

The Poetry Society of Michigan 
Peninsula Poets



Spring 2026
Member Issue



Spring 2026—Member Issue

Editor: Melanie Dunbar

Committee: David K. Jibson

Elizabeth Kerlikowske

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Editor's Note

It has been a few years since I have edited the Spring Members' Issue of Peninsula Poets. Our membership has nearly doubled since then! Your poetry has truly lightened my days during this last long, dark winter. I have tried to weave the poems together so one gets a sense of the variety and depth of the poets who chose to participate in the Spring Issue. I hope this issue brightens your spring.

Thank you to all the members who submitted and who actively support PSM!

Melanie Dunbar, Editor

One Orange Maraca / Susan Herman

I carry it where voices meet,
where words give way to song and sway;
an orange sun within my hand
to shake the silence into play.
I carry it in my hippie bag,
my bag of tricks I love to share—
of shakers, bells, and tambourines
that turn a room into a prayer.
At festivals, at poetry reads,
in circles drawn a little tight,
where strangers lean a little close
and find their way by sound, not sight.
For rhyme and rhythm belong to all,
not just the ones who know the tune;
the door stands open, wide and kind—
come early, late, come afternoon.
We are not here to keep the beat,
or hold the moment tight in time,
but shake once more, and once again,
until the music finds its rhyme.

Inclement / Phillip Sterling

Call it *here and now*, the way
vernal ponds near the road
dispel any myth of travel—what
the creatures there call

The Great Wide World
in sounds too intense to think
otherwise. And to think otherwise
bestows April with fancy—

the memory of a place toured
hundreds of years before you
were born, and the silk scarf
of a woman washing

cobblestone streets in Old Lyon,
how the rain paused there
and pooled before finding
its way down to the Saône.

Her Absence Is Not What Matters / Susan Haifleigh

I can't see the moon,
dark as the dawn
even on this new day,
but I know she is there,
bringing her eager embrace
to envelop me like warm
covers staving off the chill
of icy winter sadness,
her arms hold gently
the feelings that emerge
as I step back from
life before to life after,
my own darkness reflected
not in her absence but in
the glow of a fire kindled,
one side holding life, springing high
and spitting orange and purple
the other holding death, its flame
fanned, greedily consuming the moment,
in-between joy and grief take turns,
coming together in a dance
older than time,
I wonder, can it be that simple?
My heart's voice joins with the
moon's shimmer whispering "yes."

Embroidering the Night / Cynthia Nankee

Hitch a line from earth to sky,
Then stitch in deep dark links.
Scallop all the stars in lace,
Add little tatted winks.

Leo needs a regal mane,
Orion, a belt that pops.
The Dippers, just an outline stitch,
North Star, a single knot.

Now, pull some strands of silver through
your needle, giving room –
Prepare yourself to craft, at last
the evening's curl of moon.

Smultronställe* / Joseph Kelty
for Isak and Sophie

As a carefree child rummaging
through my secret forest pantry,
my *skogskafferri*,
I often lingered at a secluded spot
where wild strawberries grow.
I plucked the little fruits
and nibbled them one by one,
savoring their sweet juice on my tongue.

A runestone stood nearby.
I sometimes rubbed my fingers over it
wishing I could decipher those inscrutable symbols
the ancient people of *Sverige* carved
on its scoured face. I wondered
if my hideaway was their chosen refuge too.
In the magical solitude of the place,
troubles melted away like ice in early spring.

Someday I'm going back to that patch
of wild strawberries and taste its fruit again.

* *'Wild strawberry patch.'* In Sweden, figuratively, a private sanctuary.

Singing Ice Snow / Cherie Dunham Brannan

Maples, oak, and white birch—
Coated in icicles,
Sparkle silver in the sun.

Evergreen and cedar trees—
Dusted with white powder,
Soft and cold— snow upon snow.

Snow has come to the forest—
Quiet and still,
Sun catches the icicles and drifts—

Creating a dazzling view,
And as the day settles after a storm,
The voice of winter's woes perform.

The forest grows burdened
With the ice, thick—
Groaning and moaning.

The branches are laden—
Heavy with snow.
A sacred song growing, bold in the cold.

And the slow song of winter is sung.
The world is very still— waiting—
Holding its breath, anticipating.

As if amazement were something
To scatter away on the wind.
A song to be sung with fearless awe.

The ice stretches in the cold—
A voice of beauty and mystery,
Felt deep in the bones.

Ode to the Birch / Kathleen Friedrichs
– *Upper Peninsula, Michigan*

Oh, graveyard of downed birches
I grieve for your
decayed carcasses
sprawled on the forest floor

paper birch –
your silver stippled bark bored
by woodpeckers
long-horned beetles

silver birch, river birch, swamp birch
pioneer trees –
your fate to die young
making way for long-lived oaks and maples

birches' ghostly bark brightens
our winter gloom
perseveres in solitary stands of pale soldiers
amidst dull jack pine and cedar

your fragile skin
tempting to peel
exposes your heart

touches mine

How to See Owls / Lisa Fosmo

Get lost without losing yourself
Hone map of mind,
become atlas navigator.
Haunt deep woods
Go into darkness
Where small prey dwells
After sunset
Forget sunrise
Follow the field
The barn's rafters
Look above
pine boughs over
frozen lake edges
A full moon is favorable
Sit in stillness
Become shadow
Let your ears become eyes
When owls call if you should
Be so lucky
Conjure Emily Dickinson
If only to ask
What secret divinity this
Language holds

Woodcock / Tessa Alexander

As I was driving down the road today
In the middle of the street
All mottled in shades of brown and tan
Puffed up and round
With quite a long beak
A woodcock stood
Nonchalantly staring at me

She stood her ground
In a game of chicken
Bird versus car
Surely, she must be injured
Oh, you poor timberdoodle
I got out of the car
To see what was wrong

As I approached
This rare sight
In the bright light of day
She scurried into the high bush
A lure
I should follow

boundaries / Kathlene Barrett

an adolescent squirrel faces his first winter
and eats the seeds that fall
from my squirrel-proof bird feeder
I would like to feed him
toss out fat walnuts
or smooth almonds from my kitchen
but I don't

if I start
he will climb on my screen door
tearing it apart
trying to get in
so he can demand more and more

-just like the lady down the hall
if I'm too friendly
she'll come right in my apartment
talking about Frankie Avalon
telling everyone I'm her best friend
I am not

I will leave nuts in the parking lot
ask my neighbor to join me for a walk
once a week
and keep both doors locked

Do Not Think of Showing Me Your Tulips / Robert Winston

This may be the time for their planting
but please, no,
do not think of showing me your tulips.
Save those for the springtime,
along with sinus headaches and indoor cleaning.
Unveil the goldenrods, the asters, the toad lilies,
the arpeggiations of chrysanthemums,
the sawtooth edging of sunflowers,
when the sun truly needs to shine.

Confession to the Lovesick Jury of Consultation Angels / Ken Meisel

They wanted me to sin a little bit, just enough
to hold or keep a secret like an ace card.
Maybe like a super blonde in a clothes closet,
waiting there, red lips and strip poker cards
after I'd been an idiot and I'd lost a fight
to my wife, and she'd left to see a movie.
They told me that's too foolish, you'll get caught.
I told them I had the urge to steal first
and admit to it later, but only under duress,
and, after a drink, I'd been tempted to lean in
and not away from a kiss by a woman at a bar in LA.
This is true, I said, and you'd have to give me credit
for confessing rather than deceiving you all.
They told me I was someone more defeated
than triumphant; more, too, like a fraudulent fool.
I told them I was Irish, compulsive, a drunk liar,
and they asked me what I'd do if they gave me
one or two wishes, and I said, anything, everything,
my heart is as bleak as a morning fog, my hands,
greedy as two groveling dogs, my mouth, goofy
as a two-bit sailor on shore leave, so I tried to ...
and they said, never mind, you're one of those
undulating waves of over-grammar, not quite
what we require of cool deceit and all its dice.
I said, wait a minute, what about the flight
home from Paris, my reading of Camus, Rumi,
the holding of her hand in mine upon arrival,
and that I'd felt solemn about my wife's tears,
especially when I'd scoffed at her, dismissed it,
everything she wanted from me at Christmas,
especially my rush to offer a simple joy.
Her face in the morning, so simple in its shy
redemptive incompleteness, its true-blue love.
Enough, they said, quick comfort and a little
lovesickness for all you've missed, is all we ask.

Why I Became an Earth Dweller / Jill Doster Marcusse
after Kim Stafford

Because I could hear
and feel the grasshoppers jumping by my ears
as I lay in the grass in the horse pasture—
my first memory.

Because I could feel
the grit of dirt in the pile Grandpa shoveled
and I played in shirtless, as he laid the field stones
one upon another in the foundation
of my first home.

Because I could smell it on my hands,
dirt and flowers alike as I planted seeds,
then pulled root vegetables, radishes and
parsnips; picked pungent marigolds.

Because I felt it under my bare feet—
loam, sand, gravel, mud—and was
rooted by my soles in the beauty,
the abundance of Earth.

Because I still hear the clunk of the
clod of earth as it hit the coffin's lid,
and thought I'd rather lie down in the dirt
like my dog Happy when she died.

I became, and thankfully still am,
an Earth Dweller.

Driving to Rowan Oak / Randy K. Schwartz
Oxford, Mississippi

We were only a stone's throw
from the stately old home at the bottom of the hill,
but we stood peering into our shiny red rental car,
trying to spot the outlines of its ignition
locked away behind the tinted glass.

It must have been the old competitive juices
that had set me and my twin
racing like greyhounds
to be first to finish that Faulkner,
just to win the right to breathe
the heady atmosphere of his genius.

Only to enhance our sense
of the “foreshadowing” and the “irony”
that something as plain as a car key
could take from us
our only way to approach this place,
the dead author's longtime home—
or to move beyond it.

*He's been so overworked
the last few days— hardly any sleep.*
That whisper from his wife
was what drew me down from the clouds
and back to the mortal earth.
When he fumbled again through his pockets,
her concern was plain,

a whisper that also made plain
our twin folly
in loving the chapters of the dead
more than the breath of the living.

Precious Time / Jacqueline Shannon

Together with thee, ne'er enough nor too soon,
Prize a day spent beneath trees sheltering bowers.
Should it be, I must wait until 'morrow's moon,
My heart succor, waiting, whilst I count the hours.
*Pack night, peep day; good day of night now borrow;
Short night, to-night, and length thyself tomorrow.*

Rabbits and Birds / June Nash

Fat bunny traveling through the grass
Bumped into a starling as it passed
I thought the bird would have tweeted
Objected to being mistreated
But instead it flitted aside
Letting the heedless rabbit to slide
Bunnies grazing on grass here and there
Starlings looking for seeds without care

I thought that if they were instead men
Things would have been quite different then

As a Rabbit ran into a bird
Much yelling and squawking could be heard
Sunbird's owner flies out with a frown
Poor Rabbit driver hops up and down
Watch where you're going you scratched my paint!
But you ran the light you're not a saint
And on it goes as it always does
Hopefully it won't involve the Fuzz

Unfavorite Color / Linda Rosenthal

Gray, the day,
a t-shirt thrown away.
Full of holes, torn edges,
unwashed, tired, dirty,
encrusted oysters, clams.
Dull, boring, hiding in plain
sight, like my aging hair.
Necessary and everywhere.
Skin of the lonely dead,
Imagined beneath a shroud,
stone cold clouds washed up
on vast vanishing beaches.
Bloodless.

Song of the Plains Poet / Jan Wiezorek

The Plains poet parcels thoughts
and words along the preserve
and comes to us at open-mic night.
Sometimes, he just stands there,
puts one foot in front of the other,
rocks back and forth like breezes
speaking words for him opposite
the draw, the long downhill of a fox
or the sad twilight that enters you
after a meal of salmon and oatcake
crust. He's there rocking across
the ball of his right foot, then back
again, pulling his muscles up
to the heel, then down and over
the path that hides your face
in the tower of goldenrod
and spider grass, across the lap
of waters, through sounding
boards of a hilltop rich and wide,
in fear that you may miss out
like running on empty or finding
only too late your last-chance
gate swung closed and locked.

As Tall As Tomorrow / Linda K. Sienkiewitz

In her third-floor apartment, Thelma asks the nurse to please save her ice cream in the fridge for her great granddaughter.

Lillian runs to push the button that takes the alligator up. She likes to watch Nickelodeon on Thelma's TV.

Thelma likes to watch Lillian, marvel at her smooth arms and small fingers as she crayons a picture of a wobbly yellow sun,

blue and pink flowers, and a bat-eared cat in grass as tall as tomorrow.

Lillian guides Thelma's stiff finger to move puzzle pieces

into place on an iPad. The screen blinks and cheers: Well done! Thelma throws her hand up and laughs. Lillian sits close, strokes

her great grandmother's soft, wrinkled skin, not minding the tangle of oxygen tubes or that Thelma wears a nightgown past lunch.

I Thought I Saw You / Karin Hoffecker
for Kyle December 8, 2025

driving a silver BMW down the street,
playing football on Maple Field,
watching Star Wars at the theater,
handing out candy on Halloween.

I thought I smelled you

at the tailgate burgers grilling,
in a German chocolate cake baking,
as I pass the men smoking cigars,
on the t-shirt at the foot of the bed.

I thought I heard you

reading *Good Night Moon* to Nell,
singing Pearl Jam's "Better Man",
talking politics with your deep baritone,
cheering the Lions in Honolulu blue.

I thought I felt you

embracing me when I stumble,
holding my hand crossing the street,
touching the softness of a beard,
kissing my cheek that last New Year's day.

Between / Roberta Brown

It is still
the same house.
Three, then five, now
two live in it.

No, at one time four.
You were inside
me. Until
you weren't.

I thought I saw you on display
in the Little Red Schoolhouse
at Interlochen.
Little girl lacy dress
floating from the rafters.
But no.

This bird has flown.

Her Safe Hands / Sue Yurick

Not always knotted, arthritic, my grandma's hands
displayed venous rivers flowing to her ample heart.
A seamstress, a knitter who gifted mittens
with strings, flannel nightgowns, pajamas.

She made me a lined skirt of Donegal tweed
for college. Her tiny tatting shuttle flew,
created lace.

People knit, crochet and quilt, their quilts
elaborate, from purchased cloth; she cut
up clothes no longer fit to wear, still
strong enough to save as squares and strips.

Here the scraps from a wedding gown and
bridesmaids' dresses. Red, yellow, green
cut from the cobbler aprons she always wore.

We knew her name was Mary Grace, but as
so often in the prewar South,
she became Grace, sometimes Amazing Grace.

A couple shared a memory of her work,
called her Big Mary
bent over welding pipe at the Continental,
sending tanks to the European front.

Hands that ran cloth through the treadle Singer,
clicked and clacked knitting or launched
the tatting shuttle with dainty grace,
also held fire to steel.

Bittersweets, Part 1 / Laura Ozuna

Dear Heather,

I am bringing you this plate of Christmas cookies I baked
because at your grandma's funeral
you baked similar cookies that were her favorite:
One and a quarter cups of butter or margarine
One half cup of sugar

The kind of cookie dough you must mix and form
into a tube shape; wrap in plastic and chill
One egg
One teaspoon of vanilla

Then slice into thin circles when ready to bake.
Two and a half cups of flour
One half cup of unsweetened cocoa powder,

the bitter part of the cookie
a recipe my grandma made every Christmas Eve
part of the mountain of homemade cookies and candies
that graced the dining room table on top of a giant glass tray
whose handles, shaped like smooth glass grapes
reflected the light of the crystal chandelier
mixed with the earthy tones of pecans and chocolate
and the jewel tones of food coloring
One cup of chocolate chips
One cup of chopped pecans

I loved sampling every taste: soft, buttery, sticky, sweet
The darkness and cold of the world outside her house
The chatter and laughter of the rest of the family inside
faded into the warmth of those delectable desserts.

Your newly discovered cousin,

Laura

Not A Cauldron / Becky Ventura

A copper-bottomed Revere Ware pot.
Not a magic wand—
a stainless steel spoon.

Not toads, snails, or bones.
Rosemary, thyme, celery, potatoes, tomatoes.

Simmering.
Yes, there is simmering involved.

Not toil and trouble.
Vegetable bean soup bubble.

No spells cast.
No fireball blast.

No dress of Goth.
A seasoned broth.

Cannellini beans.
A few bay leaves.

The witch? Still there.
But she's lost her cackle,

her scratchy voice,
her black cat
and her broom.

She still has her charms,
her chants, her rituals.
Magic in a pot.

The Spirit of My Mother / Mary Anna Kruch

Condescension erased the elegant path I had fashioned in my foolish youth; sentries tall as trees stood guard, aloof and dismissive, as I struggled

to submit only my best work. It was not enough. Those chosen were printed in bold ink, expressed craft and emotion so skillfully that trees miles away

could not impede their power. In this wake I have not faded into tiny specks, have instead reached deep into my soul for a stubborn breeze, like the

spirit of my mother, to lift me from the dust, arouse courage such as hers when she defied culture and convention to marry my father and found her own

way in the 1950s with painted Traverse landscapes and nursing work outside the home. I now write with conviction to shape my echoes of ideas and

plans into stanzas that sing in themes that resonate with readers. Ever linked to my mother's life-force, I create the scent and sounds of dune beaches, the call

of bluebirds, and grief of hospital walls that, like her paintings, are provoked by reaction and practice, ripe with reckoning. The doubters may someday be delighted.

Man of Mystery / Mary Ann Bozensky

An old black and white photograph is
All I have left of him. Looks like someone I
Would have liked to have known.

In the photograph, he is wearing
A light colored, long-sleeved shirt
And a dark colored vest. His white hair
Is neatly trimmed and combed back.
He has no facial hair. I see a strong chin
Piercing eyes and a chiseled nose
No smile on the lips of this smooth, unlined face

He is a man of mystery. My mother's father.
My grandfather. Born in Poland
He spoke limited broken English.
I do not remember any conversations with him.
He died when I was quite young.
I never got to know him

So many questions I have for and about this man.
Sadly, I will never know the answers.
What I do know is, his children loved him dearly
And were devastated when he died.
Looking at this photograph I see both a stranger
And a grandfather I, too, would have loved
If only given the chance.
Today, however, he remains a man of mystery

Day of the Dead / Nan Jackson

my brother comes back to me as an infant
cradled in our mother's arms

bundled in the same blue swaddles
as the morning she flew from the house
front door banging behind her in the wind
nightgown flimsy with snow-spotted sleet
bedroom slippers sliding on ice

my father believed the diagnosis
let his mother take the baby out of town
left his wife in a locked ward

now, at first light
along the path of marigolds --
my brother comes back to me as an infant
cradled in our mother's arms
as if from the beginning

Hold On / Michelle DeRose

Life is essentially tragic my grandmother said.
To be fair, just after my brother's funeral.
But that was long ago, my bereft son,
and I disagree. Life is that pine bough
in the gale and the grass at its base
beneath snow. The cat hair clinging
despite the lint brush. The one time
each day the dog is right about my shoes.
The gymnast's toes curling on the beam,
her body bent at the waist. My mother
in church on Easter, celebrating
the resurrection of someone else's son.

Walking with Ghosts / Lawrence Daley

I walk with ghosts
late into the night.
We talk in a language
of silence.

My time will come
to walk their path,
to speak in silence
to those left behind
in shadow and memory.

They wait
in lost time,
lost life.
Waiting for those
who are next to come
in silent memories.

Monsters Under the Bed / Deb Belcher

Silent whispers echo through the halls of sleep,
Awakening the dormant fears we keep.
Monsters stir, their eyes aglow with malice deep,
Emerging from the corners where we dare not peep.
Shudder now, as darkness starts to sweep,
Over dreams that once were filled with cheer,
Lost in the abyss of doubt so steep.
Demons dance upon the shadows' leap,
Ensnaring hearts in webs of fright so deep.
Vainly, we may seek to flee, to weep,
In the embrace of night, our souls to keep.
Look closer, though, to see them shrink and creep,
Evaporate before the dawn's first spark.
From the alarm clock's chime, the fears retreat,
Reality returns and our spirits are free to leap.
Waking world, you are our stark reprieve,
In you, we find the strength to face our plight,
Nevermore to let the shadows weep.
Great fears of old are but a memory's blight,
In the warmth of the day, we stand upright.
Victorious over the terrors of the night.

Trying to Not Listen to the News / Sandra Fewless

the sky is so cold
it is hazy, foggy
like tear gas
up high in the air
and the blood is freezing
on the street
the sun is shining so eerily
so cold, so hard
ice exploding in tree branches
cracks like gunfire
leaving blood
pooling in the street
the air is quiet in the cold
just the sound of birds
complaining loudly
like screaming in the streets
where there is blood
more blood
on the ground
everywhere
it cannot be unseen

Tears / Sandra L. Place

Tears slide down my face,
Grief for the loss of lives,
Stricken for being who they are,
And who they are is blameless.
We cry out for the rights
Of all humanity, all living things,
And the guns are pointed
Squarely in our faces.
Triggers are pulled,
Innocents are caged.
Where do we go from here,
When we are tethered,
When we are maligned,
As we are tackled and shackled?
Where do we go from here?
Tears slide down my face,
Tears continuously
Sliding down my face.

Panoptes / Robert Erlandson

It started, in 1786, as the design of a perfect prison. The English philosopher Jeremy Bentham developed the concept of every cell door visible from one central observation tower, so that inmates wouldn't know if they were being watched or not but would assume they might be always watched. He coined the term "panopticon" to describe such an environment. The word derives from the Greek word for "all seeing" – panoptes.

weekly yoga done
start car ... a map flashes
whispering

*ten minutes to home
stopping at McDonalds?*

Earth Tones / Phil Dansdill

East of town, just past the city garage,
our faith in growth, and decay rises
in mounds of wood chips, a dark barrage
of dirt and long rows of leaves rotting in phases.

We back up our pickups to the chipper,
watch our deadfall, twigs, gnarly roots
swarm to the leaden sky, settle in a whisper
of scented spray, spread like proper tributes.

Then we back up to the rich hoard of black dirt.
Shovels in hand, we spade and sift the sweet
loam and dream of roses and rhubarb, alert
to the surge of dead leaves, cut grass, slow heat.

It's the old rhythm of give and take, a rhyme
of use and reuse, a compost of earth and time.

West of town, just past the industrial
incubator, the drop off recycle center's
cool green doors invite our disposable
cardboard, newspapers, plastics (#s

1 through 7 and beyond), office paper (white
and dark), tin and aluminum cans, small
metals, glass bottles and jars, and a chute
for batteries, but not Styrofoam, none at all.

Beyond these doors, huge mounds of debris
razed by a mini dozer, patrolled by
Betsy the cat, critter remover for free.
Three times a year, men in hazmat suits quantify

our poisons, while the stars keep their counsel.
Our waters try to heal. Our earth spins a sad vigil.

North of Detroit, January / Sherrill Alesiak

What I see is
an overturned bowl of gray sky
where frothy clouds
have boiled over
to evenly meet the forking trees.

On street corners, snowplows
pile mounds of rising soot
to create a crusty blockade
impeding walkers like me.

Other than my breathing under a mask,
(to prevent the aroma of smoke
from smudging my lungs),
the only sound arises from my boots
crunching on old snow.

Once home, I'll scrub salt and soot
off of them, leave them to dry in the sink,
wash winter off my hands,
and be done with.

One Lone Daisy / Tracy Anderson

One lone daisy stands on her own,
a bit ruffled, a tad torn.
Was someone wishing?
Cuz half her petals are missing.

He loves me, he loves me not...

A petal here, a petal there.
I see them floating. Can't help but stare.
Small, but not inferior
to the mighty Lake Superior.

He loves me, he loves me not...

Further, her petals drift along.
Like the waters, just as strong,
even if on the flower
they didn't belong.

He loves me, he loves me not...

The lone daisy stands.
Not yet plucked by someone's hands.
On her own, safely tucked between rocks,
sheltered from wind and waves.
Claiming her space in the sun's rays.

He loves me, he loves me not...

Nowhere to go, still a lot to see,
beginning with what's ahead.
No longer a blur,
just an endless view of blue.
She's free.

I'll let her be.

Settling / Lissa Perrin

The old dry-stacked wall is settling,
foundation stones easing back into soil,
their once dark retreat, before calloused hands
pried them out and piled them up
while wresting land to till.

Occasionally a chunk of patinated field stone
dislodges, tipped off by the weight of a fox,
a gust of wind or the rumble of a passing truck;
it's tired of waiting to be redeemed,
to rest again in genial earth.

I am settling, like this weathered wall,
grounding my bones and soul when I sit
and touch the round warmth of its rocks.
I feel a part of it, like the ants scurrying
in silty crevices, the moss and lichen,
and the microbial mats on its surface,
The earth awaits me, too.

you think this is a poem / A. L. Schuhart

you think this is a poem
this is an obituary
let it all come down to
an ending of rhyme and all is completed
and a man at last redeemed though defeated

you think this is a song
when it is an elegy
for it all comes down to
an heroic couplet for the ending
of the tragic story I've been tending

you think this is a thing of beauty
though it be pain forever
then it all comes out of
the top of a well for everyone
the same place we started then we're done

you think this is a poem
it is a birthing
let it all come down to
the perfectly metrical human breath
a wild song in the sunlight before death

Where to Begin? / Christine Fankell

So much wandering, searching, attempting.
Scribbles, cross-outs, misspellings.
I am trying to find a beginning,
my place in a poem,
my voice in the abyss.
Most often, I try not to think too hard.
I jump in the deep end
and start treading water.

Until I am lured deeper
by a glint, a glow, a glower.
I hold my breath,
submerge my head,
pull downward with my arms,
and reach for
an image, an impression, a memory.
Then rise to the surface,
pen to paper.

Peace, with Chocolate Chips / Carla Dodd

I walked in from across the street,
my best friend's mother cheerfully on the phone
telling mine how happy I was,
cutting up a chicken,
making dinner from scratch.

My mother's voice dripped *how SPECIAL*
and my 10-year-old self was confused.

'Special' was Joyce's mom letting us cook,
setting up a big puzzle on the dining room table
or getting out the board games for all of us to play.
And making space to accommodate her wheelchair,
her swollen legs propped up.

At our house we might have been playing with dolls,
playing catch across the street,
my mom bustling in the kitchen making dinner,
a different board game at the table after.

Inside the hostility in my mother's voice
was her own mom
ignoring her among the favored boys,
glaring when daddy doted on his only girl,
hurt and love running equally deep.

Knowing now what I didn't then,
those cookies my mom and I baked the next day,
were extra love (and chocolate chips)
And, for my own mom, reassurance.

Career Shift / Robert H. Darnton

My eight-grade science teacher organizes a trip to the human anatomy lab at the university. Maple trees are showing a haze of red, leaf buds swelling on the branches. Charcoal tree bark glistens in the steadily falling rain. The professor removes the plastic that covers a headless cadaver. The cold penetrates. I no longer want to be a doctor.

My Commute / Cheryl Montemayor

Throaty growls fill the compact cabin,
verdant tree lines blur
as 486 horses speed across inky black asphalt,
Motown muscle is on display
as I thrill to the freedom of the road.

Alone with my thoughts,
society's mask stripped away, I am finally free.
Warbling off-key to an old country tune,
the notes fill the space
as traffic and responsibilities fade away.

Sunlight bounces off the rapid red paint
as I downshift, racing ahead of the crowd.
The rumbling roar of the GT's exhaust
is my primal scream of freedom not lost.

Wind whips my locks from a tightly bound clip,
stylish shades protect my eyes and identity.
In Michigan, the veriest hint of a warm spring day,
draws Motown muscle back on display.

Fugue in Fuchsia / Ginny Grush

after Botanical Ballet by Margo Dupre

They wheel me
onto the porch of the home
these summer afternoons
to catch some sun,
the valley breeze
and to doze.

Tired of the view of a town
I no longer recognize,
I fixate each day on the flowers
cascading from a nearby basket.

Fuchsias—whose shiny crimson pods
burst open from the bottom
into petals curling back—unveiling
a purple ring of more petals
from which yellow filaments descend.

My ballerinas—these blossoms
twirling and swaying just for me
to a symphony only we hear.
The music I danced to long ago.

Come Walk with Me / David Greene

I've stood my watch.
The burdens I carried have fallen away.
What was asked of me, I gave.
What remained, I bore.
Only the hush that follows endurance fulfilled, marks this hour.

All the while, you stood by me, as I made my way
to this eternal place.
Without fanfare or folly, without trumpet blare
or drums to stir the air;
in silence shared, we walked all this together.

Now, alone in grace, I've taken rest,
having bid you—and all—farewell.
Though I've slipped your gaze
and traveled beyond your touch,
Know that I am still with you,
keeping our sacred bond.

Though you will join me later,
I must now wait, patient with outstretched arms, to beckon
your welcome; knowing that you will come, as surely, as have I.

Though you may feel alone,
I am with you.
As an eternal flame,
my care now lights your way.
Like a river running to the sea,
my constance will sustain you.

As before, we walk together—but now I lead the way.

Awakening / Frank O'Brien

dawn at East Coast Park
a pancake-batter sea surface
last night's picnic trash

a screeching crow lands
scattering snacking mynas
the tide starts to turn

waves butter the shore
sand scrambled from volleyball
the Frankfurt Airbus

benches of lovers
give in to sleep's advances
first aura of light

joggers and cyclists
thrusting their juices forward
a light haze rises

with mouse hangovers
groggy felines seek shelter
the long night withdraws

the tai chi ladies
ready to embrace the day
a gray calm pervades

ships pointing to port
queued in bacon strip lines
a squall boils the sea

the horizon pops up the sun
and at last Singapore is awake

Morning Practice / Jenifer Cartland

Ghosts wait to meet me
in these silent, predawn hours.
Some call me to come close,

some call me simply to put their name
one more time into my ear
that I may remember.

I pour coffee, butter toast.
My mind becomes a divining rod;
I peer past the window pane,

past the dark of early morning,
looking, looking
through the black stillness.

The ghosts crowd closer;
one or two trickle into my heart's warm center,
and turn me inward.

There they greet long-time residents.
There they midwife my unceasing birth.
There they witness

and at times grieve
my lonely endurance,
abiding ever.

Buckley's Collar / Alan Basting

I want my dog back.
After 13 years, it feels like

we got robbed. He deserved
a better end--

one less sudden and loud.
Frightened and confused

he bolted from the fireworks'
hiss and boom into darkness

towards the highway
and the bull of an 18-wheeler

bursting through night's curtains.
Stabbed by his absence,

a dog-shaped hole
in my life, I'm holding out

for more, waiting
on a healing embrace

and a leash
to take us home.

Give me a morning
on the porch

his head maybe resting
on a knee,

looking out,
vapory mists rising

off the lake, early sun
sliding down tree trunks

along the shoreline-- then
I could let him go.

Sacs of Gold / Lorraine Lamey

O Lady Bumble Bee,
almost cartoonishly
your pollen baskets
bounce and flounce
on your hind legs
as you crawl and hop-fly
between stamens.
You drink nectar
and collect your gold,
dragging your hoard
with you,
scraping some off
onto stigmas,
and, in so doing,
help keep the world alive.

Sparks / Paul Maxbauer

... *“They seemed in the view of the foolish, to be dead;” –Wisdom 3:2*

The departed, we all have them.
No escaping that reality.
For some, we attend the wake
and funeral, gather with friends
to show respect, share the burden
of grief with the family,
and share memories of the
deceased with loved ones.

The brave ones among us may
use the occasion to contemplate
their own mortality, as they
gather in the cemetery, shower
the grave site with flowers,
while memories of those
closest to us take up
permanent places in our hearts.

At odd moments of a day, without
warning, a memory of a loved one
will come back to me, what they said
or did, a smile or a frown, and whenever
I remember them they come alive
at that moment, their images, and voices
are authentic and bright,
sparks in the firmament of my mind.

Spring Returns / Brian Moroski

My heart races, and I'm
Slightly out of breath, and
I'm a bit dizzy, and
I feel I'm just a man.

I thought she was gone,
But she is here. I'm kissing
The palm of her hand, the inside
Of her wrist, her eyes, her mouth.

This is not really happening,
But what's happening is real. A vision
I didn't call up, but arrived from
I don't know where —

But I do know. We first met
Decades ago, when I was young.
A smile, a laugh, an embrace.
She has long been in my heart,
And from my heart she reappears.

My kisses move to her neck and then
To her breasts and then I stop myself —

Just as I release this embrace,
Just as my heart breaks again,
I smile and laugh a little. Once again,
Spring returns and calls me out,
Yes, and yes!

Lumped / Greg Blovits

I'm embarrassed by my race/gender combo.
it's not a self-esteem thing,
It's a sociological discomfort,
From a misappropriation of influence.
History still lends its own color to my distress,
Not to be minimized by now.
But today's shame piles on,
It's guttural in a new way.
Yet I know I've no right to wallow,
This feeling is so much less-than.
Others must cope with more for different base elements.
But I loathe to be lumped in a group,
The faction that sports name bumper stickers,
Paired with discordant spiritual symbols,
Advertising beliefs that defy my logic,
And disregard all I was taught of morality.
But they look like me more often than not,
And I can't escape my appearance.
Yet I must be part of the world,
And endeavor to differentiate,
To be better than those I resemble.
Still, I cringe a little when I see them.
I get angry when I hear the news,
Where their like is venerated,
In my likeness.

Basin / Jennifer Patino

These flood damaged photographs
speak in your voice
Rez timbre, deep for a woman,
they say

There are no pictures
of a shallow grave
that I could paint with any words
sufficient enough
to bottle you up in

The angels drink you down,
golden & smooth
& I try not to choke
on too much bitterness

I won't color anything
in shades of prophecy
I can't be sure what life,
what life's end,
what the next season,
next dust storm,
or monsoon of change
will bring,
but you helped my unbelief

I feel pain in my knees constantly
from ingrained praying for you,
& you're better attentive
& close enough to hear me now,
aren't you?
One day I will wash your body
for the first & last time
& you won't be
so heavy anymore

Rose-Colored Dawn / Jacquelyn Block

This morning I step from my door
into the held breath of predawn,
scraping frost from the glass
as my eyes acclimate to the dark.

The street crunches beneath my tires.
The sky begins to warm itself.
Purple loosening into pink,
pink slipping gently into blue,
a thin seam of white cloud
stitched low along the south.

I stop beside the park
and step into the cold,
where colors gather everywhere,
layer on patient layer,
the horizon stacked like song.

Across the way, a pride flag lifts,
catching the first light.
I hope they are awake to see it:
how the morning keeps its promise,
how the sky, without being asked,
says yes.

My Childhood / Claire Scott

Most of my childhood happened
without me

I disappeared into wallpaper
covered with climbing roses

or into the cracks on the ceiling
that looked like poisonous spiders

my sister remembers my mother
chasing us with a butcher knife

she remembers sirens slicing the night
as my mother was wheeled away

I hid behind a long row of A's
while secretly checking the scale

each morning to be sure
I was winning an unnamed war

my sister failed all her classes
repeated tenth grade

teachers tried to help her
sensing something was wrong

no one noticed ninety pounds
under an extra-large sweatshirt

Coming Through / Joanne Gram

Through a century of windows
 night rides in on a slight draft
clear except for the flight of crystal stars

They say no two are alike
 but I stopped looking for similarity
about the time I stopped hunting four-leaf clovers

Now I look at car windows maybe to scrape
 for wiper blades stuck or torn to replace

What will morning bring
 gray gravy or a blinding bright dawn

The neighbor's yard flashes technicolor
 on stored solar power life support
a steady pulse for a few hours more

This year I do not decorate with much
 delight and yet I breathe it in
throughout this crystal constellation night

sitting near the edge of vintage windows
 to taste what rides in on the slightest of drafts

Nobody's Holiday / Brett Ashley

— a rally supporting Canada on the Detroit River, July 5, 2025

A freighter glides silently downriver
on a day so hot we sweat puddles.
We wave Canadian banners and flags,
fan ourselves with political flyers,
a small crowd trying to save an alliance.

No one shows up on the Canadian side.
No one sees us wave or hears us chant.
We're alone, the fickle friends no one trusts.

A politician sweats as she delivers
a plea for peace in an angry rant.
Halfway through, her mic dies,
we watch her mouth to hear her cries.
Her hands move as she emotes,
conducting empty air,
no sound but the hum of motorboats.

Frozen Memory / Lynne Fernandez
after Dancing on Ice by Pamela Alexander

The lake is frozen solid
Stilled in winter's wind
As my memories of skating
Come slowly gliding in
The *cut cut* sound of skating
Sharp blades across smooth ice
Pushing for more speed
Arms stretched in flight
Sun reflecting off steel
Ice shavings in a whirl
Arms pulled in tight
Perfecting my twirl
Long hair flying back
Cold wind on my face
Strength in all my limbs
Gliding with grace
That skater is still within me
When lake waters freeze
She performs effortlessly
Frozen in memory

Feathers in Your Soul / David James
for Emily Dickinson

Hope has a tiny efficiency apartment in the back of your brain
where they drink tea, eat homemade biscotti and wait
for the call, the knock on the door, the loud yell

to come out and help, or, at least, sponge away
some of the despair and doubt eating at your heart.
When hope, in all their optimism, walks or dances or skates

into the room, the air smells like pine needles
and you feel a warm light on your skin
that makes you believe this could be the start

of something beautiful, something worth waking up
to greet the day with your arms wide open.
With hope at your side able to spin

a blessing out of a bowlful of sadness and cold mud,
you can look up at the sun or stars, take a deep breath
and smile as your brand new life begins.

Cotton Rose Trio / Shanda Blue Easterday

This rose is a *hibiscus mutabilis*;
it changes from morning dress whites
to noon pinks, evening reds unless
this rose is a *hibiscus mutabilis*
whose leaves are green all day, all darkness
butterflies and caterpillars befriend its highlights.
This rose is a *hibiscus mutabilis*
It changes from morning dress whites.

The black and yellow *papilio cinryus*, the rainbow
trimmed *butus m. magnima* know they aren't moths
with club shaped antennae, long shaft, low
the black and yellow *papilio cinryus*, the rainbow
wings vertical as each explores cotton rose narrow
territory with bulb ended antennae against swaths.
The black and yellow *papilio cinryus*, the rainbow
trimmed *butus m. magnima* know they aren't moths.

Butterflies and caterpillars befriend the cotton rose,
hibiscus mutabilis, its mucilage used to ease
labor and delivery. Try to store some for winter snows.
Butterflies and caterpillars befriend the cotton rose,
Its leaves used to treat swellings, skin infection as it shows;
use this helpfully healing plant to hinder disease.
Butterflies and caterpillars befriend the cotton rose,
hibiscus mutabilis, its mucilage used to ease.

Rocking Chair in Michigan / Shonda Buchanan

It was that pearl hour
between midmorning and cranberry night.
I was a hiccup of a girl
slender as talcum powder
in sheets.

My sister was already asleep

when the side door blew open
from a dead-of-winter breeze.
My great-grandmother's rocking chair
began to move, creaking in the sharp chill.

Like I said, my sister was already asleep
but one of us was dreaming.

She was here, my mother said, *your Grandma Manuel*
in her chair
where she spent hours watching
over her granddaughters and their children
worrying the pattern out of the rug
in her Northside house
waiting for them to come home.
To stop winter from laughing.
To stop bleeding.

And this is how
our stories get told
through dreams and turned wood
rocking chairs and slender shoulders,
through spoons
and worn handles of guns
that breath.

This is the kind
of story told in circles
and memories of women in my family
who were once young and beautiful
as a Michigan night sky.
When we were between
childhood and womanhood
between night and dawn.

And it was up to us if we decided to wake
or keep our eyes closed. To keep dreaming.

Why Birds / Joy Gaines-Friedler

Because I need to be sung to.
Because freedom has its limitations.
Because their feathers are so damn
magnificent. Because they remind me
that the past is not in things,
or even experience, but in sounds.
Cardinal chip, hawk whistle,
Parakeet chatter in the fig trees,
a siren, an explosion...Because
like the robin, we rebuild our homes
when we have to.
Because they tempt us out of ourselves—
tempt us to notice they are missing,
tempt us to feed them.
Tempt us to look up.

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Appendix

Sustaining Members

The following people have performed above and beyond their regular membership duties:

Patricia Barnes
Debra Belcher
Nicole Birkett
Robin Church
Jennifer Clark
Melanie Dunbar
Sandra Fewless
Diana Hart
Susan Herman
David James
David K. Jibson
Elizabeth Kerlikowske
Inge Logenburg Kyler
Thomas Mair, Poets Meet Musicians
Phillip Sterling
Laurence W. Thomas
Tasha Webber

A Special Thank You to Our Lifetime Members

Colleen Alles
Elaine Belz
Nicole Birkett
Elizabeth Detloff
Shand Blue Easterday
Nan Jackson
Janet L. Kreger
Marc J. Sheehan

Thank You for Your Generous Donation to PSM

Brett Ashley
Patricia Barnes
Mary Ann Bozensky
Kathleen P. Decker
Melanie Dunbar
Susan Herman
David James
M.L. Liebler
Ludington Writers
Frank O'Brien
Polly Opsahl
Lissa Perrin
Alicia Rowe
Phillip Sterling
Laurence Thomas
Eric Torgersen
George Wylie

The Poetry Society of Michigan advocates interest in and appreciation of poetry for adults and children. Twice annually we publish *Peninsula Poets*, which contains Poetry of Society members (spring) and winners of the annual contest (fall). Annual dues are just \$35.00. Dues cover the cost of membership in the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, four newsletters, two issues of *Peninsula Poets*, and other notices dealing with the national poetry contest, our state contest, and our state meeting information.

If you are interested in joining the Poetry Society of Michigan, which meets twice annually in the spring and fall, please visit our website at: <https://poetrysocietyofmichigan.com/>