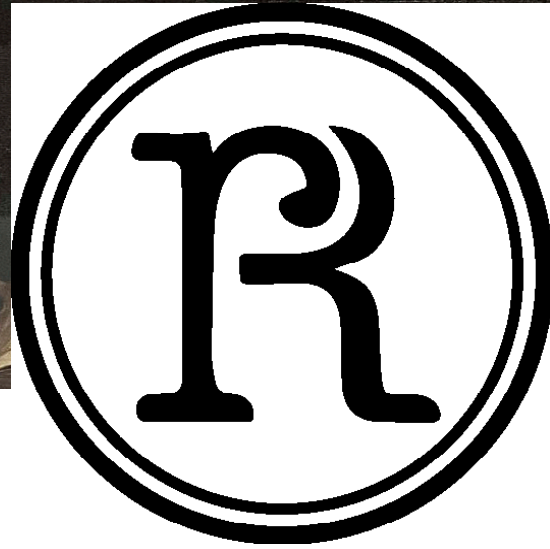




# RATHALLA REVIEW

Fall 2021 | Rosemont College





## Rathalla Review | Spring 2021

rathallareview.org

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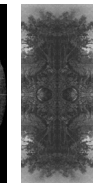
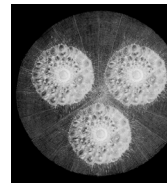
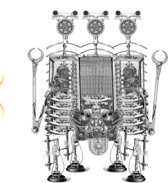
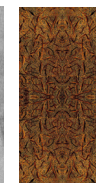
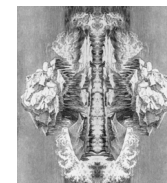
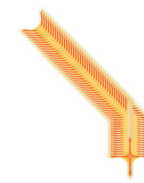
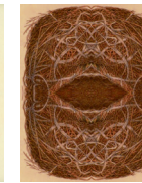
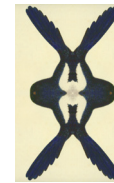
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# Art

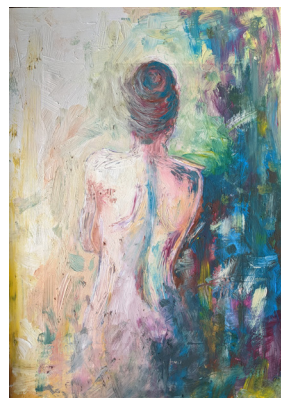


Sydnee Robertson who goes by the moniker ArtbySydnee is a digital and traditional artist who works to bring the unreal to life. She is inspired by images, music, and written work and strives to synthesize such inspirations to bring about an experience. Sydnee works fulltime as an elementary school art teacher where she shares her passion for art and builds up the next generation of creative thinkers and doers. When she is not teaching, she is off in a literary or artistic world all her own as she writes stories and bring them to life at her fingertips (often with the help of a paintbrush). ArtbySydnee creates art to inspire people and share her experiences and dreams. She has a focus on celestial bodies, natures, and the study of oneself through portraiture. Her art is for those who have ever felt they didn't have enough imagination or have yearned for something that seems far out of reach. She believes in shooting for the moon and landing among the stars.

Bill Wolak is a poet, collage artist, and photographer who has just published his eighteenth book of poetry entitled *All the Wind's Unfinished Kisses* with Ekstasis Editions. His collages and photographs have appeared as cover art for such magazines as *Phoebe*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Baldhip Magazine*, *Barfly Poetry Magazine*, and *Ragazine*.



Raised simultaneously by David Bowie and Virginia Woolf, Natascha Graham is a writer of stage, screen, fiction, non-fiction and poetry and lives with her wife in a house full of sunshine on the east coast of England. Her short films have been selected by Pinewood Studios & Lift-Off Sessions, Cannes Film Festival, Raindance Film Festival, Camden Fringe Festival and Edinburgh Fringe Festival, while her theatre shows have been performed in London's West End and on Broadway, New York as well as at The Mercury Theatre, Colchester, Thornhill Theatre, London and Fifth Avenue Theatre, New York where her monologue, *Confessions: The Hours* won the award for Best Monologue. Her poetry, fiction and non-fiction essays have been previously published by *Acumen*, *Rattle*, *Litro*, *Every Day Fiction*, *The Sheepshead Review*, *Yahoo News* and *The Mighty* among others, as well as being aired numerous times on BBC Radio and various podcasts and she has been short-listed by Penguin and Random House for the 2021 WriteNow Editorial Programme. Natascha also writes the continuing BBC Radio Drama, *Everland*, and is working on *Bad Girls: The Documentary* which explores the UK's ITV prison drama. Natascha also writes for the Broxtowe Women's Project for abused women and has also written and released several works of fiction and poetry which are widely available worldwide. When she is not writing, Natascha is co-editor in chief of *Tipping the Scales Literary & Arts Journal* with her wife and co-hosts the upcoming LGBT podcast, The Sapphic Lounge, with fellow writer, Stephanie Donaghy-Sims.





# Contributors

## Fiction

**Christie Cochrell's** work has been published by *Catamaran*, *The First Line*, *Lowestoft Chronicle*, *Cumberland River Review*, *Tin House*, and a variety of others, and has won several awards and been nominated twice for a Pushcart Prize. Chosen as New Mexico Young Poet of the Year while growing up in Santa Fe, she's recently published a volume of collected poems, *Contagious Magic*. She lives by the ocean in Santa Cruz, California—too often lured away from her writing by otters, pelicans, and seaside walks.

**Yvette Naden** was born in France in 2002 but now resides in the UK where she works as a Private Tutor. Her work has featured in *Wizards in Space* (issue 06), *Continue the Voice Magazine* (issue 07) and in 2021, she won the Roadrunner Fiction Prize. When she isn't writing, she can be found trying to resuscitate her houseplants.

**Carmelinda Blagg's** short fiction has appeared in a number of journals, including *Best of the Web*, *The Lindenwood Review*, *Barrelhouse*, *Noctua Review*, and the anthology *Grace and Gravity*. She is a past recipient of an Individual Artist Award from the Maryland State Arts Council. She lives in Washington, D.C.

## Creative Nonfiction

**Mi Tran** is a Vietnamese American student with a BA in Creative Writing at the University of Urbana-Champaign. She's the first in her family's generation to go to university, and a publication is forthcoming in *Kalopsia Literary Magazine*.

**Kimaya Diggs** is a speechwriter, essayist, and musician, based in Western Massachusetts. She was the recipient of a Callaloo Fellowship in Poetry in 2017, and headlined the Emily Dickinson Museum's Tell It Slant Poetry Festival in 2020. Her work has been published by *Malarkey Books*, *Meat for Tea*, *Cavalletto*, *Princeton's Rainy Day*, *FreezeRay*, and more. When not writing, Kimaya works as a speechwriter and musician, and tends to an ever-growing number of houseplants.

## Poetry

**Andrew Vogel** listens, walks the hills, and teaches in rural eastern Pennsylvania, the homelands of the displaced Lenape peoples. His poems have appeared in *The Blue Collar Review*, *Off the Coast*, *Slant Poetry Journal*, *The Evergreen Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Tule Review*, *The Briar Cliff Review* and elsewhere.

**Katherine Hoerth** is the author of five poetry collections, including the forthcoming *Flare Stacks in Full Bloom* (Texas Review Press, 2021). She is the recipient of the 2021 Poetry of the Plains Prize from North Dakota State University Press and the 2015 Helen C. Smith Prize from the Texas Institute of Letters for the best book of poetry in Texas. Her work has been published in numerous literary magazines including *Atticus*, *Valparaiso Review*, and *Southwestern American Literature*. She is an assistant professor at Lamar University and editor of Lamar University Literary Press.

**John Cullen** attended school at SUNY Geneseo and BGSU. His work has appeared recently in *American Journal of Poetry*, *Raven's Perch*, and *Stone Hamilton Review*. His chapbook, *Town Crazy*, is available from Slipstream Press.

**Cameron Morse** is Senior Reviews editor at Harbor Review and the author of six collections of poetry. His first, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best Book Award. His latest is *Far Other* (Woodley Press, 2020). He holds an MFA from the University of Kansas City—Missouri and lives in Independence, Missouri, with his wife Lili and two children. For more information, check out his Facebook page or website.

## Flash Fiction

**Celesté Cosme** has been teaching high school English for sixteen years. She received her MFA from Rosemont College. Her essays and stories appear in *Pangyrus*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *(Mac)ro(Mic)*, and *ROVA*. Her current WIP is an MG novel about two kids whose best-friend is the ghost of Nina Simone. She lives in New Jersey with her filmmaker husband, curious six-year-old, and tuxedo cat Rembrandt.

Author of five collections of poetry, **Shoshauna Shy's** flash fiction has recently appeared in the public arena courtesy of *BigCityLit*, *Scribes \*MICRO\* Fiction*, *50 Give or Take*, *Brilliant Flash Fiction*, and *Blink Ink*. One of her flash was nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and then won a page in the Best Microfiction 2021 series by Pelekinesis Press. She was also one of the seven finalists for the 2021 Fish Flash Fiction Prize out of County Cork, Ireland.

**Cassandra Windwalker** is an oft-transplanted poet, essayist, and novelist writing full-time from the southern Alaskan coast. Her novels and full-length poetry collections are available in bookstores and online.

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Erin Entrada Kelly MFA Creative Writing graduate, is a Newberry Medalist and New York Times Best Selling Author

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## Twin Braids

By Kimaya Diggs

I am seven years old, walking in the grass towards a playground. It must be morning, because the grass is still wet with dew, and the air is cool and humid.

The playground is the sole structure in the meadow. There's a set of swings – four swings plus a tire swing, a glossy aluminum slide on a rusty structure, a swinging bridge of wooden slats, and monkey bars. The air is sweet with the scent of the fresh wood chips that carpet the ground.

My hair is in two neat braids, and I'm crowned with a halo of frizz that dances in the breeze. I'm wearing patent leather mary-janes—no, I'm wearing white leather sneakers with grubby laces and ankle socks with a grosgrain ruffle at the cuffs. Oh, how the world glows.

And then I see her.

Hunched under the slide is a girl my age with two long, glossy brown braids. Her white dress is trimmed with eyelet lace and the toes of her brown buckle shoes are burrowed into the mulch. As I approach, she looks up. Her eyes are so big and lovely, her hands cupped at her chest. She smiles conspiratorially at me, eyes lighting up like Christmas.

“Want to see what I have?” she asks me, flashing a smile before pressing her lips together to hide her excitement. I kneel in front of her.

“Is it something in your hands?” I ask. She has no idea how shy I am. She nods, letting out a squeal of excitement. Then she holds out

her cupped hands, opening them so I can look inside. Sitting on the palm of her left hand is a glossy green frog, no larger than a blackberry.

“His name is Mister Greenie Gumball, because he looks like one of the apple gumballs from Candy Castle. My mom says I'm not allowed to have gum because I already hate taking care of my teeth. My dad's a dentist. Also, my baby sister got gum in her hair once. She didn't want Mom to know, so she put on a hat and didn't take it off for weeks! It turned into a big rat's nest and she had to get short hair, like a boy.” She giggles, and then we are by the stream at the edge of the meadow, letting Mister Greenie Gumball leap into the water, legs trailing behind him like ribbons.

“Let's go to my house,” she says, taking my hand. The skin of our palms melds together until our two hands became one hand, but she doesn't seem to notice. We skip down Saddle Club Road, our twin pairs of braids flitting and bouncing like butterflies.

We stop in front of a wide, beige house, and the air is silent and still.

“I've been here before,” I whisper. She looked at me, her eyes bright and guileless.

“No, you haven't. This is my house, where my family lives.” And with that, all the sound in the universe draws sharply into focus and explodes out of the house. Two dogs are barking, three babies wailing, pots are rattling in the kitchen, and I can hear teenagers fighting over the bathroom. A door slams. A pencil rolls off a desk. The squirrel in the attic is chewing through an electrical cord in a manic frenzy. The air seems to shimmer over bursting clouds of noise and bustle. I look beside me, and she is gone.

My heart pulses once. Twice. And again. Great, sickening pulses that stretch my sinews to the brink. I fall to my knees on the slate walk, gasping. Sick. I don't know how long I've been kneeling there, head hanging low between my arms, sweat racing down the back of my neck, grit making itself at home in the soft flesh of my shins. The front door flies open.



“Come on! Aren’t you coming in?” She waves at me from the doorway. I know it’s her, but she’s not seven any more. She is fourteen, long hair loose around her shoulders and brushing the waistline of her flared jeans. I stand up and brush off my hands, then jog up the path to meet her at the door.

She is fleet-footed, already in the kitchen by the time I get inside.

“I’m just finishing up dinner for the kids, and then we can hang out, if you can help me with the dishes.”

Now she’s twenty-two and pairing a mountain of grubby white socks in the laundry room, now she’s twenty-nine and crying on the balcony of her Oakland apartment, now she’s thirty and laughing, head thrown back, on the patio next to someone I think I recognize, now she’s thirty-four and wearing blue-and-red overalls, dark hair cascading down her back, hands cradling her pregnant belly—oh god, I’m not supposed to be here, but I’ve been here all this time—now she’s seven, and I’m seven, we’re on the top bunk of her bed, tented under the blanket with a flashlight.

Her face is golden in the light, where it’s not obscured by shadows. I can’t stop staring at her. Her face morphs into a million versions of itself as the shadows bounce and stretch and tilt. I love her so much.

“Do you believe in time travel?” she whispers. I feel something shift inside of myself.

“I don’t know, do you?”

She looks thoughtful and exhales heavily through her nose, lips pursed.

“Yeah, I think so.” Something lifts from my shoulders, breaks open in my chest.

“Ok,” I whisper, goosebumps flooding down my neck. “I do too, then.”

“What if one of us was a time traveler?” She looks excited at the prospect. I freeze, then shrug.

“I wonder which one of us it would be, then.” I say. But somehow I know. Of course I know.



# A Self-Indulgent Lament

By John Cullen

Everyone’s got two or three heartaches folded in their wallet, approximately the size of a credit card, flattened in the back pocket behind the spare ten. Or a love story struggling to keep its head above water like a dog running home in a river as the current sweeps him away. That’s why we have boats and nets and country music crying behind a door late at night on the AM dial while we drive dark highways outside Oklahoma City or other destinations on our way to tears and grease. No one knows the number of struggles required to fill an empty bottle. It can’t be measured. So I’ll not compare my scar to anyone else’s, like young men do gathered around tables drinking beer in a tavern or someone’s basement. Everyone’s online for a pound of kind words, or working with a sketch artist to draw the suspect. As if anything bore teeth that sharp or eyes so large they could swallow the sun.