

Molecule

~ a tiny lit mag ~



Issue 9

Fall 2023

Molecule

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Issue 9

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JENNIFER BARRILE

Under the Boardwalk



THE 2023 MASSACHUSETTS POETRY FESTIVAL

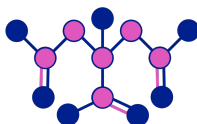
Special Section

For this issue, we invited attendees of the 2023 Massachusetts Poetry Festival to visit *Molecule* at our Small Press Fair table and submit poems on the spot. The following five pieces were chosen for publication.

The 2023 Massachusetts Poetry Festival took place May 5-7, 2023 in downtown Salem. For more on the Festival, visit festival.masspoetry.org.

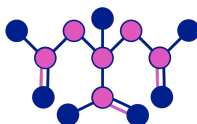
I romanticize being gone

Maybe my loved ones will
hand out my clothes like tissues
sob into my favorite shirts
soak the silk right where
my heart should be
maybe when you miss me
you'll unbury the sealed bag
in the closet, take a soft inhale
to find me again.



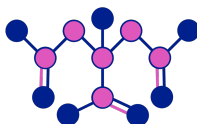
Confessions

The smell of incense permeates my nose.
The wooden bench creaks underneath me.
I've been told I've sinned
and I should absolve.
Water drips from my forehead and a
man tells me I am absolved but there's
really no proof.



At least I got this poem.

It's my job
to tell Rob Pinsky
he has ten minutes
to wrap up his poetry—
a dark comedy of jokes
while dying. Damn. I stand
on the stairs and awkwardly
hold up the sign as three-time
U.S. Poet Laureate reads on.



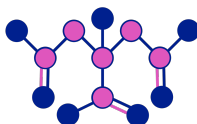
At Sea

After you've been
under full sail awhile,

you start to tally up
how very many of your mates

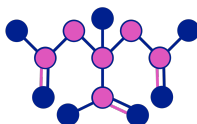
have fallen overboard
or walked the plank.

You've clearly heard
each & every disconcerting splash.



College Dreams

I cried today
as I finished tutoring.
She was overwhelmed
writing a literature review
in a second language
bouncing her baby
girl on her lap.
While my daughter
studies abroad.



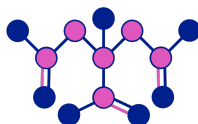
ROYAL BAYSINGER

More Pipevine than Swallowtail



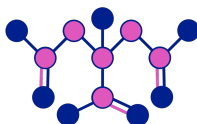
Icarus

Just wing it, she grumbled, fed up with my feeble efforts to hold a job. *Dust yourself off!* She poked at my pinfeathers, plied me with self-promotional strategies, pushed piles of applications under my nose. That was Thursday. Monday now. Fog's lifted, sun's out. I'll show her this time.



1968

In those days urgent messages were posted on storefront windows and telephone poles throughout Berkeley. FREE HUEY. FREE THE PRESIDIO 27. FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS. One day I spotted a new sign: FREE FIREWOOD. *Who's Firewood?* I wondered. *Why is he in prison?*



Salad

I sit down beside him.

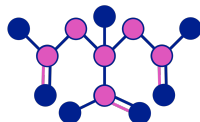
Want some salad?

He looks at my bowl. Those are chocolate chips.

I eat a handful.

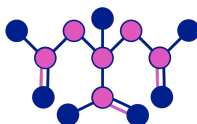
Then look at him.

Nope. It's salad.



In Hell

I dye my tips the same blue of her eyes. Come closer. At her altar, I study sayings, glances. I conjure how the air feels when we're alone. Take me. She walks in with another woman. I cut her out of my hair with bathroom scissors.



ROYAL BAYSINGER

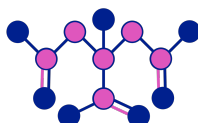
Winter Farewell



SAMUEL FISHMAN

**An Assistant to the Under Secretary of
State for Political Affairs Tweets
an Apology**

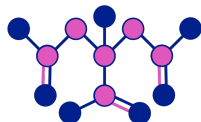
Sorry for the remarks I made to NYT reporter Maggie Haberman. Under no circumstances was the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi “kind of badass”.



MELINDA JANE

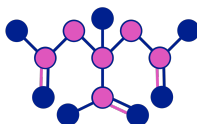
Little Red Riding Hood

Red, fashion designer, works in furs.



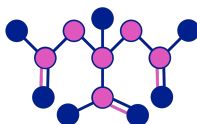
Airports are Stressful

Had I known, I obviously would've poked air holes in the baby's travelling cage.



The Moon Shrinks

No more romance after a long nightshift. No pale round face hovering as he opens his eyes. No morning strolls along the lake. Or whispers. All of this lost its meaning, because she now knows what he's been up to, hidden there behind that blanket of stars.



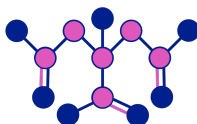
LINDA BRISKIN

Snail Suspended



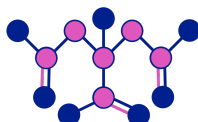
Karmaology

When the dude brake checked me, I didn't give him the flaming fuck you finger. You have to undo horror with silence. The birds on the tree did not weep. The cop car flashed its lights and I didn't even look as I flew past. A wren on fire.



Purple bruises under purple drapes

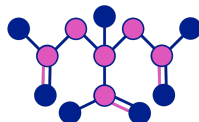
The window: a slant view. With my finger on glass,
I can blot my sister out like she was a housefly. I
wonder how people live like shook-up soda cans,
screaming inside, with placid masks for faces, then
learn how to smile for pictures.



The Mating Habits of Fish

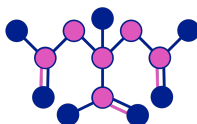
The female fish lays a bed of eggs and the male ejaculates sperm on the bed. Somehow this seems easier than the mating rituals humans put themselves through.

Well, for her. It's not that different for him.



The Crows Can Read

Us. And they find us dull. All our *Blaw, Blaw!*
Therapists on a wire, pens in their teeth. Bobbing their
heads as we sob. Crows don't get daddy issues. But we
keep coming back. It's their damn nonchalance —
convinces us, even in death, we'll be alright.



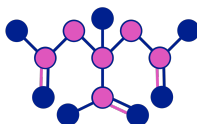
ANDREA DAMIC

Lonesome



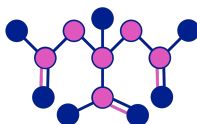
Canticle I

Most assaults are committed by people you know. So, when I go home, I won't know anyone. I'll hide in the woods of a state perfect for camping. I'll carry bear spray and plan b and guns. I will disappear. And then I'll be safe. And then I'll be safe.



Drive Thru Clown

Once famous, he now roamed the burger joint's parking lot. He approached my car. The Clown pointed at his scrofulous chest. "That ain't ketchup, Old Son! That's a rash!" yelled the drunken and shirtless Ronald McDonald. Frightened, I spilled the scalding coffee in my lap.



ANDREA DAMIC

Friends in the Woods



Dressed to Kill

(RUBY looks at herself in the mirror zipping her dress.)

LISA

(Entering)

You look great.

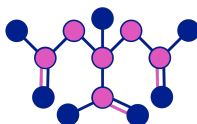
RUBY

Good. I need to. I'm going to make sure he regrets dumping me.

LISA

He'll never see it coming.

(She tucks a gun into her boot. Blackout.)



Creation (The Redo)

(GOD sits at their laptop, GABRIEL at their side.)

GOD

(Typing)

Let there be light! *(Beat)* Again.

(Nothing.)

Gabriel?

GABRIEL

‘Control L.’

GOD

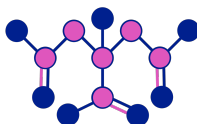
Right. *(Clicking)* Now atmosphere ... plants ... sun,
moon ... birds ... land animals. *(Closes laptop.)* Done!

GABRIEL

You forgot humans.

GOD

I know.



ANDREA DAMIC

Journeying Together



Interview with Lulu Miller*

Q: What does sound bring to storytelling?

A: It captures layers of complexity and contradiction,
of a person, a situation.

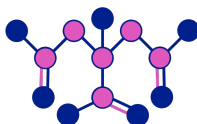
Maybe they said this,
but their tone,
their hesitation,
said *this*.

Multiply that times multiple people.

Magnify the
culture,
society,
story
they're a part of.

Then add the world.

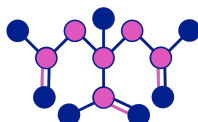
*Check out the extended audio interview [available on Molecule's website](#).



PATRICIA CALLAN

**Book Review: *The Scorpion's Question*
Mark / J.D. Debris / Autumn House /
\$16.95 / 88 pgs.**

This gorgeous collection looks masculinity up and down like it wants to start a fist fight. It treats the ocean like the prettiest girl in the room. Its reverence for unobserved beauty makes me want to look at the world again, through “dusk-colored glasses.”

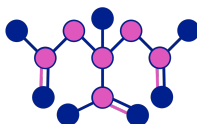


BROOKE DELP

**Book Review: *It's Not Love Till Someone
Loses an Eye* / Clay Ventre / Nixes Mate /
\$18 / 64 pgs.**

A Royal Waltz —

Ventre's poems rise and fall: dream and wake, heaven and earth; more sweet than bitter, more throat lump than gut punch, a dizzying contrast — as in “The Arrivalist,” a song is, by turns, the worst you’ve ever heard, and the best if written by one you love.



KELLY DUMAR

Crab Apple Lights



too lucky bitches

A black cat stops at a cross

o

a

d

s

Looks both ways before she crosses

up

And sees

a girl walking one side of the road.

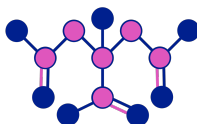
She hesitates ,

And retreats

without having made any deals with devils

Today,

At least.

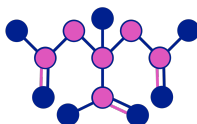


TONI ARTUSO

To Meriwether Lewis

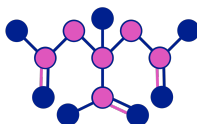
You and Clark struggled up
unknown rivers to Oregon — and back.

Yet, on your return to applause, cheers,
you lost your way among well-mapped city streets
wandered into land swindles, alcohol, opium,
so that, on the clearly marked road
to Washington, your journey ended
in raving suicide.



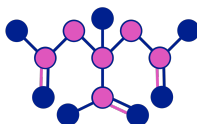
Enjambment

put the kettle on the dog
needs his dinner
so strange how
the break of a sentence
or the failure to do so
can become a land mine
when you told me to
leave
I thought you meant
the dirty dishes



My Mom

collected perfumes but never
picked favorites. I love Lily
of the Valley, like what grows
wild outside the window where
she once washed her blue glass
mugs while tuned in to trilling
tree frogs. She smelled like
what was true, like dish soap,
like singing pines, like blue.



ROBERT FLEMING

Before the Stay Away Order



Little Chicken,

I should never have to beg:

Lay me yet another egg.

Something hit you on the head?

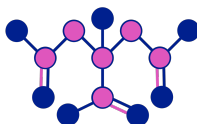
Dinged is not as bad as dead.

Get back to your simple nest.

Settle for what you do best.

Otherwise, by noon tomorrow,

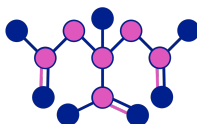
I will give you cause for sorrow.



Intrusive V

You're going to be
in some deep-fried
sticky trouble

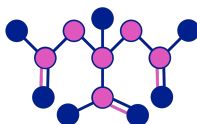
when General Tso
finds out
who's been eating
his chicken



WILL CONWAY

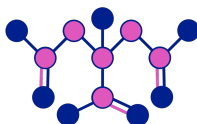
No Sweat

One spring day in 1931,
the first air-conditioned train
was introduced on the
B&O Railroad.



Nana on Parkinson's

I wasn't doing all
that great before.



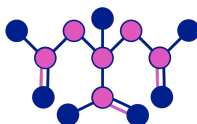
MATHILDE GRANDJEAN

**Some of us are still struggling
to get to earth**

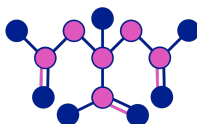


At Work

Love was tight around the waist;
happiness loose in the behind.
Today I wear frustration
and a deep-seeded anger,
fashioned by fools and phonies.

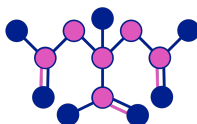


Couples therapy:
mutual masturbation
with sandpaper gloves.



lazaretto

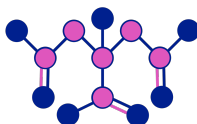
what is the point of lamenting?
we're drowning in alcohol,
we can't complain,
even the roses are sick.
but we are alive at midnight
drinking long island iced teas,
at 2 am wildly fucking,
and on the background —
catastrophe plays on the tv.



MATTHEW E. HENRY

reason #3785291 that this might not work out

when asked to write a list
of shoutable suggestions for
“what have you eaten recently?” —
at the brunch-venued, PG-rated
improv show — I thought *bacon*,
eggs, *thick texas french toast*,
rosemary potatoes. you screamed
Ashley, Veronica, Maisy, Tynnifer!



SANDRA HOSKING

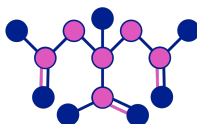
Tear



Saving the Day

Last year's four-year old stares
from the screen, hand
thrust at the camera —
Spiderman about to leap
from his parents' towering bed.

The image is silent, stock-still.
No clamorous — *I'll save you, Nani!*
No gasp at the snap
decision to catch the photo
rather than the boy.

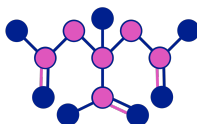


Checking In

I misread a philosopher
who wrote that friendship is a good;
I thought he'd written friendship is a god

and although I tried as hard as I could
I couldn't find, once it was gone,
that other "o" again. O my friend,

we good?



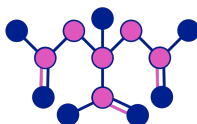
Alice

I like to sit on the floor to write,
as children sit on the floor to play.

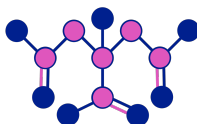
The carpet's texture mosses & sod,
the windows cathedraling over me,

the furniture a cityscape, as if
I'm Alice & I ate to fit

into the tiny door
wonders spill out of.

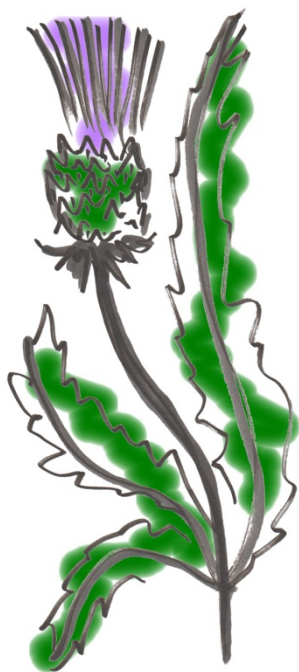


faultfinderr



NICK MAYNARD

Thistle



ACME Anvil

The moment
he believes

the ground
is solid.

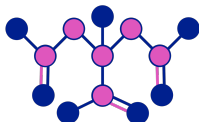
The moment
he sees it's

gone. A last
moment when

the fall seems
escapable

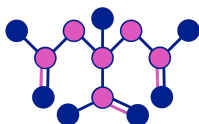
still. All
the lessons

about trust
are hard ones.



To Not Be Called Beautiful

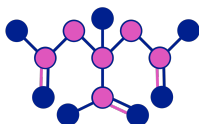
What is given
takes another name:
aster, trillium, blue wild indigo
listen closely
her voice is two voices
and each flower arms itself
with what it needs
but still receives
the honeybee
let me praise
each blooming
and learn which parts of her
want me



[untitled]

When I was
young, I was
a jerk

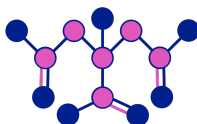
Now I am
old, and I am
an asshole



Tiny Bits of Summer

Cricket on this warm
rock do you know
the tide is rising?

A pill a day
from this small box,
summer passes.



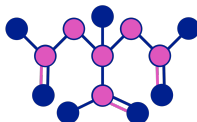
JENNIFER MARTELLI

**The Creamware Jug Stamped with *The
Apotheosis of George Washington***

leaked milk and leeched the poisonous
lead glaze covering its body. Washington,

rising to heaven with the help of Time
and an angel, still looks swollen and sore:

his one-toothed mouth filled with stolen
teeth, locked in place with metals.



PAULETTE SMYTHE

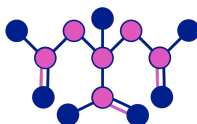
Praying Mantis on the Washing Line



LEIGHTON SCHREYER

if you've met one trans person...

you've met one trans person.

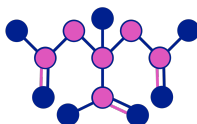


MARJORIE TESSER

dear you,

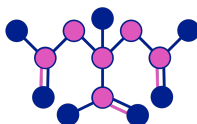
a Fibonacci poem

dear
you,
how can
I tell you
what you have un-done
and re-formed in our short term
of endearment? you left. at least the birds sing on.



Driving Past the Turbines

Huge slow goofy aliens
waving their three arms to say
we come in peace.



perseverance

“Your online application has been successfully submitted”

>Move to

>create new label

>“jobs 2023”

>nest label under:

>jobs

>freelancing

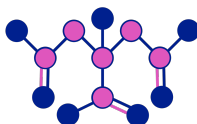
>jobs 2019

>jobs 2020

>jobs 2021

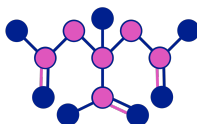
>jobs 2022

>jobs 2023



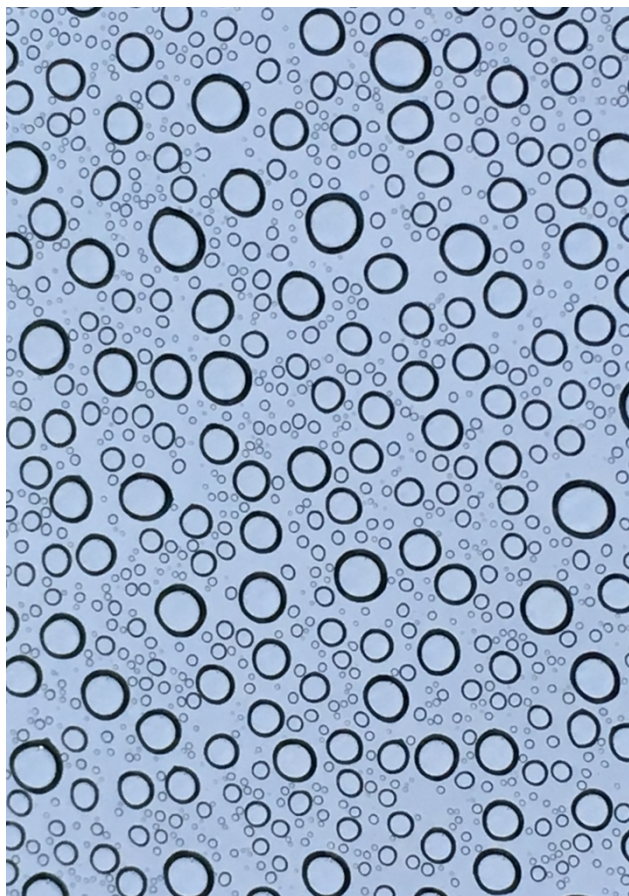
This Reminds

This reminds me of the part
where Jesus pardons the turkey
In The Book of Dinner Reservations
... coming right before that other part
where He says to His angry disciples,
“Ham is the answer
and you know it’s true!”



JENNIFER WEIGEL

Droplets



CONTRIBUTORS

Claire Marie Anderson is a writer from Houston. Her poems are in *BarBar*, *Alchemy*, etc., and once got nominated for *Best of the Net*.

Mikki Aronoff scribbles in New Mexico. She's been writing more and more, but less and less when she does it.

Toni Artuso (she/her/hers) is a trans female writer from Salem, Massachusetts. Her verse has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Twitter: @TAltrina. Instagram: @tonialtrina.

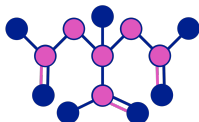
Carmen Barefield (she/her) is a poet and writer living in Salem, Massachusetts. You can find out more about her at carmenbarefield.com.

Tom Barlow writes poems because conversation requires a great deal of give and take; he thinks of himself as more of a giver.

Svea Barrett's newest manuscript was a finalist in the Laura Boss Narrative Poetry Book Contest. She has various poems published in various places.

Landscape artist **Jennifer Barrile** enjoys the challenge of working small. She has a natural curiosity to utilize everyday materials to create something new.

Royal Baysinger is. If you doubt it, he has an oft-neglected website, royalbaysinger.com and a just-as-neglected Twitter account @royalbaysinger. Learn more there.



Jane Blanchard lives and writes in Georgia (USA). Her most recent collection is *Sooner or Later* (2022).

Pamela Bloomfield is an independent consultant to governments and nonprofits. Her short stories have appeared in *Rivanna Review*, *Parhelion*, *Foliate Oak*, and other magazines.

Steve Brisendine, a bistateual Kansan, writes, occasionally paints and will throw elbows for the last tamale. Write to him: steve.brisendine@live.com.

Linda Briskin is a writer and a fine art photographer. She is intrigued by the permeability between the remembered and the imagined. lindabriskinphotography.com

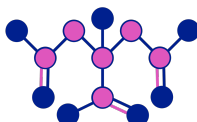
Patricia Callan is a writer, artist, and educator living in Beverly with her husband, daughters, and a tiny beagle. Find her poems in [9x5](#).

L. J. Caporusso lives in Toronto, Canada. And has a blog on www.LJCAPORUSSO.com — it's alright. (OK it's weird.)

Will Conway lives in Dover, NH, and is a member of the New Hampshire Writers' Project. He hasn't had a drink in 14 months.

Nicole Livingston Crain is a queer writer living in Philly. Read more about her work at nicolelivingstoncrain.com.

Andrea Damic (Australia) is an amateur photographer and author of poetry and prose. She spends many an hour fiddling around with her website <https://damicandrea.wordpress.com/>.



Mark DeCarteret's Nana made an appearance in *Thus Spake the Corpse: An Exquisite Corpse Reader* 1988-1998 (Black Sparrow Press).

Al DeCiccio is the Coordinator of the Mary G. Walsh Writing Center, and a Professor of English at Salem State University.

Brooke Delp lives and writes in Haverhill, MA. She holds an MA in writing from Salem State University and teaches English here and there.

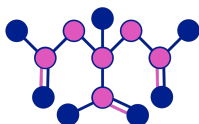
Kelly DuMar is a poet, playwright & workshop facilitator from Boston. Author of four poetry collections, including *jinx* and *heavenly calling*, 2023. <https://www.kellydumar.com/>.

Though he's never seen / Nantucket, **R.G .Evans** / knows some wicked rhymes.

Samuel Fishman is a proprietor of post-modernist hogwash. He writes about murderers, American decline, white supremacy, and irritable bowel syndrome.

Robert Fleming (b. 1963) is a word-artist from Lewes, Delaware, United States. Contributing editor of *Old Scratch Press Short-Form Collective*. <https://www.facebook.com/robert.fleming.5030>.

Mathilde Grandjean is a French writer living in the UK. She uses language and images to explore posthuman worlds, circadian rhythms, and transmission cycles.



Lázaro Gutiérrez is a Cuban-born poet and writer. You can connect with him on Instagram @lazaro_gutierrez_writer.

Catherine Hayes is a writer from Massachusetts. Her work has recently appeared in *Blood & Thunder*, *Parhelion* and *New Pages*. Twitter: @Catheri91642131

Matthew E. Henry (MEH) is an educator, editor, and author of six published or forthcoming collections. He's been known to make racists really mad.

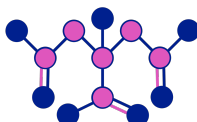
Mary Beth Hines's poetry collection, *Winter at a Summer House*, was recently published by Kelsay Books. To learn more about her, visit www.marybethhines.com.

Richard Hoffman lives and writes in Salem, Massachusetts, which he is in but not of. He is at work on his tenth book.

Mary Ann Honaker is the author of *Becoming Persephone* (Third Lung Press, 2019) and the forthcoming *Whichever Way the Moon* (Main Street Rag.)

Sandra Hosking is a photographer in the PNW. Her work has appeared in the *West Texas Review*, *3 Elements Review*, *Edify Fiction*, and more.

Melinda Jane, author of two poetry books, one picture book. One hundred and fifty-four published works through forty-two national and international publishers.



Charlotte Jung is a concrete minimalist poet. In her writing she explores the basic building blocks of language where content meets form.
www.charlottejungwriter.com

Keith Kennedy wanes poetic in Vancouver with his magnificent wife and many pizzas.

Amber Kusching is a New Jersey-based playwright. She has written more than 60 plays and is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America.

K. T. Landon is the author of *Orange, Dreaming* and is a reader for *Lily Poetry Review*. She likes the serial comma and birds.

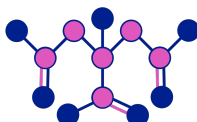
Hannah Larrabee's *Wonder Tissue* won the Airline Press Poetry Prize. She's an editor at *Nixes Mate Review* and lives in Salem, Massachusetts.

Louella Lester, a Winnipeg (Canada) writer/photographer, has writing in many journals. Her quirky flash-CNF book is, *Glass Bricks* (At Bay Press, April 2021).

Jiixin Li is a senior international student at Haverford College. They major in English and Philosophy and live with two cute kitties and puppies.

Kali Lightfoot, her book (*Pelted by Flowers*), and cat (Oscar) live together in Salem. Former Michigander and Maineiac, she's a poet who loves words.

Matthew Lippman's next collection, *We Are All Sleeping With Our Sneakers On*, will be published by Four Way Books in 2024.



Jennifer Martelli is the author of *My Tarantella* and *The Queen of Queens*. She has published in *Poetry* and is co-poetry editor of *MER*.

Nick Maynard is a queer, working class artist, from Manchester. In 2021 Nick was exhibited at the Royal Academy's Summer Exhibition.

Jennie Meyer is a poet and dreamworker from Gloucester, MA, who investigates textures and terrains seen and unseen. Find her at www.instagram.com/thedreamnest.co and www.thedreamnest.co.

Lulu Miller is co-host and host of two podcasts, *Radiolab* and *Terrestrials*, and author of *Why Fish Don't Exist*.

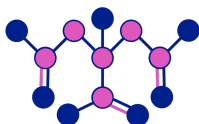
Dr. Vaishnavi Pusapati was a writer yesterday, is a writer today, and intends to be a writer tomorrow. She recently celebrated her 27th publication.

Tanya Rodrigue is an Associate Professor in English at Salem State University and co-author of *Soundwriting: A Guide to Making Audio Projects*.

Carl V. Rossi considers the time he was almost run over by the Dalai Lama's limo a high point in his life.

Angeline Schellenberg authored *Tell Them It Was Mozart*, *Fields of Light and Stone*, and *Mondegreen Riffs* (2024), and hosts the Speaking Crow open mic.

Leighton Schreyer (they/them) is a queer, trans* writer, poet, and activist from Toronto, ON, whose work illuminates the human condition.



George Searles teaches at Mohawk Valley Community College. A former Carnegie Foundation "Professor of the Year," he is editor of *Glimpse*, a poetry annual.

Paulette Smythe is a Fine Art student at Monash University in Melbourne with a deep love of tiny creatures.

Marjorie Tesser writes poetry, prose, and fiction, and edits *MER – Mom Egg Review*. She lives near Nyack, NY.

Eric Torgersen has been publishing very short poems since 1964.

Michelle Trantham is an MFA student, teacher, cat parent, and writer. She is attentive to houseplants and patient with words.

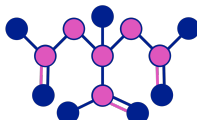
Caitlin Upshall is a British-American writer who enjoys dinosaur-focused nouns and trivia nights. You can find her on Instagram at @CaitlinUpshall or at www.caitlinupshall.com.

David Vazdauskas is a Maine playwright who writes historical comedies set from the time of creation into the distant future.

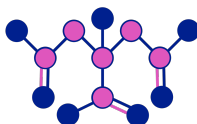
Jennifer Weigel is a multi-disciplinary mixed media conceptual artist residing in Kansas USA.

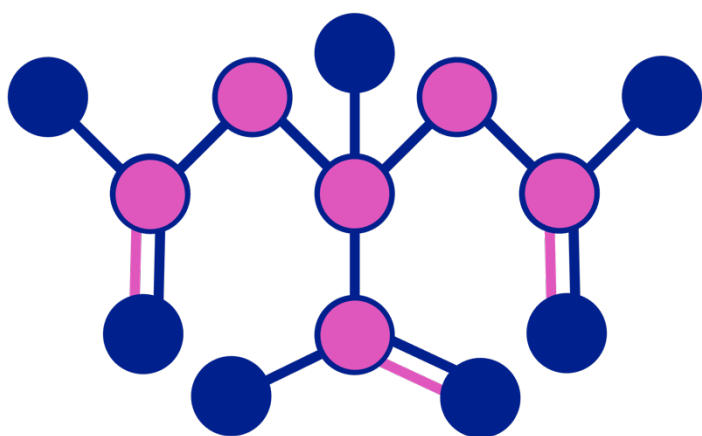
Stan Werse: A playwright and lawyer is soon to have his book published by Wild Cape Press.

David Earl Williams has been his alias since birth and it seems to be working so he's sticking with it.



Heather Wright is a parent, poet and writing coach residing north of Boston. Her recent chapbook *Tropicana* highlights her dual regionality in succinct form.





Molecule

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