



FOOTHILL

poetry journal

VOLUME 12

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Claremont Graduate University

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Contents

- 1 EDITORS' NOTE**
- 7 SHEA BORESI**
University of Missouri
Mass
- 9 COLE DEPUY**
Binghamton University
The Babirusa's Teeth
- 11 MICHAEL HAMMERLE**
Troy University
Somewhere an Exhibition Chef Takes a Break from Prep Work
- 12 EMILY LAKE HANSEN**
Georgia State University
If I made a home it's a bed of clover
- 13 STEPHANIE L. HARPER**
Butler University
(Cento) I'm tired of understanding . . .
- 14 JOHN KULIGOWSKI**
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
The Secret Language of Austerity
Ghost Orchids
- 16 BLAKE LAPIN**
New York University
Eczema
Routine Again
- 18 SARAH MARQUEZ**
San Jose State University
Invective Against the Roach

- 19** **ANDREW MCSORLEY**
University of Southern Mississippi
Johnny
- 20** **CATHLIN NOONAN**
Texas State University
Harvesting
- 21** **BOBBIE QUINN ORONA BURGOS**
University of San Francisco
The 2018 Seoul Olympics
Charybdis
Mama, I Don't Know the Words
- 25** **ERICA REID**
Western Colorado University
Why Is My Angel So Small?
- 26** **DEON JORDAN ROBINSON**
University of Urbana-Champaign
A Triptych in Recognition of Other Formerly Flamboyant
Christ
& we become it
- 29** **CALEIGH SHAW**
Oklahoma State University
Preventing Hammertoe
- 30** **CHERYL SLOVER-LINETT**
Western Colorado University
My Mother Gave Me a Vibrator
Big Blue Bowl; or, Love in a Bipolar Home
- 33** **VALERIE A. SMITH**
Georgia State University
Save a black girl
- 34** **ROB VANCE**
Queens University of Charlotte
The Borrowing

- 36** CAITIE L. YOUNG
NEOMFA Program through Kent State University
Here Is the Thing about Roses
- 39** MICHELLE EMAMI
Claremont Graduate University
Art
- 55** JOHN MURILLO
Interview
- 63** CONTRIBUTORS

Editors' Note

The 2022 issue of *Foothill Poetry Journal* has many firsts, but one thing that remains the same is our focus on quality, graduate student poetry. The pieces vary in style, subject, and tone, but every one of them is inventive and full of life. They are all well-crafted and explore humanity and personhood. Some themes throughout include parental figures, race, gender & sexuality, and disability justice. Specifically, there are a few poems that touch on chronic pain and societal implications in this issue. As folks that experience chronic illness ourselves, we are proud to publish these representations: we are nothing if not the stories we tell, and we are honored to be a home for these poets. The visual art featured in this issue also speaks to a specific, unique experience, though it effectively takes individual experiences concerning gender, nationality/borders, and heritage and zooms out to imply that the individual is part of the cultural and communal whole. This brings a greater perspective to all of the pieces within the journal and asks the reader how the varied and unique individual struggles depicted therein contribute to a larger group. We are proud to publish such a heterogenous pool of excellent work by graduate students.

Excellent work, while perhaps easy to admire, is not always so easy to produce. In our interview with John Murillo, we get a glimpse into what, exactly, it may take to compose evocative, effective work. Murillo notes that writing for fame or funds is not likely to work out in your favor. Instead, he prompts writers to write for the sake of writing and to “Work your ass off. And when you think you’re working as hard as you can . . . work harder.” Similarly, excellent work is not particularly easy to rank, particularly when it’s as heterogeneous as the pieces we’ve collected here. Therefore, we’d also like to mention how much we appreciate Vanessa Angélica Villarreal and her work as judge for the 2022 *Foothill* Editors’ Prize. We feel that winning piece she has chosen, “Here Is the Thing about Roses” by Caitie L. Young, is a sterling example of what happens when you “work harder.”

Lastly, we’d like to thank you, dear reader. Thank you for taking the time to read through the pieces we’ve collected here. Thank you for making our readers, editors, and published poets feel seen and heard.

Lauren Davila & Holly Eva Allen
Co-Editors in Chief

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is a cursive, flowing script that appears to read 'LD'. The signature on the right is a more stylized, blocky cursive script that appears to read 'HEA'.

FOOTHILL

Winner of the 2022 Editors' Prize
Here Is the Thing about Roses

Caitie L. Young



he reminds you of your brother's childhood
best friend—overweight, short blond hair,
former life
football star, angry at his father, too close to
his mother,
has a verb for a name—archer, gunner,
hunter—not
dissimilar to names like grace, faith, rose

My choice for the winner is “Here Is the Thing about Roses,” a piercingly insightful, rhetorically complex, discursively rich marvel of a poem that deftly handles the heavy subject matter of gender, sexuality, and faith with critical humor, vulnerability, and verve. As the speaker is made to endure a car ride with the kind of aggressively average blonde man everyone hopes she will eventually end up with, we feel acutely the polarized ends of an endless argument over gender performance, sexuality, and relationships, and the pressure to claim one’s right to their lives. Through the symbolic journey of a road trip and the sharp rendering of interior detail—the speaker navigates their refusal of a normative, red state, megachurch-approved life with the one they have chosen. Written in the style of Hanif Abdurraqib’s discursive metaphysics and and Chen Chen’s intimacy, this is a promising entry in contemporary American poetry, and a poet to watch in the future.

—Vanessa Angélica Villarreal, Judge

Runner Up

Charybdis, Bobbie Quinn Orona Burgos

Honorable Mentions

Preventing Hammertoe, Caleigh Shaw

My Mother Gave Me A Vibrator, Cheryl Slover-Linett



Congratulations to the winners of Claremont Graduate University's 2022 Tufts Poetry Awards



2022 Winner
**Kingsley Tufts
Poetry Award**
Divya Victor
CURB



2022 Winner
**Kate Tufts
Discovery Award**
torrin a. greathouse
*Wound from the Mouth of a
Wound*

KINGSLEY & KATE TUFTS
POETRY AWARDS

 Claremont Graduate University

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Poems

SHEA BORESI

*University of Missouri
PhD Creative Writing*

Mass

The censor fumes, swings,
swings. Scents

I cannot yet name:
benzoin, frankincense,
Aquanet.

The priest's belly leads
the processional—*alcoholic*
I've heard my parents whisper

but it could be worse.
The altar boys ignite
candles above the altar.

The dead are
sepulchered below, and I
am placeless in a pew.

Girls cannot be altar boys
but I can create ghosts
with my eyes by looking very hard

at the lights and then away
at the people, families
coordinated in plaid.

You can see the holy spirit
if you try when the people parade
for eucharist. The old ladies' hair

glows like tidy clouds
against the stained glass.
Ladies cannot be priests

I'm told. They are made differently
by God, who loves us all
but sent a flood, then sent a promise

through a dove—*can that be right?*
I read the tiny text again, gilt dust
rubbing on my thumbs.

COLE DEPUY

*Binghamton University
PhD Creative Writing*

The Babirusa's Teeth

I became a poet to turn my wanting to die
into friendly shapes
like grade school
papier-mâché aardvarks. The way hideousness
is adorable

in other species. The babirusa's teeth
grow into their brains killing them.
Eventually.
Ugliness is practical enough to try
to make sense of all this newspaper

& wet glue I tend to
root for natural disasters.
Next summer the roads will flood again
& everything else will feel silly
beside the rainbows in minivan tire spray

I see on TV. I don't know anyone
in Oklahoma yet rain like summer icicles
smashes their roofs & drowning
is peaceful the way
carrying a lantern both blinds & reveals

I'm aware.
Staring at the roadkill
buck on my morning commute
at sixty-five miles per hour
I ache for the world & this body.

Reconstructing mouse bones
I removed from owl scat in second grade
in my mind everything is
pretend.
It's easy to pretend

to gossip until I smell worms
crawling from flooded burrows

then sink in the chip bag I find
full of stream.
The buck's corpse

looks like a dirty sweater today & I wonder
what is it like to be turned
into clothing?
To pluck my irises like burnt wicks
to find river rocks where my ears should be.



MICHAEL HAMMERLE

Troy University

MS Social Sciences

Somewhere an Exhibition Chef Takes a Break from Prep Work

stoop cold on the seat of his pants,
an apron, dusty with flour,
makes the wax-side of butcher paper all the more slippery
in his lap, damp palm heel of the chef's writing fist,
and his hand writing nearly illegible
on the opposite side of the butcher paper
with a grease pencil.

The pen slipping and causing messy long hand
because on the chef's thumb is a band aid.
That thumb is all agitated by meetings
with the sharp side of an old paring knife.

Cutlery shaves towards the chef's heart,
the opposite of what he had been told
when his grandpa gave the knife to him.
The shank, brown from creating
potato quarters and cleaving the tops
and bottoms off, and julienning vegetables.

Hard to decipher could be a tactic
of the chef as writer, like his recipes,
he doesn't want scribblings to be read.

EMILY LAKE HANSEN

Georgia State University

PhD English Literature & Creative Writing

If I made a home it's a bed of clover

wild violet has sprouted on the front steps
growing somehow in a single crack
other things bloom here that shouldn't

peach blossoms tender on trees
soft strawberries underfoot as we stomp
through clover butterflies by mail-order

emerging from dark cocoons
just so we can watch my son
is waiting for them to turn *beautiful*

for their wings to unglue into
dreamy orangesicle he spins sugar
in water makes nectar so we might

keep them a little longer counts
as they are reborn *one*
twothreefour the only kind

of bug he likes meanwhile
his first baby tooth grows loose
nerves broken from gum like spiderweb

losing its stretch I quiet him
with touch a dandelion tuft
brushing the red of his cheeks

STEPHANIE L. HARPER

Butler University

MFA Creative Writing

(Cento) I'm tired of understanding . . .

morning. *Why and why and why* bleeds slowly
from my mouth at the brown brink generations
have trod and trod and trod, the sparse bright
sprinkle of grass burnishing over into the
universe of shimmer. It is hard to remain
human, drawn from the cold, hard mouth
of the world the moths have visited. At mid-
summer, the gnats were here to be together,
selfless, all, all for all, utterly free. When birds
perch weeping in the trees before the dawn,
an orange light returns to the mountains: if you
tasted it, it would first taste bitter, then briny,
then surely burn the beginnings of your breaths.
Oh, what shall I say, how is the truth to be said?

Credits: Lucille Clifton, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Elizabeth Bishop,
Charles Wright, D. A. Powell, Mark Doty, W. S. Merwin, Gwendolyn
Brooks



JOHN KULIGOWSKI

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln
MA Creative Writing*

The Secret Language of Austerity

Is the cold delicate? Equal to your skin
this pale arctic, these
white nights,

Aurora of endless dawn
whispering over *Ursus maritimus*
on the tundra starving,
solus—

a disaffected gaze
equal to your own
that I catch from memory.

This cold is delicate: a porcelain snap of ice,
kiss of hoarfrost upon the window.

It feathers & frays away
so very like the formula “every
determination is negation”

something said
that is quite
alone.

Ghost Orchids

You must love tattered things;
I see it in the way you paint
your lips, the chipped
blue lacquer on your nails—

Yes, and the child's coral kneecap
after falling from a tricycle,

not to mention the banyan's roots
thrumming deep in the earth
(though the soil grounds nothing).

You know your stuff,
I can see that—

But not really, as the sediments
of the moment lead only to your
brackish gaze.

Well, I love the way I look at
you stranded high
in the night canopies

BLAKE LAPIN

*New York University
MA Public Administration*

Eczema

What a word to write,
 difficult like an enemy.
Scratch all over
 and for a long time.
Red, where the skin is thin.
 Red, where the water
burns. Once the fingernails
 greet the skin, the arm
moves & moves. Such pleasure
 & sensation. Dialogue
begins within me to anodyne
 my thoughtless motions.
“Remove hard nails
 from your soft neck.”
CeraVe, Vanicream, Keihl’s.
 Brands which gravitate relief.
Like mites crawling
 underneath.
I get them out.
 I slice my casing.

Dermatologist ascribes this
 irritation blossoming
to new stress. There must be a me
 within me. He is trying
to signal a snake
 must slough his scales.
The cocoon must hatch.
 There is a man
within me. When I sweat
 he awakens
and begins the agitation.
 He is trying to break free.
I am trying to allow him.



Routine Again

Spring two years after and I'm exhibiting my recovered movement.
Scar tissue removed through bending & bending . . .
Muscle could have gunked but instead, under supervision
of my physical therapist, against his palms,
hip and knee regained internal & external rotation.

That same leg once dependent on walking aids, which could bear no weight,
lifts my whole body during this athletic feat of rock climbing.
Bounding from wall to wall. For the thrill of it. Feeling graceful
and unencumbered, embodying a feather or something else light:
a rash, expanding with no will of its own, just a matter of circumstance.

Remembering this denial from activity, from public space. Remembering
the isolation and helplessness. Like ants walking the edge of furniture
caught in the sunlight and examined by a curious child who has yet
to learn his own strength or appetite for harm. Remembering violet
anger in the ears at my own transformation and believed reduction.

We are muscle & bone reacting to time. One way or another we accept
our capacities. Live lives around our inherited skills & loves.
Within the gym, my fingers clench and I float up the wall.
Not seeing the world darker after recovery, during an always
recovery. Seeing it brighter and full of potential catastrophes.



SARAH MARQUEZ

San Jose State University

MA Library and Information Science

Invective Against the Roach

Trespasser in my kitchen, at 1 a.m., running fast-fast,
out from under the fridge or the heavy door opening
to the new bump out. The flash of light from the stove
doesn't paralyze you, like I hope. Or the trap
of my body, in the way. The smack of the broom's head
hitting cold tile, so loud the dogs start barking, bristle
inside. They've never seen me this wicked. In every direction
I turn, you are there and then not. I curse the moment
you came to God's mind, and he made you, small enough
to fit into his hand, a sanctuary for all things, and every impossible
corner of the world. Tough to kill dead. I forget sometimes,
seeing one of you means a million others are hiding, waiting
for the right time to come out—when protective shells have
hardened over soft bodies, summer heat rises from the core
of the earth or my private hell, and I've just finished scrubbing
brown guts off the bottom of my shoe.

ANDREW MCSORLEY

*University of Southern Mississippi
PhD English and Creative Writing*

Johnny

Johnny plants an apple tree in the warm dark soil on the banks of a river. He names the river “beautiful delta” in a language he doesn’t understand. Johnny waters the apple tree with the river he named. When the tree grows large enough it bears fruit. A dozen apples, red stars in the twisted green sky. Johnny plucks one from the branch and bites. He winces as he sees the core has been replaced with a mirror. He sees himself in the seedless interior of the ripened fruit. He takes another, and another, and another. All mirrors, all the same. He dumps the apples into the river and chops down the tree. He builds a small raft from its wood and floats himself down the river to new shores, new fields, new soil. He clears the groves of oranges he finds when he arrives, sets fire to acres of marigolds. Now he digs a hole, plants a seed, lays the mud of the river’s walls in rows beside the saplings. He names the grove “Eden.” He drinks from the river as he waits.



CATHLIN NOONAN

*Texas State University
MFA Creative Writing*

Harvesting

Under cloche a carrot deepens against
a drying ground, globe against world,
against weather, mellow-made from small

fog. The garden's glassy rows tempt
wilderness in theater. Topiaries, proud,
tweezed, fidget within the twining peas.

I want to lose my boundaries. Let it,
when it comes, be a desired thing—
the underside of a concrete snail wishing

dissolution into soil, ripening of foot, no
Pinocchio atop real slugs and worms. But let
me pull the nose long too, make chewing

gum an incantation, extract fruit from dust
and graveled stone, find flesh dense,
tight around the pit. Though I stretch

against my training, always I cup water
from air, heat from underneath. Still
my focused wild grows without concern.

Fruit opens. A rash spills out.

BOBBIE QUINN ORONA BURGOS

*University of San Francisco
MFA Creative Writing*

The 2018 Seoul Olympics

Last night, I had a dream where
I was an ice dancer—
 I stood on my skates the way
 you're supposed to,
 instead of the way that I
 always do:
 pigeon-toed, and slanted.

It was my first Olympics and
I danced to "Class of 2013."

In my subconscious,
I only heard
 Mom, I'll be quiet
 Mom, would you wash my back
 this once? And then we can forget it all—

I fling myself against the edge of the ice rink,
gripping the acrylic wall,
staring into my reflection sitting
in an empty chair—
 I'll leave once I figure out
 how to pay for my own life, too.
 I'll leave what I'm chasing for
 the other girls to pursue.

I come to a dead stop in my stride, and look
around the arena like
I don't know where I am,
I don't know what I'm doing.
I crumble to the ice and push off at the last second,
my starfished body sliding across the frozen surface,
rudderless and defeated.
 Mom, am I still young?
 Can I dream for a few months more?

I gave myself the bronze.
I wore it like it was gold.

Charybdis

I am the shattered remains of a teacup fallen to the floor
in the heat of an argument,

desperately trying not to let anyone else be cut
by the shards of my disaster.

Round and open but, somehow,
still cracked and jagged,

a geode of neglected vulnerability
with outcropping edges that remain raw and unfinished.

This is who I am,
attacking myself and pulling the crags from

their placements because
although it is pure destruction it

is all that I know.
Quiet and unmoored I find clarity

in the hum of the overhead lights in the kitchen
and take to the embarrassment of sweeping

the cracked and battered porcelain pieces of my person
into a dustpan, to be remade all over again.

I cast you back when you enter
having heard the neutron bomb of my anguish,

telling you not to come in if you aren't wearing shoes—
I don't want you to get hurt.

Mama, I Don't Know the Words

—body after Philip Metres, titled after Saeed Jones

When we wave to each other,
say good morning, usa kasakabo—

We bear our palms to one another,
revealing the stippling stigmata.

Not bullet wounds, but shrapnel
embedded under the skin. A defensive wound

from the explosion, the fallout
from ships making landfall on our ancestors' shores.

Perfectly placed in the center
to make the closure of the fist unbearable,

to catch on the braid, bitzizil—
our mothers say be brave, doo nnidzig.

Our mothers do not teach us their mothers'
word for pain.

Instead we learn guay, an exclamatory,
not to indicate that we are feeling pain

but, to indicate to others
that we are in need of support, of holding.

We learn mahite, a state of toothlessness,
taking on the life of an animal defanged

to keep us from chewing through the wrought iron bars
we are held behind.

This is also why they do not teach us the word
for blood.

With the iron molecules attached to our cells
and everlasting shrapnel under the skin,

we manage to find each other—
magical magnetism.

It makes us inseparable.
It makes the sailors on those ships afraid.

ERICA REID

*Western Colorado University
MFA Creative Writing*

Why Is My Angel So Small?

Sweet girl, one hell of a dancer, but only as tall
as a deck of cards. Hard for her to help me much—
to block the blows, to shield me from what is being
thrown. She can hold a secret and that's about all.

In the fall when my four-inch angel arrived
I fashioned a frock from my quilt discards, a basin
out of a bottle cap, a bed from an anchovy tin. Why
am I the one doing all of the tucking in?

My pocket protector loves cashews, apple slices,
bites of my cake. I give her whatever keeps her
bright and smiling. It feels cruel, but I wonder
if she will grow—or if I am meant to get smaller.

To tell you the truth, I had hoped to be held.
I wished to be swaddled and not to be needed,
to have the chance to be the child this time around.
Yet here I am again, in a too-familiar land,

where the one meant to take care of me is eating from my hand.



DEON JORDAN ROBINSON

*University of Urbana-Champaign
MFA Creative Writing*

A Triptych in Recognition of Other Formerly Flamboyant Christs

I.

As a child, your best friend was

a maroon teddy-bear speckled with ash
gray hearts. For his first life: a tender ally.

Someone you trusted to watch you
shake your hips in private to pop songs.

Who understood your fear of the dark was more
a fear God might be unkind with the lights off

Someone to tape against the ceiling above
your bunk bed and pretend—with a fixed

black eye and poor posture—was an ordinary savior.

II.

You remember double digits as a pair

of fists growing into the face.
The smallest in your class. Boys

belittling you for your docile body
language. Committed to fighting

over grease-stained pizza bagels
and the poised hand of Mary J. Blige.

To action figures and which of you
would become the stilted army men

on toy store ledges, trained not to flinch.

III.

For his second life, he let you bash

his head against your bed. Grind his smile
into the serrated screws pointing out

the frigid steel frame. Not for satisfaction
but to unleash the syntax of bare hands.

Repeating boys will be boys but men
will be monsters. You wished to be

violent the same way you once wished
the night to be gentle. You kept on. Kept on

admiring the plastic emperor of their kind.

CALEIGH SHAW

*Oklahoma State University
MFA Creative Writing*

Preventing Hammertoe

My mom's feet have always been white,
rarely seeing the sun, setting up camp
in the shade of sneakers. She had her father's feet,
always hidden in work boots. He felt pain
with every step. If hers had to be out on Sundays
for church wear, they were covered by itchy nylon.
The nails eventually changed their color,
made their curl. She soaked, cut, dug
underneath the nail, painted her toes, a ritual,
like her weekly visits to a wellness clinic
to get her back adjusted, stretched, massaged.
Daily pain in her Achilles tendon, she couldn't
put off the foot specialist. My mom sat down
and took off her shoes. The specialist's gentle
hands held my mom's right foot. She felt
the sides and high arches that created a little cave,
the foot morphed and supported into place.
My mom called four people on the way home,
crying about her father's pain, his toes never
stretched and straightened like hers.



CHERYL SLOVER-LINETT

*Western Colorado University
MFA Creative Writing*

My Mother Gave Me a Vibrator

for college, a parting gift.
There, now I've told someone. I hope
it wasn't too awkward. For you,

I mean. It was plenty embarrassing
for me. She wrapped it in pink paper,
a giant purple bow. I'd imagined

a bottle of champagne or a shower
caddy. She gave it to me
matter-of-factly, *here, open this
when you get to school*. She could have added
in the privacy of your room or *it might not
be what you expect*. And being
the early '80s it wasn't like
discrete ones of today that slip into your
purse or pocket. Longer than an English

cucumber, with a five-foot cord
and the hum of a distant vacuum cleaner,
this was my mother's welcome-
to-womanhood, to feminism's second wave
with which she danced so uncomfortably.

I would have preferred an *I love you*
and a loaded phone card. After a few fumbles

this maternal memento lived
in the back of my drawer most
of freshman year. Decades later, when
my own daughters readied for college,
my mother thrilled learning they'd be near.

It wasn't until after I'd dropped
them off that my mother
shared about her bulging lymph nodes,
months in the bloating. She knew
the parting gift they would bring

and yet put on her game face,
queen of the unspeakable.

Big Blue Bowl; or, Love in a Bipolar Home

When my grandmother lifted the turquoise belly
from the bottom cabinet, out from behind
the Sunbeam mixer and highball glasses
for my parents' bridge group, I'd begin begging

Please let me help bake bread tomorrow.

I needn't have pleaded, a buxom hug her response.
The next afternoon I'd run from the school bus
up the back stairs and burst into the kitchen to find her

beaming, ingredients spread. She'd teach me to proof
the yeast, gauge flour (never measure), take
my hands in hers deep in the bowl. I'd kneel
on her lap to be tall enough to plunge my knuckles

into the breast-like squishiness, heave up
and dive back in, face framed in aqua, breathing in
manna. After the dough plumped, I'd grease the loaf pans
and she'd split the swollen blooming into six equal portions

with a smaller seventh ball for me. I'd caress that cherished
orb, but she'd gently nudge me to punch instead:
pull it, fold it, push the heel of my palm hard, yeasty scent
rising like sunflowers, enveloping me in amnion

again. Though I adored my grandmother
and that cerulean crock now sits in my own bottom cabinet,
my time with her didn't yield what my father had hoped:
the ache for my mother still cumbersome, the wallop

undiminished. The image of him driving her away mute
while a neighbor stayed still boomeranged
me. It wasn't until I brought out the aging ceramic
for pandemic sourdough, its glaze now mottled,

that I realized this instrument of grandmotherly
devotion was actually my mother's. It was hers from
before I could remember and she entrusted it to me,
no limit to what it could hold.

VALERIE A SMITH

Georgia State University

PhD English, Creative Writing, Poetry

Save a black girl

- Save a black girl from Brad Pitt's abs
- Save a black girl from Idris Elba's eyes
- Save a black girl from older black girls
- Save a black girl from little white girls
- Save a black girl from Barbie
- Save a black girl from pink tights
- Save a black girl from a ballet bun
- Save a black girl from tennis skirts
- Save a black girl from volleyball shorts
- Save a black girl from the canon
- Save a black girl from ministers
- Save a black girl from serving
- Save a black girl from stripping
- Save a black girl from the stairwell
- Save a black girl from rap hooks
- Save a black girl from car trouble
- Save a black girl from solitary
- Save a black girl from smoking

Save a black girl from drinking
Save a black girl from diabetes
Save a black girl from endometriosis
Save a black girl from white boy doctors
Save a black girl from sharp objects
Save a black girl from the death of her children
Save a black girl from the pulling of the ocean
Save a black girl from the noise in her head
Save a black girl from the quiet in her mouth



ROB VANCE

*Queens University of Charlotte
MFA Creative Writing*

The Borrowing

I can't hide this fault line, a fracture
of skin two weeks after my birth, a cure
for Pyloric stenosis, a defect in the stomach.
Could I have survived if born just one
hundred years earlier? That earlier me vomiting
with a force, my family might think a spirit
possessed me. Thin and runty at mother's breast,
the small-town doctor would accuse
my mom of bad milk and suggest another's or
even that a prayer might help soothe
the passing. My life born of a surgeon's mark
startled me with enough pain to survive.
My belly dulled red with iodine and blood, I was
an ember sleeping in a coarse hospital
blanket. What energy was passed to me
by stainless blade, quick hands,
and one strong lamp?

CAITIE L. YOUNG

*NEOMFA Program through Kent State University
MFA Creative Writing*

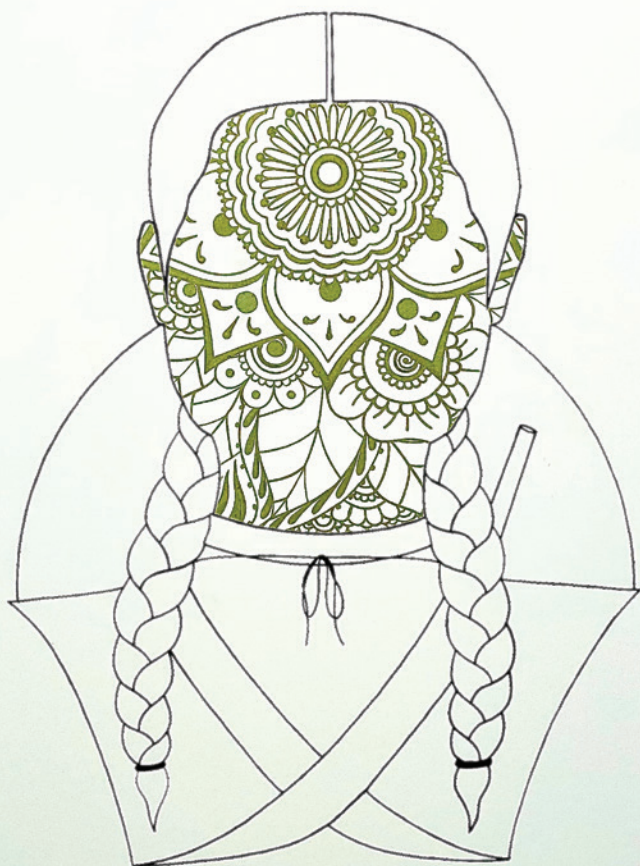
Here Is the Thing about Roses

the man in the car driving me home tells me he knows what women want; he is the kind of guy like a pill bottle or maybe it's pills—you have to take him in small doses for many reasons primarily that he is a man that knows what you want, he assumes you're a woman, after all, they all do. he reminds you of your brother's childhood best friend—overweight, short blond hair, former life football star, angry at his father, too close to his mother, has a verb for a name—archer, gunner, hunter—not dissimilar to names like grace, faith, rose, when you see his blue eyes unromanticized in moonlight as he is driving you home and stops, as he should, at red lights, but gazes into yours just before red turns green—remember he thinks he knows what you want, remember he is the guy that your mother would want you to be with because she still believes you might be bisexual and that even if you were, you would find a man you would want to be with longer than five minutes; he reminds you, in no words that she refers to your partner as your friend to her friends, so when you bring them to weddings or christmas, everyone asks about your friend and know they know what they're doing; he asks me to play music he can stay awake to; there are three hours till we are out of kansas and can stop to sleep; he is a church boy which means he wants christian hip hop or chance the rapper, so i play both and look out the window; he really is a nice boy, a boy like seasons, like your ex's mind, or car oil after six thousand miles, a clean boy, something i would have wanted when i wanted what everyone wanted; the truth is exactly what i think it is—i am too good at pretending to know what i want for him to see anything except grace, faith, hope, Jesus, chance the rapper, or God.



Art

Michelle Emami



La Revolución de Mexico

acrylic pens on museum board

40" x 32"

2020–2022



Sinaloa

acrylic pens on museum board

40" x 32"

2020-2022



Folklorico

oil on canvas board
18" x 24"
2016

Sonora Bronco

acrylic pens on museum board

40" x 32"

2020-2022





Jalisco

acrylic pens on museum board

40" x 32"

2020-2022

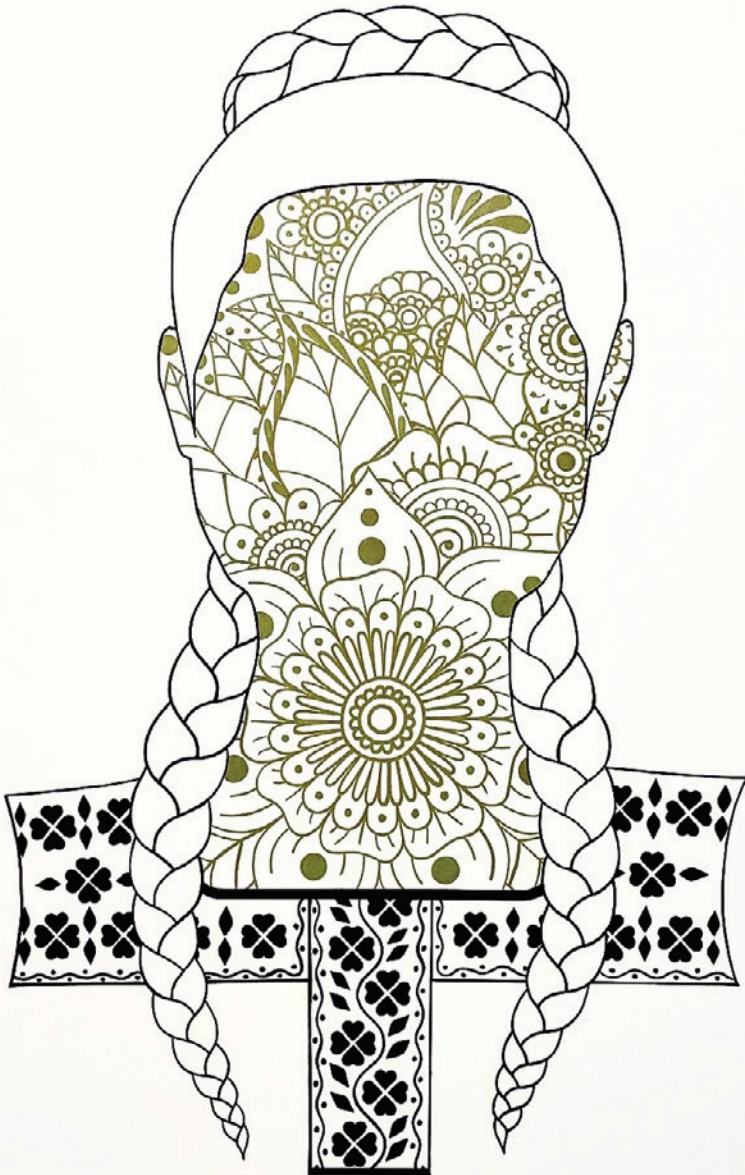


Vector

acrylic on wood panel

48" x 47"

2022



Guerrero Costa Chica

acrylic pens on museum board

40" x 32"

2020-2022

Michoacán

acrylic pens on museum board

40" x 32"

2020-2022





Zacatecas

acrylic pens on museum board
40" x 32"
2020–2022

Eclipse

oil on canvas (center),
prismacolor on black construction paper (outer layers)

36" in diameter (center)

4" x 4" per square sheet (outer layers)

2018



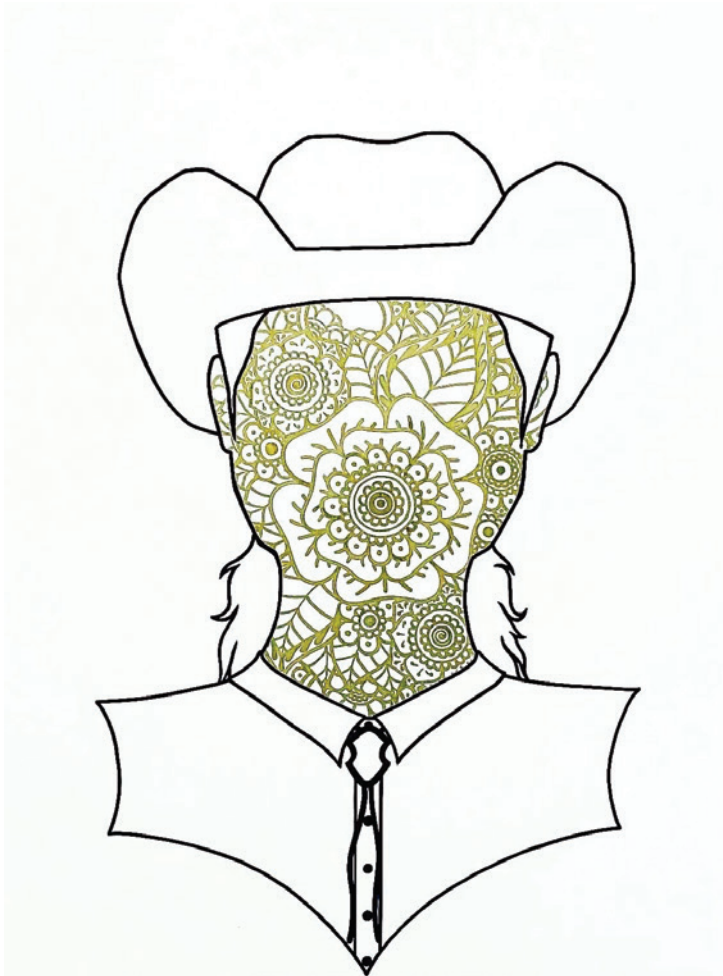


Nayarit

acrylic pens on museum board

40" x 32"

2020–2022



Baja California Norte

acrylic pens on museum board

40" x 32"

2020–2022



Mental Block

oil on canvas
36" x 60"
2019



Interview

John Murillo



JOHN MURILLO

is the author of the poetry collections *Up Jump the Boogie* (Cypher Books, 2010, Four Way Books, 2020), finalist for both the Kate Tufts Discovery Award and the Pen Open Book Award, and *Kontemporary Amerikan Poetry* (Four Way Books, 2020), winner of the Kingsley Tufts

Poetry Award and the Poetry Society of Virginia's North American Book Award, and finalist for the PEN/Voelcker Award for Poetry, Believer Poetry Award, Maya Angelou Book Award, Hurston/Wright Foundation Legacy Award and the NAACP Image Award. His other honors include the Four Quartets Prize from the T.S. Eliot Foundation and the Poetry Society of America, two Larry Neal Writers Awards, a pair of Pushcart Prizes, the J. Howard and Barbara M.J. Wood Prize from the Poetry Foundation, an NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Cave Canem Foundation, and the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing. Murillo's poems have appeared in such publications as *American Poetry Review*, *Poetry*, and *Best American Poetry* (2017, 2019, and 2020). Currently, he is an associate professor of English and director of the creative writing program at Wesleyan University.

FOOTHILL

In an interview with Rachel Zucker for the podcast *Commonplace*, you mentioned that you have many journals filled with material and drafts that you may not return to again—that you primarily complete pieces that develop internally over a long period, not that you return to your written material for revising. In this same portion of the interview, you said “One could say—my wife would say—that I could get rid of all those journals, that they’re taking up room in the house. But it’s just part of the process. For some reason it’s necessary for me to know that they’re there.” Do you think that you might keep them in the hope that you will return to them at some point despite the fact that this is not your standard writing practice? Is there perhaps another reason you keep them?

JOHN MURILLO

It's funny you ask that. I've thrown most of those old journals away. I came across this book recently called *Work Clean*, about the way chefs operate, organize, and make use of their time and space. I've incorporated some of those philosophies and practices into my own regimen and it's been paying off so far. Less clutter, more efficient use of my workspace, deliberate scheduling. The journals have served their purpose, so they had to go.

FOOTHILL

Additionally, in the *Commonplace* interview, you discussed your initiation into La Regla de Ocha and noted that this initiation process stipulated that you forego social media. In the interview you noted that "It was good to be away from that and to not really have that as part of my life" due to the "uglier side" of social media. Did this break from social media help cultivate any thoughts or opinions concerning the role that social media plays today in the lives and careers of writers?

MURILLO

Absolutely. Social media—or maybe it's more accurate (and fair) to say, "a particular mode of engaging" social media—along with the thirst for celebrity, a celebration of the self, wherein attention is prized as much as, and is itself considered, accomplishment, has brought out the corny in a lot of people. I could go into a long rant about all the goofiness I've seen over the years, but suffice it to say that none of it has a damn thing to do with the actual work of writing, revising, and studying poems. I have a Facebook account that I pop in to check every now and then, but that's it.

FOOTHILL

At last year's Kingsley and Kate Tufts awards ceremony and *Foothill Poetry Journal's* release event, you read alongside other poets and discussed your book, *Kontemporary Amerikan Poetry*, which won the 2021 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. How do you feel that these events, ones in which multiple poets read different works from different collections, function?

MURILLO

I think they're wonderful. One of my favorite memories of that week was hearing the work of other poets and being in community with them. It reminded me of a time before Covid, when poetry events were an opportunity for folks to gather, share, and listen.

FOOTHILL

At the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award event last year, one of the pieces you read was "On Negative Capability." Why did you choose this piece in particular? Additionally, does the lack of punctuation in the piece change the reading or rhythm for you at all?

MURILLO

The events of that poem take place not too far from Claremont, so I thought it was fitting. The week was something of a homecoming as I spent some of my most formative years in the Inland Empire. As for the lack of standard punctuation, the white space and line breaks in that particular poem are meant to govern the rhythm and pace. Not only that, but without clear signs—period, comma, semicolon, em dash—the reader is left to their own devices, similar to how the characters in the poem are left to fend for themselves, driving in pitch black darkness down unlit dirt roads, without the help of any signs or signals.

FOOTHILL

How do you find that teaching poetry varies from writing poetry? Does teaching poetry ever teach you anything in return about yourself or your writing process?

MURILLO

If done right, teaching can make one a better writer. A friend of mine once put it this way: "You have to give it away to keep it." Or put differently, giving it away helps you to keep it. Preparing lessons and lectures, annotating texts, close readings, anticipating students' questions, etc.—basically, all that is required of a serious teacher—demands that one be a serious student. And then there's the joy of spending time with young writers who care about the work itself, whose primary motivation is to learn to do the thing well.

FOOTHILL

We are always curious about what folks are reading and who we should be reading. What are you reading right now that you think is important and/or prescient work?

MURILLO

Questions like these always make me nervous. When listing favorite poets there is always the chance that you will leave someone out that should have been included, and that this person will see that you've left them out and will hate you forever after. So, I'll just tell you the dead writers I'm reading. Because if I leave someone off, they won't mind. They have other concerns. I've been spending a lot of time recently with Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet*, as well as the poems of Yeats and Milosz. Mostly, I've been reading Natalia Ginzburg. The English translation of her thin collection of essays, *The Little Virtues*, and in Italian, her largely epistolary novel, *Caro Michele*. Brilliant work.

FOOTHILL

Finally, do you have any advice for poets who are just beginning to work on the craft?

MURILLO

Hell yes. Settle in for the long haul. Enjoy the process. There's no rush to "achieve" or "succeed." Do the work. Study, write, and study more. Live a full life—experience loss, heartache, disappointment, joy, love, laughter—and know that it's all beautiful. Even the ugly parts of it. Know that the only two ways you can fail are to either give up or try to find a shortcut. There are none. Work your ass off. And when you think you're working as hard as you can . . . work harder.

I'm also going to say something that contradicts what many young writers are told, something that I, myself, am guilty of passing on. Often a teacher will try to encourage a student by saying something like, "We need your voice! We need your particular perspective on the world! You're special!" But what if we try this a different way? Consider that you are not special. That all that needs saying has been said already, by people who are smarter and more talented than you.

Consider that writing will not be your chance to prove how singular you are, how unique. You will not gain fame, fortune, or anything else from doing this. Nobody is going to acknowledge your effort. In other words, becoming a poet is not your chance to stand out. Rather, it is an opportunity to lose your ego and to become part of something that is bigger than you. Now . . . do you still want to do this? If we answer this honestly, most people will answer in the negative. My advice, then, is this: If you want fame, do something else. If you want fortune, do something else. If you want to feel special, unique, important, singular, then do something else. On the other hand, if none of that is what drives you, if you just want to write . . . then welcome. Now work.

Contributors

SHEA BORESI teaches creative writing and composition at the University of Missouri, where she is a PhD student in the Creative Writing Program. Her dissertation-in-progress focuses on ecopoetics. She has an MA in creative writing from Fordham University, where she mostly wrote about endangered species. Her work has been published in *Lyre, Lyre* and has won university prizes, including the Academy of American Poets Prize. She lives in Connecticut with her partner Davis and their tiny dog, Obi.

COLE DEPUY is the winner of an Academy of American Poets University Prize (Binghamton University) and the Negative Capability Press Spring 2020 Poetry Contest. His poetry has appeared in the *I-70 Review*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Summerset Review*, *Solstice*, *Rupture* & other fine journals. He is poetry co-editor for *Harpur Palate* & Binghamton Poetry Project co-director. His manuscript in draft has the working title of *Labyrinth* and explores the intersection between species extinction (particularly human) and addiction. Find him on Twitter @cole_depuy.

MICHELLE EMAMI is a Mexican-Iranian American artist from Southern California. She obtained her BFA in painting and drawing at California State University, Fullerton in the spring of 2020 and an MFA from Claremont Graduate University in spring of 2022. Although her main field of study is painting and drawing, she has also dabbled in a variety of fields such as sculpture, glass work, metal work, jewelry, ceramics, and installation. Her current body of work focuses around her cultural identity by fusing her two backgrounds together through the use of repetition, pattern, and design.

MICHAEL HAMMERLE teaches college creative writing and composition. He is the founder of *Middle House Review*. His work has been published in *The Best Small Fictions*, *Split Lip Magazine*, *Tendon* at Johns Hopkins, *Michigan State University Short Edition*, *New World Writing*, *Louisiana Literature*, and elsewhere. He lives and writes in Gainesville, Florida. Find him middlehoureviews.com/michael-hammerle.

EMILY LAKE HANSEN (she/her) is the author of *Home and Other Duty Stations* (Kelsay Books) as well as the chapbook “Pharaoh’s Daughter Keeps a Diary” (forthcoming from Kissing Dynamite Press) and *The Way the Body Had to Travel* (dancing girl press). Her work has appeared in *Hobart*, *32 Poems*, *Glass: A Journal*

of *Poetry*, *Atticus Review*, *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, *The Shore*, and *Rust + Moth* among others. A recent finalist for the Black River Chapbook Competition, Hansen lives in Atlanta where she is a PhD student at Georgia State University and an instructor of English at Agnes Scott College.

STEPHANIE L. HARPER grew up in Northern California, attended college in Iowa and Germany (BA in English and German from Grinnell College), completed graduate studies and gave birth to her first child in Wisconsin (MA in German literature from University of Wisconsin—Madison), and homeschooled and raised her extraordinary son and daughter to adulthood in Oregon. She now lives in Indianapolis, IN, where she completed her MFA in poetry in May 2022 at Butler University. The author of two chapbooks, “This Being Done” and “The Death’s-Head’s Testament,” Harper is a Best of the Net and four-time Pushcart Prize nominee and was a finalist in the 2021 Red Wheelbarrow Poetry Prize judged by Mark Doty. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Red Wheelbarrow Literary Magazine*, *Slippery Elm Literary Journal*, *Whale Road Review*, *Neologism Poetry*, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Vox Populi*, *The Night Heron Barks*, *Resurrection Magazine*, and elsewhere.

JOHN KULIGOWSKI is a MA candidate in creative writing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he teaches writing courses. He writes fiction as well as poetry and is interested in the intersections of these two genres. In addition to being an author and educator, he is assistant editor for volume 392 of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Word Riot*, *Random Sample Review*, *Maudlin House*, *Misery Tourism*, and the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, among others, and he has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and The Best of the Net. He is currently at work on both a novel and a series of interconnected prose poems.

BLAKE LAPIN’S chapbook, “I Look at You Instead of the Road,” was published in 2022 by Bottlecap Press. Scholarships from Brooklyn Poets, Community of Writers, and the New York State Summer Writers Institute have supported his work. After obtaining his undergraduate degree at Claremont McKenna College, he spent a year in Malang, Indonesia on a Fulbright grant. His poems have appeared in *The Community of Writers Review* and *The Journal of New Jersey Poets*. He resides in Brooklyn, NY where he pursues a master’s

in public administration at New York University. He can be reached at blakelapin.com and followed on Instagram @blakelapinpoet.

SARAH MARQUEZ (she/her) is an MLIS student at San Jose State University. She is based in Los Angeles and has work published and forthcoming in various magazines and journals, including *Capsule Stories*, *Human/Kind Journal*, *Kissing Dynamite*, *Mud Season Review*, *Salamander*, *SHIFT*, *The Hellebore*, and *The New Southern Fugitives*. When not writing, she can be found studying librarianship, reading, sipping coffee, or tweeting @sarahmarissa338.

ANDREW MCSORLEY is the author of *What Spirits Return* (Kelsay Books). A graduate of the MFA program in creative writing at Southern Illinois University, his poetry has previously appeared in journals such as *The Minnesota Review*, *Poet Lore*, *UCity Review*, *HAD*, and many others. He lives in Petal, Mississippi, where he is a PhD student at the University of Southern Mississippi.

CATHLIN NOONAN (she/her) is completing her MFA at Texas State University. She is assistant poetry editor for *The Night Heron Barks* and associate editor for *Ran Off with the Star Bassoon*. Noonan's poem "Ghazal with Louse" was a finalist for Crazyhorse's Lynda Hull Memorial Poetry Prize for 2022, and her poem "Setting the Record" was a finalist for *Broad River Review's* 2022 Rash Award in Poetry. In 2021, she was runner-up for Sweet Lit's Poetry Contest. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Banyan Review*, *The Broadkill Review*, *Broad River Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *Ruminate*, *Sweet Lit*, and *Small Orange Journal*. She lives in San Antonio and can be found online at cathlinnoonan.com.

BOBBIE QUINN ORONA BURGOS is an Afro-Indigenous Taino and Mescalero Apache poet, originally from San Dimas, California. They hold a bachelor of arts degree in English, with a minor in art history, from Lewis & Clark College and are currently an MFA candidate at the University of San Francisco. Burgos uses she/her and they/them pronouns. Their writing focuses on traversing complex narrative landscapes, belonging in heritage, and navigating difficult conversations with oneself.

ERICA REID lives in Fort Collins, Colorado. She earned her MFA at Western Colorado University, serves as assistant editor at *THINK Journal*, and works in arts marketing. In 2022 she was nominated for *Best New Poets*; in 2021 her poetry won the Yellowwood Poetry Prize and the Helen Schaible Sonnet Contest (Modern Sonnets category), was nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and was commissioned by the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. Reid's poems have been recently published or are forthcoming in *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *Broadsided Press*, *Able Muse*, *The Lyric*, *Yalobusha Review*, *Tiny Seed*, *Twenty Bellows*, as well as the anthologies *I Thought I Heard a Cardinal Sing: Ohio's Appalachian Voices*; *We Are the West* (Twenty Bellows); and *Writing the Land: Windblown II*. Connect with Reid at ericareidpoet.com.

DEON ROBINSON (he/him) is a Queer Afro-Latino poet born-and-raised in The Bronx. He received his BA in creative writing from Susquehanna University, where he was a two-time recipient of the Janet C. Weis Prize for Literary Excellence. Currently, he is a first year MFA candidate in poetry at the University of Urbana-Champaign where he is a recipient of a Graduate College Master's Fellowship and selected by Adrian Matejka for the 2022 Hobart L. and Mary Kay Peer Memorial Award. He is a two-time Best of the Net nominee and has received fellowships from the Brooklyn Poets, the DreamYard Rad(ical) Poetry Consortium, and the Hurston/Wright Foundation.

CALEIGH SHAW is a poet from Canton, Georgia. She recently earned her MFA at Oklahoma State University, where she was an editorial assistant at the Cimarron Review. She has received scholarship to the New York State Summer Writers Institute and is Georgia Southern University's 2015 Brannen Creative Writing, Nonfiction Award winner. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *RHINO Poetry*, *MAYDAY*, *Moon City Review*, *Santa Clara Review*, and *Maryland Literary Review*, among other publications. You can find her on social media @caleighcal14.

CHERYL SLOVER-LINETT (she/her) is a poet based in Santa Fe, NM. Her poetry is featured or forthcoming in *Amethyst Review*; *Eunoia Review*; *River Mouth Review*; *Sky Island Journal*; and *Hole in The Head Review*; among others, and she serves on the editorial team at *High Desert Journal*. In addition to writing, she leads wilderness retreats through Lead Feather, the nature non-profit she founded in 2008. She holds degrees from Yale and UCLA

and is currently an MFA candidate at Western Colorado University. She spends as much time as she can in the high desert mountains of northern New Mexico. Learn more about Slover-Linett's work at www.leadfeather.org.

VALERIE A. SMITH is a poet and essayist who earned a 2022 Tennessee Williams Scholarship to the Sewanee Writers' Conference. She is a PhD candidate at Georgia State University with an MA in professional writing from Kennesaw State University, where she is currently a lecturer of English. Her poems have appeared in *Aunt Chloe*, *Weber*, *Spectrum*, *Obsidian*, *Crosswinds*, *Dogwood*, *Solstice*, *Oyster River Pages*, and *Wayne Literary Review*. Above all, she values spending time with her family.

ROB VANCE is a former Ironman triathlete, who gave up his day job to travel and race for nearly a decade. Now he is an IT professional and continues his journey as an athlete through writing, reminiscing, and an occasional weekend race. His poetry and essays have been featured in *Aethlon: The Journal of Sports Literature*, *Chiron Review*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Indian River Review*, *Kakalak 2017 & Kakalak 2022*, *The Hollins Critic*, and other esteemed journals. A graduate of Old Dominion University, Vance is pursuing an MFA in creative writing at Queens University of Charlotte. He tweets @RobVance_RVA.

CAITIE L. YOUNG (they/them) is a queer poet and fiction writer from Kent, Ohio. Their work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Minnesota Review*, *Scapegoat*, *The Elevation Review*, *Passengers*, *Vallum*, and elsewhere. They study in the Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts program (NEOMFA).

FOOT
HILL
poetry



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