



Bear Review

Bear Review is an online literary journal of poems and micro prose out of Kansas City, Missouri. Published twice a year, in fall and spring, *Bear Review* is made possible by its readers' help and support. The editors, Brian Clifton, Marcus Myers, Andrew Reeves, and Ruth Williams, would like to express their gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the journal.

We read submissions year-round at www.bearreview.submittable.com. Send up to five poems or one to two short prose pieces (maximum: 500 words). We will consider a long poem, as well as a sequence of interconnected short sections of a short story, as long as it promises to keep the fire stoked. We are open to simultaneous submissions but ask the writer to notify us immediately about an acceptance elsewhere.

Cover art, 'A Meat Stall With The Holy Family Giving Alms' by Pieter Aertsen (1508 - 1575).

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Craig Morgan Teicher

Song Abstract

I want sound like gravel coughing underfoot
when I sing, like keyboards clacking
underfinger, a happy drone of subdivided
time. The tearing cascade of the spiral
notebook's page, like a waterfall weeping
over its rocks, is the vibration of my desire.
Birds grieve when their eggs fall undernest.
Who will teach me to keen like them?
Drains are also stricken as they gurgle water
down to the bottom of their undersoul—
lessons from drains are free. My true
voice is a parade of dashes and dots, a mute
series of blank blinks. What you hear now
is autotuned. I'm so sick of my sweetness.

Aubree Else

Food Poisoning Over Phoenix

I have a plastic bag just in case this turbulence shakes something
out of me. The seatbelt sign is on again. I need you to pull it together

when we go through customs, my husband says. The stewardess
with teased out hair, fake eyelashes sloshes two ginger ales into his hands.

Her hair is a box dye, an almost navy color where it's thinner. We are somewhere
along the Mexican border, and most passengers have hats with neon writing

cheaply printed on them. One guy wears a bandana that reads "Baby Dick".
Two sips into the ginger ale, and my breathing sounds like a toddler is jumping

on my stomach. The woman behind me is snoring loudly, her gaping mouth
the only thing I see between the seats. The pilot crackles above us:

we are beginning our downward descent, please prepare for landing.

Seatbelt off, I plow past four thick legs to the aisle toward the back bathroom again.
Eyelashes looks as if I am holding a gun, reaches out from her floating seat to unlatch

the bathroom door. A wet something lines the corners of the toilet base. I squat
and hit my head on the lower safety bar, but remain upright. Eyelashes knocks,

come out we are landing. *Breathe one two through the mouth no crying.* I am Virgin Mary

in a dark room—uneasy and unwanted, quick and dirty. More churning knocking
then lights. Sit right down here, a too close face tells me. The last seat, near

a Japanese college student studying atmospheric patterns. I want my head to fall off
into the aisle so these people will deplane faster once we land. Wheels down,

cramping again. Eyelashes says, that poor girl. Her friend agrees and notes
their landing in Dallas last week was rough. The bag still in hand, I am that girl,

the one who can't handle a little turbulence. I cannot open my eyes, make myself
vomit, or block out the urge to hold the bag like a funnel from my mouth.



Ellen Jantzen

Accumulation

Burnside Soleil

Nature Morte

The dancer smokes
Outside, bonfire
For gnats.

She hears the lilting
Brawl of the moon.

Grits
Hot in her belly.

She thinks about a white bowl
Of cherries—her grandmother:

You know those hands—
Song-made, two fingers.
Pirouette.

Genevieve Williams

Threat

I slept next to a loaded
revolver. Nailed to the east wall,
the stretched skin of a coyote. Skulls,

skeletons of birds, protected us
from the corners of that pink room
her father said looked like a whorehouse.

He took me to the woods that summer, taught me
to shoot at wood blocks propped up
against trees. *It is necessary*, he said,

to know how to protect yourself.
He soaked the handle of his axe in water
when the blade got loose.

Fixing the neighbor's fence,
he hacked tangled branches as I unspooled
new barbwire.

Because he laughed, I laughed,
when the blue of his axe blade arced past
me, stuck into dirt.

On the kitchen counter, our gray cat,
his brain exposed. The vet bent over him,
working. Something got to him.

That was what it was to live
on the farm; you went about your daily routine
until suddenly you were mauled

by an animal.
The cat never recovered, not really.
After his head was stitched shut, he fell

down our cellar stairs
and we found him mewling,
lost in a cold room empty

except for onions that hung from the rafters.
He started to pee on things, walk crookedly,
cry into the sour air.

I didn't know that by asking for help
with my back, which had hurt ever since
I'd carried the heavy end

of a chain-sawed stump of tree,
that I was vulnerable to injury,
that I could hurt like that—

I'm going to go as far as I can with you,

he said. *Sixteen is the age of consent. I'm a lawyer,
I know. No one needs to know.*

When the cat stopped coming around,
we didn't go searching for him,
knowing without knowing

that he'd wandered
back into the jaws
of the same animal

that had ripped the top of his brain out,
the same animal that had separated
part of him from the all of him.

Genevieve Williams

Killer Of Small Threats, Survivor Of What's Yet To Come

Sweat dried onto my farm girl body,
film of salt, second skin. I pick at
cockleburs sticking to my ankles,

feel a pull on my head,
and by now, it's second nature—
I pinch the tiny tic body

and bring it to my front teeth,
where I bite it into an unmoving v,
spit the tickle from my inner lip,

and walk the remaining blood shell
to the toilet. I turn on the shower
and a mouse peeks out

from a hole above the faucet, startles
at the shape of me. She retreats
into the wall after nearly falling

out. I don't yet know that feeling
but will, how fear can stop you
dead when an unexpected shape

is there, or a hard weight presses
against you, and something in you
breaks in half.



Suzanne Rancourt

Ghost Dance

Farrah Field

from *American Looseness*

The kind of wind rushing by my words
We sound as though we've been walking for ages but we're sitting on the road
As soon as the grass is soon
She is quiet without judgment her face is my face
Wearing the yellow dress with ruffles my mother sewed
In my exciting life sadness is my best friend
I don't want your co-dependency right now
I want you in the let's watch a movie and talk the whole time sort of way
Did I go to the afternoon barbeque with Heather and Jay
My father's blood was O negative what's yours
The unspoken violence about to happen in my family
Golf for example
What does it feel like when I reach all the way from behind to the front
It has taken me a whole lifetime to find a form
This is what my poetry will be like until I die

Devon Balwit

Poor / Town

I haven't earned the right
to speculate
on shuttered store fronts,

to count the churches,
the rehab centers,
the single library,

to gloss the cordwood
and the wrecked
cars,

to deem those
behind the counters
trapped or lucky,

to read the landscape
beyond thorns
and red dust,

to squint against
the glare,
dry skin cracking,

hungry for surety,
like signage
along an unknown road.



Ellen Jantzen

Off Road

Niina Pollari

Beast Ice

for M.M.

When I tell you I like your hair
I am falling-down drunk on Beast Ice
The Doors are playing, lol

I never liked Jim Morrison or his baby nose
Even though I respect him as a 27-year-old dead person
He had a good performance ethic
For a man

But I like your hair
And how you manage it

Hair is a personality
People ascribe a lot of presence to it
Which makes me think about feelings
Bouncy feelings, limp feelings

There's a theory about feelings I once heard
Before I left school

But I can't remember it now
Sorry for the false start

Some people die from feelings

Looking at your beautiful hair

I feel my heart rising

Like King Lear's wandering uterus

Niina Pollari

A Strong Survival Instinct

Touching someone's arm is a familiar gesture
Let's talk about the familiar
Last week a roach touched me
By walking all the way up my arm
It was a high-sky kind of day
With the sun touching everything with light
Even the roach was the illuminated brown
Of an old leather book, whiskeyed and lit
It paused to await my seeing it
Time stretched long like a piece of gum
Thin, filament-like, until one of us broke
The person who broke was me
I shuddered and moved
Which made it move too

When you see something you recognize that also disgusts you
Is your instinct to scream because you are afraid
Or because you don't like looking at yourself
I recognize myself when I think about how it's everywhere
Even on my own arm which I think of as my property
I am trying to not use words that make it seem alien
About its shape or the way it conducts motion
Instead I am trying to convey things I recognize

A strong survival instinct
A sense of community
When you look at something enough to recognize it
Does it hurt you to see your history
And the fact that it's omnipresent
It hurts me

My mother once told me
That a childhood nickname for my father was "Roach"
Because as a child he had gapped teeth at the sides of his mouth
And although they hadn't spoken for years
Sometime after my father died
A roach visited my mother
It crawled up her arm
Then disappeared fast
They are very good at disappearing fast
I recognize myself in that too
For years I have avoided writing about my father
His meaning in my life and the heft and shape of his passing
Because it's too easy to make this life event into a metaphor
Especially for a woman writing about her father

FYI
I don't think this is a good way
But poetry is a failure like that
Poetry requires
An admission that you failed
A changing of the subject
And a kind of sick pride
I used to date a boy

Who lived in his parents' yard
In a tiny studio with a drop ceiling full of roaches
'They disgusted me when they fell on my skin
Whenever I stayed over
'They always fell on me
It was like they wanted to

My antennae are invisible
And I groom them a lot
And I need my beloved to touch me on them
I read a study about female roaches
About how they produce more eggs
If they are touched by other roaches on their antennae
I cuddle my beloved in bed and I think
If I could produce more eggs I would
But I scrutinize hard and judge fast
When I am creating my family
So it's not as simple for me
You could say
'That I've lost touch with nature
Maybe we all kind of have

Most of the time
'There's no time to think about its beautiful color
Or shape like a sticky Mediterranean date
You just make a reaction to its alienness
Its unbelongingness
Why does it live in your house with you
Has it been there the whole time you've been there
But what if you just slow down

What if you ride the time as it lengthens
The last time I saw a roach
I didn't scream
I waited
Then I got up slowly
And left the room

I would like to cultivate this response
Because to let in things that actually horrify you
And watch then how they become part of you
Makes them belong to you
So dear roach the next time
You crawl up my arm and wait for me
I will wait for you too
And if more of you come I will wait for them too
If a mantle of roaches forms around my neck and arms
And upon touching me begins to go still
Until it is improbably unmoving
Its bodies around my body like a family
Holding still
I will too



William Crawford

Forensic Foraging Gotham City

Angela Meyer

Broadsword

Last night I
Split myself in two, in bed
& became still broader
& still

Nothing spilled or frothed or bubbled
Such was the searing
& like much that harms

It calmed me
To be splayed out
But cauterised

Darren Demaree

blue and blue and blue #116

if the rabbits
took the ocean
the ocean

would be full
of rabbits
& i would feel

much safer
about my own
fucking life



Joachim Brohm

On Fire

Miguel Murphy

Crown

Infection, he says, is a train
On a slope down hill
The thrill of your elected
Emptiness
Speeding at you like death's fantastic velvet

at your own personal number—
Cell count. Viral copies.

These new, exponential trees.
Ratios. I don't want
the night's vast dust to gutter me

yet. Doctor, it is summer. I want
To wear what the deer is wearing
Chewing his green
Leaves.

Ama Codjoe

Superpower

Over lunch, with a forkful of salad that wavered
for a few minutes in front of her mouth, a girlfriend

of mine, a novelist friend, discussed her idea for a superhero.
In the face of perilous danger our girl would whip off

hoop earrings and with a flick of her bangled
wrist wield them against opponents. After injuring

her arch rival, forcing him underground, and halting his plot
to gentrify the neighborhood, discs boomeranged back

to the earlobes of our fearless hero, poised and ready
for the next nemesis. A moment before she took action,

the comic bubble would read: Don't make me
take off my earrings. Hearing this, I thought of

John Henry, steel-driving man, whose hammer
and superhuman strength left him dead, buried

in the sand, and of enslaved women who, pregnant,
picked as much cotton as any man, who pregnant

by the same man who said he owned her—who, it must
be said raped her again, again—the same man, or someone

like him who after the pain of labor demanded she return
to the fields, and after the pain of labor sold their child away.

And it may seem unlikely, but I thought of my mother,
twin at each breast, how her ached body became a type

of machine, and of the broth she cooked to fight off
colds. By now can you tell I'm tired of fighting?

I envy the ordinary woman whose earrings are earrings.
She removes them so as not to scratch her lover's face.

Ama Codjoe

Origin Myth with Somersaults

I gripped the feet of my twin
brother. He clasped my ankles

like merry-go-round handles. Backs
arched, out-of-breath, we spun circles,

whirled until dizzy. Letting go,
we sidled toward each other's heads.

Blind fingers cupped each face, untouched
as we were by anyone else:

the crook of our father's elbow,
chickenpox, first kiss, milk carton

corners. Our own mother hadn't
touched us yet, though we lived inside

her: hairless and resting until
one of us nudged—asked, Go again?



Paul Gisbrecht

Young Man in East Village

Jennifer Martelli

Sobriety

When I left today after being cruel
to my kids, I saw a black and yellow

garter snake along the footpath
behind the high school

and the temple. Its back was broke,
and when a snake breaks its back

its whole body is lame. The snake
dragged itself from one bush to the other—

the juniper not yet ginned up. I fear
snakes and I fear my children

being lonely, as I am lonely. Some men
take up snakes knotted in a wooden latch box

at the church's altar. A thirsty snake (diamond
back, copperhead) can't make venom, and so

the bites around the men's wrists
come to nothing more

than a headache. The snake on the path
looked like a slow train

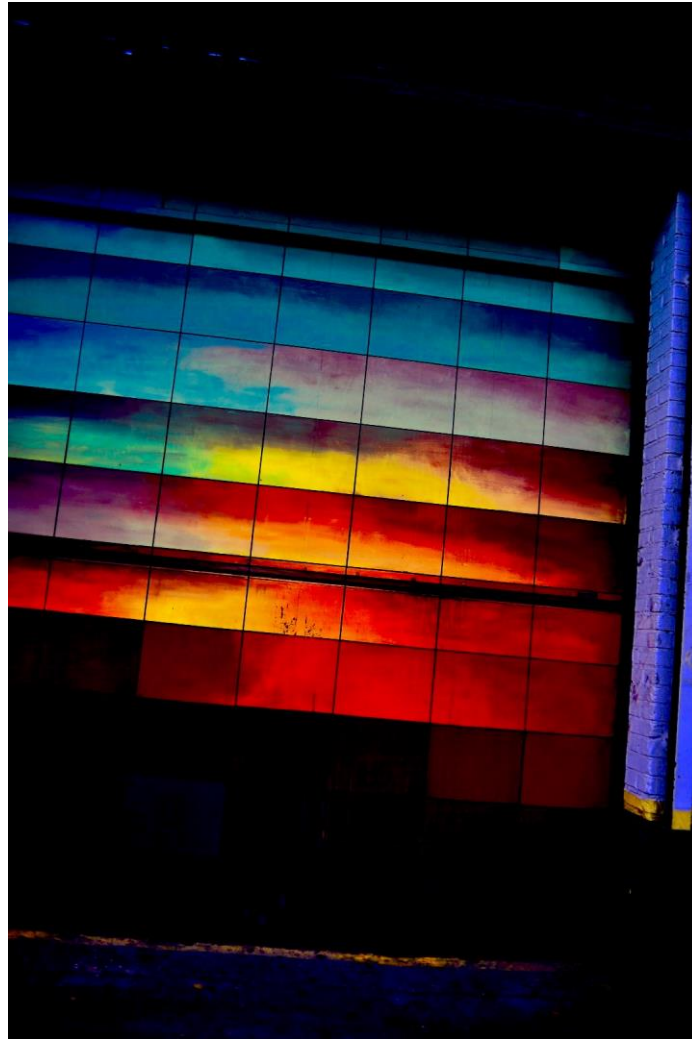
at night, its cars (reading car, club and
bar car, diner) lit up,

busy. That's how it looked
anyway from my distance above.



William Cranford

Forensic Foraging Gotham City



William Cranford

Forensic Foraging Gotham City



William Cranford

Forensic Foraging Gotham City

Kamden Hilliard

Self Portrait Under Blanket On United Flight UA495

No1'd answer my needful YES
eff I'd said *next* 2 him / so the dress Yes

No doomboi 2000 [worry free Deli
very fee] but a plaintive rest yes

Jack'd up in His made mind He all
feisty 4 fucc up my *ooo tex-mex yes*

I've consented 2 publik incandescency
not His *black beans only* mess Yes

I do ownership but He could not [at least]
not *not yet not yet not y!et ye!t ye!s! !!!*

I 2 hav deposed my decomposed
desire but the nigga is wet Yes

I am enjoying it not because I shan't
b [lemme tell yu sum shet yas

1nce I tuned a man's ocean of salt
dry w hand (I'm a thin subset o' yes)]

“The Thong Song” 2 is a sing & I
let his freedom ringme in2 debt Yes

I will watch *THE FREE STATE OF JONES*
even tho it’s mad off brand I let [yes

let] Him choose a snack box 2 Whiskey
a while after His lessening is so yessening

I am thinking of Molly Bloom I am yes
I am thinking yes thinking yes yes *yes*

Peter Mishler

Tenor

Piece of quartz on his way to choir,
forehead holding the coldest sun,
no one can see you disappear your talismans:

out of your parka, into the bowl,
you relinquish a single section of fruit
from the food pyramid,
your offering.

Then for an hour on felted risers
beneath a vaulted ceiling
you're made to sing the Kyrie:

have mercy on every plane that has vanished,
mercy on every waterfall
that drops from the office mezzanines

in parts per million
onto the trees and earth and men and beasts
as equally as our mild hearts are equal.

When singing you're told to fold your hands.
When singing you're told to round your lips

to make the shape of a well.

In the dark of your mouth
I know you are saving
an orb of your human spit.

Little silver thought,
you changeling,
protector of the snowscape
walking the wet retaining wall to your house at dusk,

the history of your private life has begun.



Ellen Jantzen

Strata

Lauren Berry

A Stepmother Vows To Determine Her Origin

Sometimes I wonder if you believe
I should I have been
swept away by the last storm.

Tonight, as the town hushes
down to sleep, I run
hot water over white dishes

and watch you
through the kitchen window
as you step out
onto the dock. You switch

the light that turns
the sea so pale
it's possible

to see to the bottom,
through the green heaving
chest of water.

Was I the fresh lumber
for the part of the dock

that was missing?

Was I the oyster shell
who sliced your heel
in the slap of the salt water?

Was I the balm
your father soothed across the cut
and then wiped from his hands
with a rough red towel?

You run a finger
over the wood's blond dust
and slip it
in your mouth just to see.

And the fish rise to you
with their sore mouths
going open and open
with their questions.

Bridget Lowe

Sea World

I am counting down the days
on my abacus of bone. I write home
with my finest India ink.

At dawn the damaged will be laid
out in rows and warmed by a light
until their strength returns.

At least enough to wave. Little girl,
this one's for you. Always has
been, always will be. I'm Babe Ruth

pointing toward a distant, sun-hued
orb. And just like that the shadows
return to their lair. And applause.

It moves me until I think that I might
speak. Then the tragic schema
of the common beach ball begins again.

Lynne Viti

November Sunset, 4:14 PM

As I cut the skinny branches of the smokebush
I hear a loud rattle in the sky. A black helicopter
descends lower, disappears. The noise carries
from the school playground at the end
of the block. I cut branches into small pieces, toss them
into the leaf bag with the rosebush clippings.
A woman walks by with her daughters,
tells me the helicopter med-vac'd someone,
deposited her –or him–with the EMTs.
I drag the last leaf bag to lean against the retaining wall.
Winter's three weeks off, but the bare trees say
it's started. All that's left alive: the rosemary, hellebore, a lone red cabbage.
The solstice approaches, a fixed point in the middle distance.
Inside, the black night shows itself in tall kitchen windows.



Fabrice Poussin

Canning The Future

Alyse Bense

Tourism

Be a tourist in your own home,
its skeletal walls flayed of plaster flesh.
You may wonder why each picture frame
seems empty. No one there is familiar,
so pass among their faces as if they were silk
curtains, luxurious but airy volumes.
It's insignificant, and yet you can't quite
understand the beauty of an abandoned silo
that incubates saplings in its hollowness.
Where you promise but make no guarantees.
The scene is here for you, and only you,
and whomever else happens to drive by
on that country road. Look at each room
from every angle. This house is no more
than its wooden frame.

Now be a tourist in your own body.
Anchor your toes—the swaying catches
everyone off guard. Like a rental home,
the body's repairs are not included:
busted pipes, faulty ankle, worn roofing,
a rupture. Don't let the beating stop. Be like
my favorite gaudy porcelain clock—rewind,
spring forward, turn back with your hands.



Maury Gortemiller

They Will Be Punished with Everlasting Destruction

Contributor Notes

Devon Balwit is a poet and educator from Portland, Oregon. She has a chapbook *How the Blessed Travel* available from Maverick Duck Press, and a second *Forms Most Marvelous*, forthcoming from dancing girl press (summer 2017). Her recent poems have appeared in numerous print/on-line journals, among them: Oyez, The Cincinnati Review; The Peacock Journal, Glass: A Journal of Poetry, Red Paint Hill, The Ekphrastic Review, The Stillwater Review, Red Earth Review; and The Timberline Review. **Alyse Bense** is a PhD candidate in Literary Studies and Creative Writing at the University of Kansas. Her recent poems have appeared in *The Adroit Journal*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *Quarterly West*, *New South*, and elsewhere. She is the author of the chapbooks *Not of Their Own Making* (dancing girl press) and *Shift* (Plan B Press) and serves as the Book Reviews Editor at *The Los Angeles Review*. **Lauren Berry** received a BA in creative writing from Florida State University and an MFA from the University of Houston, where she won the Inprint Verlaine Prize and served as poetry editor for *Gulf Coast*. From 2009 to 2010 she held the Diane Middlebrook Poetry Fellowship at the Wisconsin Institute. Her first collection of poems, *The Lifting Dress*, was selected by Terrance Hayes to win the National Poetry Series and released by Penguin in 2011. She currently teaches AP English Literature and English Four at Cypress Woods High School. **Ama Codjoe** was raised in Youngstown, Ohio with roots in Memphis and Accra. She has received support from the Saltonstall, Blue Mountain Center, Cave Canem Foundation, and Callaloo Creative Writing Workshop. Her poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Narrative*, *The Georgia Review* and elsewhere. Ama is a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee. She received the Rona Jaffe Graduate Fellowship from the Creative Writing department at New York University where she is poetry co-editor for *Washington Square Review*. **Darren Demaree** is the author of six poetry collections, most recently *Many Full Hands Applauding Inelegantly* (2016, 8th House Publishing). He is the Managing Editor of the *Best of the Net Anthology* and *Ovenbird*

Poetry. **Aubree Else** is an Iowa native. Her work has appeared in *The Chattahoochee Review* and *Upwrite Magazine*. She lives in Omaha, Nebraska, with her husband. **Farrah Field** is the author of *Wolf and Pilot, Rising*, and the chapbook *Parents*. She lives in Brooklyn and is the co-founder of Berl's Poetry Shop. **Kamden Hilliard** is a reader at Gigantic Sequins, an editor at Jellyfish Magazine, and goes by Kam. They got posi vibes from The Ucross Foundation, The Davidson Institute, and Callaloo. The author of two chapbooks: *Distress Tolerance* (Magic Helicopter Press, 2016) and *Perceived Distance From Impact* (Black Lawrence Press, 2017), Kam stays busy. Find their work in *The Black Warrior Review*, *West Branch*, *Salt Hill*, and other sunspots. **Bridget Lowe** is the author of the poetry collection *At the Autopsy of Vaslav Nijinsky* (Carnegie Mellon University Press, 2013) and her poems have been published in *The New Yorker*, *A Public Space*, *Poetry*, *Best American Poetry*, *The New Republic*, *Ploughshares*, and elsewhere. She lives in Kansas City. **Jennifer Martelli's** debut poetry collection, *The Uncanny Valley*, was published in 2016 by Big Table Publishing Company. She is also the author of the chapbook, *Apostrophe* and the chapbook, *After Bird*, forthcoming from Grey Book Press. Her work has appeared in *Thrush*, *[Pank]*, *Glass Poetry Journal*, *The Heavy Feather Review*, and *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*. Jennifer Martelli has been nominated for Pushcart and Best of the Net Prizes and is the recipient of the Massachusetts Cultural Council Grant in Poetry. She is a book reviewer for *Up the Staircase Quarterly*, as well as a co-curator for *The Mom Egg* VOX Blog Folio. **Angela Meyer** is a writer and commissioning editor. Her work has been widely published, including in *Best Australian Stories*, *Island*, *The Lifted Brow*, *Killings*, *The Big Issue*, and *The Australian*. She is the author of a book of flash fiction, *Captives* (Inkerman & Blunt). She commissions for *Echo* (Bonnier Publishing Australia). She started her career as a bookseller and a blogger (LiteraryMinded), and has also lectured, reviewed books, and interviewed authors at major festivals in Australia and overseas. **Peter Mishler** is the author of *Fludde* (Sarabande Books, 2018), which won the Kathryn A. Morton Prize in Poetry. **Craig Morgan Teicher's** new book of poems is *The Trembling Answers* (BOA Editions, 2017). He is the editor of *Once and For All: The Best of Delmore Schwartz* (New Directions, 2016) and lives in New Jersey with his family. **Miguel Murphy** is the author of *Detainee* and *A Book Called Rats*. He lives in Southern California where he teaches at Santa Monica College. **Niina Pollari** is the author of *Dead Horse* (Birds, LLC 2015). Her

newest work, a collection with the writer merritt k, is named *Total Mood Killer* (TigerBee Press 2017). **Burnside Soleil** grew up on the bayou in a houseboat, but these days, he is a pilgrim in New Orleans. His work has appeared in *PANK*, *Kindred*, and *Mosaic*. **Lynne Viti** teaches in the Writing Program at Wellesley College. Her poetry chapbook, *Baltimore Girls*, (Finishing Line) was released in March 2017. She has also published most recently in *Pen in Hand*, *Light*, *The South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Mountain Gazette*, *Amuse-Bouche*, *Paterson Review*, and *Right Hand Pointing*. She blogs at stillinschool.wordpress.com. **Genevieve N. Williams** is an MFA candidate at University of Nebraska. Her poetry has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, and has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *burntdistrict*, *Nimrod International Journal*, and *Lavender Review*, among other journals and anthologies. She facilitates Omaha Writers Group, a weekly writing workshop open to the public, is a teaching artist for Nebraska Writers Collective, and works as a writing consultant for Metropolitan Community College.

