



Rowing on Lake Washington by Nour Gajjal

# Blue Marble Review

## Fall Poems 2021

**Editor's Note** By Molly Hill

*Poetry might be defined as the clear expression of mixed feelings.*

*W.H. Auden*

November 2021

Fall Poems

Dear Readers and Writers:

It's hard to believe we can see the end of the calendar year from here, and for us that means six years of publishing student writing and art. As our submission numbers steadily climb, we've been trying to figure out how to publish more student work, and have added a few new editors to help us handle the large volume of submissions.

Our issues fill quickly and it's hard to say no to good work—hence the first November Fall Poetry Issue—otherwise known as *Poems Too Good To Turn Down*.

As is in each issue we try to include a variety of length, form, and theme so there is something for everyone. We'll publish a full issue at the end of 2021 as always, but consider these twelve selections a creative post-Halloween, pre-holiday interlude of poetic goodness. Enjoy!

Molly Hill

Editor

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**palm to palm** By Kristine Ma

you place a penny in the crook of my collarbone and laugh, the hollow deepening as my shoulders rise with my lips, copper melding into skin. a fruit fly flies too close to my face

and instinctively i clap. i open my palms to reveal tarnishing metal: to find wings like clovers, petals half bent

and symmetrical. your laugh and the clap of my palms are the only sounds

all night. i open my lips to say something, anything, but what do i say?

that i wish i wasn't so scared

of bugs, and if i wasn't, perhaps it would have survived?

that when you drove to my house that day and i went to hand you my old textbook, i wanted our palms to touch? that i wanted you to stay

for more than a minute? for now,

the hum of the vents, the artificial cold air. the way that i can't see your mouth in the dark but i can tell that you smiled.

the blinking lights outside. the memories of neon signs,

ducking from rain and into udon stalls, cupping paper trays of takoyaki. for now, i tell you that there will be a heaven made of osaka sunsets. for now, i take these words in my palms and call it home.

Kristine Ma is a writer and high school senior hailing from Michigan. She received three national gold medals and several other recognitions from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Additionally, her poetry has been recognized by the Young Poets Network and appears in or is forthcoming from Up the Staircase Quarterly, The Hunger, Up North Lit, The Indianapolis Review, and Bridge: The Bluffton University Literary Journal, among others. When she isn't writing, she can be found playing piano and oboe, watching anime, and dreaming.

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**Pair Bonding** By Annalisa Hansford

*Mar\*riage: the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship.*

My father leaves my mother at the altar.  
Years from now I embrace this idea.  
I reject any concept of happily-ever-after,  
forever-and-always bullshit that conquers  
our television screens from a young age.  
While discussing the divorce of John Mulaney  
And his wife, a coworker tells me  
“humans aren’t meant to mate for life,”  
His words imprint on my mind like a baby’s  
first handprint into clay. *Mate for life.*

I never believed in soulmates either.

I am the grandchild of divorce,  
the lovechild of *wasn't meant*  
and *to be*.

I breathe in forgotten anniversaries,  
Neglected wedding rings, and  
Broken vows.

In return, I exhale out the  
inability to lend my heart  
to a stranger.

Annalisa Hansford (they/them) is a freshman at Emerson College. Their poetry has been longlisted for Grindstone Literary's 2020 International Poetry Prize. Their work appears or is forthcoming in *The Rising Phoenix Review*, *Emerge Literary Journal*, *Poetic Sun*, and *The Hearth Magazine*. In their free time, they enjoy listening to indie music, rubbing their dog's belly, and eating vegan ice cream.

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**Haibun** By Suhrith Bellamkonda

The hawk's eye glistens fire as the hunter's moon rises above the horizon. This twilight is for heritage, for custom. She perches atop the fractal oak. Tonight, the field will shiver and hold its breath—tonight, she will remember what it means to be mortal, what it means to be a beast. In the distance, a rustle—in instinct, she pivots, leaps, and spreads her remiges—angelic, but an angel that kills. Soon, she is a lighting shadow, glazed in crimson, upon the amber below. Her home is the sky, and her prey must reside in her mandible. This is war. So perhaps there is some purpose behind the feather she always

leaves behind— to remember even a fraction of herself before the hunt, before the harvest.

Brisk mouse scuttles off—  
autumn fields dance in the wind—  
diving hawk lives on.

Suhrith Bellamkonda is an Indian-American poet from Mountain View, California. Like most, he likes staying up late and sleeping in. Indeed, he's quite a normal teenager. He tries his best. He searches for inspiration. Nothing dramatic happens in his life, so he resorts to writing about nature and his childhood. He has been published in the Stanford Anthology for Youth and has won several county-wide poetry contests. His favorite character is the em dash— his favorite word is 'again'.

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### **Treacherous Water** By Taeyeon Han

I learn from aqueducts, steeling to become a gully, this secret: mine,  
for a past grievous crime haunts me; the water exhumes the body of the Enemy  
and I must sweep it away. I am just a rivulet, but this rushed, surging water is  
my injected motto: no body, no crime. These growing  
pains — my water roars—multiply at the crossroads of old

injustices; when the flood comes, let the mountains have the body, for I  
ache to perspire into ichor before my secret whistles through the air. Misbehave-  
d, I press the rivulets to my face like hair, stock-still and hesitant at  
the precipice. Hide the body—no, let me take it to the bottom of the ocean. This is the  
last  
time I flow freely. I am pillage from the grave and bleed dilute memories— Revenge.\*

\*This poem assumes the Golden Shovel format, and utilizes “mine Enemy is growing old  
for I have at last Revenge” from Emily Dickinson’s “ Mine enemy is growing old.”

Taeyeon Han is a student in California. His writing appears or is forthcoming in The  
National Poetry Quarterly, Eunoia Review, and American Library of Poetry. He has been  
nationally recognized by the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, the Pulitzer Center, and  
finger comma toes. Other than creative writing, Taeyeon loves to read historical fiction,  
sing at karaoke, and find new restaurants.

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**Lava** By Daniel Park

I wish I could live like lava,  
to go where I please,  
Unstoppable in what I choose,  
Burn hot when I'm young,  
And become smooth,  
Beautiful,  
like obsidian  
when I'm done.

Daniel is a seventeen year old from Korea. He writes for fun, and while he has no awards that he lays claim to, he enjoys life very much.

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**A Poem in Which Nothing Touches Grief** By Samuel Victor Ajani

today, my lips wear gospel like a balm,  
like a sky carrying a colonnade of rainbow —  
a panacea glosses over it like  
dewdrops on a tulip's field.  
today, I glide in the heart of an infant,  
I clasp joy in my palms like an egg —  
joy is a fragile thing.

today, let joy be joy  
and not any word that lacerates



with a heavy consonant.  
today, I untick the chaos  
of mementos, spruce the  
wind into a cavalcade of goodwill.

today, I sap peace from God's nostrils —  
a compensation for the mornings  
that strapped from clacks of guns.  
today, I peel my skin at the tomb  
of grief like a wounded snake  
rambling for healing,

I prune my throat into  
the halcyon of a birdsong,  
forage my belly for darkness  
that hovers at the genesis  
of my brokenness.

today, my lips wear a gospel,  
let peace be peace and not  
my body shrieking in homophone.

Ajani Samuel Victor is a black writer and poet. He was a Semi-finalist at the 2020 Jack Grapes Poetry Prize and was shortlisted for the 2020 Kreative Diadem Annual Writing contest. He reads for Bluebird Review magazine. He is one of the contributors to SPRINNG Afro-eros anthology. His recent works are/forthcoming on Snapdragon journal, RIGOROUS, East French Press, Eremite, The Shallow Tales Review PRAXIS mag,

The Hellebore lit mag, Augment Review, and elsewhere. Say hi to him on Twitter @solvic16.

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**Ship of Theseus** By Ryan Skarpohl

As I reached into

My pencil case

To make a note in

The margins of a book [ which I never used to do]

I felt a rotten plank

Drop out of my heart

And a new board

Slot right in.

Your name was

Written on it

In blue ink.

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Ryan J. Skarpohl is a queer poet from Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is currently attending the University of Minnesota, Duluth for English and Journalism.

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**Delirium** By Rahma Jimoh

although we left,  
I still remember how to walk on scattered bullets,  
fake sleep with a pillow covering my ear  
to keep the deafening sounds of bombs away  
the heart-wrenching screams of people dying outside the wall  
their last words falling like leaves on a withering tree  
—to become an enemy to those you once shared with  
plates of pepper soup & toasted drinks to more life,  
the irony unveiled, makes me pray for amnesia sometimes/  
how do i blot out this unwanted phantasm in exchange of  
flowery scents, seed pots & kunu yet my placenta lies there  
& though we are miles away across hills & seas  
& time, they say heals, it is 15 years now  
but I still jump out of sleep, hallucinating!

Rahma O. Jimoh is a writer and nature photog. She is a Hues Foundation scholar and a Pushcart Prize Nominee. A lover of sunsets and monuments. She has been published or forthcoming in Kalahari Review, Lucent Dreaming, Olongo Africa & others. She is the Poetry Editor for The Quills and a Poetry Reader at Chestnut Review.

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**paperweight (2:37 AM)** By Halle Ewing

2:37 AM is an ungodly hour / it is glass breaking, thumbs without grip / it is an emptiness, it is souls leeches hollow / it is hair stuck on my shower wall, tangles caught

on combs, brushes, / it is my stomach replaced by a paperweight.

it is unequivocally human, perhaps most human of all / syncopated breathing in out in  
out in out / it is claustrophobic, time stops moving / i hold down the hands of the clock  
with my excess paperweight

2:37 AM will be written on my epitaph / my obituary will be written at 2:37 AM with a  
paperweight on the edges of the paper-light / sheets of white, light light feather light /  
2:37 AM is when i pull out the measuring tape and / paperweight

2:37 AM / wrangled bodies scattered in pencil-thin margins / i am locked in my medicine  
cabinet, final. quiet / the hurricane rages outside, raucous, / my cocoon is untouchable by  
the storm on the outside / inside, maybe not / but no fear, my forms held down by a  
paperweight. they will not fly away. / will i?

i do not have a paperweight to hold me down.

my skin is waxy / my hair does not stay in my scalp / my fingers do not stop vibrating?  
why / i am cold. it is too cold / someone turn up the heat / my pencil hurts my fingers i  
squeeze it too tightly / i am still cold / papery eyelids, mache hidden in breastbone / held  
down by a paperweight

i watch / as i atrophy / at 2:37 AM / it goes on / forever / or maybe just a moment.  
because then / at 2:38 / i hide it away,

my paperweight / is just another skeleton in my closet.

Halle Ewing (they/she) is a fourteen-year-old from Orange County with a love for the written word. She finds herself reflected in the lines she writes, and when they aren't frantically trying to remember that one word on the tip of their tongue, they're drinking way too much coffee, playing water polo, or begging her friends to take pictures of them. Their work can be found in Paper Cranes Literary Journal, Crossed Paths, and Cathartic Youth Literary Magazine, and the Weight Journal. Her Instagram handle is @halleewingg.

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**portrait of mother as nüwa** By Fiona Lu

mother sculpts me out of yellow river clay, kneads my ribcage  
into shape, leaves me in the afternoon sun to dry.  
by evening, there is already a lump in her mouth. she reaches in,  
finds my name tucked beneath her tongue. breathes life into my still  
clay hands.

when I am five, mother and I are close: umbilical cord  
intact in our dreams. hands like silk, voice  
like a bright, clear window of light. mother tells me  
there was once a man who cracked the universe into halves  
like a chicken egg, willed himself into the world until his breath  
became wind, his bones diamonds, and his left eye the egg-yolk sun.

I am nine, and the sky is broken. curtains of rain falling  
from holes in the sky. mother is perched on the windowsill,  
five-colored stones and needle and thread in her hands.  
I try to say *thank you* but the words fall out of my mouth—  
native language severed at the spine. to me,  
forgetting is an unclean word. forgetting is the knife with which i cut  
out my own heart from my chest and leave it to rot. mother sees this,

takes my silence as regret before leaping  
towards the fractured sky.

at fifteen, I have already chosen a new name for myself— a shiny new  
american thing. its edges are too brittle, syllables too sharp  
for mother to swallow  
without drawing blood. mother,  
stop pretending that you don't shiver every night before  
you fall asleep. stop pretending that I don't cover my skin so the sun  
won't stain me a deeper shade of yellow. stop pretending  
that I can still recall the imprint of your palms  
on my clay skin. I look outside  
and the sky ruptures into turtle shells and ashes.  
holes everywhere. I call for mother  
but she is nowhere to be found.

Fiona Lu is a poet and a student at Hillsdale High School. She is passionate about storytelling, no matter what form it may take. In her free time, she likes to draw, read YA novels, and take walks with her family.

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**Mary** By Natalie Hampton

in my dreams, I enter a Cathedral  
and Mary waves back. Gothic statues  
were made of oak and marble: she is

shifting stone. Saints surround. In the  
corner of my eye, I see her wink.

Devotion depends on the subject:  
old Catholics called her the Queen of  
Heaven. Protestant Reformation diverges  
from the past: Calvin and Luther argue  
for lower praise. Evangelicals say she  
deserves no elevated privilege. But  
doctrine shifts over time, a high and  
low tide of the conquerors and the  
conquered, and I wonder if there is  
an alien species who will one day  
impose their own beliefs upon us,  
one where Mary doesn't exist at all.

In Central Park, I pray to twenty-nine  
statues: Hans Christian and his ugly  
duckling, Alice and her White Rabbit,  
the Angels atop the Bethesda.  
They don't wink back.

I enter the Cathedral and pray

Natalie Hampton is a junior at the Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in the Creative Writing Department. She has been recognized by the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers, the Harris County Department of Education, the Young Poets

Network, the Pulitzer Center, and Ringling College of Art and Design. She serves as an editor at Polyphony Lit and Cathartic Literary Magazine.

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**Forgetting** By Charissa Zeigler

Who needs a horror story  
when you have facts?

a school bench becomes  
a precipice. Imagination

is a drive-by trigger  
bulleting the brain which

becomes one of a thousand  
shards. Will consent make it alright?

From the right angle, at the right price  
forgetting can pose as forgiveness.



I texted you after dying  
100 degrees of fear

fingers slipping on the handle  
of a jammed window.

Father: gone to store  
will not be back

soon. Will it be alright?  
when a fact is inevitable

the way heatwave slinks  
across the city. School's out

It's time to forget everything  
we learned.

Charissa Xin Zeigler is enjoying a gap year in Providence, RI. She is an adoptee from Yunnan, China and currently resides in Providence, RI. She received an award for editorial writing at NorCal Media Day, won the Davis' Constitution Essay Contest in 2018 in the high-school category, and was the EIC of her school's literary magazine. She

enjoys taste-testing soup, wearing sweaters in 100 degree weather, and unapologetically liking U2's new albums.

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