

Molecule

~ a tiny lit mag ~



Issue 10
Spring 2024

Molecule

Spring 2024

Issue

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“A SAFE PLACE TO REST” BY MIRANDA DIAZ

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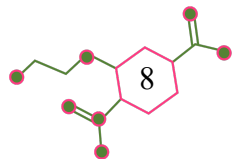
LAWRENCE BRIDGES

Jumpers in Cinque Terre



You Can't Win

Drop a coin in the jukebox, bite a hamburger, lick fingers, sing along with “Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini,” my date anxious to see mine. Rushes through his malted. I do not disappoint at the beach in my one-piece, but he never called again.



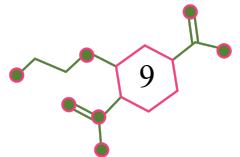
TYLER FISHER

Untitled

Tiny lit, she thought: perfect for writers lacking time.

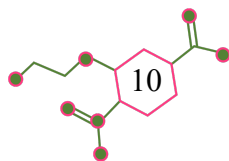
But it took weeks to write a single story, and she still hasn't come up with a title.

Prose



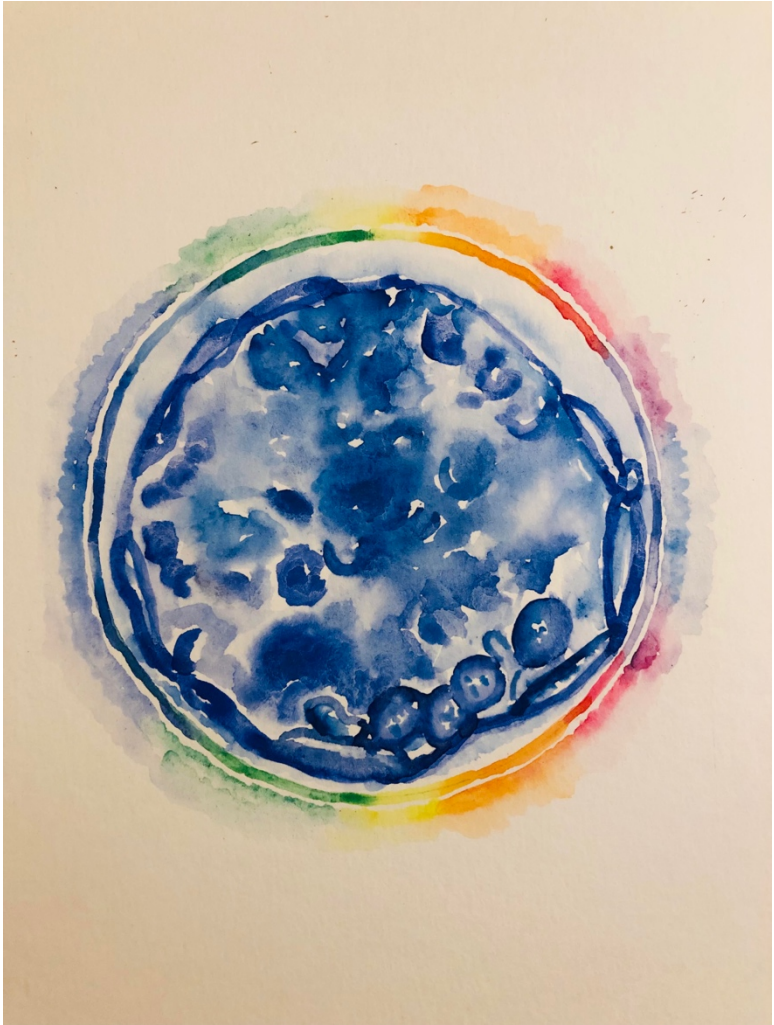
Fun at Parties

What a time to be alive I said at the party and a stranger typed into his phone to add it to a list of boring party non-speak phrases he had been collecting in Notes since 2016 and asked my name to properly create the citation.



ALISON DAVIS

Francis Embryo



Lunatics

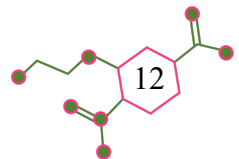
They built guns on the moon. Aimed them at Earth.

Earth built deadlier guns. Aimed them at the moon.

Like pre-adolescent boys, they shot each other relentlessly. Destroying the moon and much of the Earth.

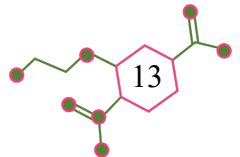
Survivors fled to Mars.

They built guns on Mars. Aimed them at Earth.



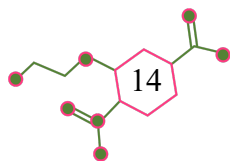
Hunger

In New York, I would sometimes slurp SpaghettiOs and beer, which left my dancer body longing for nutrients. We were two people then: the lonesome child seeking comfort and the distracted young adult craving oblivion.



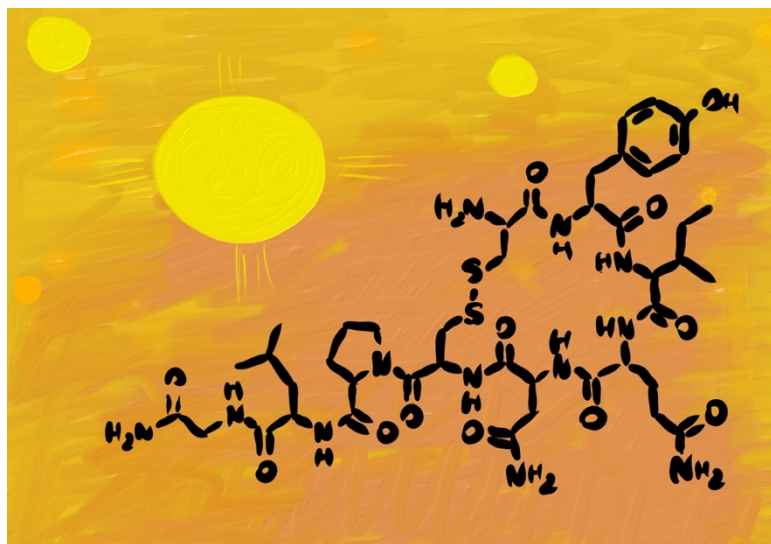
Watershed

“My feet are freezing,” Father rasps under his oxygen mask. I rub his violet toes. “Shall I put on your socks now?” He nods, and our cat, silent as Mercury, leaps to the windowsill. He swipes at the tangerine moon, again and again, but the light continues to sink.



ALEXEY DEYNEKO

Oxytocin



Three's Company

On a rare night out, our eyes meet.

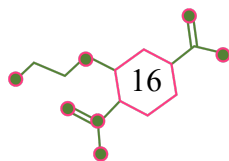
Three hours later, I'm back at hers.

Three days later, I'm dodging her texts.

Three weeks later, I have her blocked.

Three months later, I'm in the delivery room.

As she asks my wife to push, our eyes meet again.

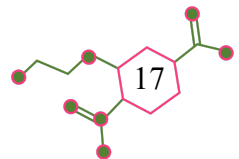


Qucumatz®—Help for Anxiety

Marketing made up the name. Reassuring. Vaguely scientific. Meaningless, but it tested well.

Unfortunately, Qucumatz is the name of an ancient Olmec God. When enough people say its name, the enormous feathered serpent will return seeking human sacrifice.

It goes on sale this week.

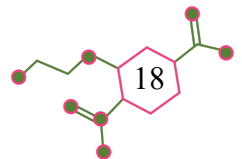


JACEK WILKOS

Available Immediately

Human vessel for rent. Good condition. Soul removed.

Prose



MIRANDA DIAZ

A Safe Place To Rest



ROYAL BAYSINGER

Punch!

JUDY

(Singing)

Hush little baby, don't say a word...

BABY

goo-goo...

PUNCH

“Goo 's” a word!

JUDY

Stop yelling!

CONSTABLE

(Enters)

What's going on?

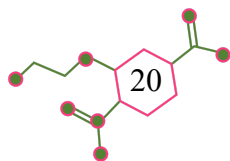
PUNCH

Nothing!

CONSTABLE

It's *something!*

Drama



PUNCH

Here's something!

(Pummels Constable)

GIANT CONSTABLE

(Arrives)

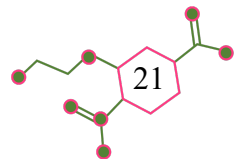
Try it!

PUNCH

(Hits crotch. Giant collapses.)

That's the way to do it!

Drama



SANDRA HOSKING

The Lye

(Two women stand over a casket.)

JANICE

She slept with my husband.

PATTY

No!

JANICE

She also poured lye in my tea.

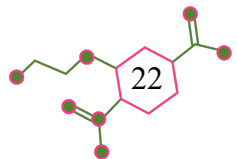
PATTY

She could've killed you! What'd you do?

JANICE

Switched cups when she wasn't looking.

(They look at the casket. Lights fade.)



KELLY DUMAR

Salamander



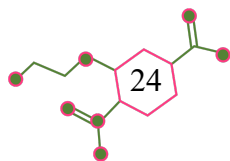
THE LANFORD WILSON NEW AMERICAN PLAY FESTIVAL

Special Section

For this issue, we are honored to once again showcase two of our favorite pieces that were created as part of a 50-word playwriting session, held at the 2023 Lanford Wilson New American Play Festival in June. Special thanks to Kitt Lavoie, Artistic Director, for making this possible.

The Lanford Wilson New American Play Festival supports new plays that feature robust roles for college-aged actors, while providing a laboratory to train students in the skills of working with living playwrights. The festival is a program of the Dobbins Conservatory of Theatre & Dance at Southeast Missouri State University.

Drama



Fusion

(Empty universe. Two atoms. Charged with insurmountable energy)

ADAM

So warm.

STEVE

Like it? Come closer.

ADAM

I've never... What... happens—

STEVE

Let's find out.

ADAM

It's forbidden.

STEVE

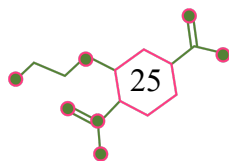
It's unknown.

(Adam approaches)

STEVE

Like you mean it.

(Adam accelerates.)

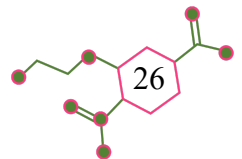


STEVE

Harder!!!!

(They collide. Tension releases. Their world begins.)

Drama



JULIANNE LEDFORD

Lisa

(Lisa sits as people walk by. A woman and man stop, they stare.)

WOMAN

Thoughts?

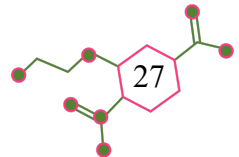
MAN

I don't get the hype.

WOMAN

Yeah, he should've given her a bigger smile.

(They exit. Mona Lisa stays. She tries to smile but can't. She tries to cry but can't.)



MARK HILLRINGHOUSE



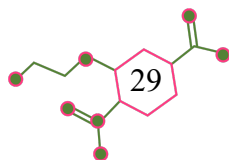
Interview with Naomi Shihab Nye

Q: A good poem?

A: A good poem helps us see and feel, images, details, stories, many shapes. Helps us sort our own wild wanderings of mind. Poetry serves us, calms us down, gives us a place to think.

Q: Advice:

A: Read lots, write freely and regularly, share your work as you can.

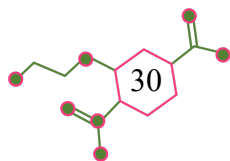


JOHANNA DEMAY

**Book Review: *Story & Bone*/ Deborah
Leipziger / Lily Poetry Review Books /
\$18.00 / 76 pgs.**

Deborah Leipziger is a poet passionately in love with life, with the voluptuous anatomy of flowers, and with her loved ones—her Nonna, her mother, her partner, her daughters. The lyrical poems in *Story & Bone* praise her beloveds in stunning images, in language that sounds like chant, like song.

Review

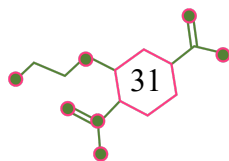


MEGHAN MIRAGLIA

**Book Review: *Glitter Road* / January Gill
O'Neil / CavanKerry Press / \$18.00 /
96 pgs.**

Glitter Road: the Delta where “memory [comes] up for air.” This land, magnolia-lush: “a memorial, a reckoning.” These poems, markers for “the nadir of our suffering.” Even here, where “the past is never past”: cicada songs, “ghosts and rebels,” “complicated joy[s].” Elegies. Daffodils. Fuchsia miracles.

Review



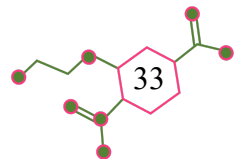
DANUTA E. KOSK-KOSICKA

Hatifnats



Weed Out Impatience

like you weed out pain. Your cats
adjust to pounding feet on ceilings;
fall back asleep. Smooth their softness.
Tend them. Notice: blue blooms above
gray cloud furrows. Notice: the sun gilds
bare oak branches. Notice: it burns
beige siding on the house next door
into bronze.



Night Muse

opens me
like a letter,
lifts me
from sleep
with a red-nailed finger—
smooths me across the sky.

Night thinks
my news is nothing
if not quaint.
A few desperate lines
and she's got the story.
But my heart still pings
like an old Smith Corona.



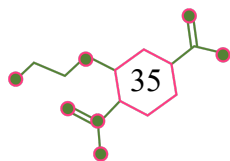
Orpheus

sweet Hades coaxing
left seed upon his ribcage
poppies at his feet

auburn flushed streets on
oblique stone carve out a path
from the embered lair

he made way through that
desolate yet soothing land
his love pleading stay

charming how tension
stripped his dignity
and left him maddened



MARY BUCHINGER

No Stops in *Woe And Ruin*

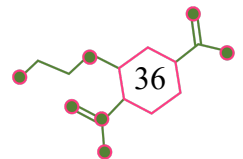
notes the linguist

Indeed, replies the student of history,

War is and war will

not end

it's filled with children

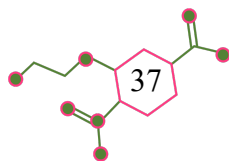


CHRIS BULLARD

July

Fireworks overhead.
Our lab howls under the bed.
He doesn't understand
how we show independence
by blowing everything up.

Poetry



JIM ROSS

Buds as Atoms

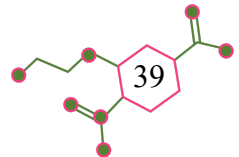


A Desert Chorus

I've buried my heart
in the trunk of a car.

It waits

singing love
songs I can
not hear, words
bouncing like
red rubber balls
hurled by kids
who have no
fathers, men who
let strangers carry
their sleeping sons.

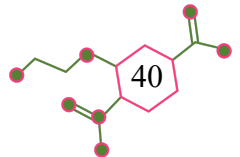


R. G. EVANS

**Senryu Upon Reading Cormac McCarthy's
*The Passenger***

What we all become—
coffined, awaiting mourners—
remains to be seen.

Poetry

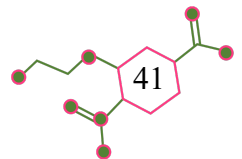


SKYY FAWXX

**They talk about flat screen TVs the way
you talk about monuments**

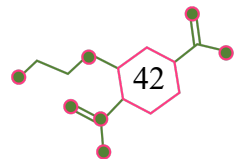
He says: Lay that check down easy you wouldn't
want it to bounce.

I say: Do you know that cheez its are a cereal?



Anxiety

is falling off a cliff onto a trampoline covered in lost
teeth.



Determination

Poems don't grow crops.

Poems don't deflect the arc of missiles

or pick through rubble in the lurch of a cease-fire.

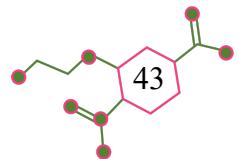
They do probe intricacies of the human heart.

This poem is exhausted

by “we” and “they” rhetoric.

This poem feels tentative, ridiculous.

Yet it can't help writing itself.



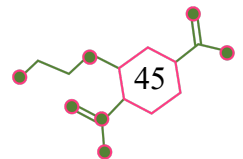
JIM ROSS

Butonbush



Personal Record

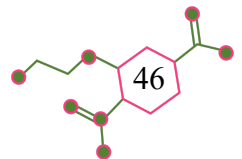
In the corner booth, a pair of young people are making out, and in this one, I'm trying to figure out how many fries I can fit in my mouth.



MARYELLEN GROOT

A Few Months into the Relationship

I've lost all my luster
and now my charm, too
Oh what I'd give
to be shiny and new



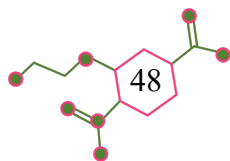
Humberto Burke

friend when I had none,
brought ribs and Dr. Pepper,
kept me company.



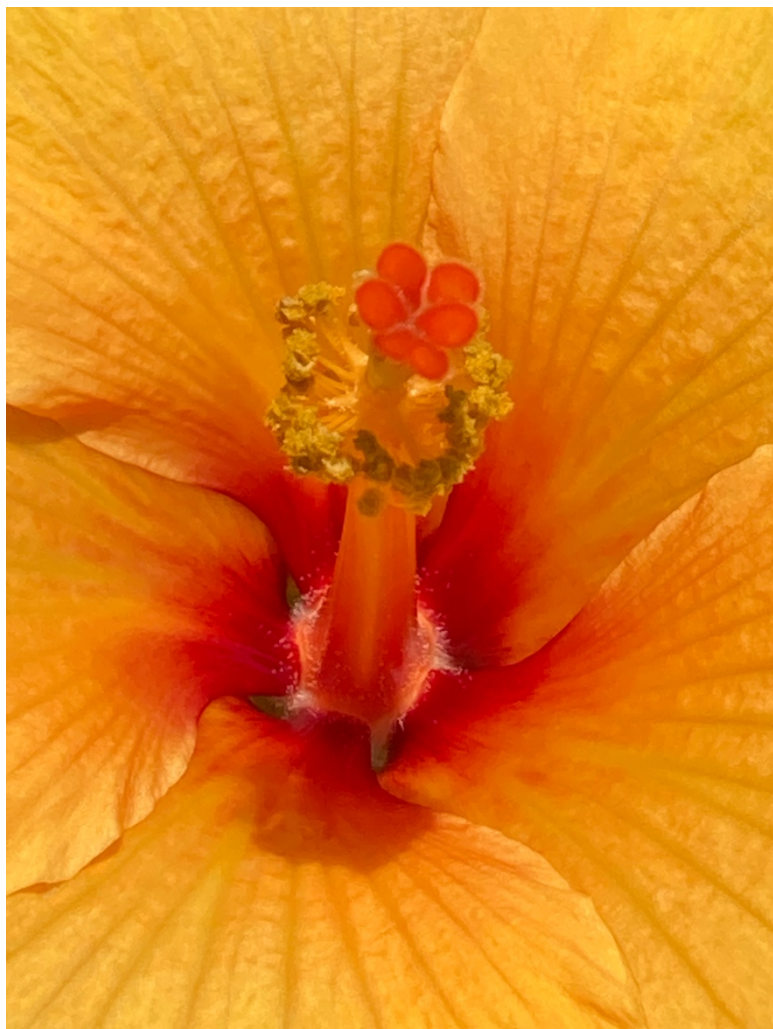
The Football

is nestled
in the quarterback's backpack
like an egg
from a fairy tale.
It will hatch
gold coins,
make him rich
beyond his wildest dreams,
dreams where he is chased
by a jealous mob
who grab him
around the knees,
just hoping
he will drop it.



CINDY SCHIMANSKI

Hibiscus Hard On



My Religion

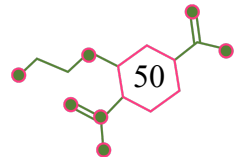
once was made
of straight lines
connected

to make a shape
I could recognize:
a box.

Now it's a tangle
like a pile of hangers.
When I pick it up

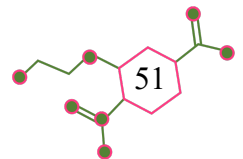
it's a misshapen ball.
I shake it hard
but not one hanger

falls free.



Finish Line

In class a boy said my
boobs were growing
the slowest. Excuse me,
I didn't realize
They were in a race.



NANCY BYRNE IANNUCCI

From My Adirondack Chair

I see my cat, Emily,
preying up at the sky,
believing every falling leaf
is a mouse from God.



Look Out Below

Between the dreams I had then
and the me I have now:
a plot hole
I'm still falling through.



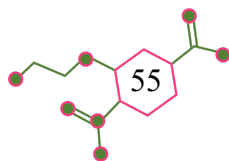
CINDY SCHIMANSKI

Leek Seed Afro Man



**ladies and related admirals
(all us fags)**

i hope to appear someday
in your field guide
in your field
i hope to appear gorgeous
i hope to appear
at once drab
at once brilliant
beyond a checklist
cradled in afternoon

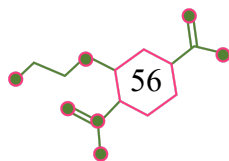


JENNIFER MARKELL

**After the Apostrophe Protection Society
Closes its Doors**

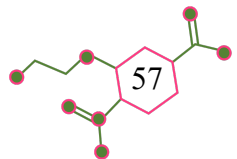
The apostrophe sends a hurried text
to the comma. *Its over. Youre next.*

Poetry



Enkidu to Gilgamesh

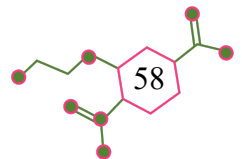
I would press my lips
to your fingers
once more.
Taste cedar trees,
barley dust,
blood,
but what mouth is left me
by the noon-day sun
and flood?
Do not fear
what bodies like ours
cannot do.
It is our birthright
to become mud
and clay anew.



JILL MICHELLE

The Space I Will Need for My Baggage

Poetry



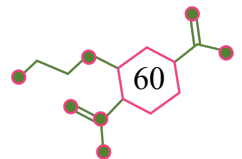
KRISTEN SIRIANNI

Abram



I Tried

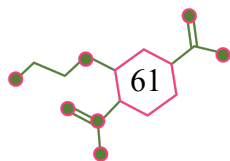
I dipped my big toe into the shimmering pond
and became your friend,
and I am pulling my toe back out,
colder and bluer than when it went in,
with a fucking leech on it.



MARION PAGANELLO

Us

This seduction spans
a life of yesterdays
you, me
length to length
this sun-warmed bed
your skin, my skin
edded like the silt
at the mouth of
a riverbed



CARLA PANCIERA

Q & A

Student A: *Why can't we have metal skeletons?*

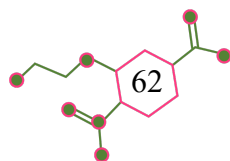
Frank: *Nothing has the integrity standards of native bone.*

The honest spine, moral scapulae, upright tibia.

No dissembling among tarsals, carpals and -oids.

It's something, this virtuous framework. The skin
hardly

deserves it. The suspect aorta. The traitorous organs.



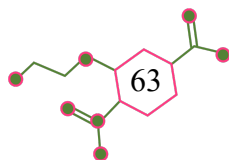
Chem Test Question

Question on 1913 chemistry test at Princeton:

Where is iodine found in nature?

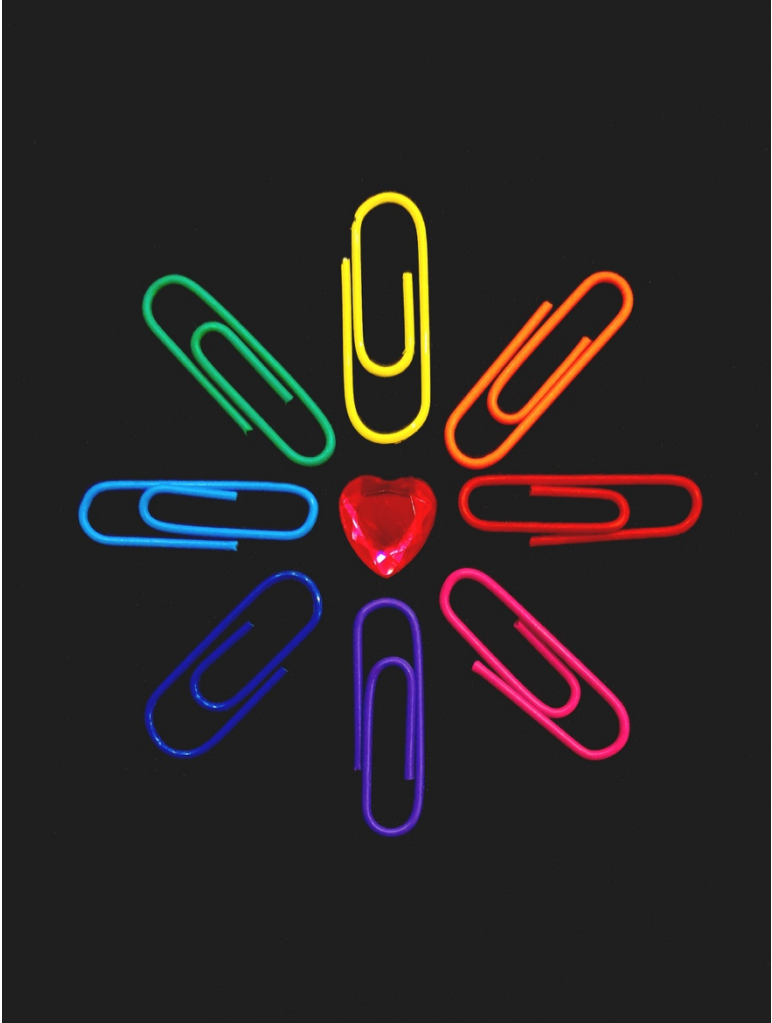
Student's response:

It occurs on the right-hand side of the
Periodic Classification of the Elements.



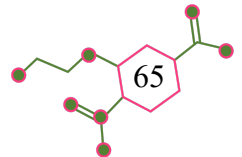
JACEK WILKOS

Paperclips 1



Emily

She's that one friend who swallowed a graveyard,
entire. I hold
back her hair as she vomits blackbirds,
I wipe ash and feathers from her lips.



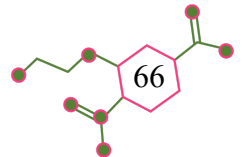
GEORGE J. SEARLES

Woodstock, Etc.

Back in the '60s
hippie birds

left no tern
unstoned.

Poetry



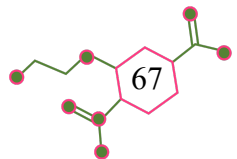
Juices

Every dark murky
morning, before sunbursts
interrupt me, I take my
feral, waiting matters
into my own hands

find my plug-in place

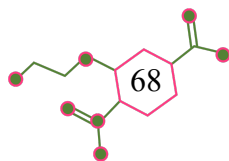
jump into my outlet,
full-bodied, longing to
hook my words up to
that tingling current

the one that's hungry
for more of me
than I can see



Bubble

Return the pen
To the pen jar
So that it can live
With all its friends.



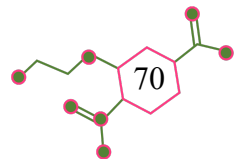
JACEK WILKOS

Paperclips 2



Unique Fear

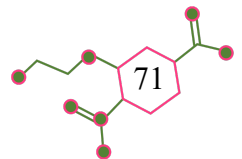
What makes us human? The ability to select all the squares with crosswalks, apparently. Not the ability to love because even snakes and snails have best friends, and crows conceptualize at the same level as second graders. Perhaps what distinguishes us is our fear of robots.



ROWAN TATE

paper cut

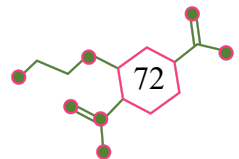
nighttime sharpens, god
is picking at his scabs. time is
paper-thin, like
moth wings. my mother said *go*
where you belong so here i am, clamshelled
on dorset and 7th, floating like
an old coke bottle in the backwash
of a life.



ARCHIEL VALENTINE

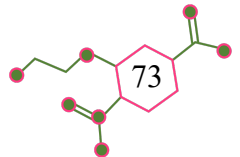
if there were captions we'd be exposed

When my partner and I talk,
our neighbors assume we are
speaking the loveliest nothings.
It's a good thing they can't read lips.
It'd be easy for them to see
that he and I
have forgotten
how to be kind.



Obsolescence

Going the way of bellbottoms,
phonebooks, roadmaps
Declining in popularity
like the landline and floppy disks
I am finally, gratefully uncool
value decreased
but strangely upbeat.



CHRISTOPHER WOODS

Dragonfly



CONTRIBUTORS

AJ Atwater's fiction is published in *Vestal Review*, *100 Word Story*, *50-Word Stories*, *American Literary Review*, *Roanoke Review*, *Blood Tree Literature*, *PANK* and others.

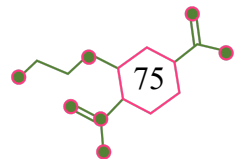
Svea Barrett has three large cats in a small apartment who all try to bother her when she tries to write poems.

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

Darren Black writes and reads on Massachusetts Northshore. Recent poems explore disability status, accessibility, and his own experiences living with blindness.

Elliot Gray Boodhan has always been in love with the art of writing. He enjoys afternoon hikes with his cat, Sadie, and spontaneous adventures.

Lawrence Bridges appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, and *The Tampa Review*. His three books are: *Horses on Drums*, *Flip Days*, and *Brownwood*.



Mary Buchinger is the author of seven collections of poetry including *The Book of Shores* (Lily Poetry Review Books, 2024).

In 2022, Main Street Rag published **Chris Bullard's** poetry chapbook, *Florida Man*, and Moonstone Press published his poetry chapbook, *The Rainclouds of y.*

Cameron Cai is an actor/playwright based in Chicago. Previous publication with Molecule is *BLOODLINE*, another 50-word play. IG: @cameron.cai

Alison Davis: Teach, learn, write, etc. Author of *Wild Canvas* (Finishing Line Press) and *A Rare But Possible Condition* (Saddle Road Press). IG: poems_and_pebbles

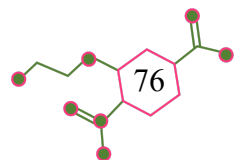
Raised in Mexico City, a resident of New Mexico since 1971, **Johanna DeMay's** poetry collection, *Waypoints*, was published in 2022 by Finishing Line Press.

Laine Derr lives in a landscape, free and quiet.

Alexey Deyneko, a pacifist, lives in Sydney. His work has appeared in *Origami Poems Project*, *Jersey Devil Press*, *Star 82 Review*, and elsewhere.

Maeve Flusser is a 21-year-old poet studying English and Design at UNH. She has published poems in *Chronogram Magazine* and *Meadow Mouse Zine*.

Contributors



Miranda Diaz (she/her) is a Latine artist living and working in North Carolina with her partner and their pet shrimp.

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

R.G. Evans's molecules have retired. Some days they're not sure if they're a liquid, a solid, or a gas. Maybe something non-Newtonian.

Sky Fawxx is an absurdist feral poet with too many teeth and not enough chickens.

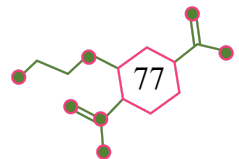
Tyler Fisher teaches languages and literatures at the University of Central Florida. He dabbles in experimental fiction and translates poetry from Spanish and Kurdish.

Robbie Gamble used to gravitate to the ocean, but now he yearns for mountaintops.

E.C. Gannon's work has appeared in a handful of magazines. A New England native, she holds a degree from Florida State University.

Maryellen Groot is the author of "Felix and the Flying Tiger," recently published with *The Graduate Review*. Her non-fiction has appeared with *Vox*.

Contributors



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

Gwen Hart teaches writing at Montana State University Northern where she encourages her students to experiment with short forms, such as one-sentence poems.

Mark Hillringhouse's writing and photography have appeared in magazines and journals nationwide. His latest project is a book of his macro flower photographs.

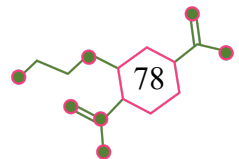
Mary Ann Honaker is the author of *Becoming Persephone* (Third Lung Press, 2019) and *Whichever Way the Moon* (Main Street Rag, 2023).

Sandra Hosking is a playwright based in the Pacific Northwest whose works have been performed internationally. She holds MFAs in theatre and creative writing.

Yasmin A. Hussain from Yorkshire, England. Recently published in *samfiftyfour_literary* Sept 2022, *Acumen Poetry* Issue 106 May 2023, Leeds Poetry Festival July 2023.

Nancy Byrne Iannucci lives in Troy, NY with her two cats: Nash and Emily Dickinson. Visit her at www.nancybyrneiannucci.com Instagram: @nancybyrneiannucci

Contributors



Frank Jackson is a man of few words. He tweets incessantly @frankerson

Stefan Karlsson is a poet and artist based in Portland, Oregon. His work has appeared in *Fourteen Hills*, *Sugar House Review*, and *Spillway*.

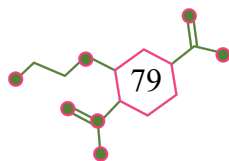
Danuta E. Kosk-Kosicka, author of two poetry books, translator for four. Photographs in art shows, journals; book covers. Co-editor of *Loch Raven Review*. danutakk.wordpress.com

Julianne Ledford is a freelance fight choreographer, director, and writer. She recently made her New York debut directing for Purple Light Productions.

Emma Loomis-Amrhein, naturalist, scribbler, birds and moths 4ever. Debut poem pack, *evening primroses*, @ Recenter Press. Recent Best of the Net and Pushcart noms.

Jennifer Markell's first poetry collection, *Samsara*, was named a "Must Read" by the Massachusetts Book Awards. A psychotherapist, she tends people, poems, and cats.

Cam McGlynn is a writer and researcher living in Frederick, Maryland. She likes made-up words, Erlenmeyer flasks, dog-eared notebooks, and excel spreadsheets.



Jill Michelle's poems have appeared in *Drunk Monkeys*, *New Ohio Review*, and *SWWIM*. She teaches at Valencia College in Orlando. Find more at byjillmichelle.com.

Meghan Miraglia is a poet, editor, essayist and educator. Follow her literary shenanigans on IG: @meghan.gets.lit

Pushcart prize nominated **Tom Misuraca** has had numerous short stories and novels published. He's also a globally produced playwright. He lives in Los Angeles.

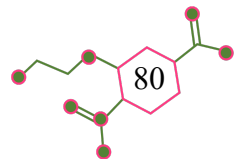
Naomi Shihab Nye has joined the Staffordchallenge.com. Her next book is called *Grace Notes*.

Julie Oldbury lives in Denver, Colorado, and she works in the technology industry. She hopes to expose the meaning of life through writing poems.

Marion Paganello has enjoyed writing with inspiring, gifted poets in independent retreats led by Maria Mazziotti Gillan, Kevin Carey and the late Laura Boss.

Carla Panciera's books are *Barnflower* (memoir); *One of the Cimalores* and *No Day, No Dusk, No Love* (poetry); and *Bewildered* (short stories).

Contributors



Leslie Anne Perry, former teacher and teacher educator, lives in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina with her husband of 60 years.

Kathryn Reese: poet/medical scientist/road trip driver/queer/mum. Gubbi Gubbi land/Peramangk land/Australia. Published in *Heroines Anthology/Paperbark./Kelp journal/Glassworks*.

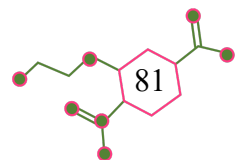
Jim Ross has published nonfiction, fiction, poetry, photography, hybrid, plays and interviews in 200 journals on five continents, including *Burningword, Feral, Phoebe, Stonecoast, Typehouse*.

Cindy Schimanski is a poet; memoirist; flash, short story, children's series writer; and a dog loving hippie sporting tie-dye, peace signs, and paw prints.

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

Susan Shea is a retired school psychologist, glad to be writing poetry again, and very happy that 78 poems have been accepted this year.

Kristen Sirianni enjoys studying bar regulars, going to church, and playing with bugs. It took her an hour to write this. She's kinda slow.



Dominik Slusarczyk is an artist from the UK, His poetry has been published in various literary magazines including *Fresh Words* and *Berlin Lit*.

Laura Smith sips hot, black coffee. A former journalist, book editor, and adjunct professor, she now writes with wonder from the White Mountains.

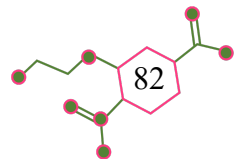
Cheryl Snell's books include several poetry collections and the novels of her *Bombay Trilogy*. Recent magazine publications include *Does It Have Pockets?* and *Switch*.

British but based in Bali, **Theodora Sutcliffe** has been shortlisted for the Oxford Flash Fiction Prize and is working on a novel.

Sharon Suzuki-Martinez is the author of two books of poetry: *The Loneliest Whale Blues* and *The Way of All Flux*. SharonSuzukiMartinez.com

Rowan Tate is a creative and curator of beauty in Romania. She reads nonfiction nature books, the backs of shampoo bottles, and sometimes minds.

Archiel Valentine is from Vermont and has publications in *littledeathlit*, *postscript mag*, and others. He writes about having a body and being transgender.

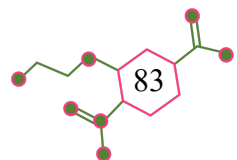


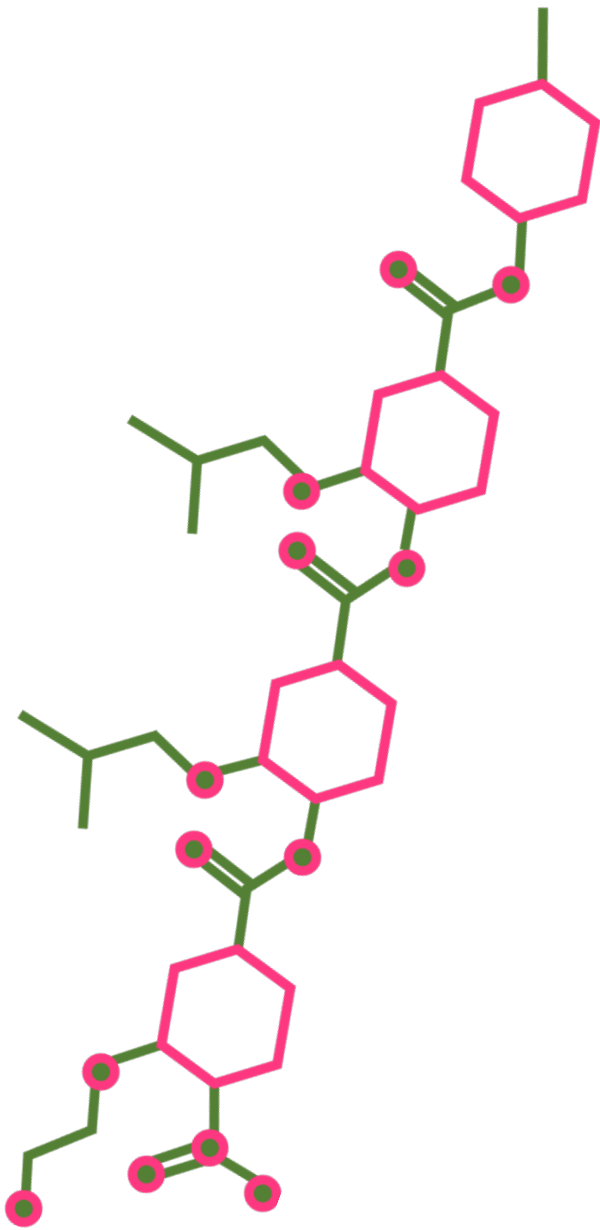
Elisabeth Weiss teaches writing and writes poetry sometimes. She's into history and social activism. Her chapbook, *The Caretaker's Lament*, was published by Finishing Line.

Stan Werse is a lawyer and a playwright.

Jacek Wilkos likes to walk aimlessly with ambient music in his headphones.

Christopher Woods lives in Texas. His monologue show, *Twelve From Texas*, was performed recently in NYC by Equity Library Theatre. He also takes photographs.





Molecule

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