

sandhill review

VOLUME 22



this is me



sandhill review

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Founding Editors	Kurt Wilt Thomas Abrams
Editor-in-Chief	Gianna Russo
Fiction Editor	Patrick Crerand
Nonfiction Editor	Anne Barngrover
Poetry Editor	Gianna Russo
Design and Layout	Jeff Karon

With Special Thanks to:

Dr. Chantelle MacPhee, Chair
Department of Language Studies and the Arts
and

Dr. Heather Parker, Dean
School of Arts and Sciences

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Foreword

“this is me”

This past year, with its challenges, struggles, confusion, joys, and moments of gratitude, has prompted all of us to confront who we are at our core. Are we our best selves? What do we do if the answer is yes? How about if the answer is no? What does “best self” even mean?

Maybe part of it has to do with our place in the numerous communities that comprise our lives: our families, friendships, workplaces, clubs and organizations, and places of worship, to name a few. Do others “see” us, or are we invisible? What do our communities say about who we are, based on our age, race, gender, and personal traits? Do we agree? How do we bridge the disconnect between the way others identify us and how we identify ourselves? Who are we in regards to our worst enemies and most beloveds? Who are we to ourselves?

The poems, prose, and artwork in this issue grapple with these questions and arrive at answers as individual as handprints on art paper. In a collage of experiences, resolutions, regrets, and declarations, these pages revel and reveal. Our hope is that—as you immerse yourself in works that speak to you deeply—you will have your own revelation, and you too will say, *this is me*.

Gianna Russo, Editor-in-Chief, Spring 2021





M. A. Sinnhuber

Teeth with Laugh Lines

Cheryl A. Van Beek

Inflorescent Potion

My essence stoppered in amber glass
that pretends to preserve, distills
on rations of filtered light, funneled time.

Sun blooms inside me,
stirs broken twigs and bee-buzzed petal bits.
Sand-sparkled grains of earth
swirl with thanks.

Between toss-ups,
I settle for a spell.
I am still
clear.
I keep the seal,
smile through cracks
spill into the air, heal.

Evelyn Ann Romano

Just for Now

I am the
sun, become
the moon, set a table
for manatees, turtles,
swans, sit with
stillness: toes touch
ceiling, legs upside
down. Listen,
no more thoughts,
fear of death a
speck of
sand in the sea.
Just for now,
songbirds bloom
sunflowers chant,
I am.

Janet Watson

Alive and Wet

To be in rain, to choose for myself
the great wash, the potent force of it,
what wild things learn to endure,
I protect myself with a poncho
or poke an umbrella through the gloom.

The tiniest warblers tuck into themselves
on branch or in nest while rain pelts darkly
from clouds nailed to their treetop.
Lacking the thin comfort of feathers,
I do not welcome rain.

I take cover from drizzle or storm
by pitching a tent, sipping hot tea
from a thermal mug and hopefully
scanning the burdened sky
for signs of change in the weather.

Everything is easier in sunshine,
but sometimes rain falls.
Warblers don't seem to mind.

Hidden

She sits just outside the island
of other girls,

writes small enough
so no one reads over her shoulder

Nobody knows me.

She builds a wall
with her hands. She castles

herself in, cries moats
into the rims of her eyes.

She has a life raft
she clings to but still

this ocean is forever.
How can she know

which way to turn
to be sure

she faces
the closest shore?

A Drawing of My Fifth Birthday Party

Even without the heavy use
of hairspray, our 'dos defy
gravity, and we are bald
underneath our see-through
party hats, but you get
the idea.

We throw a ball or loaf
of bread back and forth
across the hand drawn arch.

Penciled smiles cradle
our noses. We have no patience
for the intricacies of hands.
Our stick arms will do.

Balloon strings curve
like snakes.

My friend's eyes
are buttonlike, dollish.

The world
I live in is a strange one
but a month ago people's legs
stuck straight out from their heads
and now they have torsos.

Things are becoming clearer.

Biological Clock, Meet Internal Compass

I am rudderless; I am wanting.
My heart is screaming, "Go Now!"
My head whispers, "You're Not Ready."
I'm getting older,
But I feel none the wiser.
I'm floating through a daydream as the hours tick by.
How much longer do I wait?
Because I'm longing for a place that isn't the one I come from.
I've grown impatient;
I can't sit still, but I'm rooted in place by my own mind.
While stuck, the fantasy and reality blur into some semi-solid life.
The days, weeks, months around me close in,
Squeezing me breathless,
While my spirit flies far away.
The monotony has cleaved me in twain.
I'm neither here, nor there,
And I don't know how to get home.



Renee Gould

P Is for Pensive

Elaine Person

A Struggle Within

Others share a string of continuity
when I am just a pea without a pod.
Families procreate for perpetuity.
I cannot find connection, and that's odd.
I am a link who's looking for a chain
to make a metal circle for my neck.
Without a family I cannot explain
the way to walk through life within this trek.
How can a woman social and so smart
avoid affection of a corporal sort?
I give my head but never give my heart.
My boundary walls appear to be a fort.
Instead of asking, "What is wrong with me?"
I now acknowledge what is strong with me.

Brennan Smith

Foxhole Friends

I have found that it is nearly impossible to live life
alone.

I remember once thinking,
that as long as I had myself

I would be fine.
Yet I turned against me.

I would often wonder why
my friends seemed to spend

so much time
saving me.

My girlfriend rubbed my head,
and held me,

while I cried in her car.
My anxiety overwhelming me,

for no reason,
other than being in an

unfamiliar place.
I felt ridiculous.

I am a grown man
sobbing next to her,

Because we are at the house
of international pancakes.

I felt that if I walked in there,
someone would come in and murder us.

I felt so ashamed as I cried
but she did not care.

She stayed with me,
promising everything would be fine.

That I would be okay,
and that she would never leave.

Meanwhile, if I knew that they cried
inside or out,

I would bleed out my happiness
so they could be drenched.

Sadness is easy to wallow in.
The safest feelings are the ones I feel the most.

I sink into the muck I am stuck in.
Telling myself,

I am the foxhole.
until someone reaches a handout,

and pulls me out.
Of course, there's a reason

Some friends seem to stick.
They could never leave me behind.

The Making of an Agriculturalist

The Danube
Or so it seemed to my toddler eyes
Stretched mighty and murky
Into your backyard
Like every January
The drainage canal
Behind the row of houses
Swelled and spilled over its wide banks
Years later in my agricultural college I would learn
That the silt it deposited
Yielded your plentiful crops
Green beans strawberries onions
The occasional squash those insufferable peas
And best of all
The potatoes you would fry for us grandchildren
Until their edges were brown and crispy
All thanks to the flood

I heard the water's call
Advanced slowly on the soft earth intrigued
When my soles stuck and came out with a squishy noise
With the next step I worried
My boot sunk ankle-deep
Refused to reemerge
My brand-new sheepskin boot Mommy's proud purchase
I yanked and yanked
My foot came out
Shoeless
Only wrapped in woolen tights

White until I sank my foot into the mud
The other boot met the same fate

Panicked I pulled
The tights stretched into chocolate-dipped marshmallows
Before the mud released its grip
Back to the house I flopped
Threw open the kitchen door and called for help
Not daring to drag my muddy mess
On the red tile you scrubbed every afternoon while I napped
Dear Lord you exclaimed and I shrank in my coat
You whisked me straight to the bathtub
A twinkle in your eyes despite the stern scolding
Later you would rescue the ruined boots
And break the news over the phone to my mother
Mumbling as soon as you hung up
Who in their right mind buys a toddler a \$50 pair of boots

Over the years and steaming cups of thyme tea
Buckets of fresh-picked cherries or basins of shelled peas
Your brown eyes mirrored in mine
We would puzzle together
Over my mother's futile attempts to adorn me
With frilly dresses perms mascara
For you and I knew
As surely as the floods came in January
Like you I was
Meant for mud

The Last Goodbye's the Hardest

If there were a horse we could ride
into the sunset, like John Wayne
before closing credits, like George Strait
sings from the stage—he would be
named Docs Poco Dynamite
and he'd never win a single race.
Doc would be a working horse, at ease
under the saddle, happy to see the barn,
the farm, the cowboy he loves best.

If there were a dog who got along
with horses, who loved the woods
and the Wild West, who tracked ducks
like he was gifted by the gods,
we'd call him Tex and he would jump
in the truck before sun-up, ready
for the ride, any ride.

If there were a brother who scattered
the sting of childhood around the
cul-de-sac and down the lonely street,
who made room for a girl to play
football and put her on the shirts team,
we would call him Bubs and we
would draw plays on our stomach
in the backyard huddle and we'd run
and pass and tackle like the 1984
Raiders and never forget as long
as we lived.

History of Toast

Clearwater: August 6, 2020

Glorious is the grind of crumbs on gums, hot river of butter sluicing en route to gut, tongue occasionally tarted up with sexy-slick marmite or a sticky-strawberry spread.

Liverpool: April 25, 1995

I'm pregnant, at the head of the long line of office workers who queue to pay for white Wharburton toast, dolloped with butter or margarine. I will overrun break to line up for seconds.

Ainsdale: June 21, 1987

Newly married, sprawled in bed Sunday morning with breakfast—tea, granary bread toast—and a slew of papers: The Sunday Times, The Observer, The Mail on Sundays, silent together with toast and printed word joy.

Worsthorne: September 16, 1977

It's your turn Michael, squabbles with my brothers and sister to decide who will make late night tea and toast for all, a practice run for my University dorm where I make toast for fourteen best friends, after long evenings in the student bar.

Burnley: October 14, 1969

Dry toast—the first snack our dad would allow us 24 hours after bouts of sickness or thick toast with rich oxtail soup when we were smothered with colds. Toast cut into strips, to dip into soft-boiled eggs on breakfast trays in sickrooms.

Llanbedrog: July 10, 1967

On holiday at a Bed & Breakfast in Wales, cold white toast cut into triangles set on tables in metal racks between butter dish and pots of blackcurrant jam, a chewier texture—flavors that sit separate on taste buds like siblings not speaking.

The Vine and the Branches

I watched as my sister plunged to her death.

Dampness clung to our skin as we trudged through the woods behind our school and hoped the overcast day would not give way to its drizzly threat. Our seventh-grade science class was not too impressed with nature's backyard, but we picked our way along the beaten path anyway. It was fine until we reached the not-so-beaten path. The boys, always daring, skirted the enormous jagged rock that sat blocking the way to the deep woods our teacher had warned us to stay away from. Decades ago, a single bolt of lightning had struck into the heart of the granite slab, cracking it in two. Now it served as an ominous message to all who were bold enough to approach.

Naturally, the boys of the group started messing around near the drop-off behind it.

Naturally, we girls rolled our eyes and simply moved along in the correct direction.

The class's objective for the day was to collect samples from the pond out there to analyze under microscopes. At last a curtain of vegetation was brushed aside to reveal muddy waters. My sister and I, being the delicate creatures we thought we were, pulled on waders to avoid coming into contact with aquatic wildlife. Although the humid rubber pants accomplished their mission, they also facilitated a general lack of coordination. Our classmates had a good laugh as the two of us slipped, floundered, and squelched over smooth stones and unseen dips. Only when my teacher called for me was I finally cleared to exit the murk. I carefully picked my way out of the water and up the moderate incline until I was safely at the top. My sister was next. She scrambled up the slippery six-foot embankment faster than I thought possible in such ill-fitting waders. I swallowed a chuckle; the sight might have been amusing if she wasn't starting to lose her balance. In her haste, she had evidently accounted for the climb but not for the crest. I stared harder, not wanting to believe what I was witnessing. She began falling backward into the

pond with nothing to ease her landing but the canoe behind her. There was nothing else to stop her. But my heart stopped. She was my other half—flailing, failing, falling. I couldn't scream. So frozen in shock, I couldn't even take a breath. There was nothing I could do but wait for the crack of her skull as it splintered against wood.

I watched as my sister plunged to her death.

Almost.

She clung desperately to something—the thinnest vine imaginable, upon second glance. By some miracle, she had caught the only piece of vegetation within yards of her grasp. Her shocked expression remained even as she gripped the dangling thread before her. The moments stretched into eternities. Finally, she got up the nerve to haul herself up and began the effort, hand over hand. Our teacher still hadn't noticed, and neither had our classmates. I was afraid to breathe, afraid to shift the air even a fraction in my sister's direction. But with a slight swing of the vine she shifted her weight ever so carefully to gain her footing on the leafy slope and then stumbled to the top of the hill. She stayed there the rest of the excursion. I didn't blame her.

Although we were still years away from coming into our faith, we both instinctively understood the significance of that one vine. Connected to many branches, it was committed to serving not itself but others. It had weathered countless storms yet was inexplicably intact—an example of remarkable strength. It was a metaphor for the perfect human.

Patricia Campion

Autofocus

In the picture
I'm two years old
Standing firm in the yard
 Unsmiling
Navy raincoat red woolen tights short blond hair
 A crease on my brow
Eyes dark and focused
On something ahead outside the frame

In later pictures I am smiling
Because I am told to
And later yet because I know
It is expected
But on the ones where I don't pose
The ones stolen when I don't pay attention
The crease is still there
 Deeper with the years
And so is the gaze
 Intent on the horizon

Some of these pictures
 By my husband and friends
Are pictures of me
Taking pictures
Of birds
 Landscapes
Flowers
Cats at a window
Street merchants
 Festival dancers

All things unseen in their shots
The things I want to remember in their perfect instant

They say they want to capture that intent
That sense of purpose as I set the frame
 Nobody concentrates as hard as you do
They say
 Getting it right matters so much to you
They say
 This is you

Me, Myself, and I

In photographs spanning seventy years, a hint of resemblance persists. But peering behind the facial masks, how similar is the self from one decade to the next? At two, I see a happy, confident child who knows she is loved. Her world is small—her mother, father, sister, and occasional visits from people called Grannie, Grampa, and Gramma. Everyone tells her she’s cute, she’s clever. She believes them.

At eight, I see a shy and innocent girl, unconcerned about “looking pretty.” Someone brushed her hair for the picture, but it honors her cowlicks and natural waves. She’s a tomboy with a sprinkling of freckles across the bridge of her nose. Her front teeth, still large for her mouth and with an overbite, are visible in her reluctant smile. Her world has grown, but with this expansion came insecurity. She’s begun to compare herself to others and finds herself lacking.

At nineteen, I see a budding young woman. She projects a look of self-assurance, but still answers to an insistent voice in her head that tells her she’ll never be better than second rate. Her hair is stylish for the 60s, her makeup subtle, and her sweater classic and modest. From a distance, she might pass as one of the “popular girls,” but she knows it’s a façade. The art of making friends alludes her. She routinely questions her abilities, her intelligence, her appearance. She relies on the opinion of others for her sense of self, sometimes succumbing to bad choices in her pursuit of approval from others.

At thirty-eight, I see a radiant new mother glowing from the inside out. She’s survived an abusive marriage to her high school sweetheart. He’d been her first. She promised God she’d marry him to redeem her sin. Later, to justify her long-term affair with a married man, she modified her moral compass. He tells her someday they’ll live together as a family, but for now she makes do with whatever time he can carve out for them. He’s cut her off from family and friends. He “protects” her from other men. Sometimes she’s

not sure his love is worth the sacrifices. But motherhood has been her ultimate reward. Time spent with her children is her greatest pleasure. With them, she can be herself.

At fifty-three, she's pensive, mildly depressed. Their children are teenagers. She's given up teaching to work from home for his business. Her world has shrunk enormously. He's in love with a phantom he created, and she must be vigilant to portray the woman he wants her to be. He's never known who she really is, but does she? She went from acting the virginal daughter her parents expected to being the flirtatious wife her husband wanted to being the paradoxically chaste mistress her lover demands. He's still married but promises a divorce after he sells the business. The government investigates his company for hiring undocumented workers. As the bookkeeper, she's included in the indictment. The prosecutors promise leniency if she'll testify against him. She declines and goes to prison for two years. His wife divorces him.

At sixty-two, she's heavier—prison food does that. When she comes home, he's still serving another six years. She visits him regularly and rekindles her love for him. He's still controlling, but somehow, it's less offensive in her sixties. She's waited for him for over four decades. Why not wait a few years more? A month before his release, he's diagnosed with lymphoma. Sixty days later, still in prison, he's dead.

At seventy-two, she knows who she is. She's known heartache and joy, success and failure. She's earned each line etched on her face. But life is complicated still. She shares her home with her disabled son. The financial seizures related to her prosecution leave no option for his living elsewhere. Writing her memoir has been cathartic and therapeutic. She's more self-aware, but still insecure. She and her sister have become the best of friends. Her greatest treasure is her relationship with her daughter. Despite Social Security, she must work to provide for herself and her son. But she's fortunate to have found supportive friends both at work and in her writing groups. Aside from her son's unpredictability, life is good. But she worries about what happens to him when she's gone.

This is me. All of them are me. I've learned to accept each iteration of myself. Now I'm working on serenity and self-forgiveness.



Diana Geller

Someone's First Selfie

Edges

I totter
in the shallows, not far from shore
waiting
 for a flap of wings
 a tail splash
 more light

But why not stomp headlong
 into black water
 crush roots underfoot
 write frenzied words that rip open
 thin-furred underbellies

Let entrails slip out steaming

Offer
 blood
 promises
 a warm, dripping heart, and say

feel this.

Frequently needing to gather myself

I start with a broom

sweep up moonlight that streams through windows
invading last night's dream

landing on the shelf exposing dust motes and all
else that adheres.

Aging makes this a necessity.

Next, I adjust undergarments, acknowledge yesterday's sin,
given that judgment often hides beneath tight straps.

Reviewing daily columns of want versus need comes next,
the usual traps,
until that kind of balance becomes
useful as a Limoges plate on the scalp, teetering.

Great for posture, but not for peace.

Ask any arbiter, including wishful thoughts, how to proceed.
It's inevitable scattering will begin again

so even small gestures say intention, intention, intention.

Chrysalis

You don't know how it is to be curled
inside this little glass sleeping bag
as the sun rises and night comes
and the glass turns to black
all the while waiting to be something
while this is my world.

One day I woke and let my wet wings
dry and stiffen in the morning sun.
I was part of air and the sky was friend
that lifted me to green sections and left windows
like plates of clear glass on which I would rest.
All, all was weightless and unencumbered.

Once I lay in bed at 3 a.m. knowing I could be dead
in a month. Once I walked through overcast days
knowing I might be alone in that month.
You never know how it is to be in that cocoon.

I awoke to clear morning where a doctor said
you will live another forty years.
where the sky brightened and I knew
I would not be alone again.

Each of those feelings last forever.
Each of those feelings are long gone.

Randy Goggin

Swimming with Dad

Dad glided predator-like
beneath the broken, cobalt surface
Waves beating pool tiles in discordant
percussions: Slap, slip-slap, slap, slip-slap
I watch from the shadows

of my Oakland A's hat,

Dad's perspiring can of Budweiser
forgotten on the sun-cracked pavers,
Black water of the Cotee River slips
past channel markers and barnacled docks—
tide retreating out again to the freedom

of mangrove-lined shores

Dad's broad, freckled shoulders shatter
the surface of the pool,
And I jerk ...

Jump in, he says, with a Irish smirk
of teeth and scarred fists,
I don't feel like swimming, I say in reply:
My bony knees knocking in dry, red swimsuit
Don't be a wimp. Get in the pool.
My stomach is hurting, I mumble back
His black shark eyes tracking
every move that I make—
the way they used to with mom,

And I know...
he is going to strike,

When he scrambles up the side
of the pool, I run ...
between lizards, palm trees, and patio chairs,
Dad's feet concussing behind me
Fence spikes jabbing my ribcage
My ass on the dirt, and then up on my feet
My heels a dull drumbeat
on loose splintered planks,
Cotee River flowing beneath me
When I find the courage to meet his eyes
He's gripping the fence mesh in silence
with callused, machine-shop hardened fingers:
You're in deep shit, boy, he finally says,
And I jump...

Dinner at Ruby's

In her attic, tins of marbles
were the only toys in the chest,
which was once my father's,
that seemed safe—no metal
model cars sloughing skins of rust.
I held them up to the dust-frayed light
of the window. Tiny, swirled planets emerged.
Dragon eyes. I imagined
the creature from which I had killed
and plucked them,
that same dragon I often saw
when I closed my eyes,
how I was never sure if I
was to be the knight to slay her
or if she was on my side.
Outside, it was finally cold enough
that the manure nearly froze
before it hit the ground, just the time
when you think the flies have gone
wherever flies go in the winter,
until one shows up, struggling
in the mashed potatoes. Ruby
swiped it out with one finger and flung it
like propriety into the farmhouse sink.
My great-grandmother, born in the age
when country girls were named for flowers
or gems but wore aprons to the dinner table
and slapped the rump of a favorite cow
like a man. She did not love me much.

When she died, I took the marbles
and for years used them to hide
love letters from schoolboys,
pushed them down under the weight
of Jupiter and reptilian pupils reading
the reckless promises of youth
that she once warned me against,
how the words on the page would whisper
forever but could only breathe fire.

Paper Tigress

“In appearance it is very powerful but in reality it is nothing to be afraid of; it is a paper tiger. Outwardly a tiger, it is made of paper, unable to withstand the wind and the rain.”

—Mao Zedong

A tigress who was born a lioness
has always been pretending
to be someone else.

I snap my teeth at anyone who gets too close,
shoulder my way through the competition
and flaunt my greatness over others under the guise of any excuse
I can manage to get away with. Rules bend under the weight of my abilities,
so I learn not to listen to them in the first place. I cheat,
and the world praises me, so I keep it up. I wear my confidence
like my stripes, emblazoned across my shoulders
in dark bands that promise bravery.
Spending so much time alone means
that I tackle everything
alone, independence my greatest asset.
But sometimes I question
the sharpness of my claws and the reality
of my stripes.

The tiger's crashing
style of being makes it easy to misspeak. Prey,
all around me: I let delicate deer hooves
trample-dance on my origami ego;
fold up what's left

of this paper tiger and tie a noose of flowers
around her muzzle. Kill her with what she is
not. Her roar is worse than her
bite.

*

Once, when we were swimming together, my mother asked me
how I moved so fast. I told her I visualize a tiger
slashing through the water. I coined the tiger stroke.
I swim for the same thing I do for everything else:
myself—with power, speed, and results.
I swim for the burning
in my muscles that tells me how hard I'm working
to move, to fight
the waves. But not my mother,
she swims like a frog. Creates graceful
shapes with her body; cuts
elegant lines in the water for other people
to enjoy and admire. The tigress in me purrs as I churn
the water below the surface, feeling strong.
The frog has a pearlescent
greatness, soft and inviting. A tigress's excellence
is bright, untouchable, cold: wreathed in gold thorns.



Renee Gould

Delicate Flower

Kate Sweeney

The Woman of the House

—with a first line from Lauren Groff

I have somehow become a woman who yells,
who digs her nails into her palm when
her three-year-old son smacks his infant sister
in the face over the red crayon.

I have somehow become a woman who should
sleep when the baby sleeps but instead watches
hours of YouTube videos or buys clothes online
to impress all the people at all the places she never goes.

I have somehow become a woman who can sleep
nine hours a night—because she leaves her husband
on the couch watching Netflix alone by eight—
but who still has trouble getting up before sunrise.

I have somehow become a woman who cannot write
without drinking wine, who cannot drink wine without
writing, who cannot tell you how long those wet clothes
have been mildewing in the washer.

I have somehow become a woman who still will not
accept this for her daughter as she holds ice
to her baby's bleeding nose. It's not okay to hit him back.
Instead, you're supposed to... She can never remember the rest.

I have somehow become a woman who yells
until she is soaked with sweat down to the nursing bra
she still wears—even though she has been dried up for months—
and knows it's not sexy, but it still holds her tight.

Eileen Murphy

Hausfrau

In my dream, four bullets
had blasted
the chest
of my pink cotton housedress.

I pulled it over my head
and laid it on the bed
to wonder
at the pattern—

one, two, three, four holes,
nice and even.

I wasn't bleeding—
the dress must have shielded me.

I am not the *hausfrau* type;
I only vacuum
when the dust
piles up to dune levels,

and I only cook
under duress
from out-of-town house guests.

Perhaps I shot the dress myself.

M. A. Sinnhuber

I Am Sarah

God changed her name to Sarah.

—Genesis 15:17

Our new priest says
we are like Abraham and Sarah.

God told them to leave everything behind,
all that gave them roots—family,
church, home—and move south to Canaan.

We move south
from Pittsburgh to Florida, my third husband
and I, younger than 90-year-old Sarah,

100-year-old Abraham, and it's guaranteed—
I won't get pregnant.

Sarah means “princess” or “noblewoman.”

I am the fierce noblewoman, staving off
pneumonia and no-seeum wounds, allergies
to our moving box's oiled cardboards.

I am the weighted princess who can't remember
names of cross-streets to find my way
back to our new home.

sagging
sagging,

molt in g,

c

racking,

Stretching

, pale,

freckled, blue,

sutured, stapled, scaly,

smooth, soothed, cool,

moisturized, massaged, bruised, sunburned,

SPF-protected, numb, wrinkled,

pimpled, porcelain, clammy,

goose-bumped, blistered, kissed and hugged,

ruddy,

baby soft, splintery, scraped, band-aided,

waxed, calloused, vein-ridden,

covering of my bones and blood,

flesh.

Victoria Dym

Florida Reincarnation

I am so-over-it with Sisyphus always pushing
upward—weakening like an elderly Atlas
muscles turn to fat, soft with age
I want
to be the toad, the rooster or, in the lake behind me
—the two-headed alligator
Those gulls who guffaw, in the parking lot
a tick-tick ticking reminder that the sea is near,
that I can go naked into the salt water
—an animal of my own making

Diane Neff

My Life Time

Boxes within boxes, the calendar is my refuge,
where my pen is as powerful as a warrior
waging new battles.

Ticks and sweeps and flashes control my pace,
each second of each minute of each hour
marking their purpose.

The pulse of my life is measured by these limits,
every action to its own time, the consequences
planned and foreseen.

Yet the inexplicable, love, creates the fire,
of moments that burn for hours, and a lifetime
in a wisp of smoke.

Night Vision

They call me when someone is dead.
I bury the cats, take the dying rabbit to the vet.
No undertaker nor priest, I compose eulogies
lead my mother to the body, carry the casket.

I rent the spare room in my classmate's house
where her father's suits live in the closet,
where his shirts sleep in the pecan dresser,
where spare change is still sprawled on a table.
"Move any of that stuff you want," she says,
"I can't." So I slide the gray suits to the side,
bag the nicotine smelling shirts, place the change
in a jar for her. Later that summer, we clean out
the garage and move the living room furniture.

My neighbor steps out onto his lawn:
"Remember the lady who came to visit last month?"
and tells me about her open car door outside a club
the speeding driver, her face frozen in the photograph.

You see, it seems natural most of the time,
the old folks, the reckless ones, the diseased
slipping back into the warm water as the tide goes out
the moon watching silently overhead
with her blue reflected light. I could be content
with this grip but my hands own a doubt
whether I can really see that far into the dark
or if my night hasn't yet come on.

Vicarious Self-Insert as ARPG Mentality

“The world is unstructured and designed to reward experimentation.”

—*Wikipedia*, “The Legend of Zelda:
Breath of the Wild”

Drop me into an open-world video game
& point me in the direction of the first checkpoint
via the path of least resistance. I will turn around,
climb the cliff-face behind me, & wander
for hours before I wind up where you wanted me
by accident. There is no warning that the edges
of mountains do not have bounding boxes, so I walk off
the edge of the sheer peak in unintentional suicide,
my first autonomous action in the Great Plateau.

Place me in front of the Death House & watch me
avoid it for three hours. The mist & monster
that is meant to drive me into the house
finds me making camp in the library for the night.
The dungeon master has to craft an entire town on the fly
as I steal from the market, make friends at the tavern,
& eventually torch the Death House. I almost go into the basement,
but I shy away at the sight of spiders pouring
from the trap door. I end up cutting
my losses, buying a horse with stolen treasure
& abandoning the town altogether.

My Irrational Fears and How I Tame Them

The following includes a list of my top three irrational fears and how I've learned to tame them:

I. *Trypophobia: the fear of clusters.*

Additional Definition: To abhor all cluster-like images, objects, or situations. These may include, but are not limited to, the juicy red ovaries of pomegranates, the clinging seeds inside bell peppers, the clumped nature of the individual taste buds on your tongue, and worst of all, clusters of people engaging in social activities.

Side Effects: Phantom itchiness across the body. Visible shuddering. A gag-like impulse, depending on the severity of the cluster. A weird gravitation pull to stare at the cluster itself until one is made so uncomfortable she experiences all of the previously listed symptoms. If witnessing a cluster of human beings engaging in small talk, additional side effects may occur, including the sweats, shortness of breath, obsessive combing of the hair or adjustment of lipstick, stuttered speech, etc.

How to Tame It: Avoid cluster-like images and objects at all costs. If it is unavoidable, try to break the cluster apart until it is no longer one, lumpy entity but separate entities. For example, after cutting open a fresh bell pepper, immediately disassemble the hanging seeds at the core and empty into a sink or nearest trash can. Relief should follow shortly after. If you are experiencing trypophobia in a social setting where the cluster at hand is a group of people, remain calm. Do your best to break apart the group the way you would the seeds in the pepper. Handling groups of people in smaller quantities will prove to be much more manageable and not quite so scary.

II. *Lepidopterophobia: the fear of butterflies and moths.*

Additional Definition: To shriek with toddler-like intensity every time a butterfly or moth gets within a ten-foot radius. To have issues with things

that can get too close to your face without prior warning. To simultaneously fear change.

Side Effects: Development of an acute awareness of all small, flying objects. Dramatic swatting. (Note: Some people, even friends, may use your fear against you. For example, they may find a dead butterfly on the ground and put it in your hair. You may be traumatized as you pluck out wings and legs from your curls. You may also consider getting better friends, though this cannot be listed as an official side effect.)

How to Tame It: Avoid beautiful, lush meadows and grassy areas. Enjoy winter while the colorful beasts hibernate in their chrysalises. Under no circumstances should you chaperone your sister's second-grade class field trip to the butterfly conservatory. This will lead to widespread hysteria among seven-year-olds who were once brave and unafraid of the little flying creatures. Lastly, learn to accept the fact that sometimes change can be beautiful, even when it hurts.

III. *Nyctophobia: the fear of the dark.*

Additional Definition: To fear the unknown, open-endedness that only exists in spaces where there is no light. To love the light.

Isolation

I hide within these walls
Only eggshells in the fractured night
Listen to cicada calls, Watching
vacant streets through the kitchen blinds,
Blue flashes in my neighbor's bedroom window
Beat soundless rhythms against the glass
Is he alive in there? I don't remember his name.
I picture a lump of person beneath the blankets
On a lonely bed in a strobing array,
A tomcat creeps down Jarvis Street
Staying close to the ground as it moves
Fluid, through the pale moonlight,
Its feline phenotype dissolves
into dark shadows of *Juniperus trees*
I feel the emptiness it leaves behind
The neighbor's televisions persists
in its synaptic explosions of manic energy
Panic below the surface suddenly rising
I'm going to be okay. Just breathe.
And again, I catch myself thinking of you
If you were here, you would know what to say,
A satellite plummets across summer night sky
Now sanitized of its endless flights
I remember when the three of us flew
out west to the mountains of Colorado
I remember Livia's laugh
At the table in your aunt and uncle's house
In the Black Forest, Now gone,
I imagine faceless strangers conversing

in distant cramped spaces
of the International Space Station,
They watch the continents below
Like ancient gods, bathed in cosmos
Observing from their windowed fortress
Vast cerulean oceans of calm (from that far away)
While we remain stranded below
Quarantined in the claustrophobic refuge
of this endless Isolation.

James Sutman

Personal Care

Showering another man can be much more pleasurable than showering yourself. Contorted muscles are leather straps, a twisted spine, a heated coil of steel, a spring that never springs. Curled cinnamon hair at once the tangled mane of a mustang and then the treetops of a forest. My fingers press through the brambles and massage the earth, the skull which sees little light. I, too, am now a horse, Secretariat, confident in my lead, confident as crevices are counted and Irish Sprung. The cartoonish evergreen soap plops from shower chair to slick tile, melts like a lime Popsicle, and foams into a whirlpool around the drain. My shoes and pants are wet, yet no one will curse me for this. Although my childhood returns every Wednesday morning rinsed in warm water and dried in an oversized towel, we are adults. Clean adults. Our strength at its zenith. No one hovers above us. Our mothers in other rooms, kitchens, basements, in houses that are no longer ours. Soon we charge to the breakfast table, hooves damp, coats glistening, eyes alert to danger. There we eat orange lifesavers and drop cubes of sugar into our coffee.



Diana Geller

Me in the World

sandhill review

Krystal “Gypsy” Orellano Weldon

Who I Am?

I am a story yet to be written.
A face never forgotten.
My exterior is as strong as steel.
While my interior is as soft as cotton.
My blood flows in mixtures that start at the top of the tree.
Ancestors had chronicles that eventually
lead to the making of me.
They say strong words in a little girl such as I, then again sirens of ancient
Greece brought tenacious men down to their knees.
I am sexual revolution.
Dangerous, unknown the widespread youth pollution.
The civil rights next chapter of the movement.
Dr. King I am the living dream.
Maya Angelou I am that woman Phenomenally.
The strong African and Taino roots my grandmother told me.
I am liberation the change in the social norm.
I live the words my lips form.
I am a religious debate.
One to express myself.
Nostradamus.
A prophecy of the next generation.
In a dawn of a new creation.
Who I am is more than meaning cause I'm empathy more than words
written down in poetry.
I'm light and darkness in a battle of good vs. evil.
Above average cause this girl is not most people.
Not a follow but a trend setter, staying unpredictable as the weather. Every
day striving to get better,
What will be my legacy?

How will they remember me?
As a fighter, a survivor, a mother, and provider.
Not just Hispanic, lesbian, nor woman, but a human.
Someone who opened the doors for a younger crowd to step through.
What struggles I go through will be but history to you.
I will be but a picture in a book not their reality
and that is how it should be.
As her blood flows in mixtures I will be in the middle of her tree.
Chronicles that eventually lead to her story, her legacy.
The fighter and my maybe, she will be the one who remembers me!

Eating in the Kitchen

The blonde baby picks
pepperonis from her pizza
slice. She stands in front
 of the fridge, crying
until her mother hands her
a tissue and promises
a popsicle when she's
 done with her dinner.

The baby used
 to eat Froot Loops
in front of the TV,
watching *Peter Pan*,
though sometimes she could
hardly hear "You Can Fly!"
over the arrhythmia
of her brother's band
and her father's slamming the door.

 The baby hasn't adjusted yet
to hot food. It's hard
 to strike a balance
between the comfort
 of a warm meal and the sting
of a burnt tongue.

My Sister's Soggy Diaper

The diaper always needed to be changed when I woke up in the middle of the night to my wailing baby sister. I'd sense the weight of it as I lifted Marci's squirming body out of the crib. It hung dense and dreadful.

When we sat together on the rocking chair, I'd feel it on my forearm. Our family beagle had pulled apart enough diapers for me to know that the wet parts clumped and gathered, forming sad little balls of moist cotton. The thought disgusted me as Marci and I rocked together, but not enough to change her. I was a child too, heavy-eyed and desperate to return to my own bed.

Once I got her back to sleep and returned to the crib, I would lay awake and worry. I'd stress about rash and whether she was uncomfortable. But changing the diaper would mean turning on lights and moving things around in the bedroom. It would mean accepting wakefulness at this hour as normal. I could not tolerate the idea. Marci would want to start playing. She might want a bottle. The entire thing would snowball, and ultimately those fears won out over the fear that my sister would wake up in the morning, crying with a red, bumpy rash.

Nearly thirty years after I learned to mother my sisters, I brought the same diaper struggles to mothering my daughter. I didn't change my own baby when she woke up in the middle of the night, either. My sister survived it, I wearily told myself; my child would, too.

These late night episodes allowed us to bond, and Marci liked me better than anyone else in the family. With my mother working 3pm to 11pm at the hospital and my father not home from work until after 5pm, my cousin Barbara, a senior in high school, was hired to bridge the childcare gap.

I would get off my school bus every day to Barbara holding my crying sister on the front steps of our house. Marci's face would be red and desperate. Her arms would reach out as soon as the bus came to a stop, and her legs would start kicking against Barbara's body.

“She’s been doing this since she woke up from her nap,” Barbara would report every single afternoon, happy to hand my sister over to me.

Marci and I are the bookends of the family. I’m the eldest and she’s the youngest. We are nothing alike. She loves fashion and follows every trend and has tattoos. She seeks attention and enjoys telling stories loudly and for an audience. I am terrible at being trendy, I cut my own bangs, and I would rather read a book in a dark room than hold forth at a party.

She continued clinging to me as she transitioned from screaming baby into insecure school-aged child and thrill-seeking young adult. I checked her homework every night and protected her from our other two sisters, who were more athletic and eager to fly down our driveway on bikes with no brakes or play kickball until someone was physically injured. I was the phone call she made when she needed money or food or when she got caught hiding her best friend in her closet when the girl ran away from home.

I gave her a place to live when she was between abusive boyfriends.

I flipped off abortion protesters and followed her into the clinic when she was pregnant with a married co-worker’s child.

Things are different now. None of her diapers are soggy. Those are only memories that remind me of need. She is a different baby now, living in a gated community with a big car and three kids and a high-earning husband. She has firm ideas about how the world should be and where we all fit into it. Scented candles decorate every room and she is passionate about Keto meal plans and Instagram selfies. The last text message I received from her was a complaint that the woman she pays to pick up the dog poop in her backyard is missing a lot of it.

We leave each other alone. There are resentments and judgments. Our lives are more separate than they’ve ever been, and our relationship has settled into something polite and guarded.

That’s okay, I tell myself.

That’s okay, that’s okay, that’s okay.

I don’t tell myself as much as I repeat it like a mantra.

Things We've Handed Down

“Where it all ends I can’t fathom, my friends.
If I knew, I might toss out my anchor.”

—Jimmy Buffet, “Son of a Son of a Sailor”

My grandfather was an obstetrician;
his father a lawyer on Franklin Street;
his father brought artesian wells to Alabama.
Just like the Bible, I know little
of the women—
mothers and grandmothers left out
of the genealogy. Women are changed
by marriage; forgotten footnotes
hard to track in the census. Except
when the last will and testament lists
us with the horses, furniture, pots and pans.

Yet when my brother turned fifty, I knew
I still wanted to be like him—
the way I did when we were kids.
Even when he put his cologne on
my favorite stuffed animal—a horse
named Lightning, who forever smelled
like a teenage boy masking the stench
of puberty. Even when he was punished
for sneaking out of the house and taking
our dad’s Pontiac to a party. I never

went to parties. Never climbed
out the window into the dog’s side yard

even when I wanted to. I wanted to
travel to China, land a high-paying job, sail
the Gulf of Mexico. I want to be brave
like my big brother, who was always good
at math and had the best handwriting;
who always knew what he wanted
and how to get it—and still does
for the most part. At fifty, he knows
there are some things we never get,
no matter how much we want them.

Echoes of the Easter Parade

I lay here miserable, after some hard days
in a warming, mediocre April, so far
deciding to sing to myself...
the tune to in my Easter bonnet
with all the frills upon it...(pause)
I just might write a sonnet...
Repeating the refrain
I finally sang myself to sleep
visualizing that I was pulling makeshift reins
hoping the donkey of Easter joy
Would follow & lunge forward
at my carrot.
But the tired, depressed mood
Lead to nothing
but a sort of rough n'tumble sleep
w./ bits & pieces of dreams
alluding to the day's work at the resort
busy doing maintenance and clean-up work
& the people w./ whom I usually rubbed shoulders
in my crew
when I finally experienced what Jung
defined as a Grand dream.
It was in full, vibrant color.
In this dream
my father came back from his heavenly & temporal location
in his late 40s, when he died young
of a sudden heart attack
provoked by his bi-polar condition
& the effects of medication

he'd been given at the psychiatric unit
when treated at Jacksonville's St. Luke's hospital.
He'd whispered in his Portuguese New England accent:
A command that I should follow:
"Remember, everything in moderation!"
To the dreamer, it was as eerie as Hamlet's Ghost scene.
Though he was dark-complected
short & robust
mild, but very intelligent & innovative
starting the first youth symphony
east of the Mississippi,
as I'd always remembered & missed him
as a growing child.

I woke up not joyful at Easter Parades
Or about going to Catholic Church Easter mass
(where some parishioners attend only once per year)
Yet somehow nourished in some strange way.

Mirrors

The vintage furniture store was going out of business. She didn't know why she stopped in, her apartment was too small and too cramped to fit anything else in it and she was meeting her roommate for dinner soon. Something bright caught her eye as she passed the window, made her double back and duck inside, the thunder rumbling outside, still threatening more rain. Then she saw it, *Magical Mirror \$150.00* handwritten on the tag. She walked up to the mirror smudged with years of fingerprints and rimmed in an ornate gold frame, and whispered,

“Mirror mirror, on the wall.”

Nothing happened.

Her reflection stayed the same. Her frizzy brown hair matted down from the rain she ran through that afternoon to get her boss a new coffee, one venti blonde Americano with two pumps of caramel and a splash of soymilk. The skin on her forehead was flaky and peeling from a sun burn she'd gotten while she was in the park reading with her dog. The days would be getting shorter soon and she wanted to take advantage of the sunshine while she still could. Her lips were full and defined, her cupid's bow was her favorite feature now. When she was younger, she hated her lips, they were too big and got too red too quickly when she'd bite down on them. But she'd learned quickly in college how to use them to her advantage – filling them in with a dark mauve, staining the skin and accentuating that bow before letting cupid's arrow pierce the heart of the guy across the counter at *Heartless*, the local bar, or at her marketing TA, Taylor, when she was a few points shy of a letter grade.

Her glasses were slowly slipping down the bridge of her nose, but they would catch like they always did at the little indent from a stupid teenage moment

of weakness. Kyle Henderson told her he didn't like girls with facial hair, pointedly looking at the wisps above her upper lip. She went home that afternoon, heartbroken and inconsolable, locking herself in the bathroom with disposable razors, bleach, and wax still in the plastic bag. The bone-dry razor was in her hand poised to make her face completely hairless when her mother's concerned voice and knock shocked her into making the first move. She saw her reflection, blood dripping down the bridge of her nose and onto her mouth, the bathroom counter, her sweatshirt, her bare toes curled into the white mat. Locking eyes with her reflection in the bathroom mirror, she started to sob.

In the *Magic Mirror*, she pushed her hair back behind her ears and wiggled them, her wide smile pushing them up and her frown pulling them back down. The rounded tops moved quickly, and she studied them for a moment. She never really thought about her ears. She had a girlfriend after she graduated college who loved them. She would nibble the tops, slowly moving down the lobe as they laid in bed curled together. She used to bite sharply at the left one during sex, making them sore for the next few days. A throbbing reminder of their time together she would feel when she pushed her hair behind her ears.

Now her eyes looked almost green with the dark clouds overhead blocking out the rays of sun that normally made her eyes look blue. She loved her eyes. They were just like her mothers. Changing with the light and every color she wore. When she was a child, she used to put on her mother's favorite grey sweater, soft and hand woven with care by her grandmother. The hem falling just above her knobby knees and sleeves spilling over past her fingertips, always getting caught on something, yanking her back momentarily but never stopping her from running down the halls. She would stare in the mirror at herself, swaying back and forth and watching her eyes slowly become the same beautiful green as her mother's anytime she wore the sweater. She would run to her mother's office, throwing open the French doors and demand her mother look at her eyes, to see how they glowed. Her mother always smiled, cupping her little-cheeks and squeezing.

“Why it looks like someone has the prettiest eyes in the world,” she would say.

“No mama, that’s you!”

“No baby. That’s us!” Her mother would respond before helping her roll the sleeves up.

She would find a place for the mirror.

One, Indivisible

On the cusp of sleep, perchance a dream, I met Me:
Tired,
battered,
bruised by life and a system that instigated
perpetual silence.
The nightmare punctured childhood memories,
muting our voice slowly, painfully,
until it could not be heard.

Her fingers reached for Me,
to transport Me into the past,
to confront it,
and I retreated, frightened of what I knew lay there,
like a predator encircling its prey in the darkness, quietly
waiting to pounce, succumb Me, devour Me.

She reached again, stretching,
but reluctantly, I withdrew.
The memories taunted Me,
luring Me into remembrances of a time I wished
to ignore, to forget, so I could live, happily.

She reached yet again, lovingly, and
I touched her fingers, closed my eyes.
Gunfire permeated my soul in
memories, formed in rapid-fire succession.
Each one hit its target—Me.
They grazed Me, festered a wound that was already there, long buried.
I squeezed my eyes tighter, like a door slamming shut, but they
overpowered Me.

Each memory wounded,
scarred,
an ironic remembrance of “*Dulce et decorum est*,”
but my body could not be sacrificed anymore.

Tired,
battered,
bruised by life,
I open my eyes,
and she is gone.
On the edge of sleep, I discover
we are no longer synecdochal.
We are one body, indivisible.
She was Me.
I was her.
I am now #MeToo,
with liberty and justice for all.



Ginna Wilkerson

Lost

Emily Rose Miller

Workshop Feedback as Letter to Self

Dear Emily,

I [redacted] loved you [redacted] the light [redacted] the dark, [redacted] the
image of you [redacted] a devastatingly beautiful story. Your [redacted]
[redacted] memories [redacted] gut [redacted] you [redacted]
[redacted] remembering what has happened [redacted] and [redacted] what [redacted] broke [redacted]
[redacted] you [redacted] into [redacted] piece s [redacted]
[redacted] Breaking up [redacted]
[redacted] made [redacted]
[redacted] us [redacted] darker [redacted] How did [redacted]
[redacted] this happen [redacted] ? [redacted] we didn't
see [redacted] the story for what it
was [redacted] You [redacted] really were [redacted]
strong [redacted] I thought [redacted] we [redacted]
[redacted] could try [redacted] again [redacted] I'm looking for [redacted] you.

Sincerely,

[redacted] e [redacted]

The Picture Book

The book is coquettish: bound by taupe leather with a sheet of white lace underneath that precedes the first page.

When I begin to turn the pages, I smile, seeing a throwback to my childhood. Glitter shines from the pages filled with words that speak of mall days: jewelry and treasure, of gauntlets and bracelets and crystallized pleasure. There are stories illustrated with color, blue skies that match blue-painted playgrounds, with their sunny flavor and lullabies; all the sort that feel new but oh so familiar.

Another page, jagged mountains that pop up from the book, reminding me of the Rocky Mountains and rolling betwixt them in a moving truck. Next page: the fragrance of bubblegum and vanilla, my favorite well-known scents with a hint of chemical imitation. Turn: chords from songs I know and love, with some mechanical interruption here and there that doesn't hurt the melodies.

Second to last page—a prince I'd seen years ago and am starting to get to know now; one that makes me wonder: *where has he been all my life?* One I'd only encounter at late night hours these days, who now stars in some of these pages' flowery sweet plays; the blue eyes and that shock of red hair that please me so fair and on which I've grown so keen— those sweet orbs of aquamarine!

Something makes me close the book before looking at the last page. Last few pages—blank—there is to be more of the story yet.

After all, for just a diary that has no pictures—only my scratchy handwriting—it has quite a way of showing my mind enough pictures for one day.

Internal Warfare

I recognize my destruction.
It is our own. We reach for the quiver,
to pelt arrows at our deepest parts
and tear out that which caused us
such misery. It is the only way forward.

Though we both know that's not true:
no one has to pin their old self to a firing squad
to start again. Our blood shouldn't be shed
to move past the wounds that shattered our reality.
But that isn't the only way forward.

I recognize my destruction.
It is devastation we share. But if I were to reach
inside, aiming down a shaft, to kill our innocence
before it could ever be corrupted. Go back in time...
I know, as you do, that salvation is meaningless.

And we both know the laws of physics
don't bend or break against the bowstring,
that whatever magic we believe in, they still oblige.
So, I ask you this time, would it be worth it?
Would you truly undo your life? Mine? If given a chance?

I recognize this destruction.
It is my own. I favor the cleave
of words to bows, and yet,
here we both are, long distance,
arrow nocked, string taut, taking pot shots
at our younger selves when history is carved in stone.

Paths of Golden Fates

I was asked once,
Why do you have so much yellow?
and I shrugged. What was there to say?
Another friend told me
his theory:
that the yellow was to fight the sadness,
the pain we all live through, how we
all find our way. But what good would that do?

It's not wrong. Yellow, bright,
brilliant, neon brings a smile to me
the way few things do. Even lazy
summer afternoons and the pitter-patter of kitten feet
don't hold a candle to a blazing flash of yellow.
Apollo himself is reaching down and dragging
you up and up to face the day his chariot brings

which conflicts with how I am: all navy blues
and deep teals, straying into light aqua
to break up the monotony of dark blue-green.
But hark! There! One blanket. One pillow.
One wall-scroll. One mouse.

It calls the eye like sailors parched from the
Sun-God's restless movement, as the doldrums
of color blend into the Atlantic, Mediterranean,
Caribbean, Balkan, and Gulf seas—

a yellow the color of the Golden Fleece.
The Nemean Lion. Excalibur. The Golden Apple. Gáe Buidhe.
All yellow to the point of touching divinity itself.
So maybe he was never wrong, that friend I knew
for such a short time, who, like so many depictions
of the Gods and Angels, walked into my life,
granted me wisdom all my own, and vanished
into the Elysian Fields or the eternal planes of Aaru.

Waldeinsamkeit

Waldeinsamkeit is a German word that refers to the feeling one has while being alone in the woods, usually a sublime or spiritual one.

Why am I so detached from my own body,
That I can smile without any signal from my neurotransmitters?
My mind's own makeup, a dark foreboding
Forest, invites only in the worst times.
The trees here are in misery,
Vultures lining their branches.
It is a land that God has created in anger.
Still as death.
I love it against my better judgement.
The dead leaves are a soft bed,
If only you'd lie down.
But I can't bring myself to sleep.
I'm just not tired.

Pinwheel

Florida dawn floods my kitchen
rose, indigo, vermillion. Sun lifts
above backyard's Japanese plum.
Early birds and butterflies flit
among plants, breakfasting before
summer heat hits. Daffodils, lilies,
baby's breath, in a flowered vase reflect
light on white walls in a riot of color.
Sky hung like a blue backdrop for tall pines
and live oaks that shade neighbors' yards.

I close my eyes, feel rivers
of light bathe my face, wonder
why this beauty was created
for me to see. Soul rises, called
up and out while feet feel cool tile.
Look down at my body immersed
in light, wife and kids in bed.
Higher my astral form rises,
harder to hover over house while
Earth rotates, flies through space,
sailing ship in a gale; my hands
grip kitchen table to tether wild
soul while our sun spins around
the Milky Way and galaxy races
toward universe's expanding edge.

Shaking, I force eyes open; soul rushes
back to body. Sunlight's yellow now,
coffee still hot, dog lying on floor. Only

cramped hands, white knuckles, prove
I saw my insignificance—and value. I stand
on Holy Ground. Remove shoes and socks,
search my yard for a burning bush.

Paige McBride

Below My Lips

There are no invisible lines
that we will not cross
when we hold hands
of peace, of love.

The red lips we both speak
from only know love love
even as a sun-lit-black
river of light of dark
flows at our feet.

Sunflowers begin to spring
from the mouths of our kisses,
out of our eyes as we walk
into the sunshine
of the earth.

You are loyal too, this I see.

This I know like I know
lily petals and rose water sit
below my lips
of love and seed.

Carlton Johnson

Wishful Profile

I am solvently inventive and sporadically special
I am looking for evening peace and morning skirmishes
I am a dread toaster, a good processor and a flashing machine
I am bees zooming with pollen
I am buds blooming in an apple orchard
I am a cold bitter wind on an infernally hot day and the starry clouds
on a pale moonlight night.
I am the well-wisher, the gentle-kisser, the lend-an-ear listener, the
melancholy mister.
I am a prayer, a hymn, a blessing, the final grace note.

I am the moniker of Heaven, the sentry of lost and stolen sentences
The forgetter of plum daisies and emerald grasses.

Inferno

The sun was on fire when I told my mom about her. I remember going for a walk before sending the text message. It had just rained, and gnats were out, flying up my nose and in my ears. The walk was supposed to be calming but the frustration kept bubbling. *What if she hates me? What if she doesn't want me to be her daughter anymore? Worst of all, what if she doesn't care?* Rachel reassured me so many times that it was going to be okay. Rubbing my arm up and down, holding me through panic attacks, taking me for drives when I couldn't breathe, repeating it like a mantra, a prayer; "it was going to be okay." *But what if it wasn't?* The thought was never leaving my head. It took seven? nine? ten? months before I got tired of the weight. And in the grand scheme of things, she was right. It was okay.

But, to me, it wasn't.

Things they don't tell you about coming out:

- Not being able to sleep for weeks after you tell your mom.
- Having to tell her over text because she wasn't answering your calls and you couldn't lie anymore.
- The paralyzing fear of posting that First Post on social media.
- No matter how many likes it gets, the never-ending questioning and fear of what people are gonna say and think.
- Who's gonna screenshot it to share it with their friends and say, *I knew it* or *look did you see* or *what a surprise* or *disgusting*.
- Crying yourself to sleep at 3 am when your girlfriend gently snores right next to you.

- The weight on your shoulders doesn't disappear overnight, instead it amplifies, and it feels like you're barely walking with a boulder weighing you down.
- Getting triggered by your girlfriend genuinely trying to give you a compliment, "*You look so gay,*" but it reminds you of something your siblings said to you as a kid, and you haven't heard from them in days.

The air was warm like newfound hope when I realized it didn't matter. We went away for the weekend to celebrate our one-year anniversary. She booked a hotel and dinner reservations and I got her a star map. We walked out to the dock, the sun bright and blinding, but we didn't care. The air was filled with specs of saltwater and we spent an hour ducking into little shops to find some relief from the heat. On the drive home, she pulled over into a *Dunkin Donuts* parking lot because the weather was too much. The skies were dark grey and they opened to heavy rain with no end in sight. Of course, she reassured me it was going to be fine and it would let up soon enough. Those twenty minutes in the parking lot felt like the rest of my life. It was safe and quiet—even though we were surrounded by noise, it was no longer *what if what if what if*.

Things I didn't expect after I came out:

- Having a move-in date for my first apartment and signing the lease with my girlfriend.
- Constantly pausing a cheesy rom-com because I couldn't handle how much I loved the main male and female characters when it never mattered before.
- Happily picking out furniture with my girlfriend and not being stared at while we tried out different beds and couches.
- Going to the theme park with my brothers and neither of them batting an eye when I held her hand.

- Getting free champagne from a hotel owner because it was our anniversary.
- The unbelievable happiness of being known.

It's a cloudy day and coming out is never a one-time thing. I can hide like the sun, be protected and unseen. But I want to be felt and known. There's the constant subjecting and exposing myself to be judged and ruined by everybody and nobody. But when she grabs my hand and squeezes it three times, my body is on fire and I am happy

Darek C. Baczewski

Looking Glass

Somewhere, there is a me looking at a you. Looking into each other's other faces, staring into each other's other eyes. In a world not this one, but this one. In a home not this one, but what this one could have been. Parallel to the me and the you, here and now, who have nothing to do with each other, whose chances have been expended, whose opportunities have dried up like a savannah Sahara or Arctic jungle. There's a me that died in the arms of a you and a you that died in the arms of a me. There's a version where I am you and you me, and the story went much the same as the me here with you there, except with that-me's twist counter to the other-you-over-there's eccentricity, yet with twice the electricity of the me here with here's you. In theory, there's a me looking at a you. A me in love with a you, and a you in love with me. It gives me comfort to know that somewhere amongst infinity there is such a me and a you, representing the me and you that could have been, might have been, wanted to be, here. It dulls the pain of the me here, and there, and there, who had no chance to be with a you there, or there, or here.

A Reflection

I hang a hand-threaded tapestry over
the mirror in the hall
the one I pass by every day
because its woven threads reflect more of me
than a mirror ever could
or should
because life is not limited to superficial things
like complexion and make
up
because silly daydreams like
perfect body shape
and eyebrows and (let's face it)
life
are myths
because a mirror is cold
but my tapestry is oh so warm
with the hugs I have received
the gentle burn of faith
the glowing embers of compliments
given and taken
of kindness
of warmth
of love
which are more
me
than anything else.
And my tapestry is not finished yet.



Victoria Dym

Cherub in Stone

sandhill review



Contributors' Notes

Susan Abercrombie is a graduate student pursuing her Master of Arts in Creative Writing at Saint Leo University. As an emerging writer, she has had work featured in both the Sandhill Review and the Hive Avenue Literary Journal. She currently resides in Key West, Florida where she is Saint Leo's Key West Center's academic advisor.

Rachel Andrews was born and raised in Florida. She is currently enrolled in Saint Leo University's MA in Creative Writing program specializing in Fiction and works in the International Admissions office helping students from all around the world come to our University.

Darek C. Baczewski, is a US Air Force Veteran. He earned his MFA in Creative Writing at the University of Tampa and teaches as an Adjunct English Professor at Saint Leo University. He is the first ever two-time winner of the University of Tampa's Tampa Bay Hotel/Plant Hall Beautiful-Weird-Cool-Spooky Old Place Writing Contest, in both Fiction and Nonfiction. He swears it's a thing.

Anne Barngrover (nonfiction editor) is the author of the poetry collection, *Brazen Creature*, published by The University of Akron Press in 2018 and a finalist for the 2019 Ohioana Award for Poetry. Her new poems are featured or forthcoming in *Boulevard*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Arts & Letters*, *Waxwing*, *Verse Daily*, and on the *Slowdown* podcast, curated by former US poet laureate Tracy K. Smith. Anne is an assistant professor of English and Creative Writing at Saint Leo University, where she is on faculty in the low-residency MA program in Creative Writing.

Gregory Byrd's latest chapbook, *The Name for the God Who Speaks*, won the 2018 Robert Phillips Prize from Texas Review Press. He has published poetry widely and taught poetry in Albania as a Fulbright Fellow. He's recently finished a WWI fighter pilot novel, *Where Shadow Meets Water*. Recent prose

appears in the *Baltimore Review* and in *Saw Palm*. Since 1990, he has taught writing at St. Petersburg College, Clearwater campus. He serves on the Board of the Florida Literary Arts Coalition.

Patricia Campion is Associate Professor of Global Studies and Sociology at Saint Leo University and a graduate of the MA program in Creative Writing at Saint Leo. Her poetry and nonfiction have been published in *The Sandhill Review*, *Soul-Lit Magazine*, *Three Line Poetry*, and other magazines. She is a member of the San Antonio (Florida) Writers Group.

Christine Cock lives in Florida surrounded by woods, hayfields, and sky. Her poetry focuses on natural world and has been included in a conservation exhibit at the Florida Natural History Museum. While working in Zoo Conservation she received her BA in Creative Writing from Eckerd College where she received the Writing Excellence Award. She was a runner-up for the Yellow Jacket Press Chapbook Prize and has been published in several journals and anthologies, most recently *Wildfire* and *Tiny Seed. Screams of Silence* by Vociferous Press honors victims of assault and proceeds go to their aid. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Janna Correa graduated Saint Leo University in 2019 with her Bachelor's in Advanced Literary Studies, but she is nowhere near having the "last word." Currently enrolled in Saint Leo's Creative Writing Master's program, she is fascinated by not only what makes great stories, but also how they are put together. When she isn't making homemade sweets, playing her guitar or keyboard, or tending to her plants, she loves practicing her writing craft to keep her writing—and her pencils—sharp.

Michael Correia was born in Sydney, Australia in 1946, to a Portuguese-American serviceman and an Australian war bride. He served in the Vietnam War as an Air Force hospital corpsman. He was a journalist for newspapers like *Pasco News* and *The Tampa Tribune*. He was a substitute teacher, a Florida prison Reading & Writing instructor, and an English Instructor at community colleges in the Tampa Bay area, including Saint Leo. He has published an epic historical poetry collection, *Some of America Traversed*. He's had his poems published in *The George Washington Review*, *The Sandhill Review*, *Cycle Press*, *Electronic Poetry Center*, *AR--LI-Jo online*, and

Barnstorm online. He teaches Creative Writing at Santa Fe College, Gainesville, FL.

Patrick Crerand (fiction editor) is an Associate Professor of English in the Department of Language Studies and the Arts. A member of the Saint Leo faculty since 2008, he received his Ph.D. in English and Creative Writing from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, his MFA in Fiction from Bowling Green State University, and his BA in English from The Ohio State University. His short stories have appeared in literary magazines such as *McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*, *Conjunctions*, *New Orleans Review*, *Ninth Letter*, *Indiana Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *Knee Jerk*, *Monkeybicycle*, among others. Two of his stories have been short-listed in *The Best American Nonrequired Reading* and *Best American Fantasy* anthologies. His creative nonfiction essays have appeared in *New Ohio Review*, *North American Review*, *The Collagist*, *Midway Journal*, and the *Tampa Bay Times*. Recently, Arc Pair Press published a collection of his stories entitled, *The Paper Life They Lead*.

Victoria Dym is a graduate of Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Clown College with a degree in Humility, a Bachelor of Arts, in Philosophy, from the University of Pittsburgh, and a Masters in Fine Arts, Creative Writing-Poetry from Carlow University. Her two poetry chapbooks, *Class Clown*, and *When the Walls Cave In* were published by Finishing Line Press in 2015 and 2018. Ms. Dym was cast for the *Risk! Live* from Orlando storytelling show and her story, "One Shot" was selected for the podcast. Her short story, "The Linzer Torte" was published in *The Scribe Magazine*, January 2020 issue. Victoria is currently submitting her third manuscript, *The Hatchet Sun*, for publication. She lives in Tampa Florida, where she hosts the annual Haiku Challenge, teaches poetry, storytelling and facilitates Laughter Yoga workshops. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Chris Flocken is a summa cum laude graduate of University College at the University of Maryland with a major in art history and a minor in English. She is also a graduate of Rollins College with a Master of Arts in Teaching. Chris is writing a memoir; she also writes short stories and poetry. Her poetry has been published in the Florida Writers Association's Collection in 2020 and in the Florida State Poets Association's Cadence in 2017, 2018, 2019, and

2020. Her photography has been published in the *Sandhill Review* in 2020. She lives in Orlando with her family.

Diana Geller Diana Geller has a B.A. in Psychology from Purdue University and an M.S. in Human Development from the University of Texas at Dallas. She was born in Florida and has lived in Massachusetts, Indiana, Texas, and Tennessee before returning to Florida in 2001. She is a former member of the SLU Writers' Circle and is desperately working on unblocking her inner writer so she can return soon. She lives near Tampa with her husband, sons, and one very bad dog.

Erika B. Girard is currently pursuing her M.A. in English and Creative Writing with a concentration in Poetry through SNHU. She graduated from Saint Leo University in Florida in 2019 with her B.A. in English Literary Studies and a minor in Hospitality Management. Originally from Rhode Island, she derives creative inspiration from her family, friends, faith, and fascination with the human experience. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *The Alembic*, *Delta Epsilon Sigma Journal*, *Edify Fiction*, *Wild Roof Journal*, and more.

Kaisha A. Girard is a graduate of Saint Leo University pursuing her Master's in English and Creative Writing through Southern New Hampshire University. She has had her work accepted to *Sandhill Review*, *Ember Chasm Review*, *Dots Publications*, and *Draw Near*, among others. A native Rhode Islander, Kaisha loves reading, writing, and correctly guessing *Jeopardy!* questions and is inspired by her faith, her family, her friends, and the world around her. "The Vine and the Branches" was first published in *Draw Near's* 2021 *Blessings & Curses*.

Marissa Glover lives in Florida, where she teaches at Saint Leo University and serves as co-editor of *Orange Blossom Review* and a senior editor at *The Lascaux Review*. Marissa's work appears in *First Things*, *Rust + Moth*, *SWWIM Every Day*, and *Okay Donkey*, among other journals. Her poem "The World Asks Too Much of Mothers," published in *W hale Road Review*, is a 2020 Best of the Net Finalist. Marissa's full-length poetry collection, *Let Go of the Hands You Hold*, was published by Mercer University Press in early 2021. You can follow Marissa on Twitter @_MarissaGlover_.

Randy Goggin lives in central Florida, where he works as a Park Ranger for Pinellas Parks and Conservation Resources. He holds a Bachelor's degree in biology, and has been fascinated with ecology, humanity's fragmented relationship with nature, and the literary arts for most of his life. He has been a volunteer for the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Peter M. Gordon won the 2019 Thomas Burnett Swann Poetry prize given by the Gwendolyn Brooks Writer's Association of Florida. Over 100 of his poems have been published in various print and online journals, including *Sandhill Review*, *Slipstream*, and the *Journal of Florida Literature*. He's authored two collections: *Two Car Garage* and *Let's Play Two: Poems About Baseball*. He teaches in Full Sail University's Film Production MFA program and earned an MFA from Carnegie-Mellon and BA from Yale. He is an alum of the Sandhill Writer's Retreat.

Renee Gould has always had an interest in photography and could always be counted on to have a camera on hand to capture life's most precious moments, even before phones had cameras. The artist's passion lies with photographing animals and nature.

Carlton Johnson is a former math teacher. A Winter Park resident for the past 14 years, he is originally from Baltimore Maryland. He has been published in recent anthologies of the Florida State Poets Association. He is the winner to the 2020 Thomas Burnett Swann Prize in Poetry. His poem "Tour of Flanders" was included in the 2014 K9 for Warriors Veterans' Event. His poetry has appeared in *The Provo Canyon Review*, *The Sandhill Review*, *Revelry* and *Breakfast Poetry*. He is a member for the past several years of the Florida State Poets Association and an alum of the Sandhill Writer's Retreat.

Emily Kochanski graduated Saint Leo University in 2018 with a BA in English and is now a full-time employee with the university. Whether she's writing personal poetry or short works of fiction, she always strives to write from the heart. When she is not putting the pen to paper or burying her nose in a book, she is pursuing her dream of becoming an actress. Keep your eyes glued to the screen (both big and small) because you just might see her someday.

Tameka Limehouse is a Florida native and an alum of Saint Leo University. She completed her Master of Arts in Theology in 2020 and

moved abroad as an ESL teacher. She has attended one of the many Sandhill Writers Retreats. She spends time furthering her studies in spirituality as well as writing, contributing her stories, artwork and photographs to various publications and alternate outlets. She hopes to one day publish her own book about her life and adventures. She says, “When I am in nature, I find peace and I find rest.”

Andrea McBride was born and raised in Ohio and now lives in Wesley Chapel, Florida with her husband and their two teenage children. Besides writing poetry, she studies and teaches piano, enjoys learning violin, and going on long runs on her neighborhood trail. She has participated in several Sandhill Writers’ Retreats, and has had poems published *NFSPS Encore*, *Odet*, *Alba*, *One Sentence Poems* and other print and online literary journals.

Paige McBride is an artist, a poet and a librarian who lives in Dunedin, Florida. She earned a BA in English (CRW), a Master’s degree in Library and Information Science, and is currently earning a Master’s in Creative Writing (Poetry) at Saint Leo University. Her poems have appeared in the *Straylight Literary Magazine*, *Saint Katherine Review*, *West Trade Review*, *Tulane Review*, *Heartwood Literary Magazine*, *American Chordata*, *Sunset Liminal Press*, *aaduna*, *Literary Juice*, *Burningword Literary Journal*, and *The Wayfarer* among others.

Chantelle MacPhee is an Associate Professor of English at Saint Leo University with a specialization in 18th Century Poetry and Shakespeare. She has many articles published in her field of study, but this is her first submission to a creative writing peer-reviewed journal. Chantelle loves the way language can convey a vast array of themes, images, symbols, emotions. Poetry is what she loves most of all the genres, and her submission alludes to two very different authors whose work seemed appropriate to reference with this topic.

Cath Mason is part of the literary community at the University of South Florida Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI-USF). She teaches courses in literature and poetry, leads a shared interest group “Write Time for Poets,” and twice a month she hosts a poetry discussion group for 25-30 explorers of poems. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writer Retreat.

Cris Michel holds a degree in History, and is pursuing an MA in Creative Writing at Saint Leo. She says, “I never stopped reaching for that

goal of writing to tell a story to others. Despite many medical issues, I have managed to maintain my love of travel which has influenced my writing. I also have deep appreciation for my Scottish, Irish, and Syrian heritage which led me to research the myths and folk tales of those peoples and cultures. These many, diverse, things have helped inspire, shape, and influence my written works—as well as how I view myself. I try to focus my energy not on the negatives of my past experiences, or any current struggles, but on the positives in my day-to-day life.”

Emily Rose Miller is an emerging writer and a recent graduate of Saint Leo University where she earned a BA in English with a specialization in creative writing. Her work has been published in *Sad Girls Club Lit*, *Red Cedar Review*, *Inklette Magazine*, *The Dandelion Review*, *Sandhill Review* and is forthcoming in *Parbelion Literary Magazine* and *The Dollhouse Magazine*.

Carol Ann Moon is a full professor in the Daniel A. Cannon Memorial Library at Saint Leo University. Moon has taught library research to Lions everywhere for the past 20 years. In 2017, she received her MFA in Creative Writing (Poetry in the Expanded Field) from Stetson University in Deland, Florida. She and her dog Denver love to travel and love to make soups during this pandemic.

Eileen “Mish” Murphy just published her third book of poetry, the collection *Sex & Ketchup* (Concrete Mist Press Feb. 2021). *Fortune Written on Wet Grass* (Wapshott Press April 2020) was her first full length collection. Her second book *Evil Me* was published in August 2020 (BloodPudding Press). She’s had more than 100 individual poems published in journals, including *Sandhill Review*. Mish is also a visual artist and illustrated the children’s book *Phoebe and Ito are dogs* written by John Yarnus (2019). She is Associate Poetry Editor for *Cultural Weekly* magazine and teaches at Polk State College.

Diane Neff is a former professor and college dean as well as a former US Navy officer and now serves as a librarian in the Seminole County (FL) Public Library System. Her poetry has appeared in *Encore*, anthology of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, and *Cadence*, anthology of the Florida State Poets Association.

Cari Oleskewicz is a writer and poet from the Tampa area. Her work has been included in a number of print and online journals, including *Literary*

Orphans, The Collapsar, The Fourth River, Mojave River Review, Red Coyote, Josephine Quarterly, and Lime Hawk Review. Her poem “I Am the First to Hold a Virus” was recently included in ART IN THE TIME OF COVID, an anthology published by San Fedele Press to benefit Doctors without Borders. She is currently at work on a memoir about caregiving and family. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Elaine Person, writer, instructor, editor, speaker, performer, and photographer has writing included in Random House’s *A Century of College Humor*, Florida Writers Association’s collections, *The Florida Writer* magazine, *Sandhill Review*, *Not Your Mother’s Book*, *Poets of Central Florida*, Haikuniverse.com, *Encore* from National Federation of State Poetry Societies, *The Five-Two* online, and Florida State Poets Association’s annual anthologies titled *Cadence*, which she co-edits. Her photography is also published. Elaine won the *Saturday Evening Post* limerick contest and has won awards for her writing. Elaine teaches Writing to Art at an art school. She writes “Person”alized poems and stories for all occasions for gifts. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Evelyn Ann Romano’s debut chapbook, *Ripe* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2019. She has been published in numerous journals and has won several awards for her poetry. She lives in New Tampa with her husband, Albert. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Gianna Russo (Editor-in-Chief, poetry editor) is Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing at Saint Leo University, where she teaches in the undergraduate and graduate programs and directs the Sandhill Writers Retreat. Russo is the author of the full-length poetry collections *One House Down* (Madville Publishing, 2019) and *Moonflower* (Kitsune Books, 2011), winner of a Florida Book Awards bronze medal, Florida Publishers Association Presidents’ Award silver medal, and finalist for an Eric Hofer First Horizons award. She is also the author of two chapbooks, *Blue Slumber* (YellowJacket Press, 2006) and *The Companion of Joy* (Green Rabbit Press, 2014).

M. A. Sinnhuber’s chapbook, *The Leaving Field*, was published by MadBooks in 2013. A member of Madwomen in the Attic at Carlow University in Pittsburgh, PA since 2004, she has been published in the *Voices*

from the *Attic*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *Vox Populi*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Sandhill Review* and *Pittsburgh City Paper*. A life-long Pittsburgh resident, now in Clearwater, FL, she is working on a full-length manuscript, *Body of Stones*. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Brennan Smith is a senior student at Saint Leo University, enrolled as a Creative Writing major. He enjoys writing in every genre, putting the most work into fiction and poetry. His works touch on the recesses of the mind, usually focusing on monsters and mental illness.

Jimmy Sutman is a graduate student at Saint Leo's University pursuing an M.A. in Creative Writing. He lives in Youngstown, Ohio where he runs a business taking care of adults with disabilities. He lives on an alpaca farm and raises peacocks in honor of his heroine, Flannery O'Connor.

Kate Sweeney's chapbook, *Better Accidents*, was published by YellowJacket Press in 2009. Her book, *Worrisome Creatures*, is forthcoming from Madville Publishing (2022). Her work has also appeared in *Best New Poets 2009*, *Meridian*, *Rattle*, *Tampa Review*, and *Poet Lore*, among others. She teaches English for Saint Leo University and creative writing for the non-profit, Keep St. Pete Lit.

Gracie Elizabeth Swind is an aspiring writer, poet, and novelist attending Saint Leo University; as of this publication, she is a senior English major with a creative writing specialization and a minor in theater. She is a devout fan of all things animated and her current career goal is to intern with DreamWorks Animation in the summer after graduation, during which time she plans to convince them to hire her. She will graduate from Saint Leo in May 2021.

Cheryl A. Van Beek's work has appeared previously in *Sandhill Review*, *Odet*, *Poeming Pigeon*, *River Poets Journal*, and the Burgert Brothers anthology, *Chasing Light*. She is grateful to have won first place for Poetry in Odet/Safety Harbor's 2018 Romeo Lemay Contest. Her poetry has also been awarded prizes by The National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Florida State Poets and Creative Writing Ink. She is a member of New River Poets, a chapter of the Florida State Poets Association. She lives with her wonderful husband and their exceptional cat in Wesley Chapel. She volunteers as a Master Gardener and is deeply inspired by Florida's unique beauty. Besides

the transformative power of writing, she is passionate about nature, food, art, photography and travel. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Janet Watson has been a frequent contributor of poems and short stories to *Sandhill Review*. A longtime resident of Wesley Chapel, she worked for the Pasco County School District and wrote for several community newspapers for many years. She has published a book-length collection of poetry, *Eyes Open, Listening*, as well as several chapbooks, and her poems have been published in numerous journals and anthologies. She is a member and past-president of New River Poets, a chapter of the Florida State Poets Association, and for twelve years chaired a statewide student poetry contest.

Krystal “Gypsy” Orellano Weldon is a Tampa native, spoken word poet, writer, and educator. She is pursuing an M.A. in Creative Writing from Saint Leo. Krystal is known around the Tampa Bay community as an open mic artist, has been in features such as Pinot & Poetry: A Toast to Herstory and got her start at the USF Poets. Krystal is slowly transpiring as a creative nonfiction writer, being published in St. Petersburg College’s newspaper, and was the University of Westminster runner-up winner for the 2017 Mental Health Poetry competition. Currently, Krystal is working on a novel called *The Lover’s Passion Lounge*.

Madison Whatley is a Saint Leo alum and first-year MFA student at Florida International University.

Ginna Wilkerson has been writing almost from the time she could read, loving everything about stories in all forms. She has two published novels as well as two poetry collections and several academic articles. Ginna currently lives and works in Tampa, Florida. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Susan Abercrombie

Rachel Andrews

Darek C. Baczewski

this is me

Gregory Byrd

Patricia Champion

Christine Cock

this is me

Janna Correa

Michael Correia

Victoria Dym

Chris Flocken

THIS IS ME

Diana Geller

Erika Girard

Marissa Glover

Randy Goggin

Peter M. Gordon

Renee Gould

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Carlton Johnson

Kaitlyn Kenny

Emily Kochanski

Tameka Limehouse

Andrea McBride

Paige McBride

Chantelle MacPhee

Cath Mason

Cris Michel

Emily Rose Miller

Carol Ann Moon

Eileen "Mish" Murphy

Diane Neff

this is me

THIS IS ME

THIS IS ME

THIS IS ME

this is me

Cari Oleskewicz

Elaine Person

Evelyn Ann Romano

M. A. Sinnhuber

Brennan Smith

Jimmy Sutman

Kate Sweeney

THIS IS ME

THIS IS ME

Gracie Elizabeth Swind

Cheryl A. Van Beek

Janet Watson

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Krystal "Gypsy" Orellano Weldon

Madison Whatley

Ginna Wilkerson