabama. He is a writer and cancer survivor. His stories and/or poems have appeared in Cabinet of Heed, Ginger Collect, Vamp Cat Magazine, Mojave Heart Review (among other publications). [Twitter.com/storiesyoumightlike](#) / <https://storiesyoumightlike.wordpress.com/>

Ellen Huang lives for the magic. She has a BA in Writing and Theatre from Point Loma Nazarene University, a school right by the ocean where she found plenty inspiration. She has fairy tale pieces published in Sirens Call, HerStry, Diverging Magazine, Enchanted Conversation, Awkward Mermaid, Rigorous Magazine, Ink & Nebula, Between the Lines, Quail Bell Magazine, The Folks, Whispers, The Gallery, The Driftwood, Perfume River Poetry Review, and more.

Cheryl Pearson is the author of *Oysterlight* (Pindrop Press). Her poems have appeared in publications including *The Guardian*, *Mslxia*, *Under the Radar*, and *Poetry NorthWest*, and she has twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She has won or placed in competitions including the Cheshire Prize, the Hippocrates Prize, the Gregory O'Donoghue Prize, the Keats Shelley Prize, and the Costa Short Story Award. Her second collection, *Menagerie*, is forthcoming from The Emma Press.

Ceinwen E Cariad Haydon lives in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, and writes short stories and poetry. She has been widely published in web magazines

and in print anthologies. She was Highly Commended in the Blue Nib Chapbook Competition [Spring 2018], won the Hedgehog Press Poetry Competition 'Songs to Learn and Sing'. [August 2018] and was shortlisted for the Neatly Folded Paper Pamphlet Competition, Hedgehog Press [October 2018]. She has an MA in Creative Writing from Newcastle University (2017). She believes everyone's voice counts.

Peter Clive lives on the southside of Glasgow, Scotland with his wife and three children. He is a scientist working in the renewable energy sector. As well as poetry, he enjoys composing music for piano and spending time in the Isle of Lewis.

Ronnie Sirmans is a digital editor for a print newspaper in Atlanta. His poetry has appeared in The South Carolina Review, Tar River Poetry, The American Journal of Poetry, Gargoyle, Blackbox Manifold, Peeking Cat Poetry, and elsewhere.

Benjamin Davis is an American living in Saint Petersburg, Russia. He is a columnist for Russia Beyond the Headlines and author of The King of FU. He loves magical realism and often writes flash fiction drawing from Russian folklore.

Ed Ahern resumed writing after forty odd years in foreign intelligence and international sales. He's had a hundred ninety poems and stories published so far, and three books. He works the other side of writing at Bewildering Stories, where he sits on the review board and manages a posse of five review editors.

Juliette Sebeck is the author of *Mistakes Were Made* and has work forthcoming or appearing in a wide variety of publications. She is the founding editor of *Nightingale & Sparrow* and runs a lifestyle blog, *For the Sake of Good Taste*. Currently, she is curating the *Stanzas from the Silence* anthology and working on a variety of personal and freelance projects. When she isn't writing (and sometimes when she is), she can be found with a cup of coffee and her cat, Fitz. Juliette can be reached on her website or across social media.

Laura Stringfellow writes both verse and prose poetry, holds an MFA in Creative Writing, Poetry, and hails from the very humid Southern US.

Recent publications have appeared, or are forthcoming, in various journals including *Déraciné*, *Right Hand Pointing*, and *Nine Muses Poetry*.

Clifton Redmond is a student at Carlow College St. Patrick's. His work has appeared in various online and print journals and has been placed in various competitions and awards. He is also a member of the Carlow Writers' Co-operative.

Annika Sood is a writer, dreamer, and amateur baker from San Diego, California. She holds a BA in Writing from Point Loma Nazarene University. Her work has been published in *Gay Flash Fiction* and *Driftwood*. Most recently, she won first place in fiction and third place in poetry in *Driftwood's* 2019 edition. She can be found on Instagram @annika.sood.

Helen Cox is an Amazon bestselling poet and novelist. She currently writes stories about a crime-solving librarian sleuth for Quercus Books and hosts The Poetrygram podcast. Alongside her writing, she coordinates the poetry courses at City Lit in London and teaches an annual poetry masterclass at Keats House.

Nicole Rain Sellers is an Australian writer, naturopath, and pagan. Her poems, stories, and articles have appeared in Plumwood Mountain, International Light, Emerald Egg, Silver Cord, Crossroads, Spiral Nature, and elsewhere. For more about her work, visit <https://www.nicolerainsellers.com/>

Erna Grcic is a poet, writer, and English teacher, currently residing in Dubai and writing her first novel inspired by ancient Slavic mythology. Her poems and short stories were published in Sarajevo Culture Centre's anthology titled *The Space of Time*. She's also published academic papers dealing with literature and literary theory.

Monica Kagan lives by the sea in beautiful Cape Town, South Africa with her wonderful cat. She is a contributing writer at *Rhythm & Bones Press* on their blog #Necropolis and a reader at *805 Literary and Art Magazine*. Her work appears in *Fourth & Sycamore*, *Bonnie's Crew* and *Crack the Spine*, among others. Twitter: @MonicaOFAH

Sarra Culleno is a London born, Manchester based English teacher and mother of two who loves to write and perform both formal and free verse poetry on identity, womanhood, motherhood, age, modern monogamy, technology, the education system, children's rights, and the environment. Sarra performs poetry open mics around Manchester, recently came second in The Poetry Café's Easter Slam with Farrago in Covent Garden, has had poems published by Les Femmes Folles in Nebraska, and is due to perform as a featured poet at Herstories Festival, May 2019. Sarra has a YouTube channel and can be followed on twitter and instagram :

<https://www.youtube.com/user/sarra1978>

@sarra1978 - twitter

@sarracullenopoetry - instagram

Aaliyah Cassim is a twenty year old South African university student.

Adele Evershed is originally from Wales but is now living in Connecticut with her family. She runs an expat group and writes a Pantomime for them to be performed each year. In doing research on fairy tales for the show she was inspired to try her hand at writing poems.

Charlotte McCormac is a writer, editor, blogger and content marketer who is currently studying an MA in Creative Writing. Her fiction, poetry and technical content have been published in numerous magazines, journals and anthologies. Find her services at www.charlotte-alice.co.uk

KT Workman grew up in the rural South without the benefit of cell phones or the Internet, a time and place that has heavily influenced her writing. To this day, when she puts pen to paper—or fingers to keyboard—nine times out of ten her mind veers south onto that old, familiar road. It goes home. KT resides in Arkansas where she writes a wide variety of gothic and speculative fiction, and dabbles in poetry.

Chris Collins used to write on her narrowboat in between teaching and Morris dancing. Now she writes in a burning room in Australia in between trying to spot kangaroos and Morris dancing. She takes inspiration from the powerful beauty of nature from whatever was out the hatch of her narrowboat, to the bush of Australia where she currently lives. These are melded into magical stories with themes of folk culture, fairy stories and pagan ritual.

Dr. Susie Gharib is a graduate of the University of Strathclyde. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in *The Curlew*, *Plum Tree Tavern*, *The Ink Pantry*, *A New Ulster*, *Down in the Dirt*, *the Pennsylvania Literary Journal*, *Mad Swirl*, *Leaves of Ink*, *the Avalon Literary Review*, *The Opiate*, *Miller's Pond Poetry Magazine*, *WestWard Quarterly*, *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *The Blotter*, *Foliage Oak Literary Magazine*, *Crossways*, *The Moon Magazine*, *the Mojave River Review*, *Dodging the Rain*, and *Coldnoon*.

Edwin Stockdale has an MA in Creative Writing from the University of Birmingham with Distinction. Two of his pamphlets have been published by Red Squirrel Press: *Aventurine* (2014) and *The Glow of the Sun* (2018). Currently, he is researching a PhD in Creative Writing at Leeds Trinity University.

Irene Cunningham's recent publications: *Picaroon*, *South Bank Poetry*, *I am not a Silent Poet*, *Riggwelter*, *The Lake*, *Shoreline of Infinity*, *Blue Nib*, *Strix*. She thinks about the outside world but isn't often there. Nominated for The Pushcart Prize 2019. <http://ireneintheworld.wixsite.com/writer>

Henneh Kyereh Kwaku studied a Bachelor of Public Health, Disease Control program at the University of Health & Allied Sciences, Ghana. He's from Gonasua in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. He has poems & Micro prose published/forthcoming at *New South Journal*, *Ghana Writes*, *Lunaris Review*, *Kalahari Review*, *Praxis Magazine* & elsewhere. Contact him via—Twitter/IG: @kwaku_kyereh & Henneh Kyereh Kwaku on Facebook.

Matthew Twigg lives in Oxford (UK) where he works as an editor for an academic publisher. His short fiction has appeared in numerous magazines, including *The Fiction Pool*, *Penny Shorts*, *Gold Dust*, *decomp*, *Scarlet Leaf Review*, *formercactus*, *The Hungry Chimera*, and *The Big Jewel*. He is working on his first novel.

Jonathan Rentler is currently a writer/performer in NYC. His work has previously been published in *Fickle Muses*, *I-70*, *Ganymede*, *Unlikely Stories 2.0*, and *Midnight Muse*. @JRentler

Grant Tarbard is the author of ‘Loneliness is the Machine that Drives the World’ (Platypus Press) and ‘Rosary of Ghosts’ (Indigo Dreams). His new pamphlet ‘This is the Carousel Mother Warned You About’ (Three Drops Press) and new collection ‘dog’ (Gatehouse Press) will be out soon.

CB Droege is an author and voice actor from the Queen City living in the Millionendorf. Recent publications include work in Nature Futures and Science Fiction Daily. Learn more at cbdroege.com

After a lifetime as an NHS doctor, **Richard Westcott** finds his poetry often suffused with medical over – or should it be under? – tones. His pamphlet *There they live much longer* came out in 2018 with warm commendations from Philip Gross and Carole Bromley

<http://www.indigodreams.co.uk/richard-westcott/4594230918>

He blogs at richardwestcottspoetry.com and he’s been pleasantly surprised to win a few prizes, including the Poetry Society’s Stanza competition.

Artists

Janet Dean is a writer from Barnsley and lives in York. She was shortlisted in the Bridport Prize in 2012, commended in the Stanza Poetry Competition in 2015, and chosen as one of 50 poets for the Northern Poetry Library’s *Poem of the North*. She is a member of York Stanza and a contributor to live poetry events in and around Yorkshire. Janet’s debut novel *The Peacemaker* was longlisted in the Mslexia Novel Competition 2017 and is published in March 2019.

Born in Dublin Ireland, **Paul Nixon** spent much of his early childhood years growing up in County Sligo, located in the North West of Ireland. Set in the shadow of a two thousand foot tall mountain known as Tievebaun, his grandmother, Margaret, a mystical woman had a great influence over him. A farmers wife, she spent a good deal of her 83 years living on the slopes of this mountain and its wild glaciated lands where she was tuned into the historical, mystical and legendary wonders that enveloped the area. Margaret endeared Paul with her qualities which allowed his imagination to evolve and develop that would serve him well in later years. Revered Irish poet William Butler Yeats was also drawn to this area. Yeats one of the foremost figures of 20 Century literature loved Sligo, and his goal was to cultivate a tradition of a hidden Ireland that existed largely in

the anthropological evidence of its surviving customs, beliefs, and holy places. He was a master of the traditional verse and was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923.

Both WB Yeats and Paul share the emotions and inspirations of that ancient land and its mysteries. In fact two of his sculptures are now on permanent display alongside the works of WB Yeats in the Sligo Museum. Today he lives with his wife Francesca and daughter Ana Claire in Greensboro, North Carolina. In their 20 years living there Paul has carved out a reputation as a sculptor and artist and much of his work is influenced by those early day experiences which capture the imagination of so many who have come to know his work.

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English at Shorter University. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in *Kestrel*, *Symposium*, *The Chimes*, and many other magazines. His photography has been published in *The Front Porch Review*, the *San Pedro River Review* as well as other publications.

