

# sandhill review



VOLUME 23:  
THE WORLD AROUND

US





*Suzanne S. Austin-Hill*

In This Together



# sandhill review

Volume 23 • 2022

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

sandhill review is produced by the students and faculty of the Saint Leo University Department of Language Studies and the Arts and published annually.

The editors invite electronic submissions only of poetry, prose, artwork, and photography between August and December to [sandhillreview@gmail.com](mailto:sandhillreview@gmail.com).

Copyright © 2022 Sandhill Review



## Table of Contents

POETRY		FICTION
NONFICTION		GRAPHICS

**Front Cover Photo by Patricia Campion**

*Cholita Checking the News*

**Back Cover Photo by Patricia Campion**

*Afternoon Contemplation in La Paz*

**Inside Front Cover Photo by Suzanne S. Austin-Hill**

*In This Together*

**Inside Back Cover Photo by Suzanne S. Austin-Hill**

*Life or Death*

**Gianna Russo**

*Foreword*..... ix

**Avery Allen**

*U-Turn*..... 1

**Cari Oleskewicz**

*Parulas in the Understory*..... 4

*Katherine Writes*..... 6

**Erika Girard**

*Chaos, Blurred*..... 7

**Rick Campbell**

*Big Sur*..... 9

**Mariana Navarrete Villegas**

*Since I left Mexico it is painful to stay anywhere* ..... 10

*When time stops it lets people from the future travel to the present*..... 12

*I met my neighbor at the airport after living next to each other for three months* 14

**Patricia Campion**

*Zebra Crossing in La Paz*..... 16

<b>Edith Freeman</b>	
<i>An Unexpected Awakening</i> .....	18
<b>Rodney Owen</b>	
<i>Patrol</i> .....	19
<b>William Mitchell</b>	
<i>The Symphony</i> .....	20
<b>Janet Watson</b>	
<i>Global Crisis</i> .....	21
<b>Patrick Crerand</b>	
<i>Elegy for a Hatchet</i> .....	22
<b>Amy Stasio</b>	
<i>Love Stays at Home while the Brain Is on Vacation</i> .....	25
<b>Emmalee Welch</b>	
<i>a hero to the world and a hero to me</i> .....	26
<b>Julie Garisto</b>	
<i>My relatives' Italy is not my Italy.</i> .....	27
<b>Derora Williams</b>	
<i>Daddy-O, I need to come sit on your porch...</i> .....	30
<b>Kaisha Girard</b>	
<i>Five More Minutes</i> .....	31
<b>Mary Missouri</b>	
<i>Villanelle of My Oyster World</i> .....	33
<b>Alisa Azzarelli</b>	
<i>All the Way Back</i> .....	34
<b>Malia Roberts</b>	
<i>A Desolate Forthcoming</i> .....	36
<b>Cheryl A. Van Beek</b>	
<i>Resilience</i> .....	37
<i>To My Friends during the Quarantine</i> .....	38
<b>Paige McBride</b>	
<i>Flesh Specks of Mourning</i> .....	40
<b>Malia Roberts</b>	
<i>The Unfamiliar Pandemic</i> .....	41
<b>Suzanne S. Austin-Hill</b>	
<i>The Corona-cation Chronicles: Days Nineteen to Twenty-Four</i> .....	42

<b>Emmalee Welch</b>	
<i>It'll Never Happen to Me</i> .....	44
<b>Steven Richardson</b>	
<i>The Best Medicine</i> .....	45
<b>Carol Ann Moon</b>	
<i>Snippets of Novel Virus Texts to/From Me (March 2020–July 2020)</i> .....	47
<b>Derora Williams</b>	
<i>Isn't it ironic</i> .....	50
<b>Nigia Morris</b>	
<i>Six</i> .....	51
<i>Stages of Change</i> .....	52
<b>Janna Correa</b>	
<i>Read/Look</i> .....	53
<b>Cris Michel</b>	
<i>Who Needs Science Fiction when We Live in a Time Loop?</i> .....	55
<b>Emmett Ferree</b>	
<i>Childhood Obsessions</i> .....	57
<i>Two Truths and a Lie</i> .....	58
<b>James Viggiano</b>	
<i>Dark Parking Lots</i> .....	59
<b>Sonja Jean Craig</b>	
<i>Inviting</i> .....	61
<b>Kate Sweeney</b>	
<i>Burning First Street</i> .....	62
<i>Falling from the Sky</i> .....	64
<b>Janna Correa</b>	
<i>International Smile Exchange</i> .....	66
<b>Angelica Molina</b>	
<i>Arroz con Habichuela</i> .....	67
<b>Elaine Person</b>	
<i>Paris and Beyond</i> .....	70
<b>Kathryn Duncan</b>	
<i>A World of Curiosity</i> .....	73
<b>Marie Gann</b>	
<i>A Midsummer Day's Dream</i> .....	76

<b>Briana Rodibaugh</b>	
<i>The World Around Us</i> .....	77
<b>Kenrinique Morris</b>	
<i>Rebel</i> .....	78
<b>Avery Allen</b>	
<i>No Longer in the World of “We”</i> .....	80
<b>Diane Neff</b>	
<i>Move On</i> .....	81
<b>Paige McBride</b>	
<i>Immaculate Gallop</i> .....	82
<b>Kate Sweeney</b>	
<i>Slam</i> .....	83
<b>Patricia Champion</b>	
<i>The Vigil in My Office</i> .....	84
<b>Peter Gordon</b>	
<i>Sober Six Weeks</i> .....	85
<b>Rachel Chitofu</b>	
<i>Hoarfrost</i> .....	86
<b>Peter Gordon</b>	
<i>Live Oak, Late August, Orlando</i> .....	87
<b>James Schellenberg</b>	
<i>How Far Away</i> .....	88
<b>Diane Neff</b>	
<i>Impact</i> .....	91
<b>Rodney Owen</b>	
<i>View of an Old Mill Town in the Carolina Sandhills</i> .....	92
<b>James Viggiano</b>	
<i>Spiders Conspire</i> .....	93
<b>Randy Goggin</b>	
<i>Coyotes at Dawn</i> .....	94
<b>Sonja Jean Craig</b>	
<i>Cypress Knees</i> .....	97
<i>Green Swamp</i> .....	98
<b>Eileen Murphy</b>	
<i>Somewhere in Central Florida's Wetlands</i> .....	99



**Lola Haskins**

*The Trail* (2020)..... 101

*Luxury* (2020)..... 104

**Christine Cock**

*Autumn Is Verbose*..... 105

*Chipmunk Counting Coup in Colorado*..... 106

*The Truth*..... 107

*Travel Sketch*..... 108

**Janet Watson**

*Beachcombing at Sunset*..... 109

**Sean Sexton**

*Color of the World Sestina*..... 110

**Our Community**

*Contributors' Notes*..... 112



Gianna Russo

## Foreword

### “The World Around Us”

**T**he World—so enormous a place and such an abstraction that most of us can hardly envision it. Yet that is what the poets, writers, and photographers whose works appear in this year’s issue have attempted to do. Photos document places as far-flung as the streets of La Paz and as close to home as the Green Swamp of Florida. Prose pieces grapple with the hardships of the pandemic and are balanced by poems that offer antidotes. Private moments echo public encounters.

It’s easy for us to focus on the World’s violence, inequities, losses, and evils when these dominate both the news and social media. Yet here we find hope, light touches, small goodnesses, and big hearts. Altogether, this issue—like all our issues—is about our common humanity. Enjoy this look at “The World Around Us.” You might even end up agreeing with Louis Armstrong: *It’s a wonderful world.*

Gianna Russo, Editor-in-Chief, Spring 2022



## U-Turn

**M**y Granddaddy and I are watching yet another protest on the television this Sunday afternoon after this morning's church service they deliberately woke me up for. I'm not saying I don't need to go, but waking up that early after a night out with the boys is not something I look forward to.

Anyways, the people are protesting this time outside of the old state capitol in Springfield, Illinois. A young African American boy, about my age, named De'Andre

Stewart, was shot yesterday on Jefferson Street. Officer supposedly stopped him for an illegal U-turn, told the kid to exit his SUV, thinking he had a gun, kid told him he ain't have no gun, arguments started and one thing led to another. Kid ended up at gunpoint, he was told to put his hands up and walk backwards, as he's walking backwards something falls out of his jacket pocket, officer opens fire shooting De'Andre seven times in the back, officer runs up to him once he realizes he's not moving, looks beside his lifeless body at the object that fell, it was a wave brush.

Granddaddy says I better be careful when I go out with my boys, says, "Those officers are always looking for a reason." I've been stopped before, but I ain't wanna worry him like that, so I never told him. As we keep watching De'Andre Stewart's protest on old-fashioned TV, I can hear Kim Jackson, the head of the AAJ program here, say they're having another protest same time tomorrow. Soon as they say that my phone goes off. The "Gang" group chat notification pops up on my screen. My boy Christian texted all of us:

"u guys hear abt that boy that got shot 4 carrying a wave brush? I'm so tired of this man, when does it stop fr. we out tmrw or wat?"

Now my second buddy, Marco, responded to Christian's text: "bro. u do know that they shot him for just carrying his brush. what do you think those people would do w our black asses? Idk abt y'all but home sounds like the place for me, for a lil' bit."

Christian now responds back, he's always been the go-getter out of the three of us, never backing down and to be fair to Marco, that has gotten him in a handful of trouble when we were boys. "stop being so scary. u want them to get u nxt? we have to do something or who knows one of us could be the nxt De'Andre Stewart. ya'll in or what?"

This time I respond: "i think we should go. something about this doesn't sit right with me, and honestly i think it'd be good for us."

Marco gives in: "Alright but when one of u end up on the news I'm not wearing ur shirt."

\* \* \*

We left this afternoon, Christian, Marco, and myself. I had woke up early this morning, though, a little worried about what we would actually see outside once we got to the Old capitol, I've seen all over the news about the police tear-gassing and beating the people protesting, and I would be lying if I said I wasn't nervous, but right now under these current circumstances it's either protest or die over something as small as a U-turn.

As we pulled up to the Old State Capitol people were already outside holding signs with things written on them like: "Justice 4 De'Andre" and "Don't Make Me Next" in big black drawn out letters. Something about this kick-started a twinge of fire in me, like I was supposed to be here. As we parked and got out we were met with others around our age that came to do the same. They handed us some of their extra signs for us to hold up, and we all start to gather around as Kim Jackson starts to speak through a megaphone so we all can hear her. She yells through the phone: "We are doing what De'Andre Stewart couldn't today, we are speaking up for our

continually mistreated and forgotten African-American sisters and brothers, we are standing up for our ancestors that died at the hands of the white man, we are shouting for our freedom, and most importantly we are fighting for our children we will someday have to leave behind in this racist-built foundation we call America.”

As Kim said these things the vibration from the crowd was infectious, the way they fed off her words like a Sunday dinner made by my Granny. It was like nothing I had felt before and it did nothing but stimulate me further. For the first time I felt like more than just the everyday black kid, and it even unsettled me to think that that was De'Andre's thought process before he was murdered. Understanding this I knew I had to do something more than this protest because afterwards I couldn't just be the average everyday black kid knowing that one day could be my last, over something as simple as a U-turn.

## Parulas in the Understory

She tells me what she sees in Albania:  
Sharp caves growing from gem-colored  
water. Americans admitting travel mistakes.  
Boats from Brindisi. Beaches called Jala,  
Gjipe. Himara. Donkeys pacing.  
Goat meat between teeth.

She describes her last slip into the sea -  
salt on her skin, something in her chest -  
bellows. The line where Ionian meets Adriatic.  
Pebbles between her toes. In Florida we have no rock,  
it is all soft, sinking.

She says she remembers.

Passion fruit seeds in her cocktail but we were  
never drinkers. Someone fixed a glass of something  
wet and sweet.

The sheep, she says, are repetitious in their complaints.  
Nuts plop from trees into cakes and mouths. Figs  
everywhere, open and sticky.

Waiting I know is dangerous. My categories.  
My birds. My buntings and my tanagers.  
My projects. My parulas in the understory.

A woman reading coffee cups described us  
walking a circle, moving in opposite  
directions until...until.



In Tirana, she sees bomb shelters, heavy  
footprints from recent pasts. She worries  
I may not be well and asks about my sleep.  
I try to tell her I have stalled. I am stuck.  
She will have to make a full circle to reach  
me; a complete 360 like the osprey  
under which I stand and start to shake.

## Katherine Writes

that she longs for travel knowing I am lost  
without my own unwary  
voyages. It has been too long since I bounced  
on a hard shell suitcase, willing it to zip.  
Too long since I lingered on a train platform  
distracted by pigeon songs and smoke from old  
men while wondering if this was the Regional  
to Grossetto. My last lunch in a restaurant  
was risotto stained with beets and salty  
artichokes fried to the color of camel.  
Katherine and I distract ourselves with stories  
from before. We tell of haunted wedding  
gowns in boxes under beds and what happens  
to children and cities like Paris and Florence.  
I could tell her about the Balkans, where violence  
is hushed, where I ate goat ribs and cheese topped  
with honey. We can imagine mist rising  
from the Loire Valley, olives in Umbria, fish  
hot dogs in Reykjavik. We can long for what will  
come again or maybe we can be still and see  
the roots are digging in—holding us not as traps  
but as instruments of balance.

## Chaos, Blurred

You hear a pin drop  
overseas  
in a Chinese city you've never heard of  
a pin on that map you haven't looked at  
since 7th grade geography  
a map of countries you never visited  
and places you never thought about seeing  
but now, you see, the world  
is looking and seeing and broadcasting  
something *happening*  
a new disease  
illness—plague—  
that spreads easily but won't travel  
here because here is half a world  
away and there are barriers to protect  
you. Right?

You watch the news with a sick  
stomach watching the sick and suddenly  
in a small blur on the left-hand corner  
of the screen in front of the chaos you see  
something. At first it looks  
like a smudge but soon you realize  
that the smudge on the news coverage is moving  
and smudges on news coverage don't move  
so you wait and wait until finally  
it comes into focus and you smile.  
It's a butterfly  
drifting lazily on the wind and it soon flutters

out of the picture off the screen  
into your mind into your ear  
into your living room and you frown.  
You've imagined it. It's nowhere.

Then it flaps into the picture once more  
half a world away  
its wings beating only once  
before it's gone.

*Rick Campbell*

## Big Sur

Butterflies in the brown grass  
of the swale look for the sun.  
Cold is not their best of all worlds.

It is late in their lives, fall. They  
are almost still as wildflowers. I  
walk miles of road waiting for a ride,

the ocean blue and breaking  
below the sky. I pick one up,  
monarch, maybe, I'm never sure.

Fooled by mimicry like birds.  
I think of Eberhart's wasps, how  
he warmed them to near flying

then cooled them again. This one  
I wonder, will it warm in my hands  
and fly, grateful for my gift? It

twitches in my hand, then the wind  
blows it away. It's easy to forget  
we are not gods. Four cars

and a camper ignore my thumb.  
The wind will only grow colder.

Mariana Navarrete Villegas

## Since I left Mexico it is painful to stay anywhere

Roots are growing out from my ankles  
and they are tying down my feet  
here, and I want to  
leave.

I am scared of deciding  
where I should stay forever,  
or where should I escape from,  
because for me staying does not exist  
I got to keep moving

The roots have tattooed to my toes  
*m i e d o s*  
each letter for each toe  
devouring each nail,  
making it difficult to run to  
escape.

*Miedo*  
of calling home the palms of my hands  
and not knowing where the lines  
drawn on them  
take me,  
*miedo*  
of staying and never coming back  
to me,  
*miedo*  
to accept that I am not anymore  
from my hometown, and maybe

I hate where I am now  
and I will never belong where I am going,  
*miedo*  
of evaporating in a foreign corner  
alone,  
after staying too much  
*miedo* of realizing I belong to the only  
place I love  
maybe the only place I would  
come back to, the only place  
I cannot stay.

I am constantly leaving even  
if I know I will miss everything  
of these places, of these people.

It is painful to take out the roots  
from each place I have left  
*but I do it anyway.*

Mariana Navarrete Villegas

When time stops  
it lets people from the future  
travel to the present

Time stopped  
for ten minutes that Tuesday  
afternoon at the Departures bench when  
I was reading Borges, taking a breath, no mask,  
eating an apple,  
when a woman carrying a backpack came out  
from the sliding doors  
with a facemask hanging from her right arm  
and eating an apple.  
She sat next to me.  
She had short gray hair,  
no makeup, and long golden earrings.  
*They could have been mine,*  
*some years,*  
I thought.  
We had the same nail color,  
*sky blue.*  
Together we saw  
a couple crying, trying to say goodbye  
kissing seven times,  
kids hugging their grandparents  
not knowing if it might be the last time.  
*We both sighed.*  
She asked me if I like to read  
as she pulled out a book from Borges.  
*We both laughed.*



Her partner arrived and held her hand.  
She left and gracefully said goodbye,  
I kept reading and wondered  
if I could be her in fifty years  
or I might be her,  
who knows what time  
does to reality?

*Mariana Navarrete Villegas*

I met my neighbor at the airport  
after living next to each other  
for three months

What are the odds that I found you there?  
Thanks to that fortunate event I have started to like your eyes.

In what world are coincidences precise?  
So far you have been the most beautiful of mine.

From all the places we could have first  
met and talked, our pathways met at the airport--

not taking the same stairs,  
walking to the same side of the building,

opening our neighboring doors,  
not there.

I found you at the boarding gate  
and you smiled to me fixing your glasses

because after three months for sure  
you recognized my hazel eyes,

and you were so tender and easy to talk to.  
I genuinely regret not meeting you before.

Because now that I have,  
the days are lighter, and softer.

The 'good mornings' as we're walking down  
the same stairs, and endless conversations

on how to fix the world, like you  
fixed your glasses, are delightful.

Here we are, with rivers of chances,  
and odds that can occur in our lives,

with the coincidence that your eyes did smile  
to me at the gate, before starting to board the plane.

*Patricia Campion*

## Zebra Crossing in La Paz

When you tugged lightly at my jacket sleeve  
So lightly I thought I'd imagined it  
Until I looked down to see your chiseled sunburnt face smiling up at me  
    Did you know or suspect  
On this grey Bolivian afternoon  
On the edge of the sidewalk the street slimy from the autumn drizzle  
Encased in buildings that screamed the names of Western corporations at us  
While we watched the taxis and buses thundering by  
    Blue green white orange yellow flashes  
You tiny wrinkled grey-haired woolen-skirted shawled and hatted  
Bent in two by the load tied to your back in a striped blanket  
    Me wrapped in blue and grey over my pale skin  
    Light-colored hair tucked inside my jacket hoping to blend in  
In a crowd of uniformed kids freshly released from the nearby schools  
Of businessmen purposefully looking busy  
Of shopping housewives of idle elders  
    Did you know  
When you spoke to me in a language I didn't know  
    When I spoke back those few words of Spanish to you  
Not caring if we'd understand each other's words  
Because we were both pointing at the other side of the street  
Across the fast-moving river of steel and smoke  
Because you nodded and kept smiling at me

Did you know  
As we set out for the other side  
Once traffic had hushed momentarily at the light  
Once your small brown hand lay securely on my folded arm  
The other gripping your cane  
Did you know that I was a stranger to this land  
As we crossed in silent companionship  
Like two old friends who no longer need words  
As I held back my stride to match your frail shuffle  
As I resisted the current of the hurried crowd  
As we reached the sidewalk again and your hand released me  
Did you know  
When you thanked me with one more of your wide smiles  
And a few more incomprehensible words of Aymara  
As I bid you good day in Castellano  
Did you know  
That by trusting me to bring you safely over  
By choosing me over those kids businessmen or housewives  
You helped me cross over too

*Edith Freeman*

## An Unexpected Awakening

Nigeria's sun  
Dawned while I watched an aging  
Man lift his baton,  
*He* watched a young flute band's march  
Which quickened the large crowd's hearts.

Long years before my  
African quest he'd mourned youths  
Kidnapped by terrorists.  
Some were freed, some didn't survive;  
This world mourns their stolen lives.

The crowd watched the sun  
Toss sparklers on the band's flutes  
And white Western clothes.  
Flutes played at the conductor's pace  
Their hymn of faith: "Amazing Grace."

Many still mourn youths  
Killed in the past, as today's  
World demands justice.  
It seeks those youth's courage as  
The band stills fears from the past.

*Rodney Owen*

## Patrol

Last night I dreamed of the Army.  
Rather, it dreamed me,  
The Army.  
I was running.  
I was smoking cigarettes.  
I was on patrol, young and alive.  
I woke up thinking of Florida.  
I could taste the air,  
Thick with water, and  
The smell of mulch.  
The early fog,  
Always on patrol.  
We were so far from the Army  
In Florida,  
At least in space.  
In time it's always here  
In my mind, as ubiquitous  
As fog and cigarette smoke.

*William Mitchell*

## The Symphony

Tree tops swing  
Like a maestro's arms.  
Bushes sway  
Thunder drums.  
Nature's symphony  
Her gift to mankind.  
All in homage to  
    ancient Gods.  
All at the mercy of  
    a crazed brain with a crooked finger  
    on the bright red button.



*Janet Watson*

## Global Crisis

My son's small hands  
once slid across continents and seas,  
and his fingers climbed mountain ranges,  
disregarding borders and boundaries  
as he spun the library's large globe  
in its mahogany stand.

Watching the world whirl so swiftly  
was heady stuff for him,  
as even now, it is for me.

So I am buying this old globe  
for a grown-up boy.  
It sits, battle-weary,  
in the sad circumstance  
of an estate sale, surrounded  
by chipped dishes and musty books.

The planet turns stiffly on its axis,  
and its faded surface shows shrinkage.  
This miniature world  
is coming apart at the seams,  
much like the real one, which I,  
regrettably, must leave to my son.

Patrick Crerand

## Elegy for a Hatchet

*for Big Country, Late of Dade City*

The plumbers found your hatchet  
underneath my house. Not wanting  
to leave it there with a hundred  
feet of galvanized pipe they'd already loosed,  
they surfaced it and found me idling  
in the garage to ask: "You Big Country?"  
They laughed, pointing to the name  
on the hatchet's tang. The joke being I am  
neither big nor country. They left it on the work  
bench standing on end like some small  
emblem from a half-assed commie  
dictator, a sickle short of a nation. "It's not me,"  
I said. But they told me, "What's underneath  
the house is yours," as if it were enough  
to win a claim in some subterranean  
court of finders-keepers—the kids' game  
we played in streets or long ago in grass  
with natives, like Woody said—*This land* was made for  
*you and me*. It's a big country out  
there. Enough breathing

room for all of us, except when we can't.  
Now your hatchet stays buried  
in the toolbox next to three hammers  
I tend to ignore. Only yours has a name  
written in black marker—your forgotten gift to me  
in a will you never wrote. We were about the same  
age, my wife says. She knew your children  
from school. I don't even know  
your Christian name, just the graven  
image of a prairie, or that fleshy center  
from Oklahoma, or farther back, to a time  
when perhaps a line of smoke low on the frontier  
grew long from a Dutch oven brimming with beans,  
and the crude hands that tended it—hands, lined  
with a wagon team's leather straps, crisscrossing  
the palms like rivers on a map of this country, Big  
Country. It seems we've come so far since then,  
though now they suck tubes of Ivermectin,  
champing on its white rope, the gritty bit, to get one more  
snootful of air before the worms come.  
They come for us either way.  
The horses know to neigh without it. My neighbor,  
an elevator repairman with seven fingers, has gone now. The  
father of my son's friend, a contractor, too. They say Jesus  
knew his way around a beam and you  
were a handy man. But who will fix this

big country now that you're all gone?

There are no pockets on a shroud

but what of a tool belt? They're burning them

all up anyway, across the city, the prairie, the mountains,

a whole country of chimneys, filling our skies,

our heads with black ash, a void of yous, and all that smoke

catching in our lungs—a cough thumping

deep, more dreadful than your hatchet's swing

against a root.

## Love Stays at Home while the Brain Is on Vacation

When I was younger, I was convinced that I had been robbed of a “normal” grandma. She had dementia, and sometimes talking to her was like listening to a broken record. I always wanted to know what she had been like before she got sick. Maybe she would have been able to tell me more stories. Maybe she also could have listened to mine and recalled them the next time I visited. But when your brain is stuck on the “what ifs,” you can never truly live in the moment. I was trying to change the unchangeable in my head.

I wish I could go back and tell myself to savor the boba tea from her local cafe and the extra ice cream bars after dinner. I wish I could watch one more football game with her. I want to be able to pull off a pair of pink capri pants like she could. I don’t know when that moment will come, probably in my 70s. But what I do know is this: memories are all you have left of a person when they are gone. What I remember is that she always knew how to be kind and how to love me. And maybe that’s all you need.

*Emmalee Welch*

a hero to the world  
and a hero to me

out at sea you saw so much of the world  
a part of something bigger thaN yourself  
sleeping in crAmped rooms, little space for storage  
sent postcards from eVery place you had been  
a proud hero fighting for your countrY  
left only to be your daughter's hero

## My relatives' Italy is not my Italy.

**M**y relatives' Italy is not my Italy. Their Italy is "backward." Their Italy is poverty, desolate farms and villages. My Italy is corner cafés with outdoor tables occupied by cigarette-smoking sophisticates and fashionistas arguing with their hands waving about.

My Italy is Marcello Mastroianni and Sophia Loren in a torrid black-and-white love scene or a wide-eyed Giulietta Masina in *La Strada*. My Italy is a stream-of-conscious montage and contemplative beach scene finale in Fellini movies.

I grew up watching 1950s Italian movies and trying, often in vain, to learn the words to Neapolitan folk songs my mom played on the big Medieval-esque console stereo. Not a typical pastime of 8-year-olds to be sure, but my mom got me.

My mother, likewise, was different from the plain, pragmatic Italian-housewife relatives who visited from Canada and Connecticut. These women looked almost identical to me: They had short unfussy hair, stern expressions and wore gold crosses, holy medallions and demure gold-hoop earrings. They wore knee-length polyester skirts with pantyhose, sensible shoes and carried neatly filled "pocketbooks."

My mother, on the contrary, dyed her hair and wore figure-flattering dresses with bold prints. She didn't restrain her enthusiasm and love of friends and family. She divorced her abusive Italian husband. laughed out loud and embraced everyone.

Cagnano Varano, my mother's birthplace, in the province of Foggia, is almost at the center of an Adriatic peninsula known as Il Gargano. The mountainous promontory juts into the Adriatic Sea. The "spur of the boot," Gargano has craggy mountain cliffs and an ancient Umbrian Forest. East and uphill from Cagnano, past the

olive groves and more small towns, you become immersed in the aroma and shade of centuries-old pine forests, also populated by beech, a variety of oaks and maple. The holm oak of Vico del Gargano stands 50 meters high with a diameter of 5 meters. You can find it in front of a Franciscan convent; most likely planted there by the friar Nicola da Vico, who died in 1719. My grandfather's name was Nicola. Nicola Pancia. Pancia (pronounced *PONCH-ah*) means belly in Italian.

Several antiquities have been excavated in the Pugliese region—grottos and caves with pictures of Greek Gods scrawled in them. Giant birds and rodents once inhabited Gargano when it was an island during the Miocene epoch, millions of years ago. Settled by Athenians, the area still has a Grecian look with whitewashed buildings, olive trees and turquoise waters. Spanish, French, Turkish and Germanic influences can also be found, too. The Lombards, Ottoman Empire, Spain and Austria fought for dominion.

One of my mom's best friends, Maria, was a feisty 4-foot-11 lady from a town near Naples. She was one of my mom's regular gal pals during my tween/teen years. Maria married a Russian-American Navy man who rarely spoke. Because she had a stroke at a relatively young age, part of her face was paralyzed. She talked out of the side of her mouth with the raspy voice of a former chain smoker. She'd call my mom by her Italian name but with the last syllable lopped off. "Giusepp<sup>eee</sup>," she'd say with a *shh* sound and a little saliva. Big-eyed and spastic, she busied herself in her garden, running instead of walking. She had a perpetual tan and laughed a lot — really loud until it was a hard silent laugh. She'd make fun of my black and baggy new wave clothes and tell me, "Why you dress like dat? You look like a *buffon*!"

In that undeniable Neapolitan dialect, Maria would reminisce about her hometown, *GUYehtub* or the town nearby, *ShhhCAWri*. She had a Boston-born daughter in college who studied math. The difference between mother and daughter was so stark, you'd think the girl was adopted. She had kinky curly hair and a large dimpled



nose and never smiled or said hello. When I tried to talk to her, she'd mumble in as minimal a fashion as possible and retreated to her bedroom.

It was okay—I had more fun with the loud-talking moms anyway.

*Derora Williams*

## Daddy-O, I need to come sit on your porch...

to yuck it up and shoot the breeze  
as Marvin Gaye, Betty Wright, and Fannie May  
become your background singers.  
You crack open pecans of knowledge  
with hands weathered by heat  
and stained with permanent replicas of hot grease.

Daddy-O, I need to come sit on your porch...  
and hear you say *Hey Kid*  
as you take a sip of the brown energy in your mug,  
your Bible perched on the tabled throne  
in front of you;  
evidence it had been hailed and held...  
your self-proclaimed anchor in the storm of rising suns  
you chanced upon.

I need to come sit on your porch...  
and let the breeze carry my tears to your ears  
as I reveal the whispered truths of my failing relationship,  
the hardships of parenting...

the sheer energy I expend  
simply living each day without this chair to sit in.

Daddy-O, I need to come sit on your porch.

## Five More Minutes

I haven't left my bed yet.

I don't want to go out there, don't want to leave my room. I don't want to know what the world is like without him in it. So many things became so unimportant when he started failing last night. He was gone within hours, we had to let him go. He was suffering. He was in pain, you could tell by the involuntary growls that escaped him toward the end that he was in pain. He loves when we pet him. Always. So three hours earlier when I pet him and he pulled away and would move to a different spot, dragging his back leg behind him as he hopped, just to get away from my loving touch, I knew something was wrong. I knew it from the moment he looked up at me in front of the fireplace. He looked scared, and was sitting oddly in one place with his leg folded under him. His cries for help came out in small squawks, one every few seconds, as his eyes held mine. He's never that vocal, and definitely not that constantly so.

It's still fresh. I think of kissing the top of his sweet head, the soft fur brushing my lips one last time. The tears come without my permission. Just before one day turned to the next, we left the hospital without him. They couldn't find his carrier. I wonder if that was on purpose. Going home with an empty carrier would have been worse. We talked about him the whole ride home. The good times we had with him, the little ways we could tell something was wrong at the end. "At the end." I wondered about the finality of death. What it would be like. It was so peaceful. He was gone before we knew. His eyes never closed. The kind doctor said, "Most don't." Her compassion got us through it. With the pandemic, she explained everything over the phone as we sat in our car. Then we hung up and discussed what to do. Then we talked to a kind receptionist, who

went over aftercare with us. He wasn't even gone yet. But that made it easier when the “after” came.

The during was hard. They let us in to be there with him. We're eternally grateful for that. Goodbyes are never easy and this was our first to say. He looked cute, comfortable, with his furry softness just hanging out on two soft blankets when a kind girl brought him in. She left us with all the time we needed. We pet him and talked to him and cried and loved on him. We had let our grandparents into our house, for the first time since the pandemic started, to enjoy him one last time. Now we video-called our aunt so she could, too. At the end of the call, the doctor poked her head in. We asked for five more minutes. She left us with all the time we needed. He looked fine when he came in, so how could we do this to him? But by the end the soft little growl that would escape with every other breath let us know he was hurting. He never growled except at the vet, but this was different. He was in pain. When the doctor came back, we knew it was time. She said she would give him a sedative to make him sleepy and then an overdose of an anesthetic that would stop his heart. We pet him while he rested his head deeper into the blanket. Soon she said, “I'm going to check his heart.” We were confused, but she moved the stethoscope under him and said, “He's gone.” It was so peaceful. It happened before we knew. His eyes never closed. She said, “Most don't.”

I wondered about the finality of death. Right now it doesn't feel final. It feels like I can subsist off of memories and his absence isn't exactly real. There's sadness that he's gone and hope that I can ignore the fact that he is. There's no finality.

Until I leave this room.

## Villanelle of My Oyster World

Captivated in my oyster world  
Like passion, kisses and delight.  
Now, he's gone—my oyster pearl.

When I was lonely, baffled and whirled  
He charmed me with love through the night;  
My Shining Armor, affectionate and theatrical.

I long to hear enchantment and spiritual  
Lyrics of praise and smiles so bright!  
Now, he's gone—my oyster pearl.

He wasn't tall; yet, serious and comical  
A voice of deepness, my Mr. Right;  
My Shining Armor of affection and theatrical.

Enchanted by his songs of love, enthralled and emotional.  
His arms of strength embraced me tight.  
Now, he's gone—my oyster pearl.

I've searched the universe for my oyster world.  
Country to country, I took the flight!  
My Shining Armor of affection and theatrical.  
Now, he's gone—my oyster pearl.

## All the Way Back

“**M**ama, I remember when waiters and waitresses used to not wear any masks!”

She was busy, digging through her big purse as we sat beside each other in the front seats of the minivan.

“Ma, do you remember that? No masks! While serving our food! How did—”

“Oh, hush right now. Can’t you see I’m doin’ something?” I slouched in my seat and turned to look out the window. My stomach growled. We were parked in the Walmart parking lot. People were walkin’ by, pushin’ buggies.

I remember when people would grab buggies and push them, not even thinkin’ ’bout who grabbed and pushed them first. I spotted the sanitation station near the entrance. Try saying that five times fast: “Sanitation station, sanitation station, sanitation—”

“Hush!” yelled Mama, more irritated than before. “Get up and check the back for me, will you?”

I unwillingly unbuckled my seat belt and leaned over into the back seat of the minivan. I dug around a hoarder’s nest of empty water bottles, tissue boxes, receipts, and fast-food garbage.

I remember being able to sit inside a restaurant, and it would be packed like a tin of sardines. All so close up on each other, eatin’ and talkin’ and breathin’ and spittin’ right next to somebody else. Now we eat at home, because Mama says it’s better, and we get to eat chicken nuggets and french fries all the time.

“I didn’t find nothin’ back here, Mama.”

She sighed, her face red like a piggy from the stress.

“Well, we gotta go all the way home then and come on back,” she said, huffing as she tossed her purse, and started up the minivan again. I buckled my seatbelt.

I watched out the window as we drove, and sat up a little more in my seat as we drove past the park. I remember all the old folks who used to sit on the benches, feedin’ the ducks or enjoyin’ the day. No old folks go out to the park much anymore.

“Hey, Mama,” I whispered.

She sighed. “Yes, baby.”

“Can we visit Grandma soon?” There was silence.

“No,” she said quietly, “not yet, baby. Give her a call later, though. I’m sure that she misses you.”

We sat in silence again. I remember when Mama wasn’t so stressed all the time.

We pulled up our driveway and Mama got out of the car. Daddy spotted us from his seat at the window and came to the door.

“What happened? Why are you home so soon?” he asked, looking worried. I remember when Daddy didn’t look so worried all the time.

Mama took a big step up onto the porch and shook her head. “I forgot my mask.”



*Malia Roberts*

## A Desolate Forthcoming

sandhill review



## Resilience

Birds sang, pretended everything was okay.  
Spring 2020 flowered amid chaos.  
Daffodils, hyacinth scented the air.  
But for all its usual light, Spring's edges were tinged.

No leaving home, except to buy food from sparse shelves,  
in a surreal sea of masked faces.  
Bookstores and restaurants shuttered,  
the stock market plummeted.  
Families separated, ventilators scarce.

Outside my window, a deer  
carried its three hundred pounds on ribbony legs.  
We wobbled around the precipice of:  
when would it be over?

We learned to reach out without touching,  
to hold our breath  
for graduations, wedding plans,  
paychecks, test results, a cure.

Each morning, dawn's glow  
nudged us to keep rising.  
Over the internet, we took classes,  
worshipped, shared our stories around the globe.  
The young shopped for the elderly.  
On home computers, teens made masks to shield us.  
Even under quarantine,  
we carried our burden together.

## To My Friends during the Quarantine

A pall hangs over me.  
Its shadow bears down—  
the novel uncertainty  
of Corona virus.

Mercifully, there's a breeze  
that lifts the pall's edges,  
sun flickers, through a thicket.  
We repurpose the energy  
the virus uses to destroy.  
Despite the quarantine, we create  
our immunity with community.

In a dark sky, stars  
flash a Morse code of hope.  
We speak through poems,  
write and share,  
visit each other in stanzas.  
My ink flows because I know  
they're waiting, will listen and answer.

Metaphors bridge the distance.  
Across the globe, shared voices chime,  
pierce the silence.

Verse dazzles  
till I can't speak, just listen  
to the poem, to the moment,  
so we can see  
through each other's eyes—  
where light spins into stars.

## Flesh Specks of Mourning

I listen to the lips on my sword  
as I gather the flesh specks  
of mourning poetry that speaks  
to the petaled leaves on the pages  
of fresh memory.

I seek remembrance of breathing  
verses like the little light of night.  
I seek lines kept alive that live  
in a sky of stone.

The sky keeps me bathed  
in breaking breaths  
as I walk through pale blue  
snow in my opulent alone  
and think how poetic words  
are the alphabet's dream.



*Malia Roberts*

## The Unfamiliar Pandemic

sandhill review

*Suzanne S. Austin-Hill*

## The Corona-cation Chronicles: Days Nineteen to Twenty-Four

Stanza 1: Phew!

A bump the likes of Mt. Everest  
Renders me unable to embrace  
The fixture reflected in the mirror  
I think I'll howl  
Lonely and alone  
And resolve that I was heard

Stanza 2: Isolation

And resolve that I was heard  
Like every bump in the night attending  
No longer protected by your embrace  
A fixture for nearly a score  
Winds howl between the leaves  
Searching as if lonely

Stanza 3: Anti-Love

Searching as if lonely  
Masked with resolve  
Bump against the new norm  
Expect and give an embrace  
But behind the fixture on my face  
I howl down this contagion

Stanza 4: Quirk

I howl down this contagion  
A lonely thing being undiagnosed  
Prompted to resolve our status  
Testing gets a bump  
We embrace optimism in spite of  
The fixture of furrowed eyebrows

Stanza 5: The Fardel of Social Distancing

The fixture of furrowed eyebrows  
Confirm their hearts howl under the weight  
Of lonely deaths'  
Rhyme or reason can't resolve  
They bump into the grim reaper  
Thankful to have escaped his embrace

Stanza 6: Nature

Thankful to have escaped his embrace  
Realizing Corona is a relentless fixture  
There's a soulful howl for rain  
Which falls upon the lonely and the loved  
Who hope with great resolve that  
Precipitation may bump the numbers down

## It'll Never Happen to Me

“*Expecto Patronum!*”

The words scream out of *Harry*  
almost jumping off the page.  
I love getting lost in other worlds.

It'll never happen to me.

Stab! Stab! Stab!

I watch *ghost face*  
as he claims another victim.  
I love scary movies.

It'll never happen to me.

“I'm so sorry for your loss.”

I hear the voice of *Conrad* talking to a family;  
they just lost someone to Covid.  
I love my family.

I never thought it would happen to me.



## The Best Medicine

I walk down the soulless streets. Yes, *soulless* is the correct word. The bodies line the streets, sure, but they have no souls piled on each side; no one is left to haul them away. I tug at my blue medical mask as I walk the streets, glancing at the once-infested bodies. Some have been there for years, old, dusty, bone-exposed, skin-dried, now food for maggots. Some look fresh as if they have just died today. Some with eyes closed, as to finally sleep off this horror. Some with eyes bulbous and bright enough as to stare at me in their last cries for help, shedding their invisible tears from their dry eyes. I've never seen a single living soul since my seclusion. At least, one that I have not seen on the verge of death. The pandemic is over. The virus won the war. It eagerly waits for me to see its fine work. Since I need to gather food and water for my own survival, I have no choice but to oblige.

I should've been the first to die, not the last to survive. I have a condition, anyway. My lungs are rebellious; they always had been. This virus would've encouraged their rebellion, given them the ammunition and resources necessary to revolt against my government I call the body and mind. This virus would've looked on in glee as I joined all of the other overthrown governments and it establishes its own, new, cosmopolitan government: The Macabre Republic. I was not as healthy as some of my peers, but apparently health doesn't matter...at least not anymore. The debates no longer matter now that there's no one to debate with. These differences, labels that we place on one another for every failure in the virus's containment (conservatives, liberals, too old to care, too young to understand, third-world countries, developed countries, black, white, knowledgeable...stupid) no longer matter. *Everyone was stupid*, I thought, *and so was I for thinking that we could beat it.*

I already thought the world was sad before the pandemic, but I tried my best to ensure that it would not be bleak. *We'll get out of it*, I foolishly thought. *I believe in us, as humans. We will get over this pandemic just as we have gotten over all others in the past.* Now the pandemic is over, and I could not be any more wrong as I look at every dead body on the sides of the road I walk on, cursing them for not following my vision, then cursing myself for being so naïve as to believe that they would follow it. I learned about the laws of human nature and chose to ignore them. For what? For my own happiness? My mental health? My sanity?

During humanity's last days, the days when all hope was lost, the days when we accepted and embraced death for comfort, a doctor told me to keep up the high spirits, for I might be the last person on Earth to remain happy. "Laughter is now the best medicine," she said. I had to laugh; it was my duty to laugh, to laugh at this virus, this tyrant. I had to laugh and I laughed until I hacked. Laughter was now the best medicine, for no one could find one better.

## Snippets of Novel Virus Texts to/From Me (March 2020–July 2020)

Wash hands  
Refrain from touching your faces  
Love you Thank you Miss you  
Take good care  
Where you live and work and go to school  
Hi! I need to cancel until further notice  
Thank you God bless  
Early Voting ends TODAY in your county  
Can you tell me if there is a specific fever  
Temperature that signifies Covid-19  
Polls are open until 7 pm  
Can you vote safely  
Eyecare: We are closed  
In response to COVID-19  
We will open for Emergencies Only  
Be safe Thank you  
Do you need a food/supply drop  
Let me know  
It is the only time out of the house  
Hand sanitizer up and go  
Allegiant flight is cancelled  
Manage Travel online for options  
Currently I have a case of the shingles  
Sending lots of prayers your way  
To help protect families  
During the coronavirus outbreak  
Re-elect her to the Senate  
Please stay safe and join the new phase

The pH for corona virus varies  
Do not keep this information to yourself only  
“Be still, and know that I am God ....”  
I hope you are ok  
Your inspection is approved  
No further action is required  
Track your order every step of the way  
In the Shop app  
Happy Mother’s Day  
Working on the chapbook  
Thank you Great By Midnight  
Thank you so much for the Zoom  
Thank you for getting us altogether  
Please take good care  
So you guys can have a summer reunion  
Beautiful and very moving  
You are both still unfurling your awesome wonders  
Love it Made me laugh  
The weather here in FL has been lovely  
Hope that has been a consolation  
Do you have a preferred head shot  
It would look nice to include that  
It is my Jack Nicholson impression  
When this virus gets less virus-y  
Yes to all – beach and brunch  
I will start my workout now – lol  
We’re still leery of eating at restaurants  
Maybe we could picnic and practice social distancing  
That works for me  
The additional 15GB of hotspot added to your plan  
at no charge ends 5/31  
We hope it helped keep you connected  
During these challenging times  
Thank you for contributing to COVID Near You

Are you still feeling great  
Please answer HEALTHY or SICK  
I just checked with hotels and no curfews  
Hoping all the best for you  
In an effort to keep you safe during the pandemic  
Your supervisor of elections has mailed every voter  
Voting by mail is safe  
I am selfishly glad that you are in your beautiful home  
and keeping safe and not traveling during this pandemic  
You know you are my Sister  
Glad you can go into Caribou  
Just don't stay in the space for too long  
Fleas have calmed down  
Mowed the front lawn  
Otherwise being lazy  
Back since June 30  
Finished my self-isolation on Tuesday the 14<sup>th</sup>  
Still not doing very much  
How was your day  
What are you making for dinner - any protein  
Sorry you are isolated  
But we will get through this  
Nite Love you Draft due Tuesday  
Back to school nasal swab test

Derora Williams

## Isn't it ironic...

that we now wear physical masks to match our proverbial ones?  
We can shield others from the stench of our breath,  
and the reeking truth of our personalities.  
It wouldn't matter if that truth were democratic or republic  
since it's all pretty-petaled lies planted in hypocrisy.

The irony...

Like living in a land where *In God We Trust* is declared  
on the back of filthy lucre that clearly divides us.

Like African American males filling prisons to be reformed  
for crimes they didn't commit, while white males ride handcuffed  
to get fast food before receiving their punishment.

Ironic, isn't it?

Like Black Lives Matter protests that only erupt when there's  
black blood on white hands, or how Blue Lives always mattered  
because it began with the white man.

Like how hard we fight to keep a divided stance,  
while death waits to unite us all for one final dance.

## Six

We  
as humans, miss the little touches that isolation made less real.  
But it's okay; the internet made it cool.  
All the jokes, the tags, and inspirational pieces that we  
put out there. All the little things that will be left  
as we hide behind masks, but also schooled  
screens. Six feet apart is too much because we  
love to get together and lurk  
through the night. When the moon begins to sink. That late.

We  
change our lives and everything in-between when Covid strikes.  
The data collected daily always set us straight  
when we tried to ignore it, playing the fool. We  
pay for our mistake as we sing  
hymns for our loved ones, as if they'd sinned.  
They were taken away from us too fast. We  
struggle as jobs and our contentment thins.  
Six heartbeats in a flask; it's no wonder everyone turns to gin.

We  
sit in our quiet neighborhoods, once filled with Jazz.  
The parties canceled six beats in the heat of June.

We  
with the hopelessness of each freed breath, die.  
And if not six feet under, we'll see each other soon.

## Stages of Change

The world around us is different  
It keeps you trapped and wanting tissue paper  
It leaves you wanting take-out  
It makes introverts want to touch some grass  
And experience the real life.

The world around us inspires creativity  
We must change to the new normal  
We have to stay occupied not to lose our minds  
It provides different perspectives  
But leaves many things to be desired.

The world around us adapts  
After all this is the age of technology  
After all everything can be done virtually  
That helps to fill our social void  
Still it can only do so much.

The world around us settles  
What else is there to do after two years of disorder?  
What else is there to be afraid of?  
It leaves us six feet apart  
Yet better than we were.



## Read/Look

I read about girls getting scars cut into  
their faces,  
Both by men and by trees:  
I look around and see  
wood carved into soft furniture,  
and not into beating sticks.

I read about children whose parents  
suddenly go from  
every day to just a comforting memory:  
I look up and see  
the half-empty bowl of watermelon,  
today's breakfast from Mama.

I read about things that make me cry,  
when the book tells me  
I really shouldn't.

I read stories where fathers are not even  
in the picture,  
Gone in some way or another:  
I look over at a framed photo,  
Daddy and me,  
in there and still out here.

I read about girls who have not age nor time  
to dream of romance,  
Before those men took them, hurt them: I  
look down, shamed,  
by my own tales of eager, petty princes  
I've brazenly, repeatedly cherished.

I read words of fiction that reek of the  
truth of ugly history:  
A story that has never been mine, but still I  
look away and tears fall—  
for a me that I wish I couldn't imagine  
Being.

## Who Needs Science Fiction when We Live in a Time Loop?

I lie here, on the couch, pillows around me  
like I'm a frat boy crashing at a mate's house.  
And think. Really hard. About what it was like  
in the Before Times. When what few friends my  
chronically ill life had could come over.

When the scream of cicadas in a Florida Summer  
didn't drone into a haze of fog trapping me forever  
in the Summer of 2020. They say we'll write of this  
the way our grandparents and great grandparents  
talked of the war. But... somehow...  
I know this is different.

It's August 2021. It still feels like June, 2020.  
The screaming match with my best friend  
in the entire world over his exposure to the Virus  
because of his white lie and my fear of dying....  
It's still June. It's still a year ago.

And I've gotten colds, because: pollen. And we  
patched it up again, so we could carefully see  
each other. But it doesn't take away the pain—  
for an instant, one of the two most important  
people to me, threw aside my health. It doesn't

fix the time this Apocalyptic standard has bled  
from all of us. It's not a War to End all Wars because  
how can it be? It's against the smallest existence of "life."

So I lie here. In the self-imposed summer heat  
where cicadas cry, and while I move forward  
in my world, with education—trapped online.  
Work with writing. With busy work...

any work. That keeps me on the couch to watch  
the days bleed into the next in the endless  
summer that no longer gives us happy memories  
of vacation and family, but fear to the backdrop  
of the cicadas' wail blending one summer into the other

like smudged art that I've hated as much as isolation.  
So, I think. Has it changed? Do I remember  
winter? A winter that Florida barely feels?  
And I don't. I remember these same howls of agony  
from friends that reverberated in nature herself.

But that's the question, isn't it? Will my life,  
our lives, forever be mired in the stagnation  
of a couch, a room, the isolation that has seeped  
into our very bones? Will it always be, year after year...  
June of 2020?

## Childhood Obsessions

I remember my mother's groans when she would take me  
to the playground—she would shake me from her arm,  
prying my fingers from her cardigan.

When she finally wriggled her arm from my grasp,  
she would steer me towards the jungle gym  
and tell me to go play nice before heading  
to the pavilion to catch up with a friend.

I never understood it, how it seemed as though  
every other child would throw themselves  
at the monkey bars and not be afraid, their bodies  
swaying as they dangled upside down, unsupported,  
sometimes slipping from the metal bars  
and falling into a face full of mulch.

I was so small, and everything looked so big.  
Even the other kids seemed big to me—taller,  
stronger, and so sure of themselves.

Their laughter echoed off the playground equipment  
and I could never understand their happiness,  
or why my mother laughed along with them.

Was I the only one afraid to die?

## Two Truths and a Lie

One—                    you used to grip  
the left handlebar tighter than the right,  
scared to jolt loose the marble wedged  
between the bell and trigger. It pulled you  
off balance, but it was the only way  
you knew how to keep your training wheels.

Two—                    you never had chicken pox,  
only cigarette burns and scabs from  
where the jiggers gnawed. They never healed;  
you used to lie in bed at night and watch them  
bleed, the metallic tang turning you on.

Three—                    you still dream about  
the bogeyman, still smell the whiskey on his breath  
and taste his sour belch on your tongue.  
Nightmares were never a problem  
when you were young, but high school was  
a different beast and so were the neighbors  
who kept watch when your parents went away.

## Dark Parking Lots

The pool hall parking lot is dark.  
On the edge of town

before the last motel, it stands  
with one light over a warehouse door.

It's the type of place where I'd buy  
cocaine from a dude named Pops.

Pops was an old, stringy black man  
with a ball cap and shaded glasses,

worn so he could keep an eye on  
the waitress, the pool game, and whatever

I couldn't see coming. Etiquette stood  
that you had to play a game with Pops,

order a drink from the girls.  
He couldn't do business without making

business. Not everyone played  
pool at Pops' table. Some had to wait

in the parking lot in the dark.  
That's not my game anymore.

I used to walk around with a crow  
on my shoulder, closing bars

like it was on my license. All the arrogance  
of youth left out in the dark parking lot,

passing key bumps on the sense  
of sound and purpose of smell.

Red cigarette cherries, my lanterns.  
I burned my youth. I was an artist.

My friends went off to war. I wrote  
about them. I kissed their girlfriends.

My classmates went off to companies.  
I served their tables. I washed their dishes.

Now, I drive past the old pool hall.  
I don't know anyone inside.





*Sonja Jean Craig*

Inviting

sandhill review

*Kate Sweeney*

## Burning First Street

Gainesville, Florida

Dusk rolls over  
like a sow  
in its slop.  
A drunk has kicked  
my recycling bins  
into the street.  
Empty tuna cans  
and wine bottles  
that become tiny glass  
buttons of shame:  
a different kind  
of renewable resource.  
Someone reckless  
with a staple gun  
jacks fliers  
about something urgent  
to the lamppost.  
Down the street,  
roars are carried up  
with the smoke  
of a bonfire  
that its circle  
of spectators try

to feed palm fronds  
and to roast roadkill  
armadillo and to burn  
down the sky.  
The Southern  
Northern Lights.  
Hours later, under  
fire hydrant mist,  
a man uses  
the rest of the tree  
as an umbrella.

Kate Sweeney

## Falling from the Sky

If you are kinder  
to yourself, and others,  
perhaps what falls  
from the sky  
is something more akin  
to manna from heaven,  
not the mullet that drop  
into my backyard,  
having saved themselves  
from the talons of an osprey  
only to die in a wet thud.  
Something in the black hole  
of their irises  
looped in silver says  
*Brace yourself for impact.*

At Grant's inauguration party,  
in a Judiciary Square tent,  
the champagne slushed  
and the canaries—wind-sick,  
strung up in their cages—  
froze to death and dropped  
onto the heads of guests  
dancing in formal overcoats.

Of course, there is also  
hail, airplanes, and whatever  
flakes out of God's beard  
when he scratches it  
with the crown  
of his pocket watch.

And my son's kite  
that the breeze takes  
then won't take  
then takes again  
until down it comes  
as he claps and laughs  
and plucks the pieces  
from the sand like bits  
of a nightmare or a dream  
that you can't shake,  
until you reason  
with yourself, and others,  
that the falling,  
not the flying,  
is the best part.



*Janna Correa*

## International Smile Exchange

## Arroz con Habichuela

I am preparing to face my fears. I walk into the dancing room  
and start to stretch my back, my legs, my arms, my hands, and my neck.

Then I walk to the speaker and turn on the music.

1, 2, cha cha cha, 5, 6 cha cha cha... These are the counts for one  
of my favorite rhythms. As you might guess, that rhythm is the Cha Cha Cha.

The Cha Cha Cha originated in Cuba around the 1950s.

The Cha Cha Cha is very sensual; it is the perfect interaction  
between the feet, the hips, the arms, and the eyes. Your body  
becomes an instrument, and that transformation is a magic I cannot explain.

I can only show you.

To dance the Cha Cha Cha, you need to understand its four counts.  
Two of them are slow, and two of them are fast. The two fast times  
are always the Cha Cha Cha. The other two slow times are your space  
to improvise, where you can show you are a better dancer than the one  
next to you. But do not forget that we all reunite  
in the Cha Cha Cha.

I play one of my favorite songs, "Arroz con Habichuela,"  
from El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico, and start dancing.  
I am feeling it. I am feeling how my body transforms into  
The instrument that matches the beat. I am enjoying it.

For the past three months, I have been working on a fear diary.  
I wrote something in it almost every day. My fears  
come from clear, detailed experiences and other more irrational  
experiences that are a result of the complexity and  
abstract work of my brain. This fear diary is the one  
I am facing today.

As I am dancing, I see all my little paragraphs  
written day by day in my fear diary. However,  
as I dance even harder, I see the paragraphs becoming smaller  
and smaller, and they each merge into one word, one fear  
that was dominant. I realize that, every day, I wrote about one  
fear that rests deep into my soul, waiting for it to be its turn.

I see all the fears lining up for their fight round.  
They have trauma as a weapon, but I have music.

5, 6, *dile que no* and then cha cha cha...  
Time!

I see we are starting strong. Time has been one of my deepest fears.  
There are just so many occasions where time  
has been my enemy that they slide through my fingers  
because I can not hold them all at once.

Time, in particular, I feel is a very common fear  
(even if some people fail to admit it).  
The truth is that time can be very scary.  
Time has power over you, and that is what I am scared of.  
Time has the power to cure or to destroy.  
Time can give you hours of overthinking or  
accelerate till you feel you can barely breathe.

“Time is relative; its only worth depends  
on what we do as it is passing.”

—Albert Einstein.



Time is a gift. But why, if it is a gift, I am so scared of it?  
I am scared because time is such a treasured gift that,  
once you use it, it will never come back. You can go through time  
a thousand times in your memory, but, as much as you want,  
those memories will not become a reality again.  
That part over there is when time becomes scary.

Time also had a secret method.  
It puts you in a fight against yourself. Time is just there,  
and it gives you the choice of what to do with it.  
Should I rest or should I keep pushing? If I rest,  
I am using the time to recover myself, and that is necessary.  
But If I keep going, I will see further results,  
and it will be worth it once my time is up.  
Whatever I do is my responsibility.  
I cannot blame time.

I can tell you, time is a terrible dance partner.  
It is just there, and I am the one who has to  
make all the decisions.

Luckily, I know how to dance.

## Paris and Beyond

Once upon a time, I had a job where I traveled the world. I journeyed to the Caribbean, Europe, Tunisia, on cruises and land trips. I photographed the sights, as I loved to document locations, but I had no proof I was there—just shots of landscapes, marketplaces, plants, and other people. At the Parthenon in Greece, my roommate's boyfriend asked me if I wanted a photo of myself, instead of me always remaining behind the camera.

I said, "Yes." Jim asked me if I wanted the Greek flag in the background. I said I did. With my green cotton hat placed on my head, green printed dress, and white sweater, I looked like an American tourist posing near a national treasure. The wind and I had a struggle. I finally pulled my hand away from my hat long enough to create the composition I wanted. I thanked Jim. In the days of film, I got all the rolls developed when I returned to the states after each trip. I'd say vacation, but they were working trips for me.

The photo showed me smiling, sitting on a boulder, with a large, tall, brown flagpole sticking up and out of my head. The blue and white Greek flag flapped above. Since I wore a hat, I looked like a Las Vegas showgirl balancing a heavy headdress while trying to remain upright. Strike one.

In Paris, I spent time alone after returning from a cruise. The other members of the group had gone home. My flight back to the United States was the next day, so I took the RR train to town from my airport hotel. I walked the Champs-Elysees to the Arc de Triomphe. The last time I went there, the elevator was broken, and I didn't go up. This time, the elevator was broken again—or still—so I walked to the top.

I drank in the delicious and well-earned view. I clicked shots with my Nikon N65 film camera. In broken English, a cute man

wearing a beret asked me if I wanted my picture taken. He pointed to the Eiffel Tower, saying I should have a photo of me with the landmark in the background. I handed my camera to the stranger knowing he couldn't steal it; the long escape down the stairs would be fruitless.

“Oui,” I said.

He snapped the photo.

“Merci.” I smiled. When I got home, I had the film developed, and the Eiffel Tower appeared to be sticking out of the top of my head like a funny, pointed hat. I became a metalhead. Strike two.

On a cruise to the Bahamas, the ship's photographer approached me on a beach. I wore a white, Bahamas T-shirt, floral shorts, and my long curly hair blew in the breeze. I had learned my trusting-strangers-to-take-photographs-of-me lesson. The ship's professional photographer would be ideal. He'd know how to properly line up a photo without getting a peculiar surprise upon development. Although I knew I would have to pay if I wanted the picture, I said, “Yes.”

The next morning, I ran to the ship's photography gallery, excited to see a professional shot. Lo and behold, there it was. A nice look appeared on my face, but the ship could be seen in the background running through my head. Yes, the pro put part of the ship to the right of my head and a portion sticking out to my left. It looked like the photographer went spearfishing, and I was the fish, or like Steve Martin's comedy routine where he placed the fake arrow on his head to make it appear that it pierced through it. Painful strike three.

Ten years later and using a digital camera, I went to my hometown in New Jersey and visited Alexander Hamilton's discovery, the Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, by myself. Yes, a stranger asked me if I wanted my picture taken near the falls. My guard was down. “Yes, please,” I said. I thanked the man, and he walked away. I looked at the photo and saw the Great

Falls pouring onto my head. Thank goodness I wore my raincoat that day. There is no strike four.

These days, when people ask if I want my photograph taken, I just say no, so don't ask me.

I am now inspired to teach photo composition in addition to writing workshops.

## A World of Curiosity

“Curiouser and Curiouser!”

—Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

Sometimes, curiosity gets a bad rap, as in curiosity killed the cat, but curiosity is a wonderful and powerful tool to achieve equanimity in a world that can feel chaotic.

Curiosity can take us toward this sense of mental calmness and composure because we can use it for self-knowledge, which, in turn, leads to less anxiety overall.

The titular character of *Ted Lasso* models this. Ted is an American coaching a Division II college football team in Kansas. He knows nothing about English football (aka soccer). This doesn't stop him from accepting an offer to coach a Premier League football team in London. In the pilot episode, we see Ted being tutored by his assistant coach on the game's jargon as the two fly to England.

Of course, comedy ensues, and Ted is faced with a lot of justifiable skepticism with one character noting that he's not only never coached soccer, but his coaching experience of American football was of amateurs who were not playing at the top level of the sport.

Ted remains undeterred, facing down his critics with good will and often with humor. We see him experience some difficult emotions in the show, but none come from the constant criticism that he experiences daily. As the entire stadium yells “wanker” at him during the game, he stands on the sideline unperturbed.

We learn why when someone has yet again insulted Ted and assumes he will fail. Ted explains, “guys have underestimated me my entire life. And, for years, I never understood why. It used to really bother me. But then one day, I was driving my little boy to school,

and I saw this quote by Walt Whitman, and it was painted on the wall there. It said, ‘Be curious, not judgmental. ’I like that. So I get back in my car, and I’m driving to work, and all of the sudden it hits me. All them fellas that used to belittle me, not a single one of them were curious. They thought they had everything already figured out. So they judged everything, and they judged everyone.”

Though the attribution to Whitman is a disputed one, the adage holds true for Ted and for all of us. Ted’s epiphany allows him to see that there is nothing wrong with him. Those judgmental fellows are defensive and don’t know what to do with a guy like Ted who lives his life in a constant state of curiosity, always ready to learn—as we see from his willingness to take good advice no matter the source, whether it’s his trusted assistant coach or the employee responsible for cleaning up the locker room.

Science supports the power of curiosity as well. Psychologist Paul Ekman, known for his research on the universality of facial expressions, notes that people who score well on recognizing subtle emotions tend to be more open to fresh experiences and more curious about life overall. They typically are more conscientious, dependable, and efficient.

Buddhist nun Pema Chödrön argues for bringing this same curiosity to our interior life. She cites neuroscientist Jill Bolte Taylor’s book *My Stroke of Insight* to advise sitting with whatever emotions arise, no matter how uncomfortable, for an automatic response such as anger will only last 90 seconds, unless we feed it, suppress it, or run away from it. Rather, we can sit with that emotion, bringing an open mind and heart by being curious about it, not caught by it, letting it flow right through. Chödrön writes, “We have to know ourselves fully and completely, avoiding nothing, never averting our gaze. We have to be curious about this thing called My Life, curious about this person called Me.”

When we are comfortable sitting with our own difficult feelings, we can feel less anxious. When we recognize that we’re being

underestimated because others are judgmental and lack curiosity, we can lose social anxiety.

Each day, we can become “curiouser and curiouser” about life and, thereby, lead a better one.



*Marie Gann*

## A Midsummer Day's Dream

sandhill review





*Briana Rodibaugh*

## The World Around Us

sandhill review

## Rebel

Growing up, I remember, we  
would play in the streets all day, until it got real

late. And we knew it was real late when outside got cool.  
I always remember how after school we

Would all go to the plug and buy gas until we had no money left.  
In those days who even went to school for school?

We went to school to see our friends, we  
went to school to chill with the girls and lurk.

Almost every day we would be late.  
We went to school just for the lunch. We

Caused all of our teachers to go on strike.  
We lived in the office, but the principal always  
made sure we were straight.

We were no good at it, but we  
Walked the halls as loud as we could, thinking we could sing.

If being a rebel was in the Bible, we had committed the biggest sin.  
We didn't care though because we

Were having fun, although our teachers' patience was running thin.  
I'm sure after school each one had a shot of gin.

But we didn't care because we,  
We were leaving school to do the same, while vibin' to smooth jazz.

Oh! How we couldn't wait for June.  
School would be out and we would be free. We

Got to live life free and on the edge, hoping none of us died.  
I pray we all make it, because in the blink of an eye,  
school will be opening soon.

## No Longer in the World of “We”

Sometimes I think we  
forgot just how real  
everything else around us was, it was cool  
How we got lost in the world of we.  
But then you left.  
I was abandoned, left to continue school.  
The world was no longer filtered through the sunglasses of we.  
The spirit of longing and desperation would lurk.  
The days were late,  
Nothing compared to the shimmering aura of we.  
It felt like my body was on strike.  
Nothing seemed straight.  
I desperately hoped we  
could sing  
one last time, but that would be something of a sin.  
Something in us told us there really was no we.  
The chances always seemed to be thin,  
Extended nights filled with gin.  
Nights where we  
would listen to the silky melodies of jazz,  
Staying up all night in the musky nights of June.  
There is no world of we.  
Maybe this uncontrollable benumbing will die.  
Maybe it won't. Hopefully, soon.

*Diane Neff*

## Move On

Perhaps I want what can't be found on earth—  
compassion, beauty in this life of pain  
that amplifies the sharpness of cold rain.  
I run to find my shelter under girth  
of weathered branch, twisted, bare, a dearth  
of bark protecting wood, bleeding vein  
of sap, my own blood causing darker stain  
and reddening the ground like coming birth.  
The hope in brightened sky, the sun now white  
with warmth of springtime, hatching promised life  
that flourishes—and struggles—every day.  
Move on—through every darkness and through light.  
Subdued or bold, I choose to live through strife.  
Move on—stone hearts can soften into clay.

Paige McBride

## Immaculate Gallop

After the painting *Kanthaka* by Annette Gloomis

Utter, angel, speak through my open window  
I long to hear your immaculate gallop  
I long to see your magnified colossal body  
Your lionheartedness is everlasting like the river you lie by  
You are lordly and you are named

Utter, angel, speak though my open window  
March through the fluid river you lie next to  
Get up and rise above for your spirit is acclaimed  
And your body is left unblemished  
You are cherished even among the flood of mud

Utter, angel, speak through my open window  
Speak to me, your lionheartedness remains untamed  
Your story is not yet unsung  
You are a clover in an earth of men  
You are magnified even in a darkened field of flowers

Our perfect love is a white pearl that lies in grace among the water

## Slam

The saying goes, *a sound  
broke the night*. But really  
the night breaks the sound,  
shuts it out, leaves it  
howling and shivering  
on the other side of the door.  
Whatever was in the yard  
shook in the wake of that slam

and screamed like my babies.  
I did not run up to them  
but out onto the moonlit grass  
and spun around looking  
for the animal, for what it was in  
or what was in it—if it was small  
but dying large or large but  
being whittled down before

my very ears. I covered  
them until it stopped  
killing or was killed  
and when the door  
opened again,  
everyone  
was still  
asleep.

*Patricia Campion*

## The Vigil in My Office

For Kurt Wilt

We're staring at the flame  
Silently facing each other  
The lopsided wick  
A gulley of liquid wax on one side  
And an alcove of soft honey to bounce off the light

My side table an unwilling altar  
A remembrance for the dead  
At a faraway concert hall in Paris  
November 13th, 2015

You let out that you're sorry  
Before the rest of your words choke in your throat  
And I let you hold me

My thank you muffled in your woolen sweater  
You hunched over me like the lopsided wick  
I hold on to the light  
The soft glow of true friendship



## Sober Six Weeks

I never worried so much about wine  
seven weeks ago, when I always had  
bottles handy; in a pinch—cooking  
sherry. A glass or two, or three,  
or four of pinot or chardonnay colored  
my everyday greys. Glorious it was to hold  
a mouthful of Malbec, let it trickle,  
then rush down my throat, fill me  
with courage. Now I stumble through  
dusty rooms, fighting wine's call, so strong  
I forget how I used to fill each glass faster,  
and then slugged it straight from bottles,  
drove away family, friends, neighbors.  
I loved wine more. Been good six weeks,  
still, pinot is my first morning thought,  
at night, chardonnay. Bottles whisper—  
I find myself fondling car keys, calculating  
how quick I can get to a liquor store. I step  
toward the door. *Just one sip. It won't kill you.*  
I remember that day on the bridge, looking down.  
Yes, it will.

*Rachel Chitofu*

## Hoarfrost

At last I can mourn  
my personal space  
into a bleeding canvas.  
Every monster is birthed  
by a mother. I searched  
at least every grave  
at the cemetery.  
In  
the flushed light  
of Spring  
they looked  
like the pages of a magazine.  
Strangely that is the story  
of my life depending  
on how long you've been  
reading  
her mind.  
I remember the shuffling path  
of shoes disappearing in the grass//  
the trail left hacking a man//the trail  
along with a man hacking the indistinct  
scrambles of heaven.  
The door hinges broke,  
the soft, side-swept coo  
of summer left to evoke.

*Peter Gordon*

## Live Oak, Late August, Orlando

From June through mid-August rain falls every day. Grey haze obscures night sky. I'm lucky if I see one eye of the moon peep through chinks in clouds. Frogs croak, mosquitos bite, water drips off soaked branches and Spanish moss. Feet squish through swampy backyard.

Half a block from my house a five-hundred-year-old live oak lives, sprouted when Florida was swamp, before English colonies planted in The New World. Developers spared it when they converted former fish camp into suburb.

Our oak so old it must rest elbows of each long branch on grass. No human could see that tree and not dream of defying 'don't climb' signs scattered about. A circle of twenty people could not hold hands around its scarred central trunk.

One night toward the end of August, breezes blow from the Atlantic, clearing out clouds so stars shine. From my porch I see Orion, belt centered under the full moon, rectangle of the Big Dipper showing the way north, smell salt spray, gift from the beach.

Some nights I look east and see rockets launch from Kennedy Space Center, red hot rivets rising above the tree line straight toward heaven, vanishing at the ozone barrier between space and sky.

Does our oak consider this progress, or just a bump before rebirth of swamps of youth?

I'm not sure myself.

*James Schellenberg*

## How Far Away



### *Longinquus*

Luna's distance from Tierra is an on-going cyclical dance. Most of the scientific models and pictures that I have viewed of our solar system show an Earth and moon extremely close to each other. Like the first picture, although we know that the moon is suspended far from Earth, we can't comprehend it to scale. That is, since the distance is so gargantuanly large, we have no means to depict the details of the Earth and Moon while also respected its true distance in scale.

This creates a problem. Many fail to understand the vastness between the neighbors of Luna and Tierra. The picture on the right shows the actual scale of Earth and Moon, yet it's robbed of their features. There lies a coldness of the blackened space of the image, an absence of the recognizable colors of white, blue, green, and tan

with the Earth. The moon does not have its unique craters which we can view with our eyes. It is a dot, nothing more. Earth's a white dot, nothing more.

Space reminds me of distance. The reality of frailty, lack of control, of sheer incapability of understanding or knowledge to conceptualize 238,900 miles of space between Luna and Tierra. How precious. How surreal.



Sometimes dreams and realities intermingle at a point. Memories and fantasies get jumbled into closeness, and there is a merging.

It was always at night, never in the morning. It would either be when I was asleep for a while or beginning to fall asleep. Whether I was in a dream or back in reality, I don't know. What I do know with certainty is that this did happen.

As my eyes were opened, a shift occurred. I can only describe the shift as one of distance. It began with a subtle spin, not too vicious, but enough to make me disoriented. Then I fell into "miniaturization." The feeling of being infinitely crushed and small took over me in an instant. The distance between my hands and my face felt miles apart. The ceiling, which was realistically about ten feet tall, felt like a skyscraper. My movement became so insignificant, or, at least, it felt like that. It was a surrounding of infinity, insignificance at large. The only escape was becoming fully awake and moving the whole body (standing up and going to the restroom or going downstairs).

The only relation I can possibly make of this occurrence is a specific scene in the 2014 film *Interstellar*. As Cooper and his crew are travelling through the wormhole, the sheer space-time speed that they are crossing creates a hectic scenery around their spacecraft. During this sequence, their craft glides through empty space while also seeing immense star systems, galaxies and other interstellar sights that dwarf their impossibly tiny craft in this wormhole.

Visually, they are dwarfed by the sheer might and scale of the universe in this wormhole. In this scene however, there is the absence of control. No matter what Cooper does, his spacecraft does not respond to his turning, speeding, or braking. They are completely submissive, completely at will to the wormhole. They are helpless.

What happened to me was the most frightening thing to experience an event in which you have no control of anything. That's terrifying now in my age. It rattled me for the remainder of the nights, as I thought about how small I am.

As a kid, it was one of the scariest feelings I ever experienced. I'm unaware of how often it occurred, but it was frequent enough. It was haunting. To this day, I can't accurately formulate the experience of it. I still fail to encapsulate all the feelings and thoughts that went through me in this abnormal time.

There's no reason why this occurred when I was younger. Unexplainable or supernatural, one could call it. In retrospect, why I hated this event was the helplessness. I was without control, without knowledge.

It's not a typical fear that a child has, to be plunged into the depths of infinitely small where you are insignificant. Anytime now that I look to the stars or the moon, and picture the sheer distance in between, there's a little call in my head. A call of how insignificant I am. My physical stature means nothing to the scales of the sun, stars, planets, asteroids, moons.

How can I be significant, if I am but a small speck to the likes of Earth?



*Diane Neff*

## Impact

Rain falling gently on the open sea,  
no evidence of impact, wet on wet,  
absorbed like breeze in air, a lush duet  
played silently, invisible, and free.  
The barest glance, the lightest touch, a bee  
will graze the stamen, brush the pollen, yet  
its weight so barely felt, the blooms abet  
the visit in its sensuality.  
We humans guard our spaces, force our will  
on others. Even if no harm is meant  
we speak with senseless words that sting and bruise.  
Instead of choosing kindness to instill  
a sense of wonder, hope and love's intent,  
we worry more about what we might lose.

*Rodney Owen*

## View of an Old Mill Town in the Carolina Sandhills

Black buzzard  
Sitting on a stumbling old building  
Surveying destruction  
The memory of a mill town  
Composed of rot, mildew,  
Entropy and despair  
There was once life here  
Activity, happiness,  
Sunday morning hymns  
Now only spiders and kudzu,  
Growling dogs,  
Bored buzzards and low clouds



*James Viggiano*

## Spiders Conspire

in the Crepe Myrtle, tucked  
among the flower pods that refuse  
to bloom this season. The spiders use  
all eight legs, which they consider hands.  
They knit sweaters for baby moths,  
tailor pants for grasshoppers,  
quilt blankets for butterflies. All evening  
spent building dreamcatchers  
for our nightmares. We're ungrateful  
and toss in our sleep. We twitch and turn  
until morning, where the spiders retreat  
into the bloomless Myrtle buds,  
hanging inside their bottomless slumber,  
dreaming of designs for dreamcatchers  
made from hands we call legs.

## Coyotes at Dawn

Their chatter carried across the lake, from the hammock over on the eastern shore. I stood shivering in the fabric of my windbreaker, watching—just a trunk of wax myrtle in the fog and stalks of broom sedge seeding. In the window of silence, they yipped and barked—the sky a rusty, barbed wire orange. I watched for movement between the oaks and muscadine vine. A wolf-like howl cried out above the rest, then subsided.

Another wave of traffic approached from the west, headlights on the highway, sounds growing louder. The tumult of combustible engines and noisy exhausts careened past the preserve – metal boxes shoving their way through the air by sheer force. And then fading. . .

On the grassy rise behind me, a herd of bovine silhouettes loitered around the steel legs of a Duke Energy power line tower. The sprawling caravan of steel behemoths marched imperceptibly across the county, heading south. What did the cows hear in those same *Canidae* sounds? What subtleties and instinctual inclinations?

The fog blurred the details of the preserve: a sprawling patchwork of converted pastureland, cypress domes, and hammocks to the north of Keystone, floodplain forests, swamps, and wet meadows to the south. I inhaled the fog with every breath, pulled it down into my privately-owned lungs, then exhaled. A red-winged blackbird sung in bursts from the barbed wire fence. When I turned for a look, it took flight, its path taking it straight down into the cattails and gone. The red blotches on its wings persisted in the air in a memory captured or half-defined. Above me, a teal-colored sky grew bluer—still conspicuous in its absence of turbine engines. The endless procession of inbound and outbound flights was now a thing of the past—now history.

The gears of our global market forces had ground to a halt—one species of bat-borne virus unleashed to stop us dead in our tracks. We'd forgotten, but now we remembered. We the people—deeply divided and rediscovering our own mortality.

I missed coffee shops, bookstores, and maskless faces. I missed the family the three of us had before. Somewhere a mockingbird mimicked other birds' calls. Red maple saplings grew down by the lake. Something popped near the shore, rocking the surface. The coyotes continued in their social chatter. I longed for a flash of fur, or ivory teeth. But already a wave of traffic approached (this time from Hillsborough County). Their yips and barks grew more insistent, almost violent. The traffic sounds increased and drowned them out, a clamor of racing machines and rushing wind - toxins released into the air. I listened as the last of the traffic sped past, a Doppler shift to a dull, fading drone, the soundwaves growing longer and less intense.

The highway hemmed them in from the south. From the north, the Fox Hollow golf course grounds. Domesticated dogs barked wildly from fenced-in yard to the east. And I watched from the west, with the lake placed squarely between us. Our ancestors had admired them for their cleverness and their untamed eyes. How they vanished like ghosts into desert and field—at the edges of camp, and then gone. We found them everywhere now: in every state, in cities and suburban sprawl. Our industrial exploitations had a cost; our progress, an apocalypse that broke the world. But they thrived, where so many other species had not. They'd survived, and we'd despised them for it.

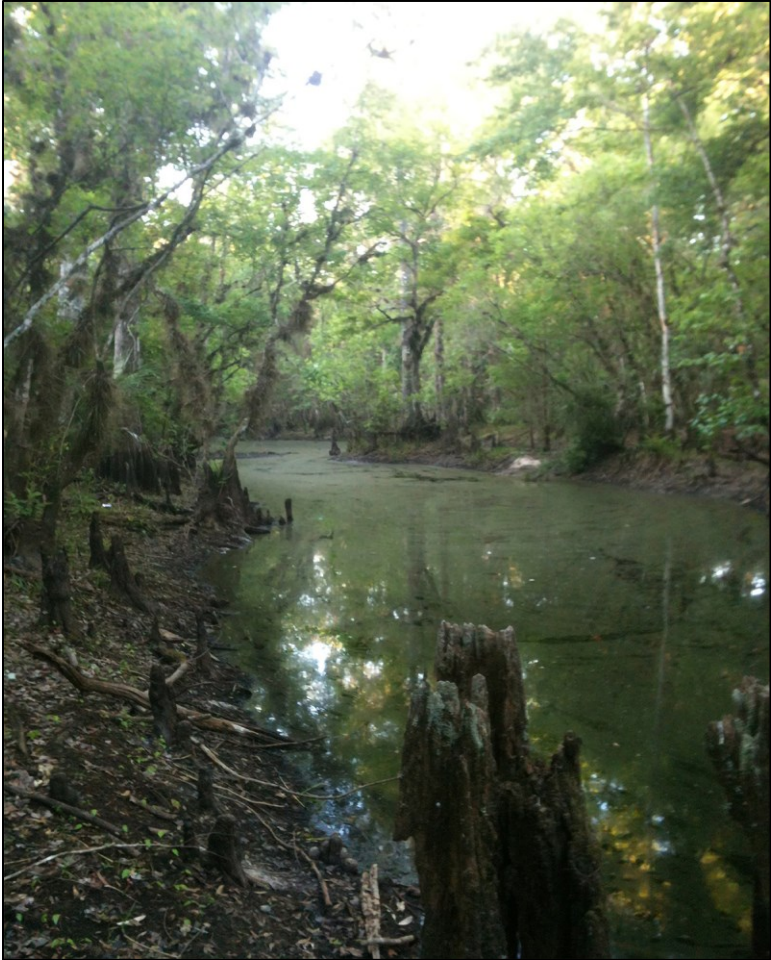
The fog had grown more transparent, entropic. Pieces of it clung to every seed stalk and blade of grass, to the hairs on my arms, to my sneakers soaked through. A wave of traffic approached from the west. Nothing stirred on the opposite shore—no chatter. I felt their absence like a heaviness in the air. I felt an emptiness inside that was absent before. The barking dogs had lost their

zeal, but their instincts pushed them to keep barking more (a half-assed barking that seemed to recognize its own futility). A silver ripple formed near the center of the lake, energy moving outward from its source (more ripples following the first). Something bigger crashed even further out, waves shaking the water lilies and spatterdock. The fog crumbled faster beneath the sun; it fell like padded footfalls to the earth.



*Sonja Jean Craig*

## Cypress Knees



*Sonja Jean Craig*

## Green Swamp

sandhill review

## Somewhere in Central Florida's Wetlands

we stop  
in a palmetto grove  
so my fiancé can take a photo of  
the cranes,

and after a one-hour  
thunderstorm,

they fly out—  
cranes are grace—

and he takes off running  
after them

splashing through the  
muck  
with his smartphone  
held high,

while I linger  
here with  
the usual  
ticks, water moccasins,  
and  
friendly.  
gators.

Later, the sun is setting,  
and I'm still  
waiting for him.

My phone won't work  
because it got wet—  
and the cranes are back.



*Lola Haskins*

## The Trail (2020)

### Woods

Home and here are  
the only places  
I'm allowed  
now the world is sick.

### Trail

Leaves are  
etching the bottoms  
of my shoes.

### Company

A tiny violet moth  
has fallen in love  
with my socks.

### Beside the Path

some brown and white  
mushrooms are  
discussing the rain.

Cut-throats

Smilaxes  
will get to the top  
no matter  
who they smother.

Thrum

Whenever the sky  
dims  
crickets chirp like stars.  
When like a Daughter

heat walks down the aisle  
my cheeks dampen  
past anything  
I can wipe away.

Trees

Your barks, my tribe.  
Your leaves, my light.  
My heart, a bird

who would sing  
for you like  
the thin edge

of the moon,  
sing as large  
as her soul

as small as a molecule,  
sing—imagine!—  
as if she had wings.

*Lola Haskins*

## Luxury (2020)

a glossy leaf  
a full moon wreathed in branches  
a crab spider off-center on her web  
lavender clusters of wisteria  
ivory flutters of lichen  
brown-and-gray velvet fans  
dangling white glories  
a curve of bone—  
I turn each to the light  
then walk on because I know  
I can't afford anything here  
not even a single raindrop  
to wear at my throat.

*Christine Cock*

## Autumn Is Verbose

A single white rose,  
long stem pinned  
by a well-placed rock,  
was left on a yellow bench,  
bankside.

Water burbles  
over slabs of granite  
and the path is littered  
by shards of light,  
mountain laurel, chestnut,  
and tulip poplars.

I now can't tell  
the difference between  
yellow sulfurs and yellow  
leaves flitting  
within the breeze.

Clearly  
trees want to rest,  
showering confetti  
back to soil  
and this rose, lying  
within a limp plastic sleeve,  
petals rusting,  
on the yellow bench  
at the edge of the creek  
says, "It's time to let go."

## Chipmunk Counting Coup in Colorado

It's the third time we've met  
on this lichen-crust, flat-topped, hard-assed boulder  
at Continental Reservoir.  
I'm here bowing to this long drawn moment of folded earth:  
    slippery mountainside/  
    splashes of quivering saffron/  
    slate lake surface mirroring its clouded cover.

She's left her recess of rock shelf  
to race across a gauntlet of open ground  
on a well-worn Lilliputian path,  
dressed in stripes of russet to harvest her world:  
    seeds from the crevasse/  
    berries from windswept stunted scrub/  
    water from shallow indentations cupping pools of rain.

From a smooth ledge two feet away  
I look sidelong and down into her demanding obsidian eyes.  
It's not that I'm dangerous.  
Far worse—  
    I've neglected to bring an offering/  
    Her scolding is palpable/  
    I'm brought to my knees.

## The Truth

Dog and I wander the soggy path  
Willow leans over the pond as if

it's about to dive into the viridian  
surface. Above, Owl swivels

its head, probably having followed  
us the entire way. Man says God

made him in his own image.  
But wait, Woman has claimed

the same thing. Owl, with its round,  
blue hoots maintains a similar truth

and below its branch, Frog, motionless  
as the emerald mat of duckweed

feels a damp, intimate knowledge,  
which is hard to refute, since it sees God

in its reflection daily. Dog claims  
his kind is the deity's choice.

Proof being its name is God's  
palindrome. But then Tick, hitchhiking

on Dog's ear, questions nothing  
as it bites and sucks, knowing

there is no more important being in  
its known universe.

*Christine Cock*

## Travel Sketch

After Basho

The shift began when a few wisps of white hair revealed themselves  
at my temples, then brown spots appeared, dotting skin on my hands  
and forearms. The arthritic limp in my knee has become pronounced  
and I've noticed jar lids are made to fit so much tighter now.

On every questionnaire left in my inbox, from my feelings about  
voting concerns to pleas to help save wolves, I'm compelled

to check the 65+ category. I haven't been asked for an ID  
in a decade ... well, ok, several decades and, trust me, sunglasses

do not serve as reliable disguises for wrinkles. Waiters flirt  
with chic hairdos at other tables, while the glass at mine begs

to be filled. Doors are shut when I approach, not due to rudeness but  
because I'm pretty sure I'm fading from view. The crows and pines

that share my morning see me, which is somewhat of a consolation,  
and I still love to dance with dogs. But I haven't been told about

my pending absence, not in so many words, and as translucence  
progresses like a cloak that feels as if pebbles have been sown

into its seams, I refuse to be drowned by their weight.

The moon is waning  
Blue light folds down into pines  
Owls echo each other



*Janet Watson*

## Beachcombing at Sunset

Wading through tranquil tidal pools  
we collect fossils of creatures  
that lived in the sea through cyclical drifts,  
cataclysmic shifts, climate conversions,  
and planet-changing storms.

Our pockets jingle with ebony sharks' teeth  
and bits of backbone—souvenirs  
of marine life that swam through the water  
for millennia before any of us  
were here to think of them.

Waves murmur in reverent timelessness,  
and we, who must count time,  
tell each other that the day is almost over.  
With generous artistry, the sun paints sky  
and water with every shade of crimson  
before slipping beneath the horizon's blanket.

Walking on the shore of Earth's long story,  
we admire the gifts that were left for us.  
The sun sets. Darkness waits.

## Color of the World Sestina

Blood is inside the world flowing,  
to brighten and waken the dark.  
And rain sharpens the grass, hiding  
drought, stealing its colors to fill  
barren fields; clothe them in plenty.  
What is most alive, which the dying?

What is the color of the world? Death  
is sumptuous and grand, yellow flows  
from entrails of a crushed moth, plenty  
escaping like water from ice. Darkness—  
placental—swells with shadow, fully  
surrounded in light, hidden

but dark and light never hide  
from bright, insistent death.  
Napoleon was color-blind, saw full  
fields of blood like grass flowing,  
greening his garden of killing, darkening  
harming—ruining plenty.

Blue is the night in day, the plenteous,  
eye of heaven, olden and hidden  
in the unseeable dark.  
And morning is but light dying  
into night, when all color flows  
like fallen rain—filling

ground, high and low—as grass fills  
fields, seeds fall and vanish into plenty  
to emerge and rise shimmering, flowing  
toward winter and ice, to hide  
again, in faded light, lost to death  
dwindling in darkness.

Color buries in light, darkens,  
waned, vanishes in fulsome  
night where ice has grown, to die  
in the bright. But light—plentiful—  
changes, falls, fails, hiding  
like blood inside flowing,

closed in the dark, dead only to arise and fill  
the morning, hide the night, flow from  
plenty into the color of the world.

## Contributors' Notes

**Avery Allen** is a Junior from Springfield, Illinois, currently majoring in criminal justice at Saint Leo University. She hopes to continue her career in law school and become an outstanding defense attorney. She enjoys spending time with friends outside on campus, watching sports, drinking iced coffee, and planning events spontaneously! She has always enjoyed literature and reading has been her escape from reality since she was a child. She created this work to share a piece of herself through writing and hopes reading this will allow you into her world.

**Suzanne S. Austin-Hill**, Ph.D., a 2021 Sandhill Writers Retreat participant, has written for *The Washington Post*, *The Tampa Bay Times*, and TAMPA.GOV. She was a contributing author in the anthologies *TattleTALES* and *Shade in the Sunshine State: Reflections on Segregation in Florida, Vol.1*. Her poems have been published by *805 Lit + Art*, *Newtown Literary*, *Lucky Jefferson*, *O Miami*, and now, *Sandhill Review*. Suzanne's photographs have appeared along-side her work in *The News of Sun City Center* and *Of Poets & Poetry*, were exhibited at the SouthShore Regional Library, and have been featured on the Lake Cane Restoration Society website. Her first book of poetry, *Sixty-seven Pages from the Heart*, was published in December 2019 by Kindle Direct Publishing.

**Alisa Azzarelli** is a first-year student at Saint Leo University studying Economics after transferring this year from The University of Alabama. Having an English teacher for a mother, Alisa fell in love with literature and expressing herself through writing poems and short stories and owes this passion to her. Alisa currently spends her time running a business, The Urban Board, and preparing to attend Law School following her graduation from Saint Leo, while still pursuing her love for writing whenever she can.

**Anne Barngrover** (Nonfiction Editor and “Crack the Spine” host) is Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing at Saint Leo University. Her third book of poetry, *Everwhen*, is forthcoming with University of Akron Press in 2023. She is on faculty for the low-residency MA program in Creative Writing. She lives in Tampa, Florida.

**Rick Campbell** is a poet, essayist, and editor living on Alligator Point, Florida. His collection of essays, *Sometimes the Light* is forthcoming from Main Street Rag Press in the spring of 2022. His most recent collection of poems is *Provenance* (Blue Horse Press.) Campbell’s published six other poetry books as well as poems and essays in journals including *The Georgia Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Gargoyle*, *Fourth River*, *Kestrel*, and *the Alabama Literary Review*. He teaches in the Sierra Nevada University MFA Program.

**Patricia Campion** is a member of the San Antonio (FL) Writers’ Group, a graduate of the MA in Creative Writing at Saint Leo University, and a Sandhill Writers Retreat participant. Her poetry and nonfiction have been published in *The Sandhill Review*, *Soul-Lit Magazine*, *These Fragile Lilacs*, and other magazines. She lives in Ireland, where she is working on two novels.

**Rachel Chitofu** writes in Harare, Zimbabwe. Some of her work has appeared in *Quail Bell*, *Uppagus*, *Otoliths*, *New Contrast*, *Stanzas* and *Literary Yard*.

**Christine Cock** is a poet writing from the woods of Florida. She received her BA in Creative Writing from Eckerd College with the Writing Excellence Award and has been published most recently in *Sandhill Review*, *Tiny Seed Journal*, *Red Eft Review*, *From Whispers to Roars*. She was also a winner in the City of Tampa Poetry Contest.

**Janna Correa** is a graduate student at Saint Leo University. Although she is about to get her Masters degree in Creative Writing, there is no end in sight for her quest for the best words: whether putting together formal essays for school or scribbling down random thoughts before they’re forgotten, writing is her passion. She also

loves drawing, her guitar, and waiting for the fruit trees in her backyard to give her some brain-food.

Award winning poet **Sonja Jean Craig** is integrating the poetic perspective and photography as a vehicle for her journey of spiritual mastery. Her New Smyrna Beach home gratifies her love of nature. Sonja Jean's unique observations and work are celebrated worldwide through various online communities, as well as with local organizations. She is a proud member of Florida State Poets Association (Secretary), Florida Writers Association, National State Poets Association and Southeast Volusia Camera Club. She is published in various anthologies including a top ten selection in FWA's *Footprints Collection*, *Poetic Visions*, *Cadence* and *em.bod.i.ment Magazine*. Her photography has been featured at The Hub on Canal and The Art League of Daytona Beach. She often collaborates with other artists, adding her poetry and photographs to create videos, sound art and performance art. Her deck of guidance cards, *A Love Affair with Life*, incorporates her photography and images of her collage art with her poetic musings. Sonja Jean brings into form the aesthetic of her poetic and photographic insights to enhance a life filled with beauty.

**Patrick Crerand (Fiction Editor)** has taught writing and literature at Saint Leo for the past thirteen years. His stories and essays have appeared in *HAD*, *Hobart*, *Flyway*, *New Ohio Review*, *North American Review*, and other magazines. In 2018, Arc Pair Press released a collection of his short stories entitled, *The Paper Life They Lead*. He lives in Dade City with his wonderful wife and kids.

**Kathryn Duncan** is an English professor at Saint Leo University. Her book *Jane Austen and the Buddha: Teachers of Enlightenment* was recently published by Toplight Books. Written for a general audience, the book explores how Austen and the Buddha shared an understanding of human nature and how stories can alleviate or create suffering.

**Emmett Ferree** (he/him) is a self-proclaimed nerd, born and raised in York, Pennsylvania, with an affinity for all things music and

literature. He's currently a graduate student at Saint Leo University, where he studies creative writing with a focus on poetry. When he's not writing, Emmett can be found playing board games, spending time with his guinea pigs, or searching for his perpetually lost glasses.

**Edith Freeman** is a retired university professor. Since her retirement she has had several poems and a short story published. She writes both structured and free verse poetry. Much of her poetry has been inspired by travel in the U.S. and abroad. Her participation in an informal writer's group and at the Sandhill Writers Retreat has been another source of formal and informal support for her development as a writer.

**Marie Gann** is the staff assistant of the Saint Leo University Key West Education Center on the Naval Air Station. She is currently a senior at Saint Leo working towards a Bachelor of Arts - Criminal Justice. She is a lifelong learner and enjoys reading, photography—especially in black & white—, painting, meditation and swimming. Her photographs and paintings are not perfect, which is why it is called “Art.” She had a black and white photograph published by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*. She is currently writing a book involving metaphysics and the afterlife.

**Julie Garisto** is a freelance arts and entertainment editor. She has been an adjunct at Saint Leo and has worked on staff at Tampa-based alt-newsweekly *Creative Loafing* and the Pulitzer-winning *Tampa Bay Times*.

**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*, *Edify Fiction*, *Iris Literary Journal*, *Sandhill Review*, *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. Her publication credits include, among others, *Sandhill Review*, *Dots Publications*, and *Ember Chasm Review* where her work was nominated for 2021 Best of the Net. A native Rhode Islander, Kaisha is inspired by her faith, her family, her friends, and the world around her.

**Peter M. Gordon** has published over 100 poems in journals including *Sandhill Review*, *The Journal of Florida Literature*, and the 5-2 *Crime Poetry* site, among others. He's published two collections, *Two Car Garage* and *Let's Play Two: Poems About Baseball*. Peter founded and is President of Orlando Area Poets, a chapter of the Florida State Poets Association.

**Lola Haskins'** most recent collection of poems—*Asylum: Improvisations on John Clare* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019)—was featured in the *NY Times Sunday Magazine*. Past honors include the Iowa Poetry Prize, two NEAs, two Florida Book Awards, narrative poetry prizes from Southern Poetry Review and New England Poetry Review, the Florida's Eden prize for environmental writing, and the Emily Dickinson Award from Poetry Society of America. She serves as Honorary Chancellor of the Florida State Poets Association.

**Jeff Karon** (Layout and Design) is a business consultant, former university professor, and poet whose chapbook, *If Only the Cherry Blossoms Had Not Fallen*, will be published by Green Rabbit Press. Two of his haiku can be found along Tampa's Riverwalk.

**Paige McBride** is an artist and poet who lives in Dunedin, Florida. She earned a BA in English (Creative Writing), 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 *Calla Press*, *Sandhill Review*, *Straylight Literary Magazine*, *Saint Katherine Review*, *West Trade Review*, *Tulane Review*, *Heartwood Literary Magazine*, and *American Chordata*, among others.

**Cris Michel** holds a bachelor's degree in History, and is graduating in the Summer of 2022 with an MA in Creative Writing



at Saint Leo. “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. My many cats and my service dog provide me with a non-human perspective of humanity. 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.”

**Mary Missouri** is a Doctoral Candidate in the Doctor of Education Program at Saint Leo University. In 2020, she received a Degree of Education Specialist. In 2018, she received a Master of Arts in Creative Writing from Saint Leo University. She is a member of Omega Nu Lambda, National Honor Society (2020) and Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education (2020).

**William Mitchell** is a US war veteran who served with a nuclear submarine squadron, an experience that underlies much of his writing. He has been writing poetry for twenty-five years and has participated in a number of Sandhill Writers Retreat. He is a member of the Tampa Writer’s Alliance and has won several of their poetry prizes. He is increasingly convinced that poetry can play a vital role in improving lives and hopes his poems will cause people to reflect on fragility.

**Kenrinique Morris** is a senior from The Bahamas, majoring in Biomedical and Health Sciences. Her favorite genre is poetry, but she also loves to experiment with creative non-fiction. She has worked as a Lab Assistant on campus for the past year. She is also President Pro Temo and the Allocation Chair for the SGU Senate. She is an active member of the Caribbean Student Association, where she serves on the special events committee. She is also an active member of the Tri Beta Honor Society, the Black Student Union, and Lead Scholars. She is the 2021-2022 Homecoming Queen. Entertainment

and event planning are her passions, and she hopes that after graduation she can also explore this passion on an international platform.

**Nigia Morris** is a Bahamian Junior at Saint Leo University majoring in Biology-Ecology. She aspires to be a writer and poet as she enjoys writing fiction and poetry works in her free time.

**Mish (Eileen) Murphy** is Associate Poetry Editor for *Cultural Daily* magazine and teaches English and Literature at Polk State College, Florida. She just published her third book of poetry (fourth book overall), 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 August 2020 (Blood Pudding Press). She's had more than 100 individual poems published in journals such as *Tinderbox*, *Writing in a Woman's Voice*, *Thirteen Myna Birds*, and many others. In the UK, her poetry has been published in *Paper & Ink*, *The Open Mouse*, *Quarterday Review*, and *Poetica*. Mish also is a prolific book reviewer and visual artist; she illustrated the children's book *Phoebe and Ito Are Dogs* written by John Yamrus (2019).

**Carol Ann Moon** is a full professor and an academic librarian at Saint Leo University. Moon received her MFA from Stetson in 2017. Her poems have appeared in *Sandhill Review*, *Aquifer*, *PSPOETS*, and in Spring 2022 in *Muddy River Poetry Review*.

**Diane Neff** is a former professor, college dean, and US Navy officer and now serves as an adult programs librarian in the Seminole County (FL) Public Library System. She is a past president of the Orlando Area Poets, a chapter of the Florida State Poets Association. Her poetry has appeared in *Encore*, anthology of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies; *Cadence*, anthology of the Florida State Poets Association; *Florilegium*, anthology of the Seminole County (FL) Library writing groups; *We Were Not Alone*, the Community Building Art Works anthology; and *Sandhill Review*. Diane holds a BA from the University of Iowa (psychology), a MA from the University of Missouri (sociology), a M.Ed. from the

University of West Florida (education and training management, and an Ed. D. from the University of Central Florida (educational leadership. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

**Cari Oleskewicz** is a writer based in Gainesville, Florida. Her work has been published in a number of print and online journals, including *Thimble Literary Magazine*, *Big City Lit*, *Mom Egg Review*, *Literary Orphans*, *The Collapsar*, *The Fourth River*, and *Mojave River Review*. She is currently completing a memoir and is a frequent participant in the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

**Rodney Owen** is a resident of North Carolina. He is a graduate of Saint Leo University and has an MA in Communication Arts from The University of West Florida. He has published fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in magazines and journals as varied as *The Lyricist*, *Engineered Systems*, *The Ohio Speech Journal*, and *Apt Magazine*. His great passion in life is life itself, the meaning of which is found reflected in the sunsets of North Carolina's Outer Banks.

**Elaine Person** writer, instructor, editor, speaker, performer, and photographer has her writing included in Random House's *A Century of College Humor*, *Sandhill Review*, Florida Writers Association's collections, *The Florida Writer* magazine, *Not Your Mother's Book*, *Poets of Central Florida*, *Haikuniverse.com*, *Encore*, *The Five-Two* online, FSPA's *Cadence* anthologies, *The Isolation Challenge*, *Of Poets and Poetry*, *Fresh Fish*, and *Poetic Visions*, Museum of Art-Deland's exhibit and anthology. Elaine won the *Saturday Evening Post* limerick contest. Elaine leads writing workshops for the Maitland Public Library and Crealdé School of Art. She writes "Person"alized poems and stories for all occasions for gifts. [Personalwrite@gmail.com](mailto:Personalwrite@gmail.com).

**Steven Richardson** is a Computer Science major in the honors program. He is a junior who is also in the 3 + 1 Cybersecurity program. However, he also has a strong passion for English and Creative Writing, wishing to incorporate this passion into his future career.

**Malia Roberts** is currently a second-year student attending Saint Leo University with plans to graduate with a bachelor's degree

in criminal justice. She aspires to become a part of law enforcement to increase relationships and help make a change within the community.

**Gianna Russo** (Editor in Chief, Poetry Editor) is Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing at Saint Leo University, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate creative writing courses and directs the Sandhill Writers Retreat. She is the inaugural Wordsmith of the City of Tampa, appointed by Mayor Jane Castor in 2019. She is the author of the poetry collections, *All I See is Your Glinting: 90 Days in the Pandemic*, with photographer Jenny Carey (Madville Publishing, 2022); *One House Down* (Madville Publishing, 2019); and *Moonflower*, winner of a Florida Book Award. She has published poems in *Green Mountains Review*, *Gulf Stream*, *Negative Capability*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Apalachee Review*, *The Sun*, *Poet Lore*, *saw palm*, *The MacGuffin*, *Florida Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Eklephrasis*, *Florida Humanities Council Forum*, *Karamu*, *The Bloomsbury Review*, and *Calyx*, among others. She is Saint Leo's inaugural Poet-in-Residence for the College of Arts and Sciences and scholarly journal *Rebus*.

**J. Paul Schellenberg** is from Jacksonville, Florida. He is a student at Saint Leo, currently in his second year of studies in obtaining a B.A. Business Management degree, with a minor in Accounting. Along with being included in the Saint Leo Honors Program, he has the pleasure of being a student-leader for the University Ministry. He has many interests, including sports, music, piano, and astronomy (which is very apparent in this short writing).

**Sean Sexton** was born and grew up on his family's 'Treasure Hammock Ranch and divides his time between managing a 700-acre cow-calf and seed stock operation, painting, and writing. He is author of *Blood Writing, Poems* (Anhinga Press), *May Darkness Restore* (Press 53), and two chapbooks. His third full poetry collection, *Portals*, is due out this Fall. He has performed at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, NV, Miami Book Fair International, and the High Road Poetry and Short Fiction Festival, in Winston Salem, NC. He was nominated for a 2020 and 2021

Pushcart Prize and received a Florida Individual Artist's Fellowship in 2001. He is a board member of the Laura Riding Jackson Foundation ([Lauraridingjackson.org](http://Lauraridingjackson.org)) and founding event chair of the Annual Poetry and Barbeque now in its eleventh year. He also co-founded and curates a Poetry and Organ Advent and Lenten Concert Series at Community Church in Vero Beach, FL ([ccovb.org](http://ccovb.org)) featuring nine concerts each year attracting poets from all over the US. He became inaugural Poet Laureate of Indian River County in 2016.

**Amy Stasio** is a freshman and English major at Saint Leo University. She also studied creative writing in high school. In her free time, she loves to play with her dog, read, and watch movies.

**Kate Sweeney** holds a PhD in English from Binghamton University and an MFA in poetry from the University of Florida. Her chapbook, *Better Accidents*, was published by Yellow Jacket Press. Her first full-length book of poetry, *Worrisome Creatures*, is forthcoming in Spring 2022 (Madville Publishing). Her work has also appeared in *Best New Poets 2009*, *Hayden's Ferry*, *Meridian*, *Tampa Review*, and *Poet Lore*, among others. She has been an adjunct professor of English at Saint Leo.

**Cheryl A. Van Beek's** work has appeared previously in *Sandhill Review*, *Odet*, *Poeming Pigeon*, *River Poets Journal*, and the 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 Vice President 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, as well as other venues, 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.

**James Viggiano** is a poet from Florida currently living in Alabama. He is trying to be as bold as his mustache, deep as his

coffee addiction, and spirited as his dog. He hopes to write the kind of poetry that falls from the sky after a storm and raises the voice of the everyday man. James is a student in the Saint Leo creative writing master's program, studying poetry, and a member of the 2023 graduate class.

**Mariana Navarrete Villegas** is a senior at Saint Leo University majoring in Global Studies with a minor in Psychology. She is part of the varsity swim team, an editor of the Arts and Culture section in the *Lion's Pride Media Group Newspaper*, and Vice President of Sigma Tau Delta. Mariana was born in Mexico, lived in Panama, and now the United States. She enjoys writing poetry and baking in her free time.

**Emmalee Welch** is a junior at Saint Leo University, majoring in English with a specialization in Creative Writing. Her favorite genre is fiction, but she also loves to experiment with poetry and creative non-fiction. She has worked as a Resident Assistant on campus for the past two years and recently joined the *Lion's Pride Media Group Newspaper* as a contributing writer. Writing is her passion, and she hopes that one day you will see her work on the shelves of Barnes and Noble.

**Derora Williams** is an alumna of Shippensburg University of PA where she received her Bachelor's Degree in English with a writing concentration, and is currently part of Masters of Creative Writing Program at Saint Leo University. She has been the Program Coordinator of an after-school program for middle-school-aged students for 5 years, and has worked for the school district for 12 years. She is a hardworking mother of two beautiful daughters who is determined to raise them righteously.

✧ LEARN ABOUT ✧

## THE 9TH ANNUAL SANDHILL WRITERS RETREAT

[Sandhill Writers Retreat | Saint Leo University](#)





*Suzanne S. Austin-Hill*

Life or Death

Avery Allen

Suzanne S. Austin-Hill

Alisa Azzarelli

Rick Campbell

Patricia Campion

Rachel Chitofu

Christine Cock

Janna Correa

Sonja Jean Craig

Patrick Crerand

Kathryn Duncan

Emmett Ferree

Edith Freeman

Marie Gann

Julie Garisto

Erika B. Girard

Kaisha A. Girard

Peter M. Gordon

Lola Haskins

Paige McBride

Cris Michel

Mary Missouri

William Mitchell

Angelica Molina

Kenrinique Morris

Nigia Morris

Mish (Eileen) Murphy

Carol Ann Moon

Diane Neff

Cari Oleskewicz

Rodney Owen

Elaine Person

Steven Richardson

Malia Roberts

Brianna Rodibaugh

J. Paul Schellenberg

Sean Sexton

Amy Stasio



Kate Sweeney

Cheryl A. Van Beek

James Viggiano

Mariana Navarrete Villegas

Emmalee Welch

Derora Williams

