

**FALL 2021**



KENTUCKY STATE  
POETRY SOCIETY  
**PEGASUS**

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Founded in 1966, *Pegasus* is produced by the Kentucky State Poetry Society.

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“...born of cadence and rhythm/I attended your foaling/and called you Pegasus/ for I knew you would fly...”

Pegasus Editors: Thelma Scott Kiser (Newsletter/Pegasus editor 1967– 1972); James B. Goode, (Pegasus Journal editor, 1970–1972); Doug Dauffenbach (1973–1975); Doug Dauffenbach/Esther Whitehead (1976); Esther Whitehead (1977); Ruth P. Clark (1978–1991); Miriam Lamy Woolfolk (1992–2012); Rebecca S. Lindsay (2013–2019); Asst. Ed. Mark Payne (2019); Jon Thrower (2021).

## A Note from the Editor

Welcome to the fall 2021 issue of *Pegasus*.

Each of us has had a tough couple of years, and *Pegasus* is no different. As some of you may know, the last issue was published in 2019. Yet as we turn a mysterious corner to stride (or run) from the year that was 2020, we find ourselves focused on rebuilding the features of a life we find worth living.

We are starting anew. I am new to the editorship and relatively new to KSPS and Kentucky. This gap in publication and shift toward the new feels fitting given the pain of the past.

And that pain is not to be washed away easily. While I certainly do feel that poetry can function as a salve, I do not feel this is its sole purpose. There are some wounds we do not want to heal. And words can illuminate those injuries in a starker aspect.

I know too that there is comfort in connection— in knowing, learning, and seeing through another. I look forward to sharing the work in this issue that you may feel this comfort and participate in this knowing.

The Fall 2021 issue of *Pegasus* contains several amazing poems, including the winning poems from the 2020 Chaffin/Kash contest, the Grand Prix contest of 2020, and much more.

Enjoy the issue.

Jon Thrower  
*Pegasus* Editor

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# Poems Fall 2021

1971

Note to young dancer

Dancing tangos, you, I remember green eyes  
in that far off plaza of San Miguel,  
the serene church showing with stone faced  
stolid architecture churning the songs  
of the border, these violet

volleys of footwork slam to unearth,  
to reveal, while a young couple they marry  
coming out the front.  
Their children exist in their sideways glances,  
and you carry on with the company,  
singers and clapping, guitarists  
and criers combined

making you my memory, Angela.  
One day to live on in America, whirling  
dervish the folds of your polka dot skirt,  
the year of great determination

when the bulls are slain outside  
the arena, picaderos and matadors  
take their crimson wares  
and spread them on the sand for  
new and dangerous railway crossings.

To unearth, to reveal, while a couple  
marries coming out the front.  
Their children exist in their sideways glances,  
and you make of me a memory, Angela,  
one day to live on in America.

Manny Grimaldi

## Paella

As gaggle rabbits one after another passed, the earth wore down,  
the water slid into its lonesome places with every rainstorm,  
and I smiled, it was the melting butter of the cows coming home.

Stampedes, raindrops to the nth degree made classrooms  
for the tadpole, washed pollen from the bees,  
and the rabbits trudged on in considered plods and plops  
by the tasty footed road—I wanted rabbit stew by the shovel—  
I smiled as the shrimp and saffron drowned.

I smiled, the taste of clams walk-wiggling on the deserted shore,  
not a drop of water, but sand soaking up the life of these shell breathers—  
seasoning for the rabbit, the shrimp, the rice, the saffron—  
there, the gloom of a fire in the rain built on cinder blocks,  
food piled in a pan where my uncle drank his wine, guitar on the radio.

The gaggle rabbits marched the cities on parade, tearing down,  
tearing down to give more fish a home today. They swam  
to a place where we snuggled with our lovers all warm and perfect  
like sorghum biscuits with our mothers wagging fingers at the sin of it all,  
and we didn't care, we didn't care, my god in heaven not at all.

From the year 1910 and 40 days of cold wintery whipping weather,  
I sat watching my uncle cooking morsels for the troops.  
Black eyed horses come black eyed peas and beans stacked  
higher than a stalk to Babel confused and confounded,  
I don't know how to speak. I just know how to eat.

Manny Grimaldi

## This Prophet Has Fibromyalgia

A man who believes he is G\*d  
walks onto the bus.  
His breath reeks of

cigarette smoke and doubt.  
He approaches me,  
spits out harshly

that I'm too young to use a cane.  
As if telling me would  
result in a miracle.

The day I picked my cane  
at the pharmacy the angels  
celebrated so vibrantly  
that shooting stars  
sprinted across the sky.

I sat down on the freezing  
metal bench and was  
in awe that I could  
keep my torso up.

The man who believes  
he is G\*D has never  
been forced to rip open  
a package with his teeth.

He's never had to beg  
his science teacher every day  
for weeks to please follow

his IEP in the nicest tone  
his autistic voice can muster.

The man who believes he is G\*d  
can take any job he is offered.  
He will never be fired  
for his inability to recognize  
the social cues of customers.

The man who believes  
he is G\*D thinks he can spot  
who is faking from an ocean away.

All mobility devices  
are useless in his realm.  
He could make a world filled

with ramps, if he wanted.  
He could make a temple  
with canes resting on every pew.

He could make Torahs light  
enough that anyone could lift them.

When we talk about choice,  
this is never what is mentioned.

Only of the disabled people  
who have the audacity  
to exist on a public bus.

Who sit on the accessible  
seats without a mobility device.

When the bus driver asks  
them to move seats because  
*they aren't "really" disabled,*  
they dig their heels in.

They clutch their mermaid shaped  
squeeze ball so tight the filling  
explodes onto the floor.

This is the only time in their life  
that they will refuse to clean  
an overwhelming mess.

The second I say that I am disabled  
a gaggle of self-identified G\*ds  
crash down from the sky.

All handing out pamphlets  
filled with useless opinions.  
Swallowing keys to doors  
I couldn't have opened anyway.

Rubin Hardin

## Buckeye Tree

You've done quite well, child of chestnut,  
So far north of your range, balancing  
Gaudy, crimson cupolas in mid-air.  
Here, where tidal gardens harbor cloud-  
Banks of viburnum, I had not seen the likes  
Of you before but was startled by your  
Fiesta-bright flowers – arboreal displays  
Of arson – and have since come to learn  
Of your other name, *Firecracker Plant*;  
Well-suited, in my view, since you keep  
Your tinder-box fingers well-polished  
For the balance of the month and even  
Your smoldering fuses of stems will flare  
In vulgar veins of color in the coming fall.

John Muro

## Horseshoe Crab

Assembled from happenstance and  
Horror, you'll find them, like discarded  
Hubcaps slowly spinning in shallow  
Coastal waters. They share resemblance  
To a Kabuto casque with a loose flap  
Of shell suitable for a neck guard or  
A discus that once skirted the surface  
Of water, came to rest and settled deep  
Into the wet mud and leaf mush of marsh-  
Beds where many have mistaken them  
For flounders that have been fitted for war.  
They could serve as a weed-whacker or  
Metronome, too, tail extending from  
A sliced saucer of body, or else  
An exclamation point that extends  
The distance between surface water  
And the arteries of salt-thick currents.  
In another world, their long whip of tail  
Might be used as a stinger since they're  
Sisters to scorpions, armament of ten  
Jointed legs hinged to a vessel fit for  
Treading a sea floor in trundling unison  
Or spawning proverbs, like the one  
That says in order to fend off extinction,  
Present yourself as something other than  
Your name and maintain a safe distance  
From all manner of living things.

John Muro

## Walk

Watching me, you said maybe I'd relearn  
to walk like a lady now that I was out,  
but a soldier once trained has no return.  
Only in drill or surrender is an about  
face waged. This left-right walk, no doubt  
IDs me to sister warriors with dog tag lore:  
who call cadence for every woman's clout  
who wish for ceasefire at their very core,  
who with weapons train for war, grabble gore.  
This breadth of female grace eternally fits in,  
marches every boot step, the HUP-two-three-four  
of battle, of peace, of pain, toes frostbitten.  
Walk with me, without quarrel, pride in tow:  
Neither think of me as goddess nor foe.

Victoria Elizabeth Ruwi

## In Need of Hearing Aids

Why are you losing your hearing?  
Well, it's the rat-ta-tat-tat and all  
that-that from those military days.

Why are you losing your hearing?  
Well, it's the blast-blast-blast, rock n roll  
crash-clash from those clubbing days.

Why are you losing your hearing?  
Well, it's the boom-boom-boom sneaker  
squeak boom from those Zumba days.

When did you lose your hearing?  
Can you not hear the children in cages  
crying under aluminum blankets?

Victoria Elizabeth Ruwi

## For my son

Your great-grandmother said childbirth  
is the closest a woman can come to death  
without dying

She was wrong

Before you came  
cold, I waited  
weighted curtain closing

snagged breath  
And when you drew your first,  
so did I.

Arwen Careaga

## Bloodline

Hair grey from leftover cigarettes, never lit,  
and my blood boils at the same temperature  
that would melt a bourbon slushie.

My back compresses, my shoulders slump and slouch  
from the weight of generations.

My headache might be residual  
from when Betty dumped spaghetti  
onto Chester's head.  
Or, maybe it's collective, maybe  
it's every told and untold swing, hit or miss.

If I got drunk off tears,  
I wouldn't drive past the liquor store so much,  
not buying, only looking, with nose pressed  
against the window like a kid in a candy shop  
looking for candy cigarettes and bubblegum.

I look so much like Betty, and  
I roll my eyes like Roberta, but  
I laugh like Jessie and Chris.

But does that matter when I'm depressed,  
like all of them, at the same time,  
giddy-sad, mad, and suicidal?

But wouldn't it matter the most, then?  
Because it is--it's *all* of them.

It's Phyllis sitting in a stupor by the phone.  
It's Gladys not speaking for a year.  
It's Chris having chest pains, and it's  
Kurt dying on the side of the rode, then  
Jessie dying full of tubes and fumes, and  
Betty seeing Joe DiMaggio when she shouldn't,  
Chester shaking through a beer,  
Gene wheezing, sedentary, asking for another bread roll.

They break my back,  
antique weights, hereditary vice,  
waiting for me to make my move and slip.

I can carry hopes, sorrow, and

I suppose I can carry heirloom regret.  
Despite my newest bloodline,  
I still crave a cigarette.  
And I don't even smoke unless I'm dreaming.

Caitlyn Rahschulte

## Mask of Shame

“I shouldn’t have to wear a mask,”  
I heard my uncle say,  
Over soda pop and hamburgers  
On our Independence Day.

“The government shouldn’t regulate me,”  
He said, “It just isn’t right!”  
“Instead, let’s turn to Jesus and  
Let in his healing light!”

I guess that’s what happens when  
You listen to President Fibs.  
But all you’ve got after all of that  
Are more and more graves to dig.

I wonder if you can explain what  
(though it’s stupid I even have to ask)  
Is the political agenda behind a simple  
Clean, easy to wear, life-saving mask?

But oh, I’m just a silly child.  
But others would rather be hung  
By the neck until dead than be asked  
To wear a mask and save a lung.

Months go by, I watch them leave,  
And now all have gone ahead.  
I guess you can be the land of the free  
After you become the land of the dead.

Caitlyn Rahschulte

## Wind Among Cows

Had I not gone with him I would've missed it  
A wind that rose and whirled until the trees  
Dappled with brown leaves the blue sky—  
Thousands soaring over field and cattle  
Where I stood with my father holding corn feed.

It got us up, our whole selves trembling,  
Humming like old engines, new fired.

Had I not gone with him, I would have missed it.  
It came and went so unexpectedly.  
It seemed almost like a sudden warning:  
a wakening blast from nowhere  
to shake an ordinary day into itself.

Jarrold Ingles

## Porch Swing

On a porch swing on my homeplace  
I watch the mist rise from a dappled world.  
The ½ caff coffee is barely drinkable—  
It tastes like the stories of old men,  
The kind only shared when the sun rises  
But not quite, because the mind's reach  
Is greatest before the distracting light of day.

I hear the back spring door,  
And the clump of Dad's rubber boots.  
He's off to greet the chickens who gather  
Him to their brook in clucking welcome.

A shower starts in the house,  
the constant shishish of the water  
obscures the nearby ripple of Sandfork Creek  
somewhere near in the gray dark wood.

On these mornings, I feel least like praying  
Because peace settles on the family fields.  
More felt because I'm already slipping away.

Jarrold Ingles

## Synesthesia

I can hear silence.  
Infinitesimal echoes of water droplets  
tapping against the shower glass.  
I squeeze my eyelids tightly,  
see specks of orange and blue and yellow  
that look like air particles under a microscope:  
a colorful quiet.  
Cotton ball pins and needles, a gentler tingling.  
The familiarity of falling asleep alone.  
Looking at strangers on the bus  
and wondering if they like the taste  
of strawberry.

Chloe Cook

## Mango

Wake up and spit sunshine into the sink,  
regurgitate the passion fruit seeds  
remove any speck of sweetness left inside.

Pull fireflies from the night,  
condense their light into an eyedropper  
squeeze the brightness on my irises

and become: lanterns.  
Melt lipstick into sunscreen  
wear the pretty all over.

Heat, soak, stick.  
Glow-in-the-dark anatomy.  
I've eclipsed from  
the snow-dipped mountain.

Chloe Cook

Kentucky State Poetry Society  
2020 Chaffin/Kash Poetry Award Winners:

“Postcard from 60” by Pauletta Hansel, 1<sup>st</sup> place

“Early Evening, Late October” Kevin Nance, 2<sup>nd</sup> place

“A Sonnet, Just in Case” by Kevin Nance, 3<sup>rd</sup> place

## Postcard from 60

Most mornings I unspool the knotted rope of me  
into cool water, trying to dip down  
into gratitude. My sinking body  
in its nylon suit still moves as I tell it to,  
the lift and push of limbs across the length of pool.  
Mother, someday I even remember to thank  
the ache that lives at the base of my spine, too,  
for how it lifts me buoyant to this place of ease.  
I am trying to believe it is not the weight,  
but how we carry what we're given that bends  
us down, or lets us float awhile, suspended  
in these years between the gathering up  
and letting go. Mother, I am trying  
to let go, but not of everything, a soft  
loosening of my clench upon this world  
I entered through your body.

Pauletta Hansel

## Early Evening, Late October

The backyard sycamores shed their skins like snakes,  
their torsos naked in the fading light,  
mirrored in the creek with the rising moon.  
Woodsmoke. A tiny tornado of leaves. And tonight  
the festival of souls,  
the dead stepping out to stretch their legs.

Across the fence, the neighbor's Labrador wheezes,  
a tumor in his throat.  
He brings the ball back in his mouth  
one more time, then takes a nap.  
*I'm putting him down,*  
the neighbor whispers. *Won't feel a thing.*

As the moon clears the treetops,  
I picture that early evening to come when I won't feel a thing,  
when I'll stroll by the creek, kick leaves, sniff smoke,  
pace off this plot of earth where I was happy once,  
pausing to pee  
like a dog marking territory that was never his.

Kevin Nance

## A Sonnet, Just in Case

I know I'm not supposed to write these lines  
about this virus, not just yet. Too soon,  
too soon! They say to wait like grapes on vines  
for one more season, one more harvest moon—  
but darling, what if there's an early frost?  
I'll never have this chance to tell you how  
I loved our time together. Nothing's lost  
when written down this quickly, even now.  
So please forgive my haste to set in stone  
how beautiful you were, that day we met,  
how much more beautiful you've grown  
each day and night since then. We're not done yet.  
But if you wake to find me getting gone,  
you'll have these words I left you, moving on.

*April 7, 2020*

Kevin Nance

Kentucky State Poetry Society  
2020 Grand Prix Winners

“Easter Sunday” – Megan Hutchinson, 1<sup>st</sup> place

“On Hazelwood Avenue 2001” – Linda Bryant, 2<sup>nd</sup> place

“Dimitri I have No Music for This” – Gary Beaumier, 3<sup>rd</sup>  
place

## Easter Sunday, 2020

“To register what it feels like to be alive in a particular moment in history is an enormous task.”

—Stephen Dunn, “A State of Disunion”

Yesterday I wore a raven’s skull to buy milk and bread and strangers  
cast their eyes on me like I was riding the pale horse  
Maybe I am Maybe they are, too Maybe the gallon of 2% in my buggy  
contains traces of white snakeroot that will kill me just as it did Nancy Lincoln.

Yesterday I climbed a mountain  
who was putting on her green lace wearing redbuds  
in her dark hair A debutante in a suffocating world her ball  
is the only that wasn’t cancelled  
So I danced with her until the robins homed  
on her crown and bats flew from the folds of her skirt.

Yesterday I sat  
with the dead spoke  
to them in their language of stone and soil  
Of orange lichen and epitaphs and we had the best conversations I was sure  
they rose from the grave  
to meet me

Megan Hutchinson

## On Hazelwood Avenue 2001

We called it Little Brooklyn, a bubbling gumbo of culture. Michelle & Tariq tangled daily & made up. Serena in her flamingo splashed lawn chair prayed while clutching her pale pink bible. Youngsters paddled in the shabby pool & coin machines clacked in the basement laundry while handyman Joe, who guzzled his daily paycheck, paced the parking lot with Buster his long-haired chihuahua. One day Joe put his ear to my Honda four-cylinder & offered a diagnosis. Usually, he'd try to sell me a task, five bucks to haul a trunk of groceries, \$20 for a wash & wax. I'd stretch out by the pool on a patio lounge with poetry, something vintage, Neruda or Rilke. I'd stop every 10 minutes & look up as if I'd sighted a full crescent rainbow. I'd take the scene inside my core with its carousel of race, nationality & language. I'd inhale deep & slow & congratulate myself.

Linda Bryant

## Dmitri I Have No Music for This

How did you find the notes Dmitri  
amongst artillery shells or the snare of machine gun fire?  
I hear there were frozen corpses in the streets  
and nowhere to bury them  
while some ate wallpaper paste for lack of food  
and when the Stukas screamed down  
did you hear the minor chords  
and convert them to a melody  
for the violins and cellos  
for your city who gathered the  
starving to hear a starving orchestra  
play your creation  
while still surrounded  
Dmitri I have no music for this  
with the whole of mankind besieged  
when even the ones you love  
may carry the enemy  
that will cull the old and the weak  
when even a warm embrace is insidious  
and we are turned against our own hands  
Dmitri I have no music for this  
when the hospitals are jammed to bursting  
I only hear the congested wheeze  
and the fevered delirium  
when I look from the window and wonder  
if the planet has turned irreparably  
and will not turn back  
Dmitri I have no music for this

(Dmitri Shostakovich wrote Seventh Symphony while Stalingrad was under siege by the German Army during the Second World War.)

Gary Beaumier

# Opening Doors and Walking through Them: An Interview with Author Danni Quintos

Danni Quintos is the author of *Two Brown Dots* (BOA Editions, 2022), winner of the 20th A. Poulin Jr. Prize, and *PYTHON* (Argus House, 2017), an ekphrastic chapbook featuring photography by her sister, Shelli Quintos. She is a Kentuckian, a mom, an educator, and an Affrilachian Poet. She received her BA from The Evergreen State College, and her MFA in Poetry from Indiana University. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Poetry*, *Cream City Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Best New Poets 2015*, *Salon*, and elsewhere. Her knitting has appeared on the shoulders of many poets, writers, and artists, who are also friends and teachers. Quintos lives in Lexington with her kid & farmer-spouse & their little dog too.

Hello Danni. To start the interview, could you provide readers with a brief biographical sketch?

The shortest, sweetest one is that I am a writer, a Kentuckian, and an Affrilachian Poet. To expand on that, I'm *from* Lexington, and I identify as a mixed-race Asian American, which is to say that though I am a member of the Affrilachian Poets, I do not have ancestry or roots in Africa or Appalachia.

I was wondering as well about other aspects of your life, like being a mother. Are there other ways you might describe yourself? Are there descriptors that are integral to your identity that you don't mention above?

Yes, I am also a teacher and a mom, but these other parts feel very separate from the writer/poet part of me in some ways. I think that motherhood and teaching are sort of new subject matter in my poetry because I have spent so many years of my life as a student and a non-parent. Teaching as a way of paying the bills is still new to me. Mom-ing is still relatively new to me. Both of these things are a part of my identity today, but I don't think they are integral to understanding who I am as a writer. As a writer I am a woman, an Asian American, a daughter and granddaughter of immigrants, a Filipina Kentuckian, and I've been claimed by Affrilachia as one of theirs.

This statement about your affiliation with the Affrilachian Poets is a bit confusing. Can you elaborate? For example, how does someone outside of the identity indicated in the very name of the group become a member? What does the group mean to you?

I think people who are not familiar with the Affrilachian Poets tend to think that the identity must be exactly the portmanteau: Africa + Appalachia. However, this

oversimplifies the group, its purpose, its genesis. The Affrilachian Poets were birthed from a need to feel seen and belong in a place where you're from. Frank X Walker is known for saying that Affrilachia makes "the invisible visible." In my experience as an Asian American Kentuckian, I have always been asked where I am *from*. I never really felt that I "belonged" to this place, the place I was born, the only place I could really actually be from, other than my mother's womb. It wasn't until I was 17-years old, attending Governor's School for the Arts (GSA), where I met three teachers and poets who told me I belonged here, that my voice was important, and that encouraged me to tell my own stories. These three poets (Ellen Hagan, Mitchell L. H. Douglas, and Kelly Norman Ellis) are all Affrilachian Poets. Douglas is the first person who said I was a poet in 2010, when I returned to GSA as a staff member. I don't think I knew it until then. This is all to say, Black and brown poets and writers, Affrilachian poets in particular, have helped to raise me, helped me to cultivate my voice and helped me claim Kentucky as my own. I am a Filipina Kentuckian, and no one can tell me any different. I am officially a member of the Affrilachian Poets because that community told me I belonged, and they were the first to do so. Because I belong to this group I have met many other poets of color from states that contain the Appalachian mountains, I have attended readings and taught workshops, I have gone to grad school and received my MFA in Poetry. None of this would be true if it weren't for them.

How do you think you came to be a poet? What is your earliest recollection of poetry as interesting or compelling?

My parents read to me a lot as a kid, and I especially enjoyed Shel Silverstein, Lillian and Russell Hoban's *Frances the Badger* picture books (that character is always making lovely, odd little songs/poems), and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. When I was a kid, my mom would get me to memorize poems from *Alice in Wonderland* to recite them for fun. So the musicality of language, the rhythm and cadence of poetry, are things I have always been drawn to.

As far as producing my own work, I have always enjoyed and excelled in writing and storytelling. My paternal grandmother emigrated from the Philippines in the 1970s, and her attempt to translate the Philippines (or maybe I should say, her Philippines) to my sister and me has been the fuel for a lot of my writing.

Can you tell us more about *her* Philippines? For example, how does *her* Philippines come about? What are the features of this place? And how do you think it reveals itself in or inspires your work?

For first generation immigrants I think there is sometimes this need to connect their Americanized, assimilated children and grandchildren to their countries of origin. My grandmother's Philippines exists in stories she told me, the food she cooked, photographs from the past, paintings on her walls, Catholic mass, and in the three-week visits to her hometown, Candaba. So this specific Philippines that I know is an amalgamation of memory (mine and borrowed), stories (also mine and borrowed), and

the imagery that I connect to the Philippines. The paintings on her walls are huge oil paintings: still-life of Philippine fruit, pre-colonial landscapes with nipa houses and carabao in rice fields.

I think this comes through in my poetry because I am interested in this folkloric version of a real place, and in the folklore of my own family and my ancestors. The last section of my book is "Folklore," which braids Philippine folktales and monsters with my own family folklore and identity. For example, the poem "Milkfish" is a retelling of a Cebuano folktale from the perspective of an Asian American girl. Sometimes these myths and folktales sit in my brain until they decide to appear as poems that translate my own experience.

Last read poet or book and most-frequently-returned-to poet or book:

Last read: Crystal Wilkinson's *Perfect Black*

Most-frequently-returned-to poet: I could name many. Can I say three? Aracelis Girmay, Lucille Clifton, Ai

What draws you most to the work of these women? Is there a common approach, or feature, or theme which you find particularly compelling? The ways in which each of them deal with power relationships (politically, racially, historically, and grammatically) strike me as particularly significant.

I didn't even think that these poets were all women, and particularly women with roots in the African diaspora. I guess that supports my claim about being "raised" by Black poets! These three poets are so very different in what and how they write, but they are the kinds of poets that teach me something new with each read. I return to Ai's poems because of her skill with persona, the sharp, frankness of her language, and a certain kind of fearlessness braided with fear. Her first collection, *Cruelty* just floors me. I return to Clifton because of how she is able to fool the untrained reader into thinking that poetry is simple or easy, which is something that the most skilled specialists and experts always do, right? They make it look easy. But how can she contain so much in so few words? How can such "simple" diction perfectly capture things that fancier, flowery writers might work at for hundreds of pages? I also love that this "simplicity" makes her poems more accessible. Similarly, Girmay, so long-winded and prolific and generous and tender, and yet so different from Clifton and Ai. Her words haunt me in the best way, a ghost friend on my shoulder repeating "Oh body/ be held by whom you love," her deftness and skill of creating something so beautiful and true and resonant.

I can't help but metaphorize, but all three of these poets write poems that are like chigger bites. Not sure if you've ever experienced a chigger bite, but the tiny insects are near invisible, cling to you, live on you, and make you itch for days (weeks!) after they've left. These poems might not feel that impactful on first read, but then you'll find yourself

affected by their sweet venom, sticking to your skin, lingering, sometimes uncomfortably, for a long time after.

Name one non-poet who has a great influence on your poetry. How have they affected your work or your process or your consideration of what poetry is or can be?

Lynda Barry! She is a graphic memoirist/ comics/ writer/ illustrator. I got into Barry's work as an undergrad at The Evergreen State College. The book *One Hundred Demons* is one of my favorites, though her more pedagogical collage-y books have influenced my writing process and teaching as well. *What It Is* and *Making Comics* are books that give me ideas to produce and draft and draw. I love to be able to explore creatively in ways outside "the line," which carries a kind of sacred pressure sometimes. Barry also has influenced me to consider what an image can be or do, which is helpful in writing and drawing.

Does drawing play a significant role in your writing process?

Yes and no. I love to draw. Creating things outside the realm of poetry sometimes helps me not feel so stuck or blocked. I am over feeling guilty for not drafting and producing poems. That guilt is not productive for me. What has been productive is reaffirming my identity as an artist and writer despite what I produce, and allowing myself to create and be creative in prose, in knitting, and in drawing. Drawing has, in the past, been something I have turned to to supplement my writing. When I studied abroad in Peru, I kept an illustrated journal inspired by Lynda Barry's work. I also made (wrote and illustrated) a graphic memoir about my parents' divorce when I was an undergrad. Recently, I have had a very small greeting card business featuring little illustrations, and I have illustrated broadsides for the Carnegie Center's Young Women Writers Project.

You refer here to "reaffirming my identity as an artist and writer [...] despite what I produce" and the potentially unhealthy guilt of being "stuck or blocked". And I'm wondering what this means for your writing process. How do other creative endeavors meld with or open space for writing?

I think I mentioned a kind of "sacred pressure" with poetry writing— writing a poem feels important to me, I think it was Nikky Finney who said, "Do not come to the page lightly." Sometimes the blank page can be intimidating, especially when you feel bereft of inspiration. This also makes me think of Michaela Coel's Emmy acceptance speech: "Do not be afraid to disappear. From it. From us. For a while. And see what comes to you in the silence." Not writing poems sometimes helps me write more and better poems. I have learned more about revision, mistakes, and process (The Process?) through knitting. I have learned more about imagery, memory, and storytelling through drawing.

I have also grown an enormous appreciation, glazed with awe, at poet-moms, who are able to maintain their poet-selves while taking care of their mom-selves and their families. Lucille Clifton's poems were so short and beautifully compressed because she was a mom, living a chaotic mom-life, but holding the poems in her head until she had the time and space to let them out. Poets who are moms - or moms who are still poets – it ain't easy. Not only does pregnancy change one's brain chemistry, but there's a lot of guilt and outside judgment involved with motherhood. In that sense, writing poetry can feel selfish. If one's perception of poetry is that it's frivolous, trivial, and without real function, then yes, it feels very selfish to carve out time and space for this quiet, solitary, possibly meditative act. I think a lot of the world has that perception of poetry, and that part of the world might happen to be extra judgmental towards moms too. Just saying. We live in a patriarchal society, so existing as a woman is tough, existing as a woman working in a feminized field is tough (education/humanities), existing as a woman working in a feminized field and being a mom can be exhausting.

Do you have a current favorite device in your writing? Or do you have a stylistic pet-peeve that you avoid in your work.

This is a hard question, and maybe because I've compartmentalized my writing and teaching, so I'm not particularly conscious of using a device when I'm drafting and revising. When reading and teaching writing, it feels easier to see and identify the way the parts fit together and work to create the poem, but there's a kind of other worldly magic when it comes to drafting. Which is to say: imagery.

I don't think I have a stylistic pet peeve- what would that look like? I guess I don't use rhyme and meter often in my work, not that it's a pet peeve, but I don't like the diction constraints of rhyme when drafting. I took a bookmaking class in grad school where I wrote, illustrated, and created an artist book version of a children's book, and I think that was the last time I wrote a poem with attention to meter and rhyme.

We often think of poets as having a less structured writing process. Is that true for you? What is your most reliable method of writing? And here too I'm wondering about the specifics of your putting marks to a page. Does that happen in a digital realm?

When it comes to first drafts, I do everything long-hand in my notebook. There are certain notebooks that I can write poetry in, so I always buy the same one in different colors. I've tried branching out, but to no avail. I've had a lot of success writing alongside certain writing buddies- doing a series of prompts together and sharing at the end. I do love prompts: from teachers and friends, or even inspired by other writers and artists' work. My writing process has been more solitary lately, having to catch the poem when it comes to me, despite dinner steaming on the table or my kid's movie volume up in the background.

I feel very strongly about writing the poem's first draft long-hand. Lynda Barry has, in various lectures, emphasized the importance and difference of writing (and drawing) long-hand; how the experience and process is different than typing or using a device. This is what works for me in my first drafts, and I'm always breaking lines when drafting poems. My second through final drafts are on my computer. That's when I mess more with form, line breaks, precision, white space, etc. I've drafted on my phone a couple of times, but it's more for capturing ideas than writing a poem.

Care to comment on your recent publications? You have a book coming out with BOA soon called *Two Brown Dots*. The manuscript of which won the A. Poulin, Jr Poetry Prize and is blurbed by Nikky Finney and Ross Gay. You're also in an upcoming edition of *Poetry*. How do you feel?

Woohoo! I feel so thankful and lucky. The world is a crapshoot and if you work super hard you still might not get any accolades or acclaim. I have submitted to the right places at the right times, and something aligned to let my words into the world. I am so humbled by these publications, and I still don't quite know what to do with myself. Hoping the world is looking a little brighter (in terms of the pandemic) next year so that I can book tour a little and get my book into the hands of readers.

What do you look forward to, both for yourself and for poetry in general?

I look forward to having a real actual book of my own, something I've wanted and dreamed of since elementary school. I am so thankful for poets like the ones mentioned above, but also for the amazing AAPI women who have opened doors for me: Aimee Nezhukumatathil, a poetry idol who chose my book for the Poulin Prize, and Su Cho, current guest editor at *Poetry*. I want to continue this chain of bringing more with you, opening doors for people like us, amplifying important writers and poets, and basically decolonizing poetry/ the classroom/ America. To quote Nikole Hannah-Jones: "You should be ashamed to be the only one like you in any room that you're in. I never want to be the only one. If I somehow make it into these spaces, I have to be pulling other people in with me." That's where I want to go. Let's go!

## BookBeat

### Reviews of Recent Books by Members of the Kentucky State Poetry Society

Allison Thorpe, *Reckless Pilgrims*. Broadstone Books, 90 pp. \$19.50

Originally from Wisconsin, Allison Thorpe homesteaded in Metcalfe County, Kentucky for forty years before circumstances forced a change. Her latest poetry collection follows the arc of that sensually rich, poignant experience, told with the authority of an attentive life that has made room for grief as well as joy.

“Reckless pilgrims, we came to the land, /bearing our hunger like a bony heart, / our ragged dreams an open sea,” says the first stanza of the first poem, “Stone Ruins, Slater’s Field.” (3) In the second poem, “To the Boy I Remember, the Man I Came to Love,” the shadow of Vietnam falls across all that is to come: “When your number came up, / I wondered if I would ever see you again.” (5) But she did, and a joint life was fashioned between the two poles of nature and the land, and the scars of war. The natural world is a constant source of renewal and surprise. And there’s a good dog, too.

Thorpe is generous in acknowledging the writers who have influenced her. Several poems respond explicitly to another poet. “Noisy Birds” is inspired by Jim Wayne Miller’s “The Bee Woman,” for example, as “All Day Geese Have Danced” was sparked by Effie Waller Smith’s “Preparation.” “In the Budding Green” beautifully channels Albert Stewart’s voice: “I will look for you/just beyond the far woods/where the Deptford pinks/strut and sway their lyrics . . . “ (51)

At length, an absence makes itself into a presence, as we learn in the narrative poem, “Window,” wherein a handyman insinuates a threat: “*You the Widder Woman? . . . Little lady like you/shouldn’t have to keep/ up a house, all this land.*” (56) “Deconstructing the Goodbye House” bids farewell to country life, ending, “There is a road ahead, / and you have chosen its story.” (66) The book’s final section, *Forget Me Not*, bravely recalibrates the days to fit a solitary life in a city apartment, where nature has shrunk to “a pot of ivy, / the strands cascading /like dark shiny hope.” (69) The miniature portraits that result from observing this new environment—a petal in the wind, an exchange overheard at a liquor store—are constructed of vivid memories and hope, bringing this rich collection to a heartening, if measured, conclusion.

KSPS members may send review copies of their poetry books to

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## Author Biographies

**Gary Beaumier** is the author of two books of poetry *From My Family to Yours* published through Finishing Line Press and *Dented Brown Fedora* published by Uncollected Press. He has been a boat builder, a teacher, a garbage man, a bookstore manager, and a Gandy Dancer amongst many other occupations. He once taught poetry in a women's prison.

**Arwen Careaga** is a mother of four, a musician, and a business owner in Lexington, KY. She was born and raised in Martin County and graduated from Berea College.

**Chloe Cook** is an undergraduate student attending Northern Kentucky University. She serves as an editor for both the student-run creative magazine, *Loch Norse Magazine*, and the literary journal, *Pentangle*. She currently resides in the NKY region.

**Manny Grimaldi** is from Louisville, Kentucky. He appeared online in *Club Plum Literary Journal* Vol 2 Issue 1, 2021. He appeared on Laverne's Writing Workshop on RADIOLEX as a guest poet on two occasions and works with Workhorse Writers generating feedback for submitting poets. He loves to tell stories.

**Megan Hutchinson** is a fiction writer and poet from the foothills of southern Ohio whose writing has appeared in *Gravitas Poetry*, *Kentucky Philological Review*, and *HeartWood Literary Magazine* among others. She recently received her MFA in Fiction from Western Kentucky University, and is now living in Campbellsville, Kentucky with her husband. She writes for a local newspaper by day and works on her creative endeavors, including a novel-in-progress, by night.

**Pauletta Hansel's** eight poetry collections include *Friend*, *Coal Town Photograph* and *Palindrome*, winner of the 2017 Weatherford Award for best Appalachian poetry; her writing has been featured in *Oxford American*, *Rattle*, *Appalachian Journal*, *Still: The Journal*, *The Anthology of Appalachian Writers*, *American Life in Poetry*, *Verse Daily* and *Poetry Daily*, among others. *Heartbreak Tree*, a poetic exploration of the intersection of gender and place in Appalachia is forthcoming from Madville Publishing. Pauletta was born and raised in eastern Kentucky; she was Cincinnati's first Poet Laureate (2016-2018) and past managing editor of *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*.

**Rubin Hardin** is a poet who adores magical realism. They founded a literary journal dedicated to non-speaking and semi-speaking disabled artists called *Explicit Literary Journal*. They have work published in *Rising Phoenix Review*, *What Are Birds*, *Runestone*, *Crab Fat Magazine*, *Voicemail Poems*, *Can't Somebody Fix What Ails Me*, and *Iris Literary Journal*. Rubin has upcoming work in *Utterance* and *Snarl*. Their favorite bird is a dragon.

**Jarrod Ingles** grew up in Appalachia. He attended undergrad in Kentucky and then completed a Ph.D. program at the University of Rochester, law school at UC Berkeley, and a climate change program at Harvard. He now lives in Asheville where he works as a law clerk for a federal judge.

**John Muro** is a life-long resident of Connecticut and a graduate of Trinity College, Wesleyan University and the University of Connecticut. His professional career has been dedicated to environmental stewardship and conservation. His first volume of poems, *In the Lilac Hour*, was published last fall by Antrim House, and is available on Amazon. His poems have been published or will soon be published in *Euphony*, *Moria*, *Clementine Unbound*, *Freshwater*, *Trouvaille Review*, *Amethyst Review*, and elsewhere. He was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

**Kevin Nance** is a Lexington poet, journalist, photographer and the author of *Even If: Photographs and Haiku* (University of Kentucky Arts in HealthCare, 2020). His poems have appeared in many literary journals and anthologies including the *North American Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Literary Accents*, *Reliquary*, *Poetry Review*, and the *Cumberland Poetry Review*, which awarded him the Robert Penn Warren Poetry Prize in 2003.

**Caitlyn Rahschulte** is a native of Northern Kentucky, from the Walton-Verona area. She went to Eastern Kentucky University and graduated with a degree in journalism. Some of her work was published in EKU's literary magazine, *Aurora*, including the poem "O, Captain!" which won the 2016 Creative Writing Award. She also had a short story, "Little Triumphs," published in the 2019 edition of EKU's *Archives After Dark*.

**Victoria Elizabeth Ruwi** is the author of *Eye Whispers*, a book of poetry. She earned a MFA in Creative Writing from San Diego State University. Her writing has been published in journals and anthologies all over the states.