

# *Molecule*

*~ a tiny lit mag ~*



Spring 2021

# *Molecule*

**Spring 2021**

**Issue 4**

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HAROLD ACKERMAN

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## May's Chit



## Middle School Mathematics

Add together: one heavy sweater, too many spritzes of Walmart perfume, one love note dampened by your sweaty palms.



**"What did they do with the other  
horse, Alice?"**

A thousand small misunderstandings were starting to make sense. But he didn't look scared. He looked angry.

Alice sighed. Even in this now-confirmed alternate universe, they would not be going on a second date.



## Countryside

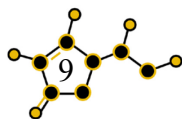
Lately, I've been sick of the country. Sure, it's quiet, but I'd give anything to be in the back seat of a cross-country bus, lulled asleep by the hiss inside a can of coke, heading to one of those big city bus stations where the pigeons have no toes.





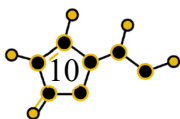
## Next to Last Song

“This is for all the ladies.” The lights shift down, the squeals come up. Luther’s had the handkerchief out since the last few, patting his face. Those in front catch his drift. Tomorrow is Toledo. Tonight he needs one hour dry-clean even more than that drink.



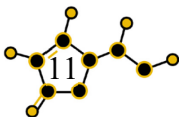
## Breathing Fire

Behind the water tower I chewed mica and fool's gold hoping to spit sparks—*then* they'd call me Dragon. The first punch sliced my gums and the pyrite's arsenic made me vomit. At home dad said I could have died, but he was proud of me for trying.



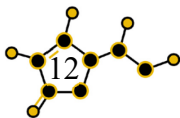
## Thanksgiving Dinner After Fistfight

The creamy spread of butter over fresh baked biscuits could heal nothing.



## Moonlight Serenade by Glenn Miller

The faded Korean War baseball cap was the only fig leaf for his baldness. When Aunt Holly's puppy chewed it up, he grumbled a bit from his stroke-drooped lip and slept by the fireplace.



HAROLD ACKERMAN

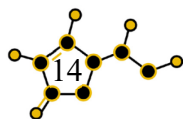
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**Lesser Body**



## Mother's Day

You kept withdrawing money and hiding it: we found notes stashed in picture frames, the toes of your balding slippers, or hidden in coffee like cocaine. None in the piggy bank I bought you for Mother's Day. I tried not to mind that you didn't trust me.

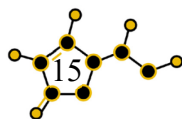


## The Stylist

Gina mistreated her staff, sabotaged her competitors, and alienated her family, but achieved her goal: she won the World Stylist Competition.

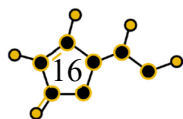
Afterward, she died in her sleep.

But she was unfazed. When summoned to serve her new master, Gina felt entirely equal to giving the Devil his 'do.



## Catharsis

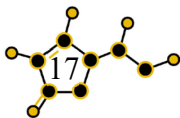
He recalled an argument he had with his ex-wife about the meaning of the word “catharsis”—whether getting divorced would be an experience of it. They disagreed on the definition and example. And when they looked it up in the dictionary they both felt vindicated.





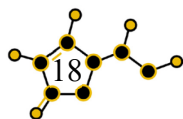
## Once on the beach

of Calangute, Goa, we were enjoying the beauty of the azure sky smooching the ocean. But suddenly my wife yelled for our missing nine-year-old daughter. After a long search, we found her preaching to a person, “We get everything back, lost in the sea.”



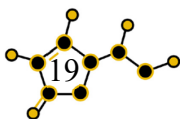
## Tales From the Breakfast Buffet

The man who stated that time travel was impossible just went back four seconds.



## Sages

McQuaid's favorite alehouse holds him in a savory grip: a malty sanctuary where frosty tankards dispense proven taste and wisdom equally. Nightly he and company dispatch three-jar vexations of homeless layabouts, bent politicians and feckless women. So much thinking scratches the brain. Publican! A final, soothing jar before closing.

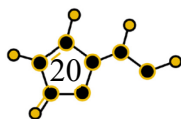


## The Taximan's Grief

The taximan was sad about the TV in his car. “It runs all day,” he told us. “I can’t turn it off. I don’t have the words to describe it.”

“Tell us, tell us,” we said. “Describe it.”

But for all the world he could not.



CAROLYN ADAMS

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## **Mordenite**

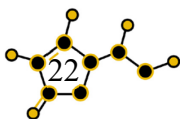


## Thumb

I found a thumb in the pickle jar. I asked my wife about it. My wife poked her head in the refrigerator. She said she didn't see anything but pickles in the jar. She said it funny.

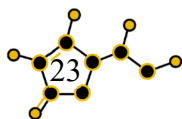
Later, I looked again. It was gone.

We never spoke of it after that.



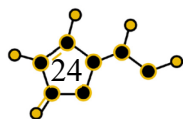
**Interview:**  
**with Dara Wier**

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| Q: Language?  | A: Crane     |
| Q: Will?      | A: Bishop    |
| Q: Judgement? | A: Baldwin   |
| Q: Breakfast? | A: Proust    |
| Q: Adoration? | A: Smart     |
| Q: Jeopardy?  | A: Poe       |
| Q: God?       | A: Avila     |
| Q: Lunch?     | A: Saunders  |
| Q: Education? | A: Montaigne |
| Q: Luggage?   | A: James     |
| Q: Comfort?   | A: Morrison  |
| Q: Poetry?    | A: Ashbery   |
| Q: Sugar?     | A: Tate      |



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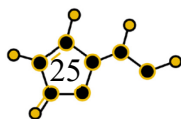
Q: Money?	A: Kharms
Q: Philosophy?	A: Pessoa
Q: Cheese?	A: Edson
Q: Keys?	A: Dickinson
Q: Dinner?	A: Melville
Q: Axioms?	A: Hansberry
Q: Dogs?	A: Williams
Q: Pencils?	A: Thoreau
Q: Flags?	A: Hawthorne
Q: Sushi?	A: Bernhard
Q: Catastrophes?	A: Plath
Q: Apostrophes?	A: Keats





**Book Review: *Perdido Street Station*/China Miéville/Pan  
Macmillan/£10.99/866 pgs**

A gorgeously gritty work of dystopian steampunk, *Perdido Street Station* features complex characters, unique alien races, and weird technologies, all connected through a tightly wound plot. This is the kind of fantasy that really grips you and doesn't let go—a truly stunning novel.



## Peter Once Loved a Cat

*Ruffles, a cat, is sleeping in an ornate bed.*

OWNER (OFFSTAGE)

Does Ruffles want a little kiss?

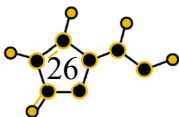
Does she?

Does my snuffles Ruffles wanna snuggle buggle?

*Beat. A sigh. Sound of retreating footsteps. A spotlight isolates Ruffles. She faces the audience.*

RUFFLES

Tonight, Peter dies.



## Pep Talk

*Day of the big presentation. DANIEL, in the restroom, speaks to himself in the MIRROR.*

DANIEL: Okay. You can do this.

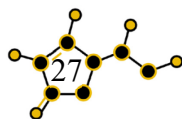
MIRROR: .ziɹɹt ob nɹɔ ɹoY .ɹsɹO

DANIEL: Relax, you got this!

MIRROR: !ziɹɹt toɓ ɹoɹ ,ɹsɹɹ

DANIEL: Just stop talking to yourself.

MIRROR: .ɓɹɹɹɹɹɹɹɹ ɹɹA



## Romeo

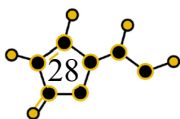
*ROMEO and JULIET lay in each other's arms, spotlight, centre stage. The stage is otherwise empty. Curtain closes.*

ROMEO: Get me a cigarette.

*ROMEO struggles out of the embrace, stepping on JULIET'S fingers.*

ROMEO: (*shouting*) a CIGARETTE!

*Stagehand runs with a lit zippo, catching the curtain on the way.*



CAROLYN ADAMS

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## **Persian Speedwell**



## North Pole Bedtime

MOMGLACIER

For my little glacier: THE STORY OF ICY.

KIDGLACIER

Mommmmyyyyyy, don't read that!

MOMGLACIER

A snowflake melts.

KIDGLACIER

Like Dad.

MOMGLACIER

Daddy's the ocean now.

KIDGLACIER

He's never coming back.

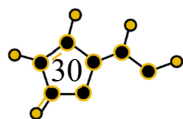
You're melting too.

And me.

MOMGLACIER

Gone, but together.

*They hug. MOMGLACIER looks peaceful, KIDGLACIER, terrified.*



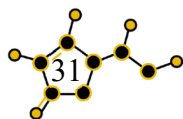
## Ice Sheets

Ice sheets cover these torrents  
red rivers laid to rest

no life within the currents  
expunged, frozen out

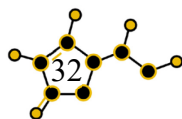
Antarctic plates plagues us  
hearts slowing to nothing

and still no smile upon your face  
not even a frown



## An Interval

Sometimes the troubles lift away  
like startled winter pigeons,  
and I'm free alone, open to the sky,  
humors balanced on the pivot  
of equanimity, imagining myself  
forever light, the trouble never  
turning back to perch again,  
heavy, and indifferent as the moon.





## My Father Had a Blue Jay

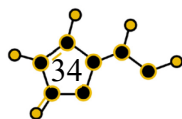
named Pepe. It hung out  
in his left breast pocket  
where he fed it seeds. He  
loved that bird. That bird  
loved him back. Oh how they  
talked.



## Sixty years on

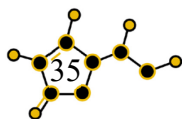
Barbie has a tiny red suitcase  
Samsonite, of course,  
iconic luggage for an iconic doll  
birthed in the nineteen-sixties.

Now she dreams of travel  
caged behind museum glass  
red dress matched to her precious red suitcase  
isolated in the twenty-twenties.



## Autocorrect Reply

Sorry, I only just now saw that you  
loved me



RENÉE COHEN

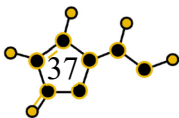
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**The Vegetation on Carrot Hill**



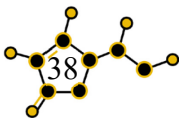
## How to Ruin a Perfectly Good Child

Give him a desk  
And put him in charge  
Of your problems



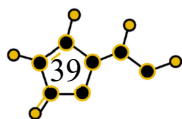
## Lightly

Well, Dwight, he  
always took things lightly,  
he packed light, he  
travelled light, he  
trod so lightly  
that one night he  
  
lifted off  
  
into the light. He  
was greatly missed. Slightly.



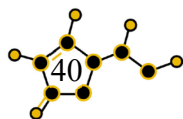
## Deferred Dream

King spoke of his vivid dream.  
Quite far fetch at the time it seemed.  
A dream told of a promissory note  
Written to those without hope.  
An heir he said they would be  
A new America... the land of the free?  
Sorry King, that's not the world I see.



## Incontinence

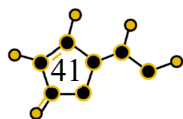
Small dog  
is embarrassed  
but  
doesn't show it.  
Aging gracefully  
she always  
looks  
surefooted  
like she  
isn't the  
least bit  
interested  
in today's  
humbling events.





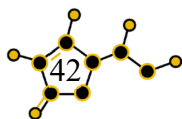
## Rodeo Steer

Break the gate  
rush forward  
into dirt  
and nothing  
I run to  
feel myself  
moving there  
is nowhere  
I can go  
my world is  
a circle  
all dead ends.



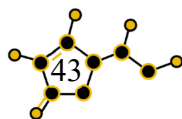
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I snap back  
with legs tied  
they drag me  
back to the  
starting gate  
next time I'll  
run faster.



## Big John

Since Big John had his brush with death  
he's become a Jesus freak  
peppering Facebook with endless  
propaganda reminding us  
to pray, forgive, love everybody.  
Comforting to him  
but annoying as hell to everyone else.  
Would be refreshing to have his foul mouth  
and dirty jokes back again.



TESSA MARTINEZ

---

## Call Me

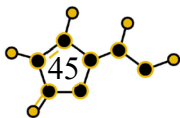


## Motel Room

key where we meet  
flickers in the lock.  
your eyes blink, snap  
to say, "why do this?"

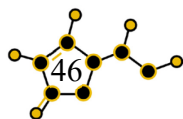
we leave

compassionate  
cheap

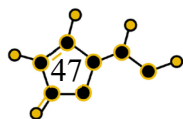


## Thursday Clap

I play dot-to-dot  
With dandelions,  
Light houses in a sea of green.

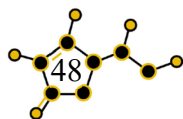


y  
l  
f  
r  
e  
t  
t  
u  
b



## Sputnik

we cut the air  
we sewed it back  
and light fell through  
anointing our cracks  
from which grew  
meaty white wings  
and off we flew





## An exceptional

I crave an exceptional  
to come in and sweep me

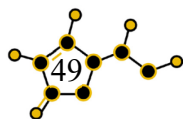
not necessarily  
off my feet, or even

away; just a bit, just  
a poke a wink a tap

from whatever it is that  
holds this place together

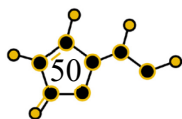
to tell me, it's good, look  
how pretty the morning

looks.



**missing parts**

there's an aquarium  
filled to the brim  
with everything  
i've ever lost—  
and i'm a child,  
i tap the glass  
and admire.



## Buddies



## English Composition Rubric

A: Electric. Indigo buntings perched in a blooming azalea bush.

B: Stable-robinesque-dependable.

C: A song sparrow, prosaic with two lyrical sentences.

D: Confusing as a nuthatch slamming into the glass of a sliding door.

F: The nest of a mourning dove, i.e, a real mess.

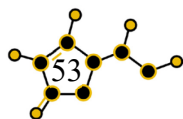


## On the Set with Basho and Frog

“Old pond scene. Action!”

“Jump in? That’s it? I don’t speak?”

“We just need the splash.”



## Clean Break

Someone challenge me  
to survive,

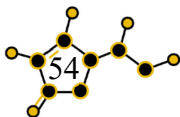
head bent over toilet,  
tongue inside.

Watch me  
make love

to store cameras  
with my mask on,

brandish two-fisted  
protection

while I fondle  
French loaves,



---

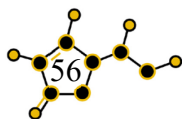
party in my closet  
like it's 1918,

live to tell  
my boring story.



## Resiliency

We had a seminar on resiliency and wellness today.  
I had to miss it because I'm on the overnight shift.





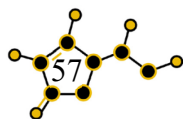
## The Minoan Snake Goddess

The sculptor chose her  
because she had the best breasts.

The snakes would not  
cooperate,  
so she and the artist faked it  
with branches.

She stiffened her curls  
with propolis and honey.  
The honey attracted the ants.

Her breasts attracted  
the Ionians,  
who desired only sons.



TESSA MARTINEZ

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## Prehistoric Times



## A Letter to Wang Wei

Here, idleness is failure.

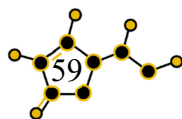
But I am tired tonight and do not wish

To stir these ashes with this bone.

I lay my head

Flat on the table. Star River

Pours into the sea.



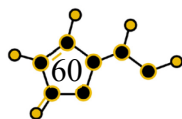
## New Feeder

They come around finally. Titmouse first,  
she tells her friends.

Chickadee then finch and cardinal.

Settling in, it's not too late

After all.

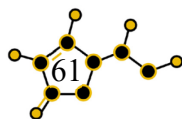


## On Reading Others' Drafts

I'm only reading poems by friends who are old.

The young have more time to revise,  
And they care about my opinion.

The old care about the poems.



## Index for a distracted world: M

—*For Krishna Mallick*

meaning of life

meaninglessness

megadams

*see* displacement

metaphysical realms

monoculture crops

Monsanto

    and control over soy and pesticides

    and monopoly on cotton seed sector

monuments, sacred

    submergence of

moral dilemma

    of drought-resistant GM seeds

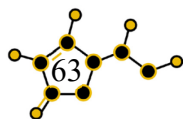
moral worth

    of humans and non-humans



## Theater

If you  
Want to know how  
They really work these things  
Don't look at the puppets, just follow  
The strings



## My Favorite Photo of Dad's Family

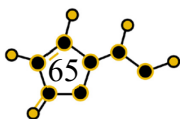
Aunt Gloria's beehive hairdo, Aunt Ginny's  
orange Lucite hoops, Nanny Veach's blue  
perm, Aunt Jody's white Pilgrim pumps,  
Uncle Vinnie's pompadour, dad's skinny tie—  
Do I want to say I miss them or do I want  
to say I miss myself?





## Unset in Stone

He left his pedestal at 5:07 p.m.  
no longer looking down on the people  
of Charleston. *Who knows how many  
of my blood relatives were owned by him,*  
one woman said.



MARY SENTER

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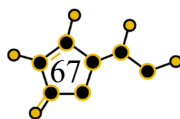
## Tiny Buttons



## NOTE

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In Clay Ventre's interview with Dara Wier, Teresa refers to Teresa of Avila, Williams refers to Joy Williams.



## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Harold Ackerman** tries to capture light at the right moments. More of his work and a list of his publications appear at [briarcreekphotos.com](http://briarcreekphotos.com).

**Carolyn Adams'** works have been published widely. Nominated for a Pushcart and Best of the Net, she helps staff *Mojave River Review* and *VoiceCatcher*.

**Richard M Ankers** is the English author of *The Eternals* dark fantasy series. Richard lives to write.

**Callie S. Blackstone's** work appears or is forthcoming in *Plainsongs*, *Prime Number Magazine*, and others. You can find her online at [callieblackstone.wordpress.com](http://callieblackstone.wordpress.com).

**Bob Brussack** has retired after a career teaching law at the University of Georgia in Athens. He lives in the US and in Ireland.

**D. S. G. Burke** (she/her) lives and writes in New York City. Follow her on Twitter/Instagram: [@dsgburke](https://twitter.com/dsgburke).

**Joshua Cassidy** lives in Berlin with his partner, where he writes stories about everything except real life because those are his favourite kind.

**Nancy Christopherson's** poems have appeared in publications across the US, UK, and Canada. Author of *The Leaf*, she resides in Oregon.  
[www.nancychristophersonpoetry.com/](http://www.nancychristophersonpoetry.com/)



## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Sharon J Clark** lives in Milton Keynes. Recent work has been published in *The Beautifullest* and *2021 Still Together* (Tawny Owl Publishing).

**Renée Cohen** is a Canadian freelance writer and artist.

**Monica Cure** is a Romanian-American poet based in Bucharest. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Plume*, *Black Bough Poetry*, and *Little Stone*.

**Merridawn Duckler** lives in Oregon with her husband, sons, daughters and a fire extinguisher. Work forthcoming in *Penn Review*, *Women's Review of Books*, *Posit*.

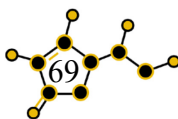
**Roy Duffield's** poems are in *Into the Void*, *Failed Haiku*, etc. He's a man of few words.

Insta: @drinking\_traveller

**Prince Duren** is a professor at Jackson State University. Prince believes "In a world where you can be anything, why not be yourself?"

**Kathryn Eberly** is a poet and happy transplant from the SF Bay area to Montpelier Vermont.

**Lily Anna Erb** studies Creative Writing at Eckerd College in Florida. She's a native New Yorker but decided to migrate south for higher education.



## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Michael Estabrook** small press poet striving always for greater clarity and concision rendering language more succinct and precise a Sisyphean adventure for sure.

**Jon Fain** lives in Massachusetts. Other tiny fiction publications of his are in *Welter*, *50-Word Stories*, and *The Dribble Drabble Review*.

**Timothy Gager** is the author of sixteen books of fiction and poetry, and hosts the now virtual Dire Literary Series since 2001.

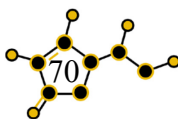
**Jack Giaour** is a poet and freelance ghostwriter. Many of his poems have been published-many more have not.

**Kari Gillespie** is an exiled Scot who gave up a teaching career to pursue her writing. Good choice? ‘Noli Timere,’ she whispers to herself.

**Rich Gravelin** writes short fiction from the woods of central Maine. [www.themainturtle.com/](http://www.themainturtle.com/).

**Chris Harder** is a playwright, burlesque performer and roommates with a delinquent cat. He doesn't have a website, so follow him: @theChrisHarder on Instagram.

**Teri Hegarty** is a writer, playwright and online columnist. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America, Inc.



## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Zebulon Huset** won the Gulf Stream 2020 Summer Poetry Contest and his writing has appeared in *Meridian*, *Southern Review*, *Fence*, *Texas Review* & others.

**Charlotte Jung** is a concrete micro poet and absurd feminist playwright. In her writing she explores the basic building blocks of language and life.

**L. Kapusta** is a disgraced mathematician, award-winning computer scientist, and (most notably) a poet.

**Aimée Keeble** lives in North Carolina with her dog Cowboy. She is the grand-niece of Beat writer and poet Alexander Trocchi.

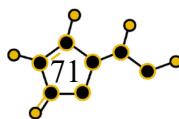
**Katja Knežević** is a Brussels-based poet and short story writer. She writes in English and Croatian.

**Katie Limnlowe** is a British non-practising novelist, currently living her teenage dream in Berlin.

**Paul McDonald** taught at the University of Wolverhampton for twenty-five years, where he ran the Creative Writing Programme.

**Linda McMullen** is a wife, mother, diplomat, and homesick Wisconsinite. Her stories and poems have appeared in over eighty magazines. She's on Twitter: @LindaCMcMullen.

**Joe Marchia** is the author of two poetry collections.



## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Tessa Martinez** is a freelance writer and English & Creative Writing senior at DePaul University. She's based in Chicago and loves it.

**Angelina Mitescu** is a Romanian poet and high school student. Her recent work is published in *The Five-Two*.

**Shakti Pada Mukhopadhyay**, MA (English), wrote a drama which has been staged and his writings have been published in the *Borderless journal*, *Passager magazine* etc.

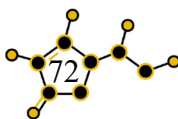
**Marcy H. Nicholas** writes sentences in between walking her dog, grading student papers, and playing golf. She lives with her husband in York, PA.

**Chris O'Carroll**, author of *The Joke's on Me*, is a *Light* magazine featured poet and appears in *The Great American Wise Ass Poetry Anthology*.

**Chad Parenteau's** latest book, *The Collapsed Bookshelf*, was nominated for a Massachusetts Book Award.

**Rajapillai Pillai** considers his name to have great comedic value. Hopefully this will be helpful for the children he's training to care for.

**Evelyn Jean Pine** is a playwright, performer, professor, and redhead.





## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Melanie Reitzel's** longer work has appeared in various journals such as *Poet Lore*, *North American Review*, *Tulane Review*, *Popshot Magazine*, *ZYZZYVA* and various anthologies.

**Rick Rohdenburg** work has appeared in the *Chestnut Review*, *Laurel Review*, *Raleigh Review*, and others. Now retired, he lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

**Frank Roger** wrote hundreds of short stories, published in more than 40 languages. He also produces visual art in a surrealist and satirical tradition.

Every single draft of **Teri Schrader's** weekly community letter begins the same way: I got nothing. Then the letter falls out from her fingers.

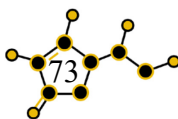
**J.D. Scrimgeour** continues to write:

<http://jdscrimgeour.com>

**Mary Senter** is a Seattle-area writer, designer, and photographer. She is the graphic designer for *Crab Creek Review*. Visit her at [www.marysenter.com](http://www.marysenter.com).

**Laura B. Smith** is the faculty advisor of *Red Skies Magazine* at Salem State University in Massachusetts, and teaches courses in the English Dept.

**David Somerset** lives with his wonderful wife & a small disagreeable dog. He writes & performs poetry, stories & music at open mics.



## CONTRIBUTORS

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**Gary Thomson** was once a three-jar man, but now prefers to blow away vexatious moments on his Hohner harmonica with Beatles and blues favorites.

**Cindy Veach** is the author of *Gloved Against Blood* (CavanKerry Press) and *Her Kind* (forthcoming, CavanKerry). She is co-poetry editor of *Mom Egg Review*.

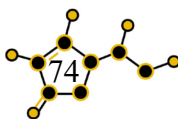
**Clay Ventre** lives in New England.

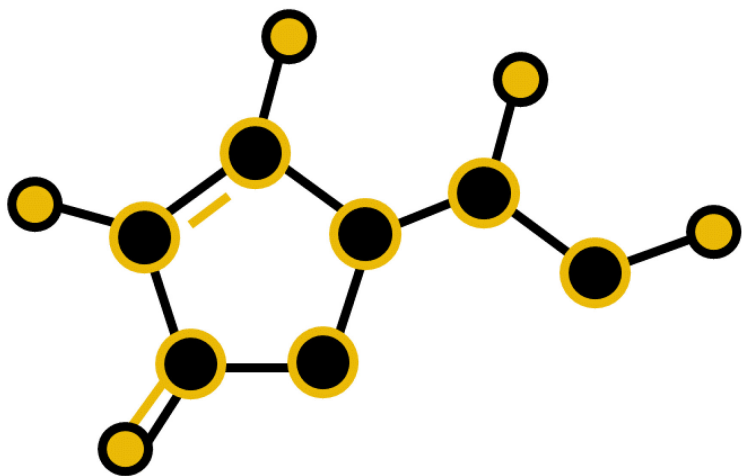
**Deb Olin Unferth** is the author of six books and the owner of many boxes, pieces of paper, and much plastic.

**Elisabeth Weiss** teaches writing in Salem, MA.

**Dara Wier's** books include *Reverse Rapture*, *You Good Thing*, *In the Still of the Night*; forthcoming is *Tolstoy Killed Anna Karenina*, 2022.

**Stan Werse** is a playwright whose book of short stories, *A Glimpse of the Unseen*, is available on Amazon.





# *Molecule*

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