Tempe
Writers
Forum

Volume 6
Special thanks to Jeanne Hanrahan, Rebecca Byrkit, Maureen Roen, Jill Brenner, Blanca Villapudua and our colleagues in the Master of Liberal Studies Program for their hard work and dedication to the Tempe Writing Contest and the Tempe Writers Forum.
# Contents

## INTRODUCTION LETTERS

Dean, College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, and University College Vice Provost, ASU’s Polytechnic campus
Duane H. Roen........................................................................................................... ix

Deputy Community Services Director, Tempe Public Library
Kathy Husser........................................................................................................... xi

## FICTION

### ADULT

Hana Duckworth.............................................. *Don't Be a Bastard* 3

### COLLEGE

Diana Arellano................................................ **Pills and Knives** 13

### HIGH SCHOOL

Sydney Adrien Wickelgren............................... *Ocean Tale* 27

## POETRY

### ADULT

Alex Dodt................................................... *In the Stairway of the Museum of Modern Art* 39

### COLLEGE

Austin Davis.................................................. *Tell Me About Your Day* 45

### HIGH SCHOOL

Elizabeth Hollmann................................. *Metaphor in a Metaphor* 51
Contents

NONFICTION

ADULT
Kim Neudorf............................................ To See Myself at Last 59

COLLEGE
Thy Vu............................................................ The Boat 69

HIGH SCHOOL
Audrey Wood........................................... A Goat, A Girl 75

BOOK COVER DESIGN
Taylor Martinez.......................................................... 83

TEMPE WRITING CONTEST
2020 - JUDGES
Reviewers’ Biographies.................................................. 87
February 24, 2020

Dear Friends,

Arizona State University is excited to celebrate the sixth annual Tempe Writing and Cover Design contest and this resulting publication—volume six of the Tempe Writers Forum. We are thrilled to sustain ASU’s partnership with the Tempe Public Library, an important commitment for us.

Six years is another milestone! Each year the contest has matured in some way. Last year the contest was opened to emerging writers living across the Valley. We were especially gratified to receive so many submissions from high school students this year.

At ASU, we are driven by a charter that impels us to advance research and discovery of public value and assume fundamental responsibility for the economic, cultural, and overall health of the communities we serve.

Helping people to gain voice through writing is an important part of our responsibility because becoming a more practiced, confident writer contributes to success in many arenas of life.

This annual contest offers opportunity and incentive for individuals to hone their craft and to build community around their art.

Many classes and workshops are available at ASU, at the Tempe Public Library, and elsewhere in the community to help you gain writing practice and feedback from others. I hope that you will take advantage of these opportunities.
Enormous thanks go to all those with the Tempe Public Library, the City of Tempe, ASU, and in the greater community who have collaborated to enthusiastically support this contest and encouraged and evaluated submissions.

I especially thank the scores of writers and graphic designers who shared their work. You have enthralled us, moved us, and delighted us. And to anyone reading this note who considered entering the contest but didn’t, I urge you to share your writing next year.

Sharing our stories—and experiencing others’ stories through the arts—expands our empathy, ignites new ideas about possibility, and enhances our humanity.

Duane Roen
Dean, College of Integrative Sciences and Arts
Vice Provost, ASU’s Polytechnic campus
February 19, 2020

Welcome Back readers and local authors alike! This publication is by far my favorite and contains the works from the very best local authors from 2020 as selected during the sixth annual Tempe Community Writing Contest. This annual project between the Tempe Public Library, Arizona State University and our community continues to foster our vibrant storytellers and those venturing out as writers for the very first time. The Tempe Public Library encourages the next step in the process, where emerging authors can find a safe and supportive environment to help them along their journey to becoming a published novelist, poet or essayist.

If you, too are a budding author, please check the Library’s online calendar and newsletter for groups and classes that might help you take that next step in your efforts: www.tempepubliclibrary.org. The Tempe Community Writing Contest illustrates the dedication our Library has for our local writing community.

Congratulations to all the authors and illustrators and the very best for future writing success!

Kathy Husser
Deputy Community Services Director - Library
Fiction
Don’t Be a Bastard

by Hana Duckworth

Adult Fiction
I was wearing a black skirt that went to my knees and a cream long-sleeved top. I had scrounged in my closet that morning for colorless, church appropriate clothing; the only way I knew how to dress for a funeral when I was sixteen. It was a midwestern winter day where instead of snow, the good lord had sent rain the day before. Rain that had quickly turned to ice on arrival. The black tights I put on that morning seemed to now hold the cold closer to my skin, but in a horribly personal way. I balanced my way to the graveside service, through the dead frozen grass. I had no coat on; this is a detail I can’t explain, but know is true.

My grandma called my name and I turned, punching the heels of my shoes through a thin layer of ice between blades of dead yellow grass, steadying myself as I waited for her. Her best friend, Gene, reached me first and made an attempt to loop her arm through mine, but my arms were tightly crossed and held close to my chest so it took a second try to succeed. Gene’s other arm was looped through Grandma’s so she swung Grandma around close to me, causing Grandma to stagger a little as Gene created a huddle of us three.
“She’s freezing, Edith! Look at her shiver in that short skirt! And no coat!: Gene exclaims at us both, the fault in my apparel seemingly belonging to Grandma as well. Gene then releases her hold on me and was struggling to free her arm from a long black coat made of something I knew was only pretending to be fur.

“Well, I don’t know Gene... she’s not been to as many of these as we have. She doesn’t know how to dress for a burial.” Grandma raises an eyebrow solemnly at me, not grateful for her share in Gene’s blame.

“I didn’t know it would be outside!”

“So where did you think the grave was then?” Gene raises an eyebrow, and frees her arm with a stiff jerk. “Here, put this around your shoulders.” Gene wraps half her coat around me; she motions for Grandma to do the same. Grandma rolls her eyes at us both, but she does as Gene instructs.

This part of the memory is dear to me and visited often, and since my memories are like maps, I see us from above now, always present in that place.

An indiscernible crowd seen through birds-eye, all in shades of black, gathered around a casket. An empty grave, an ugly, bare old tree. And a few steps back from the crowd: three heads huddled close, sharing two coats, hems overlapping, arms entwined.

And I’m warm. Warm enough. And when I shiver at the cold reaching up from the ground, Gene huddles closer, raising her jacket over our heads, building a small warm hut around us, making my grandma mirror her actions reluctantly.
“We can’t see a thing; we look ridiculous. And Gene, this isn’t respectful,” Grandma whispers.
“Respectful? Oh, he was an old bastard,” Gene laughs roughly.
“That’s Dorothy’s husband you’re talking about!”
“Wasn’t her fault he was a bastard.”
“Gene Louise! Lower your voice!”
“Fine!” she pauses. “Don’t be a bastard,” Gene whispers in my ear.

Years later when my father called to tell me Gene had passed away, I was brought back to this scene, not putting words to memories but seeing the three of us huddled close in the snap of a finger.

And then I zoom out and pan over to a different scene:
In a hangar my dad rented from the small local airport there were four mismatched plastic lawn chairs. I was slouched in the green one because although all four chairs were covered in dirt, grease and oil, the other three chairs were white so their sins were more obvious.

My dad was a pilot and kept an open cockpit World War II biplane in the hangar. Gene had asked my dad for a ride in the plane, but it was an old trainer and not the easiest thing to climb in and out of for a 76-year-old woman. I was brought along to guide her up the wing she’d have to walk up and the fuselage she’d have to swing her legs into. It was slow going as I helped her in, but she was a good sport about it.

My body was slumped in the green lawn chair as the plane taxied back in the hangar after a half-hour flight.
Before I can even sit up straight, Gene has unstrapped her seat belt, and was climbing out of the plane with impressive limberness. She then walks straight over to me and asks with disarming purpose if I have any tissues.

Yes, of course there's tissues, (I'm sure) I say, looking around for anything resembling a tissue. Not finding anything immediately available, I ask for more details regarding the request.

“I threw up in my jacket.” Gene says.

“You threw up in your jacket,” I repeat slowly, picturing the mechanics of that action, realizing I had never been in a situation myself that called for doing that.

“I threw up in my jacket and I don't want your father to know.”

At this point the father in question has climbed out of the plane and is cheerfully walking toward Gene with an arm extended. Gene ducks and weaves under his arm like an elderly quarterback, making her way toward the small airport office only twenty feet away.

Dad turns to me bewildered, arm frozen in air.

“How was the ride?” I offer my father, in distraction for whose sake I'm not sure.

“Good. Good. I did some loops, but she asked for them. She was quiet for a bit at first but then she hollered for some more.”

“Yeah?”

“She asked for the aerobatics. I didn't do it without warning or anything.”
“Yeah?” My eyes are on the office Gene has retreated to, with the secret jacket full of vomit.

“She did! I didn’t spring anything on her. I promise I was good!”

“Yeah?” I was unintentionally voicing a vague enough response for my father to transform into a discerning mother’s opinion. His mother. My grandma. Gene’s best friend.

“Do you think she’s okay?” My father now asks, unsure.

“She was quiet for a bit at first? But then asked for more?” I smile, turning my attention back toward my father.

“Yeah, she was all for it. I practically did everything. You don’t think I made her sick? Surely she would have said….“ he trailed off, anxiously staring at the office Gene has still not come out of.

I turn and smile at my dad, the humor of the situation coming into focus and I feel a sudden urge, to tease him and make him feel guilty.

“There she is!” Dad almost yelps as soon as he sees her coming back toward us. I turn and see her looking directly at me with a smile, a wink and a quick index finger over her lips. (Hush now, don’t be a bastard and tell him.)

I then realize I wasn’t keeping the secret to save her pride, a woman who held her coat over our heads at a graveside funeral just to keep my underdressed, undeservedly sixteen-year-old self warm: I was keeping the secret to save my dad guilt.

I won’t be able to attend Gene’s funeral. So I can’t tell these stories to a crowd of people who knew her. But I can keep
the loving warmth and the lessons they give, like a map I can have in my pocket and take out to retrace back, where they are ever present.

And I retrace now.

As Gene walks toward us from the airport office, extra paper towels still in hand, I wink back and say when she’s closer and only she and I can hear, “Don’t worry Gene, I won’t be a bastard about it.”
Hana Duckworth recently graduated from ASU with a B.A. in History and misses not learning obscure facts in her classes to bore friends and family with. But, recently, she has found it just as satisfying to pick up her old habit of writing short stories and forcing friends and family to read those instead. Hana is also working on a side project made up of ten word stories at TellitQuick.com and would love your submissions (and/or perusal)!
Pills and Knives

by Diana Arellano

College Fiction
It wasn’t always an obsession. Adeline remembers elementary school when she was still the image of innocence: short coal hair curled at the ends and lips that weren’t yet made out of plastic. Her parents hadn’t quite yet given up on being somewhat human to her; they still managed smiles and pats to her head. For her it was enough because she had thought that’s what love was supposed to be: fleeting moments she had to catch before they slipped between her fingers. She didn’t know there was more. Until she did.

It had been in the form of a little blonde girl with two pigtails swinging as she played hopscotch. Adeline usually ignored it all and kept to herself under the playhouse during recess but for some reason, at that time, it was different. Maybe it was the bright smile the girl refused to lose. Or the way she would trip on her own legs but would always get up. Or the stubborn streak she so obviously had as Adeline witnessed her yell back at the annoying boy that had decided to interrupt her game. At that point, Adeline could only consider her future actions as instinct.

Before the boy could spit out anymore curse words,
Adeline had run in front of the girl and pushed the bully as hard as she could. Shocked, he cried.

She remembers that even though she had to deal with three days of no recess and angry eyes at home, Adeline didn’t regret a thing. Instead, it ended up feeling like the best thing she had done. She had a new set of blue eyes to scare the lonely away. Soon, the smiling blonde replaced the silence during play time and the shadows under the playhouse. It became official: Nola was Adeline’s first and only best friend. However, Adeline did begin to notice something different, something she couldn’t understand – a strange ache. It felt like she was missing something. At first, she had thought it was her parents. They were gradually becoming colder, pressuring, like sculptors who were never satisfied with their creation. They chipped away at her, ignoring her screams and bloody flesh.

But Adeline had understood *that* pain. She always had since she realized empty houses and tight dresses weren’t love. She eventually concluded that wasn’t it. Too tired to care she ignored it.

In the years ahead Adeline rose in popularity, something that at first was foreign but eventually became a common comfort. Her mother had begun to teach her the only way to survive was to be the one pulling the strings, to be the one with the prettiest smile and perfect life. *But don’t forget*, her mother would always say, *don’t forget to keep a knife under your sleeves because if there’s one thing humanity doesn’t need to be taught to do, it’s lying*. In eighth grade Adeline realized that all too well.

It had been at Nathan’s house. Barely a 14-year-old and
the smirking boy was already left alone to throw high school parties. With parents that looked at their children as too much of an inconvenience, it was too easy to fall off the edge. Back then, Adeline didn’t know that.

She had been well acquainted with Nathan. The boy was as trapped as she was in the toxic social circle their parents loved too dearly. That’s how she had ended up finding herself smiling much too hard as she had pretended to listen to a droning jock who sat next to her as he kept so eloquently insisting on resting his hand on her thigh.

However, as many times before, Adeline kept her eye on Nola. She had been worried for weeks, having noticed a deeper sadness in her friend.

They were two sides of the same coin, one who never knew a parent’s love and one who knew all too well, but had it stolen long ago. Adeline had known about Nola’s addictive father, a man she had never truly been able to meet for disappearing every time she would come around Nola’s house. Nonetheless, she had hated him from the start. It had angered her every time she would have to see Nola spin around in a circle as her father would one day give his daughter pancakes and smiles while in most others a violent drunk. Trying to keep the hurt away, Adeline would shower her with love the only way she knew how: material things. Ever since the end of elementary, when she had learned about Nola’s life, a poor girl who only went to prestigious schools because of scholarships and a mother in debt, Adeline tried to hide her away from the bad. Her house wasn’t any better, but she had known it wasn’t a cage
for Nola the way it was for her. Rather, it was a little freedom
for the blonde and that was enough for Adeline. Soon though,
things stopped being enough.

At Nathan’s party, she realized Nola was becoming more
than just a friend who kept her sane in a world that pushed her
to grow colder every day. She had found her best friend holding
hands with a boy outside in the swings and the ache in her only
worsened. The side of Adeline that earned the name “Queen
Bitch” in the hallways had wanted nothing more than to tear
Nola from the idiot and destroy him with vicious, vicious words
that she knew could have easily broken him. But at that mo-
ment, that part of her hadn’t been strong enough yet. And so,
she only walked back into the party and decided right then that
it was finally time to taste beer. Maybe the mistake started there.
At least one of them.

From then on, it became years of lies behind grinding
teeth and a deep acquaintance with the taste of plastic. There
were moments when Adeline, for at least a gleaming second,
would think of telling the truth, of letting the ache in her that
had only grown by the day be set free. But those tiny moments
of hope ceased to exist when Adeline heard about the infamous
incident of her uncle beating his son to a pulp. He had found
him sleeping with another man when he came back early from
one of his business trips and was quick to disown him. Adeline’s
parents had only supported her uncle’s disgust and suddenly
her house became even smaller, a cage that was digging deeper
against her lungs.

Nola stopped coming around and began to spend most
of her time with Nick — her new boyfriend, and Adeline hated it. It was the same boy from the party and she soon discovered he and his group of friends had been trying to convince Nola to cut ties with her.

In high school, Adeline was becoming cruel, discovering that her mother would at least give her a satisfied nod at the dinner table every time she heard of the power her daughter so clearly held in school. In the mirror, Adeline was barely able to glance at her reflection, whether in disgust of the girl that loved another girl or the monster that wore her skin, she hadn’t known. Maybe it was both. Sometimes, she admitted that to herself in dark corners with empty bottles. But not when she had a clear mind, when she heard her mother’s voice so easily, controlling too much and leaving too little.

It became worse once Adeline gave in to her mother’s dating pressure. Junior year, she had found herself surrounded with a horny jock and a group of plastic. The only person that ever saw the kindness Adeline had been capable of giving anymore was gone. Nola eventually gave in to her long-lasting boyfriend and mostly hung around his group. After school, she would text Adeline that she was too busy, cutting their connection a little bit more every day. It was like a string that was loosening between them until Adeline would eventually be left with only a cold voice in her head and a broken heart. There was a point when it became too painful to hold onto a girl who would never love her back and so she retaliated in the only way she knew how to: ice and knives. Nola no longer found an Adeline with a gentle voice and warm eyes, instead she began to see the
cold the others were so familiar with.

Adeline had realized it was a lot easier to hold on to anger, to the hatred she convinced herself she had. It seemed a lot better than the many nights she had of a smiling Nola and a hope that would always manifest no matter how much she fought against it. Either way, it would always disappear like a candle that’s left out in a cold windy night. Nola would bring up her perfect little boyfriend and gush, and Adeline would once again end up staying awake ’til 3 a.m., filled with too much in her head.

Adeline soon took sleepless nights away with pills. Everything became harder to feel and at least with sleep it became a dark nothing. Those pills could have stayed at that if it weren’t for the party junior year.

Nathan, having kept his party streak, threw another one for the beginning of winter break. As the top bitch and a jock’s girlfriend, Adeline was forced to go. Just like in eighth grade and every party since then, she had found herself sitting down next to a horny boy insisting for one body part or another. Normally she had always slapped their hands away but that time it had been a boyfriend that she had to pretend to at least tolerate. It could have been like every other party she had been forced to experience: drink a little, socialize with sober and drunken teenagers who were trapped in their own worlds, make out with her boyfriend long enough to make him think he had a chance, and then leave to drink the hard stuff alone. None of that had been healthy but it was all Adeline had that kept her from staring at the pills for too long. But then Nola had to come that day.
Sweet Nola who hung around with a nice enough group Adeline refused to admit to came into a party that had been meant for lost souls.

During those times, there were many moments when Adeline had wanted to give up and beg for forgiveness to Nola for all the cruelty she threw at the world. Somewhere along the way, she had realized Nola’s boyfriend and friends had been right in having pushed her to cut ties. All the bad in Adeline had been worsening throughout the days and in one of her many late drunk stupors, she had finally seen the good in having kept Nola away from her disgusting feelings. Nola already had a father that was a piece of shit; sure, he had his good days, but those were never enough when all he left were broken hearts. Adeline had heard of how her father eventually became better but found a life in another family and left his daughter with a shitty mother as a guardian. She sometimes thought of how she was like Nola’s father, a person that had their tiny moments of good but could never be enough. Some baggage rots for too long.

That same feeling of wanting to save Nola from the darkness had rung in Adeline when she had seen her by Nathan’s kitchen with her boyfriend’s arm resting lazily around her as he talked to some other idiot.

Adeline completely muted out whoever had been talking to her, keeping her eye on Nola as she always had. And an hour later when she had to go upstairs to use the restroom, Adeline still remembers the regret she couldn’t stop tasting for days for her decision. She was curious. She shouldn’t have been.
When she had almost reached the stairs to go back down, she heard noises coming from the room nearest on her right. Without another thought, she had opened the door and seen two naked figures lying on top of each other. Adeline could recognize the blonde hair from anywhere.

She doesn’t think Nola ever saw her because it was so dark and before a second more, she had closed the door. High on adrenaline, on anger, on the damn ache that grew until she wasn’t able to breathe, Adeline had run downstairs, grabbed her boyfriend and lost her virginity in a thin room.

The next week, Adeline realized two pills weren’t enough.

No one was told of her attempted suicide. Her parents had been desperate to keep their image immaculate. Once school returned, it’s like nothing had happened. Adeline had been given a psychiatrist for a short time that only told her what her parents wanted him to tell her and she was forced to act as normal as possible during her parents’ ridiculous events. That was that.

Senior year came around and everything had almost become the same cycle of empty bottles under the bed and hidden knives in sleeves. But a week before graduation, Adeline made a mistake. At least now she knows it was one.

Adeline got drunk in a park before a social party she for once had refused to allow her parents to force her into. Nola eventually had found her alone late in the evening and in a crazy fit of her drunken self-pity, Adeline told her of her suicide. Never her darkest secret though. Even when Adeline had
been lost in clear vodka, she still knew she could never tell her true feelings to a single soul — especially Nola.

Nonetheless, that day, it ended up changing everything. From then on, Nola tried talking to Adeline again, because of pity, love, fear — who knows. Adeline wasn’t able to find the answer then and she still hasn’t. What she does know is, it was the worst mistake she ever made because that’s when it began. Her addiction. Her obsession.

The years after high school, Adeline began to take what Nola would offer. She tried to be her friend again and after having been at the end of nothing for so long, of not being able to look in the mirror anymore, Adeline desperately took all she could. And more.

In college, Adeline began controlling Nola’s life quietly, scaring away the friends and boyfriends she knew would have taken her away. She noticed that if she allowed Nola to see her self-hatred, the blonde would always return to her side over any other relationship. The thoughts of keeping all of that secret, of keeping Nola from the darkness, became a forgotten memory as Adeline only allowed the bad in herself to run rampage. She made the familiar ache into a toxic friend. Eventually, she assured Nola was only close with Lily and Jennifer — two girls that were trapped too deeply in their own plastic that they could never get close enough.

Every day, Adeline hated herself a little bit more but always found a way to ignore it. It was easy enough when she was loved by the girl that had been her only light for so long. Some days she was close to doing it again, to finishing the job...
she failed in high school, but the need for complete darkness was never enough as the years went by.

But then *he* came. Ethan. Adeline hated him the second she laid eyes on him. Not only had he been gradually stealing Nola away but there was something in his eyes that she had known was just *wrong*. The way he looked like he was always calculating every moment, every piece of his life with Nola seemed off. It's like he created scripts for everything in their relationship to make sure everything was perfect, so it could match a fairytale of one of the books he so clearly loved to imply he read. He was a secret narcissist, the nice guy in him only a facade. Adeline knows when someone’s hiding a secret, when they’re living a facade of a broken life because, after all, she had for so long now. She wishes she saw it sooner.

As she lies so still on the cold grass, she thinks, *when did my love for her become so poisonous?* Adeline was a lot of things, but she was no liar…at least to herself. That’s why she can’t really look in mirrors anymore. At least alone. If she does, she’ll break down because of the terrible being she’ll be looking at. She knew along the way, she fucked everything up and ruined the life Nola could have had if it weren’t for her selfishness. And now some other fucked up monster was going to ruin what little she left her best friend with. But Nola is smart, she’ll find the truth; she always has. Adeline just wishes she saw the truth in her. She wishes Nola saved herself when she had the chance.

Suddenly she chuckles. Adeline thought a slice through her wrists would be hell but at this point, she doesn’t really feel anything. How unfair — she *deserves* the pain.
Before the darkness could consume her, Adeline thinks for the last time the words she had secretly whispered a thousand times in Nola’s ear when she was asleep: *I’m sorry.*
Diana Arellano Barajas is currently studying at ASU to obtain her bachelor's degree in Journalism and Mass Communications. Since she could remember, writing has been her number one passion and thanks to her family and friends, she hasn't gone AWOL to finish reading her book list (it hasn't ended yet). Living in Phoenix, you can find her at a library at some point during the day. If not, try the coffeeshops.
Ophelia hated the beach. The sand was too sandy, the sun was too hot, and the water too cold, too salty, and much, much too wet. As her mother posed seductively and her father posed even more seductively before their photographer’s camera, Ophelia wandered away from the vanity, disdainful of the sand clinging to her pale little feet. And suddenly, the private beach’s unfavorable atmosphere changed. The air turned still around Ophelia, and the wind blew around Ophelia at a distance, as if the passing wind were not allowed to touch her. The tide quieted and Ophelia turned toward the ocean. The water receded invitingly, and when Ophelia would not approach, the waves folded themselves urgently.

And so, sunburnt and cross, young Ophelia followed the receding water deeper and deeper into the ocean. The brown sand turned white as tired Ophelia walked on, and soon the waves closed behind her. The Old Man of the Ocean oversaw that this young girl would be dry, so that his cunning plan would be fulfilled. And so Ophelia followed the sea until the water closed above her as well. Fish swam over and around her head, which Ophelia scoffed at (she had grown quite ex-
perexperienced in scoffing, and thus quite talented). Soon, Ophelia approached the great Sunken Cathedral, where coral grew in every available crevice in both bland and colorful tones. Ophelia was unimpressed. Slowly, she entered the sea chapel and saw the great throne of the Old Man of the Sea, who had been sitting there for so long his legs had fallen asleep.

“Hello, young lady,” spoke the Old Man of the Sea. Ophelia did not reply, instead folding her arms.

“I am the Old Man of the Sea.”

“What are you doing here?” grumbled the girl. “What am I doing here?”

“I am trapped, you see,” exhaled the Old Man of the Sea. “I did not choose to be the Old Man of the Sea.”

“Tough,” commented Ophelia. “You hate the ocean, do you not?”

“Very much,” Ophelia agreed. “It is much too wet for my taste.”

“And I agree,” the Old Man of the Sea said cunningly. “I was wondering, if just once, I could come to the surface and be on the dry land again. Could you help me with that?”

Ophelia scowled. “But you are ugly.”

The Old Man of the Sea, in truth, was a decayed body. His soul was the Ocean, his body forever condemned to rot there until the water dried up and exposed him to the dry land. The Old Man of the Sea had been waiting for the water to recede enough for his skeleton to touch the air once more, but as eras passed he grew impatient.

The Old Man of the Sea was indeed ugly. He was just
a skeleton now, fish having eaten away at his flesh and the rest rotted away. “Don’t you want to help me?”

“No. I want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.”

“I can never have a sandwich down here at the bottom of the ocean,” the Man pointed out, but he seemed to realize that the girl possessed little empathy. “I’ll tell you what, girl. If you agree to help me out, I’ll give you one favor: any one thing you may wish for.”

Ophelia mused her options, and recognized her advantage. “One is such a small number...”

The Old Man of the Sea groaned in a watery way. “Right, then — two favors.”

A sigh. Ophelia said, “Yes, but what you’re asking of me is so much greater...”

“Fine. Three favors. Will you accept three favors?”

Ophelia shrugged. “Good enough, I suppose.”

“Good. Now, in order for me to get out of the place, I need you to take my place on the throne of the sea. It’ll only be for a moment, but you must remain on the throne for the entire time.”

Ophelia smelled something fishy. “Okay. When will you get back? I’m hungry.”

“Only a little while,” the Old Man promised. “I’ll give you your favors as soon as I return.”

“No. I want a favor right now.” demanded Ophelia. The Man sighed, bubbles escaping through the gaps between his teeth. “I bet you want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, don’t you?” The Man conjured a plate with a sand-
“No, that’s not what I wanted.” Ophelia said, growing annoyed. “I demand a full refund for my favor.”

The Man was growing desperate. “Four wishes! I will allow four more, child. Quickly, tell me your first two wishes.”

Ophelia was not a dim child, and she wasn’t vain like her parents (or, at least, not as vain). She sensed that the Old Man of the Sea was underestimating her. Ophelia bent down and picked up the sandwich. “For my first favor, I want this: to breathe normal air when I’m underwater and to not drown.”

The Old Man of the Sea reluctantly agreed, but he wasn’t too worried. Drowning had been plan A, but there were still loopholes in that wish that he could exploit.

“My second wish is this: That you must return to pay me my other favors before one hour is up.”

The Old Man of the Sea took a deep breath — or, as deep as one can, when one’s lungs have since decayed away. He finally agreed to the favors and granted them true to her wishes. Ophelia finished the sandwich, and the Man reached out his ancient arm toward Ophelia, and Ophelia confidently held out her own hand. The moment her little, dry hand touched his bones, all of the power of the ocean left the Man’s soul and washed into Ophelia’s system. Sitting upon the throne, Ophelia watched as the Old Man, now transformed into what he once had been (a young man), touched the dry sand and then left without another word.

Ophelia was the ocean. She wasn’t a victim of it, like the Old Man of the Sea; rather, she was the one in power of it. But
with the power there was also the wisdom of the sea, whispered by the fish from reef to reef, and Ophelia drank the knowledge in thirstily. Because she was not breathing the sea water, she was alive and therefore in power of the sea rather than under it. That was when Ophelia realized that the Old Man of the Sea had paid for this power with his life, and Ophelia paid no price at all.

While the Man cried to see his past life gone and rejoiced to see what had replaced it, Ophelia closed her eyes and felt each part of the ocean under her. She absorbed the knowledge that many, many living things depended on her, and it humbled her further. To test her power, she swirled a great storm in the middle of the ocean. Her skin tingled, and she expanded the storm to a typhoon. Ophelia released her breath, and the typhoon dissipated. Her waves were not like the Old Man’s waves; hers were more rhythmic than the Man’s random ones. And still, Ophelia resented everything that had occurred that day.

“What will my final favors be?” She wondered to herself. Her third wish, clearly, would be to relinquish the powers of the ocean. But what of her final wish?

One hour had almost reached its conclusion when the Old Man of the Sea reluctantly walked back to the waters and Ophelia opened the waters for him to walk down to the sea cathedral.

“Why did you want to be on dry land, Old Man?” asked Ophelia upon her oceanic throne.

“I lost my human life the day I was named the Old Man
of the Sea. Since then, I have grown weary of the power and the loneliness of the sea, even with the lobsters to keep me company.”

“I find the lobsters quite bothersome,” Ophelia remarked. “What did you do while on dry land?”

The Old Man of the Sea said, “I saw the people and the town, and I see that they are all quite angry.”

“And why is that?” Ophelia questioned.

“They are always complaining about what they have and haven’t got, and they push the poor aside to make room for themselves. The people all ignore each other. I have long forgotten my past life, but I know that humans have never been so selfish as they are today.”

Ophelia allowed silence to settle between them before announcing, “I know what my third and fourth wishes will be.”

“My ears await them.”

And so Ophelia used her last two favors. When she had finished speaking, Ophelia took the arm of the Old Man of the Sea (now simply a Man) and they walked together back to the beach without turning back once.
Sydney Adrien Wickelgren is an ambitious 16 year old. She is a sophomore in high school and future college graduate. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, filming, and petting stray cats.
Poetry
In the Stairway of the Museum of Modern Art

by Alex Dodt

Adult Poetry
In the Stairway of the Museum of Modern Art

“I will die completely cured.”
-Salvador Dali

On our last night, I stared for five minutes at van Gogh’s Skull of a Skeleton with Burning Cigarette & asked if he meant it as an anti-smoking ad. Libby laughed. She had hair like Clouds-era Joni Mitchell & a grade school art teacher’s smile

& we spent that whole summer sitting cross-legged in front of paintings she tried to translate into poems for me: Landscapes are like sonnets, she would say, & Dali paints only odes. I would nod & tell her how close I was to figuring it all out:

a job, an apartment, the shortest route uptown & up the back stairwell to meet her, how to write her poems that could be headed by tiny stick-figure scenes instead of titles. Human sculptures always creeped me out the most, the threat of having my head rolled & bronzed. What greater gift could there be than being forgotten? Maybe Dali meant that cures are like red velvet curtains in a windowless room, in an underground tomb guarded by a terra-cotta infantry. & above ground, we remain
In the Stairway of the Museum of Modern Art

defenseless. We pick up what we can find. This knife though is just a very sharp bullhorn. Running away is only a retreat if it’s announced by a bugle & a band of screams. Or maybe Dalí meant that dying is also a cure. Libby would know. She would say What he meant is

*a prose poem without line breaks.* On the museum steps after her shift was over, she would lean in & say *What he meant is*… & then sprint ahead to race me to the train station, her laugh careening through the streets behind us like a parade at last unloosed.
Alex is a philosophy teacher at Gilbert Classical Academy and the only thing he loves more than writing is helping his 17-year-old students work through their frequent existential crises. He lives in Tempe and attended Arizona State for undergraduate and graduate school. He appreciates you humoring him as he attempts to resurrect a long-dormant teenage dream of being a writer.
Tell Me About Your Day

by Austin Davis
We meet up in the library parking lot every night after you get off work at the drugstore.

We lay on the roof of my van and stare up at the sky. You call the stars “cosmic freckles” and tell me that our biology teacher from high school buys extra small condoms and that the “v” on the middle of a Valium pill looks like a little heart that wants more than anything to become a circle.

I nod and laugh and think about how we’re both going to die some night in our sleep and we’ll never see it coming.
Tell Me About Your Day

The leaves have no idea they’re going to fall, the fish have no idea they’re going to be eaten by an unhappy family around a big oak table,

and you have no idea that getting to hear about your day for 32 and a half minutes every night is what makes me okay with waking up in the morning.

I suppose this is the way living has always been. You think you’re happy until you meet that person who makes you notice every ache in your chest.

Maybe we should drive my van into the book deposit bin and steal all the books our consciences can carry.

Maybe we should make out or make love or make up some story about a little home in the mountains with art on the walls, a pineapple pizza cooking in the oven, and “1979”
by The Smashing Pumpkins
playing on a ham radio in the kitchen.

In my mind you’re pulling into the driveway
in the same car you’re driving tonight,
about to lay with me by the fireplace

on our rug of pink and yellow orchids,
tell me all about the last 10 hours
of your existence,

and make me feel like
the man who cried into the clouds
during a solar eclipse
and didn’t go blind.
Austin Davis

Austin Davis is a poet and student activist currently studying creative writing at ASU. Austin is the author of *The World Isn't the Size of Our Neighborhood Anymore* (Weasel Press, 2020). You can find Austin on Instagram @austinwdavis1 and on Twitter @Austin_Davis17.
Metaphor in a Metaphor

by Elizabeth Hollmann

High School Poetry
Metaphor in a Metaphor

Poetry, I hear, is meant to be simple.
To explain a moment, or some grand idea
Distill the mess of dialogue
And swaths of light that make up our long lives
Into shining raindrops
To paint Van Gogh’s sweet Starry Night with.

Poetry is meant to be
A running commentary -
Or a breath, expelled elegantly into sky
Words like ‘alabaster’ and ‘byzantine’
Curling off the lips of those lucky enough
To have lungs lined with dictionary papers.

Poetry is meant to be careful.
And monstrous,
And contained.
   A hurricane
   in a bottle,
Sitting lonely on a beach.
Metaphor in a Metaphor

Yet maybe
Poetry is
   The thousand metaphors itself employs
To speak with many-forkéd tongue.
   Maybe the most complete comparison:
Poetry is like humanity; it is the
   Son, spirit, father to itself.

Poems too have a beating time-keeper, and
Feet to dance with and bodies to run with

But each one has a different heart and blood
A different sort of strut
   And each one has a different body type
   That range from lengthy blazons
   To smallest screams

Most human of all,
Poems live past death, as people do -
Even though their paper spines burn bright and quick and
Mortally.
Elizabeth Hollmann

Elizabeth Hollmann is a fifteen-year-old sophomore at Tempe Preparatory Academy who loves paperbacks, mint tea, extended metaphors, and world politics. Her love of verse began with Shakespeare, and was dramatically amplified by Billy Collins. You can find her defending the relevance of both, as well as reading, singing, and telling people to vote -- please vote.
Nonfiction
To See Myself
At Last

by Kim Neudorf
I caught a glimpse of indiscernible black marks on the hairless chest of my twenty-four year old son.

“What’s on your chest?” I asked. I hoped it wasn’t a remnant of a repeat prank—his torso defaced by graffiti.

“It’s a tat,” he said matter-of-factly, and with a hint of pleasure.

_Tat_, a new slang word for me, but I understood.

“Really, can I see?” I asked, keeping my voice calm to avoid sounding too judgmental. My authentic-self wanted to chastise him for scarring the soft, pale skin I protected all those years, but I did not want to burden him with guilt. I’d done enough of that. I told myself a tattoo could be a good sign—symbolic of hope, the future, a spark reignited.

He unbuttoned a few buttons on his blue plaid shirt and pulled it to the side. Five lines of text in a fancy, cursive font were inked across his left chest muscle. It was an invitation to look.

I inched in closer and read:

_A quarter of my life has passed._
_I’ve come to see myself at last._
_The time spent confused,_
_Was time spent without you._
Now I find myself in bloom.

I recognized it—the lyrics from the song *Darling Be Home Soon*. I introduced my son to Joe Cocker’s gritty, soulful song five years earlier. He was eighteen then, and had recently moved from our home to attend university in another city. He coped with a lot that first year, as he faced the realities that accompany independence. Preparing him to be self-reliant with day-to-day responsibilities wasn’t one of my primary goals. I regret that. I focused more on developing the values of integrity, hard work, respect and kindness. As a result, he had a lot to learn about balancing the demands of being a student with the more mundane aspects of life.

I worried about him throughout his teenage years and into early adulthood. I worried about the regular weekend parties that dragged out until dawn. I often woke at two in the morning to check and see if he was home in bed. When he wasn’t, the worrying began. I worried he was killed in a car accident, took a drug that would forever alter the course of his life, died frozen in a snow bank, or spent the night in jail—all imaginary worries.

I worried about reality too: the strong smell of alcohol lingering in his room the morning after, the lapses in memory, the burn across his back, broken bones, black eyes, graffiti drawn in permanent marker on his body, and his reluctance to engage in a conversation about all the things that worried me. There was great relief each night when he was home in his bed—safe.

I worried about his partying friends too, but mainly I worried about him. His friends were athletic, smart, and their spirits were fueled by the anticipation of the weekend’s events. My son was stalwartly loyal to them, and never once divulged
anything that might cause a parent to raise an eyebrow and scrutinize further. It took years, but I learned to accept that he would tell me only what he wanted to, and only when it did not implicate his friends.

Dr. Jane Simington’s book, *Journey to the Sacred*, helped me examine my incessant worry, as a self-defeating behaviour. My pattern of negative anticipation provoked anxiety and distress, in me and those around me. I normalized worry and accepted it as another dimension of being the mother of a teenager. Dr. Simington recommended taking control of these thinking patterns. Instead of imagining death in a snowbank, she advised exercising positive, loving thoughts and energy.

In the black of the night, when I drifted into negativity, I practiced yanking my thoughts back onto a more positive path. Instead, I tried to imagine the fun he was having with friends, and anticipated him walking safely through the door at the end of a night out. I think I became a better parent as a result, a more attuned parent.

In this loving way, I introduced my son to *Darling Be Home Soon*. It was a bitter cold night and his first day home at the start of the university’s winter break. I was excited to have him home and have our family whole again. I prepared his favourite meal. I anticipated he would be home for these favourite dinners, but knew he would spend most of his time with friends. That night, as I drove him to his friend’s house, I asked him if he’d like to listen to a new song I came across. He knew music and appreciated a variety of genres and artists. Music was another way of connecting with him. The song expressed a sentiment I was feeling— the yearning that goes with missing someone. I wanted him to know that.

Although it was pitch dark outside, there was enough
light from the dashboard to allow me to notice the intensity with which he listened. The tune permeated our confined, secure space. He was still. His eyes focused on the CD player between us.

At the end of the song, I asked him if he liked it. “Yeah,” he replied, with a bit of hesitation, and slipped out the passenger door into the uncertainty of an evening partying with friends.

That evening, like every other, I called out to him, “Take it easy, ok.”

My son’s collection of tattoos on his torso grew over the next five years. I let go of the image of the little boy I’d protected all those years prior, with straight blonde hair, eczema sensitive skin, and an emotionally sensitive personality. I grew less ignorant and judgmental about peoples’ decisions for body art. I understood tattoos were not the product of a drunken indiscretion. I learned about the often deep emotional significance of a tattoo—where thoughtful consideration is given to capture an artistic image that symbolizes, empowers and endures.

At a summer family picnic, in the company of several nieces and nephews, all in their twenties and thirties, several tattoos were revealed, and ideas for their next tattoo shared. Each tattoo was unique, ranging from simple to complex in design, from a fun symbol to a gothic image. It was an enjoyable time. I admired their light-hearted way of being in the world at that moment, as they shared what their tattoo meant to them, and talked about tat regrets they wished could be washed away.

During this exchange, my niece leaned over and quietly spoke to me about my son’s Joe Cocker tattoo. “You know his tattoo is because of you, don’t you?” she said.

I didn’t know.
I believed the lyrics he chose to have embedded into his skin were meaningful to him, because they represented a segment of his life where he overcame adversity. I expected his tattoo represented survival and transformation. I never asked him who the “you” was in the lyrics. I respected the intimacy of his choice and did not pry. I learned that, being his mother.

When I arrived home from the afternoon picnic, I turned on the old CD player and listened carefully to the song. I hoped the inked scar on his chest wasn’t in some way related to an emotional scar I’d inflicted. After listening to the song several times, I concluded that I may have helped him get through a turbulent time. Exactly when, I wasn’t sure. Perhaps at the precise moment I introduced him to the song that night in the car. I might never know, and I’m okay with that.

---

On a warm, summer afternoon, my son, now thirty-two, was married. I didn’t have the foresight to appreciate how much joy accompanies a child’s wedding. It was a beautiful event with flowers, twinkle lights, and fireworks.

I admired my son, as I watched him with his partner, tight circle of friends, and family. It was evident how much he was loved by all of them. His long-time friends stood loyally by his side to witness the exchange of vows. Afterward, they celebrated and partied, as they were accustomed to. That evening several young men shared how much they valued their long-time friendship with my son, and the good times and good memories they made. I didn’t worry that night; rather I was overcome with joy.
After the reception and speeches, and the couple’s first dance, the DJ announced the mother-son dance would follow. My tall, strong son walked toward me, a proud smile on his handsome face, wearing his pink tie and tan suit. He held out his hand. We slow-danced to a song he chose—*Darling Be Home Soon*. 
Kim Neudorf

Kim Neudorf has published in peer-reviewed journals and blogs for health-focused organizations. She recognizes words have the power to influence and make the world a bitter/ better place. She’s written one unpublished book, *Diamonds and Stones*. She is currently writing an historical biography. Kim divides her time between Saskatchewan, Canada and Tempe.
The Boat

by Thy Vu
I spend some of my days numb because it is easier to feel nothing than to feel how I usually do. Today is not one of those days. As I sit up in bed (on the left side, because that is my side, even though the right side has been empty since June) I notice tense shoulders, clenched teeth, tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, and a throbbing pain in my temple. I have often wondered throughout the years how much of my pain is actually mine. I also wonder if my physical pain is my body keeping score of my anxious episodes and depressed state.

As I sift through the intensity of my emotions today, I decide to surrender to the tide and attempt to understand it. I pull up a photo of the three of you and the first thing I feel is your gaze. I can’t quite tell what is on your mind at that moment but I can feel what is in your heart. I feel your worry. I feel your doubt. I feel your relief. I feel your love. I see the smile on your face; the one that is not quite a smile that you so often have in photos. The smile that holds the weight of every drop of sadness that has ever been felt in your bones. The smile you must have forced on your face in order to keep your toddler calm as you stuffed him into your lap, after you stuffed yourself into a
corner of a boat, after you walked briskly on the darkest night, after you kissed your mother goodbye, after you decided to flee the only land you have ever known.

I was a lonely child. I never told you that. I did not want you to feel responsible for another thing because that would mean you would be even busier, and if you were busier, then any chance I would have to spend time with you during the week would certainly never happen. I remember always wondering if you wanted me, since there are ten years between your two children. I must have been an accident, I thought. And to this day I wonder if I really was an accident, despite your countless explanations that you just weren’t ready before I came along. But, I don’t think you were ready for me either. Because if you were, why have I always been so afraid of being abandoned?

Lying in bed alone every night when you had intended to share it with someone can be confusing. But as I sit here right now I remember that it symbolizes ten years of abandoning myself and giving it all to someone else because I was afraid they would abandon me. If I take it all on and ensure I am perfect in every way imaginable, I will never be alone. However, I was doing to myself what I had feared all along. And now, after leaving myself hundreds of times, I am lost somewhere in the middle of the deep blue. I am trying to find myself again, but I don’t know who I am looking for. I do not know myself and it is quite possible that I do not exist. I put myself into a corner of a boat and hope that I will reach a shore that has some semblance of a destination.

Just like you did.
Thy was born and raised in Salt Lake City, earned a composite bachelor’s degree at Southern Utah University, and is presently pursuing a master’s degree from Arizona State University. By day, she is a marketing manager at Salt Lake Community College. By night (and, by day too, really) she is an involved “fun” mother to two very active and curious children. Appreciating a fine turn of phrase almost as much as a good night’s rest, Thy reads and writes in her spare time and is currently working on her first collection of poems.
A rainbow of a hundred different shades of yellow paints the canvas that is the desert floor. An overpowering aroma of petting zoo food pellets and furry animals radiates from the ground. A constant sound of subtle conversations simply exists in the background, like elevator music. The minuscule grains of crystal sand glimmer under the sweltering sun, sizzling to the touch. Squiggly grooves in the shape of a large foot snake around each other in the sand, revealing that an adult human has walked this land. A tiny footprint lies behind, leaving flowers in the dirt. A line of hooves that follow each other like ducklings leaves a temporary impression of those that traversed this land. The sand tells a story.

A shadow materializes in the distance, growing clearer as it gets closer, like shallow water on the shore. The emerging shadow brings darkness on the land, as fire-ants scurry about in every direction, frantically preparing for an unexpected guest. The brilliant sunlight shines over this mysterious being, creating an enigmatic dark shadow in the sand.

The joint shadow looms nearer to the ground, suddenly separating into two: a smaller outline of a young girl, and a larger outline of her father. The girl has fuzzy hair the color of chocolate with tender skin like porcelain. Her eyes are crystal
clear blue, the closest thing to water in the dusty landscape. The father’s hair is like snow; it is fluffy and pure white. Unexpectedly cool to the touch, the blistering sun is unable to infect his hair with heat.

The father gently places the girl on the ground and kneels next to her, chalky dust invading the surface of his neat denim jeans. The girl draws indecipherable pictures in the sand, feeling the fine grains file under her fingernails. The outline of an animal with sharp horns appears in front of the girl, overshadowing her masterpieces in the sand. She cautiously raises her eyes to find a pair of profound charcoal eyes staring back at her.

The mother goat looks like a cow, spotted in hues of chestnut and fawn. She rapidly scratches her moist nose against the ground, kicking up dirt in the girl’s face. Giggling at the peculiar creature, the girl breathes in the dusty smell of the sand, tasting the rough grains in the back of her throat. A timid young goat appears behind its mother, awkwardly hobbling around like a deer that just learned to walk. Its soft and silky newborn coat shines like a pearl. Eyes wide with wonder, the baby watches his mother, observing her foreign actions.

The girl’s father extends his closed hand out to the mother goat, a mystery lying within. She gives a suspicious stare at the hand in front of her. Immediately after he opens his hand, she gives a bright snort of pure delight. The mother is comfortable, gently accepting tiny round pellets of food from the human father. They taste sweet, like a peace offering.

The daughter curiously studies her father harmoniously interacting with his animal counterpart. The mother’s tongue is a sponge, wet and rough, soaking up all that it can. The baby goat watches his mother, gaining insight on a life lesson: how
to interact with humans. The young girl and baby goat stoop across from each other, adjacent to their parents. The scene is a mirror, reflecting the bond of a parent and child. The father teaches his daughter about life in the same manner as the goat teaches her kid about life.

The bond of a parent and child transcends the boundaries of human life. Ducklings follow their mother, baby kangaroos ride in their mother’s pouch, and cheetahs learn to hunt from their parents. The relationship between a parent and a child is so significant, so imperative to learning, and so simply incredible, that it does not discriminate. Humans and animals alike all realize the importance of parents to a young child’s development. No matter the species, human or animal, everyone needs someone to teach them about life.

The baby goat clings to his mother, his brain like a sponge, soaking up the lessons he can learn as he watches her sponge-like tongue soak up the tiny pellets. The young girl clings to her father, extending a hand out to the goat, just like her father does. That day, both a goat and a girl learn a little more about life.
Audrey Wood is a sophomore at Seton Catholic Preparatory High School in Chandler, AZ. She is the poetry editor for her school’s literary magazine, and is the president of the Seton Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program. She is heavily involved in theatre at Seton, and she is currently in her fifth year of Childsplay’s acting Conservatory program. She is a volunteer filmmaker for a local STEM non-profit, and she plans to become a professional filmmaker and actress in the future.
Book Cover Design
by Taylor Martinez

Book Cover Design
In creating the cover, I wanted to visually interpret the feeling of putting imagination to paper, how the flow of thought changes the once blank substrate into something beautiful. Whether through writing, drawing, designing or the like, what was once a spark in the mind becomes a vibrant reality through the ink of a simple pen.
It was never an option not to create; it was more a question of what and how. This is what led Taylor Rose Martinez, a Tempe–based graphic designer, to enroll in Arizona State University’s rigorous design program in the fall of 2016. Here, she was able to marry her artistic roots with the purposeful problem–solving of design. Excitedly approaching the end of her final semester, she is determined to bring her carefully curated skills not only into her career but also into her activism in the pro–life movement.
Tempe Writing Contest
2020 Reviewers’ Biographies
Tempe Writing Contest 2020 Reviewers’ Biographies

FICTION

Tom Bonfiglio’s stories have appeared in two dozen publications, including Fiction, Lake Effect, Wag’s Revue, Evergreen Review, Fringe Magazine, mixer and The Literary Review. His story, Jamestown, N.Y. received Special Mention in The Pushcart Prize Anthology. He teaches writing at Arizona State University.


Marc Mason lives in Tempe and teaches in the Success Courses program and the Master of Liberal Studies program at ASU. His works include the young adult novels Schism: Out of the Shadows, Battery: the Arrival and the sequel Schism: Fearful Symmetry. Nonfiction books The Joker’s Advocate, and The Aisle Seat: Life on the Edge of Popular Culture; and comic books Red Sonja: Raven and Red Sonja: Sanctuary. His most recent short story appears in Athena Voltaire: Pulp Tales.

POETRY

Andrea Janelle Dickens is originally from Tempe, but spent much of her childhood in Virginia. She teaches in the Writing
Programs with the ASU English Department. She is the author of *The Female Mystic: Great Women Thinkers of the Middle Ages* as well as several dozen published poems. Her works has appeared in *The New South, streetcake, Found Poetry Review, *82 Review, Of Zoos*, and anthologies by Kind of a Hurricane Press and Silver Birch Press.

**Ryan Holden** received his Master in Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Arizona State University. His poems have been published in *Hobble Creek Review, Adirondack Review, and Ampersand Review*. He currently teaches at ASU.

**Patricia Colleen Murphy** founded *Superstition Review* at Arizona State University, where she teaches creative writing and magazine production. She won the 2019 Press 53 Award for Poetry with her book *Bully Love*, published as a Tom Lombardo Poetry Selection. Murphy’s collection *Hemming Flames* (Utah State University Press) won the 2016 May Swenson Poetry Award, judged by Stephen Dunn, and the 2017 Milt Kessler Poetry Award. A chapter from her memoir-in-progress was published as a chapbook by New Orleans Review.

**Kelly Nelson** is the author of two poetry chapbooks. Her work has been published *Seattle Review, Florida Review, Best American Experimental Writing* and elsewhere. She teaches Intergrative Studies at ASU’s Tempe campus.

**NON-FICTION (PERSONAL ESSAYS, MEMOIRS)**

**Rebecca Byrkit**’s award-winning work has appeared in *Best American Poetry, Poughshares, Arizona Highways, Crazyhorse, Black Warrior Review, Best of Exquisite Corpse*, the online *Rolling Stone*, as well as in numerous other journals and anthologies. Her fourth book of poems, *Whoa*, was published by Kariboux Ltd. (2012). Her first book, *Zealand*, was nominated for the Western States Book Award. She has served as faculty advisor in nonfiction with ASU’s *Supersition Review*
for eight years, and as a reviewer in the nonfiction category with the Tempe Writing Contest since the year of its inception.

**Megan Todd** earned her PhD in theatre/performance of the Americas and an MS in exercise and wellness from ASU. She is a registered yoga teacher, Pilates teacher, and licensed massage therapist. Her work appears in *The Journal of Pan African Studies, Theatre Journal, Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* and in the edited book *The Sonic World of Dance Film*. She specializes in curriculum development in humanities, dance/performance studies, as well as embodied movement disciplines. She enjoys working with students exploring arts and humanities as public practice, and is passionate about wellness, arts, equity and justice.
In partnership with: