

# THE FIELDSTONE REVIEW

ISSUE 17: COLOUR



2025



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# ABOUT THE FIELDSTONE REVIEW

*The Fieldstone Review* (FSR) is an annual literary journal published digitally by graduate students in the English department at the University of Saskatchewan.

Established in 2006, the FSR has published poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and literary reviews by authors from Canada and abroad. The editorial staff all graciously volunteer their time in the production of each publication.

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# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR- IN-CHIEF

Welcome to the 2025 issue of *The Fieldstone Review*, where we explore COLOUR in all its frequencies.

Christina Rossetti's poem "Colo[u]r" pairs colours with a sense of childlike wonder:

What is pink? a rose is pink  
By a fountain's brink.  
What is red? A poppy's red  
In its barley bed.  
What is blue? the sky is blue  
Where the clouds float thro'.  
What is white? a swan is white  
Sailing in the light.  
What is yellow? pears are yellow,  
Rich and ripe and mellow.  
What is green? the grass is green,  
With small flowers between.  
What is violet? clouds are violet  
In the summer twilight.  
What is orange? Why, an orange,  
Just an orange!

Her poem suggests colour's lightness and its innocent, effortless power to delight.

But colour can also carry weight and pain. In her poem "Tulips," Sylvia Plath writes, "the tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me" (line 36). Here, colour is no gentle presence; its boldness does not delight but rather brings pain to the speaker.

Somewhere between Rossetti's delicacy and Plath's severity is the truth this issue of our journal holds: colour is both light and weight. It's both the arc of a rainbow after rain and the orange haze of wildfire smoke. It's both the green of renewal and the bruised purple of grief.

We hope the pieces gathered here by our talented group of contributors encourage you to consider colour beyond what meets the eye—as a language of experience, memory, and feeling.

Thank you for reading and exploring with us.

Jenna Miller  
Editor-in-Chief  
*The Fieldstone Review*



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# Fiction

Photo Credit: Rhea Farwell



# A CHOICE OF COLOUR

Timothy Dodd

Cold and damp and overcast, our April so far. Maybe the rain's given up—I'd tire of trying to brighten this dirty flow of the Ohio, too. I look over at the two other men on board, standing at the railing, glum-faced. Grey skies sour weekends, but not the dreams of *Jenny Ann*—coffee with cream water churns behind her, ripples of past industrial progress. Margaret might call this little ride quaint. Or maybe just filthy, I don't know.

Nostalgia is really what this entire little trip is about. Margaret wouldn't like me now, won't like me now—and I've shown no enthusiasm in our past—yet she still seems to hold on to some vague and faint interest in our time together three decades ago. She can call me callous if she wants, and maybe she's right, but I don't see the value.

I don't even like the course her cruddy artwork has taken the last thirty years, despise it actually, but she'll say it's jealousy that keeps me from laying on artsy compliments to her inflated canvases and success. Hey, I've cared very little for my own life the last quarter century, so it's mostly incomprehensible that she'd think I could have an interest in hers.

Margaret's paintings are mostly empty, one-dimensional black blobs on gray backgrounds, kind of like the inkblots of a Rorschach test. Completely sterile unless maybe when you're sitting in a doctor's office awaiting diagnosis. I figure my life has at least tried to use more of the palette and followed some sort of curiosity. Or just stirred up something. Of course, that doesn't mean there's much positive in me: whatever colours I've dipped my own brushes into have done little but alienate or get me in trouble. By contrast, Margaret's splotches have set her up with a lifetime of comfort. Well, more than comfort, actually—they've taken her all around the world playing this warped version of show and tell that the art world has created. I've barely got a single friend who'd stand listening to my sick tragedies, but Margaret can show up in San Juan, Milan, and Moscow to talk to hundreds of strangers about the cosmic significance of her blobbery, and apparently, they eat it up like campfire venison jerky, some even throwing crazy money her way. Don't take my word for it, look at the stuff yourself: the only difference between her "On Gray: Afternoon 3Q" and splotches you'd find on the wall of an abattoir is that Margaret can talk for an hour on the bloated concepts "behind" her art.

But I guess maybe this *Jenny Ann* isn't any less proof of our waste. She's not spinning five minutes of river innards to carry anything but a few of our precious automobiles over to a new set of highways—an expensive, antiquated toy that makes it into The Weekender even though hardly anyone has ever seen, much less used her.

"Tom, you're really aging," my sister, Eva, said when I last saw her two years ago, mostly on account of this kind of talk. Since she said that to me, I've finally decided there's not much point in putting myself out there at all anymore. I just hand out a disconnected deference instead: let people say what they want and nod to go along with it.

When the docking is done, I roll my Chevy out from the belly of the *Jenny Ann*. From the river, I drive through Augusta—Kentucky, now—and head up the windy road into the mountains toward Gertrude, no one really sure where Gertrude is. The weather and scenery are for ghost stories—I mean pagan ones, not those peddled with guilt and faux sympathy at the Elevation Church I'll pass by in a few minutes. I remember the bog road in Connemara that locals claimed they'd never drive down after dark—that same mist and fog. Add dead barns, hills, and a road that twists like a black snake—a few munching cows hanging around like they're staged to feed a monster.



Margaret and I hadn't communicated in over twenty years, and even very little in the ten years before that. Seville was a fun time for the months it lasted, but I don't look back to try and relive things. To be honest, I mostly forgot it altogether. I've never believed anything is supposed to turn out in some heaven-sent sort of way, especially relationships, but Margaret, like a lot of people on the successful side of a career, I suppose, thinks we can all crap peaches.

"I want you to have a painting of mine," she said, contacting me by phone out of the blue two weeks ago, her German accent now virtually gone. "You were a big part of a happy time in my life."

"Okay," I said, wondering if she thought I might take the art and hang it over my bed, heading for sweet dreams under the grace of black blobs on gray simply because we enjoyed ourselves together at college more than thirty years ago. Did it not cross her mind that I'm only going to sell it for a year's rent?

"I'm working on a project that's taking me to Cincinnati during the first weekend in April. The art museum there, the CAM, you know. I'd like it if we could meet."

"Yeah, sure, no problem. As long as I don't have to go into Cincinnati. I live in Poetown now, but how about we meet in Maysville? You'll like it there. Old architecture. Quick drive."

On the other side of a vague Gertrude, I turn onto the AA Highway away from Cincinnati toward Maysville. The cold spell has knocked out all the early blooming except for the eastern redbud hitting muted mountainsides in streaks and flashes of purple. Margaret would probably say some junk about how it gives her new ideas for her colour theories. Come to think of it, she'll be on this highway now, too—I should turn on some music so I can turn off my thoughts and keep my fingers out of my nostrils. How much art talk I'll be able to take from her, I can't say.

*Faith* is The Cure album we both loved, and I still do. "The Holy Hour" hits best on this narrow, wrinkly Germantown Road, branches leaning out from the hillside to scrape my vehicle as it zips past the Old Pogue distillery in the fog. It's enough for me to imagine Margaret not making it as I turn onto the final stretch into town, the Ohio back in view when I reach Second Street. I don't mean Margaret dying—I mean her leaving me a message to say that something came up, something critical (but not) to the pregnancy of her success, and she won't be able to see me. But then, in a stroke of great fortune, she finds someone to swing by and drop off the painting for me nonetheless.

I park quickly on Market and walk to Cobalt Coffee Company, the town's chicest café. When I open the door, my fantasy dream dissolves—Margaret's glare hits me immediately, feels like she's been camped out for days waiting for me to enter. She motions to me with a half-smile, and I walk up to her, a slice of Black Forest cake already on the table along with some kind of gourmet coffee that had a foamy flower design before she started sipping.

"I went ahead and ordered, Case. I didn't know when you'd arrive."

"Never know with us bohemians," I reply, grabbing a seat. In the chair next to Margaret, a painting is propped up inside an acetate display bag. It's not small and makes me feel like this is going to be two against one.

"Right."

"And how are you?" I ask.

"I'm fine. Thanks for coming."

"Did you have any trouble finding the place?"



“Nah. Just punched it in the GPS. I told Lina I was going to see you. She almost wanted to come.”

“Ah, okay. What’s she doing now?”

“She’s a dental assistant in Duüsseldorf,” Margaret says. “Helps me in the studio a bit some weekends. She asked me if you’re the talented Mr. Ripley.” I pick the menu up off the table just for somewhere else to look. “I’ve tried to explain to her you’re not completely like that, but the more I try to explain, the less I understand myself.”

“Sure, I get it. Well, like I’ve said a hundred times, Margaret, we were young. I wanted to see other places. I’ve only ever been back to Europe once since then. And I was gone by the time you found out Lina was inside you. I’m sorry.”

“Yeah, but she’s your daughter, Case.” Margaret looks down and shakes her head. “I suppose I should have called her Lisboa.”

“Look, I don’t regret it. And besides, there’s something fantastic about Portuguese cities. Even their ex-colonies. Ever been to Luanda or Maputo? I’m sure you’ve been to Macau.”

“Never mind. Anyway, I brought the painting that I wanted to give you.” She points with her eyes to the chair next to her. “It might be the last time I see you. We’re not getting any younger.” I try to stare harder at the laminated card in my hands, wait it out as she pauses.

An apron appears at my elbow. And behind my menu, a gorgon head tattooed on a forearm. “Welcome to Cobalt. Can I get you something?”

“Yeah, just a coffee, please,” I answer, looking up. “Black.”

“Bringing that out to you in just a moment,” the waitress says, twirling away as if passing the baton back to Margaret.

“I finished the piece just a few months ago. After finalizing my invitation from CAM, actually.”

“Oh, okay,” I say, still unsure how it could take much longer than a few hours to complete one of Margaret’s typical paintings.

“It’s actually part of a series I was initially doing for a show in Vienna.”

“Vienna Sausages?”

“What?”

I smirk. “Nothing.”

“Yeah, as I was finishing the set, something about them reminded me of Sevilla. I think maybe the tones and depth of the paintings put me in a similar frame of mind like when we were there. Then, when the whole thing got worked out with CAM, I thought it might be a kind offer, an olive branch if you will, to do an extra one for you. I’ll tell you more about it when I show it to you. When the exhibition director at CAM saw it, he wanted to include it in the exhibition.”

“Thanks, Margaret,” is all I can say. Between sips of espresso and chunks of Black Forest, she goes on for five more



minutes about this work that could be “the centrepiece of a solid private collection.” Only politicians and twenty-first-century artists could love themselves so much.

“What about you?” she asks when my muffin and coffee arrive. “Still painting?”

“Yeah, I do sometimes.”

“Like what, Case?”

“Mostly abstract figures, I guess. Purplish-blue and red tones lately.”

“Cool. Send me some pictures when you get a chance.”

“Sure,” I say, thinking like hell I will.

“Do you show?”

“Show?” I stuff half the muffin in my mouth and slurp down a quarter of the coffee.

“Galleries. Or anything.”

“No, no. When I’m dead, my canvases are going to burn.”

“Ah, well isn’t that the positive Case spirit we all know and love. I could have sat around and said the same thing.”

“Yep. That’s what I do. I sit around. I sit around waiting for real art to be made by others.” It’s enough, and I look around for our waitress, put a hand up once I get her attention to ask for our bill. She comes over and pulls a paper out of her apron, lays it on the table in front of me. I thank her, then stuff the other half of the muffin into my mouth as Margaret looks on. This will be the quickest café meet in the history of Maysville. “Let’s go,” I say, pushing my chair back and grabbing the bill off the table.

Margaret’s face reads something between disgruntled and not at all surprised. She stands and picks up her painting while I go to the register to pay the bill. I figure I might not get the masterpiece now, but while taking my change from the cashier, she walks up behind me and asks, “where do you think is a good place to have a look at the painting together?”

“We can pop into Town Hall across the street,” I answer—as good a place as any for someone to talk about themselves.

I hold the door as Margaret carries the painting outside, a twenty-four by thirty-six, then I lead us across the street and into the empty lobby of the local government. Margaret quickly takes it out of the bag and turns the painting around, sets it against the base of a wall and smiles. “I still like it,” she says.

“I don’t,” I reply. “But maybe it’ll grow on me. You never know.”

“You’d appreciate it more if you knew about the technique. It...”

“That’s probably true,” I say, interrupting, “because right now I don’t appreciate it at all. Email me the techniques.”



I suppose I said it with such coarseness, or maybe just dryness, that even Margaret didn't know what to think. "Okay, I'll try to do that. I work very hard to create my paintings, and the more you look at them, the more something comes to you. Something meaningful."

"Like all great art."

"Perhaps."

Margaret picks the display bag off the floor and starts to slide the painting back inside it. "Anyway, there's a lot to say about this piece, but I can see you're not that engaged at the moment, so we'll leave it at that. It's a cute town at least."

"Want me to show you around a bit before you go?"

"No, it's okay. I had my little walk around before you showed up. But thanks. I need to be heading back to CAM anyway. I've got a seminar discussion at four o'clock and I should at least freshen up for it."

"Ah, okay."

"Do you want me to tell Lina anything? A message, maybe, since you never send her any? Or even just a basic hello?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Yeah, sure, what?"

"A hello would be good."

Margaret shakes her head. "Case... you know... let me get going." She picks the painting up. "Let's just get this into your car. It's a goodbye to you, I guess."

"Yes, it is," I say.

We exit the building, me holding the door again, and walk back across the street to my car. I unlock it and clear out a space in the backseat where Margaret sets the painting, artwork facing out. "Is that your hand mirror in the front seat? Looks antique."

"Yeah. I collect them. Got that one last week. Nineteenth-century French. Maybe Renoir used it to pop pimples on his ass."

Margaret rolls her eyes. "Shouldn't you at least cover it up when you're away from the car?"

I close the back door. "Yeah, I will. I was looking at it on the ride over and left it out by accident."

"You should have gotten something like that for Lina. She would have liked it."

"Take that one for her, then, Margaret. Hell."

"Case, my God. You don't get it sometimes."



“Most of the time.” I look up over the roofs of the nineteenth-century buildings across the street. Clouds are ripping across the sky. “Well, thanks for the painting.”

“Sure. Take good care of it. Hope you eventually get something out of it.” It’s puzzling to me how she talks like she’s an American now. If it had been that way thirty years ago, we’d have never gotten together in Seville.

“I hope I do, too,” I say, thinking about the sale price. “Existential meaning aside, where are you parked? I’ll walk you to your car.”

“No, it’s all right. I’m across from the fountain at the top of the block.”

“Okay. By the way, there’s a hotel along the river if you ever want to come back. Riverview Suites. You could bring Lina.”

“It’s unlikely, Case.” She reaches over to me to give a cold hug, releases quickly and turns away while I think about how what I’d just said came out wrong. I didn’t mean for them to come back here to see me. I look at Margaret, but she’s got no more eye contact for me. I keep watching as she walks to her car, gets in, and pulls the mirror down to check her hair. She pulls out and drives away. I latch my thumbs onto my pockets and look through the car window at the hand mirror, then turn and start walking down to the antique store two blocks away, thinking to see if Dane Holliday has gotten anything good in since I stopped by several months ago.

When I reach the shop, a sign on the door says Dane isn’t feeling well and the store is closed all week. I walk back to the car, stopping at the corner CVS for a Mountain Dew.

I get in, flip the key and hear the engine hum. I pop *Faith* out and open the glove compartment for some Rory Gallagher. One of my pamphlets on Huntington’s disease falls out. In the rearview mirror, Margaret’s painting faces me. I twist my neck, then lean and reach back to fumble and turn it around so the artwork isn’t visible. I start to think who might bite on such a display, wonder who will take the last dead conversations off my hands for the final time.

**Timothy Dodd** is from Mink Shoals, West Virginia, in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains. He is the author of short story collections *Small Town Mastodons* (Cowboy Jamboree Press, forthcoming), *Fissures, and Other Stories* (Bottom Dog Press), and *Men in Midnight Bloom* (Cowboy Jamboree Press), as well as poetry collections *Orbits 52* (Broadstone Books, forthcoming), *Galaxy Drip* (Luchador Press, forthcoming), *Modern Ancient* (High Window Press), and *Vital Decay* (Cajun Mutt Press). Tim is also a visual artist who primarily exhibits in the Philippines. Sample artwork can be found on Instagram @timothybdoddartwork. Co-editor at Southernmost Books, his website is [timothybdodd.wordpress.com](http://timothybdodd.wordpress.com).



# Non-Fiction



Photo Credit: Lydie Hua



# THE COLOUR OF INK

Carmen Gilmore

Time slows here at the ravine. Because Mr. Petursson's house has crumbled to its foundation, there are no man-made marks upon the landscape for your eye to snag on, though there are pits to stumble over and a few graffitied rocks. Because the land is no longer cultivated and there are native plants, you can believe that this is a relict prairie ecosystem. Alone here, I can feel how short my life is, compared to the aquifer, the land, or the river flowing north.

My pilgrimage to the ravine continues, but I have made my way home. The ravine has given me a way to find my stories and weave together threads of my past. I take those threads and transform them into inks filled with the colours of the ravine. I use the pigments I find and the colour essences that plants share and imbue the ink with the memories I have made here with my family exploring and foraging. Some say this feeling of homecoming is the plants drawing the minerals and nutrients from the soil to be consumed by the fish and animals. When we eat them, we in turn absorb them. Winemakers understand the importance of terroir: the soil, the climate and terrain in creating a unique flavour. We humans are less likely to accept this about ourselves. My mind drifts over memories of golden larch and wide blue seas that called me home to Canada in my wandering years. I was called home through terroir or because the landscape gave me a way back to story. Or perhaps all our journeys are to return home again.

In caves and rocks across the world humans have left marks of their passing. Scattered across the north are Indigenous rock paintings. Some are overgrown, and most can only be seen from a canoe. Pigment, plus a shellac of isinglass, made from the swimming bladder of sturgeon, protect these marks for thousands of years. But ink, colour, water and something to bind it together gave us an ability to communicate across time.

My favourite ink is made from European buckthorn, an invasive species that flourishes at the ravine. Introduced as a potential shelterbelt shrub decades ago, buckthorn spread rampantly throughout the river valley, and now its eradication is all but impossible. Birds spread their seeds throughout the river valley, and in lean years, buckthorn can change its sex to self-fertilize. When all the trees and shrubs don their fall colours, European buckthorn stubbornly stays green. Its berries are plentiful.

In the 1600s, German artists used the berries to make a green pigment. The berries were dried and ground finely before a binder, like egg white, was added to create a deep green paint. You'd think green is an easy colour to create, but it's not. European dyers created green by first dyeing fabric or wool yellow and then blue. I've tried mixing my golden tansy ink with my oxidized copper blue, but green has eluded me until now.

Picking buckthorn is prickly work as I lean into these enveloping shrubs. A few frosty mornings have softened the berries, which turn to mush as I pull them off the shrub, and my fingers are quickly stained a dark mulberry colour. But when I simmer the berries with scant water and drain them through an old sieve, I am delighted by the green that drips out.

Many artists want archival inks. These are usually man-made and guarantee that the colour an artist puts on the page today will remain the same for hundreds of years. I am not an artist. I am a maker. My inks are alive. I can add acid through vinegar made from a mash of ravine-foraged rosehips, hawthorns and buffaloberries, and the colour will shift. Often it becomes brighter. Or I can raise the ink's PH to a more base level. I add a tiny bit of wood ash from our fire pit, and the colour changes again. By tinkering with PH, I can shift the colour, one ink becoming variations of itself. Or maybe the shifting PH reveals all the possibilities of colour that the ink always contained.



European buckthorn ink provides the best example of this colour shifting. Do nothing and you will have a lush green. Add wood ash to raise the PH, and an even deeper green will emerge. With just these two green inks, I can chart in all the trees and plants of the ravine, colour a Mallard drake's head, or curl the colour into a sun-basking garter snake. But made more acidic, it turns a deep cranberry that glides across the page. I can capture the colour of red osier dogwood stems, and the chokecherries that flame quickly into a muted maroon. I can finally complete Mr. Petursson's compass rose with a colour that holds the essence of blood and fire.

Because my ink is alive, it changes over time. The sunlight that shines through my kitchen window has changed the European buckthorn ink. After a year, the green has become brown in places, and the red has softened and lost vibrancy. I've had long conversations at the art supply store about fixatives that can preserve the original colour longer. I walked away without a solution: my ink is alive. It will continue to change. And so will I.

We think that colour is static. We think that colour is a noun. But colour is transient. I've heard it explained this way: *Blue is not a colour, that pigment is doing blue. The pigment is absorbing the red and yellow spectrum of light and only reflecting the blue UV light. And our eyes call that blue.* I think we often mistake colours for nouns like blue, violet, and mulberry. But what if we treat colours as verbs instead and ask ourselves not what they are but what they are doing. Are they doing blue, violet or mulberry? Can some of them, with a slight tip in PH, 'be' in multiple ways?

My great-grandfather's *Grammar of the Cree Language* addresses this head-on. In Cree, nouns aren't the most important part of a sentence, as they are in European languages. Instead, verbs are the shapeshifting, expressive, principal words. In Cree, the verb is the sentence; the noun carries the action. For example, above the entry for birch bark—"wuskwī Birch-bark, from which canoes are made" and "wuskwīatik The birch-bark tree, i.e. the birch tree"—my great-grandfather has added his own entry: "waskwà'osi = the birch bark canoe." Online, I see it written as *waskway-ôsi*, a few letters shifted. When I scroll down, I see *waskwayosihkêwin*, meaning "birch bark canoe-making." In Cree, the canoe—and even the act of making it—emerges from the birch bark itself, transforming birch bark from a thing into an action.

I hold this thought of being in my walks to the ravine. I carry it like a weight as I descend, and then, with my pockets filled with leaves and detritus, climb out. With each Cree word I learn, the weight lessens. With each Michif plant name I understand, I recognize a friend. With each ink I make, fragments of the story become clearer as I understand my connection to the land, to this place. On the first page of *A Grammar of the Cree Language*, great-grandfather has written page 66 and underlined it. I search the page and laugh aloud when I find, "*musinuhikunapo-kāo* He makes ink."

This idea, that settler is also a verb deepens over months. I forage the library at the University, searching now for truth as I once searched for colour. It doesn't come easily. A patient teacher once crouched before a shallow depression on the prairie and pointed out how the sun moves, and then how the plants on the north side differed from those on the south. Moments earlier, I had only seen green, grass and small growing things in a shallow depression. Now I see the individual plants, each growing exactly where they are meant to be. The difference in just a few hours sunlight dried out the soil and pushed different species to grow in different micro-climates. Just as I learned to read land and look for the sheltered or sun-loving native plants, I find there are shelves of books that arrest me. I spend days searching, often kneeling to read the spines of unused books. I have become a penitent in this temple to knowledge.

From Niigaan Sinclair's writings, I learn that Anishnaabeg is not just the name of a group of people, but also a way of being and telling stories. Just one word, and it can be a noun and a verb. I start to wonder if this is also true for all of us settlers. My family has been in Canada for four generations, a drop in the life of this ravine, a drab in the stories of the Cree and Métis. Can I too be both a verb and a noun, not just a specular reflection of how my ancestors came to this land but an ongoing claiming of settler identity and all the rough-surfaced truths that my writing sends out in diffuse reflection?



Learning the ravine's story has not just been about reconciling the tangled stories that contradict. It has been about reconciling with the unchangeable past, with the loss of butterflies and bluebirds, with chemical contamination, and the grass fire that claimed lives. The ravine holds the loss of small family farms and urban sprawl. It holds space for so many missing voices. But learning the ravine's story is also about Reconciliation. It's about learning to love a place with all its flaws and not looking away. I am a settler. My bones hold the rocks of the Canadian Shield. My body holds the smell of jack pine and fireweed. My blood holds the sway of cobalt lakes that swirl into darkness. I am new to prairie.

We forget that settler and Indigenous, and Métis lives were once interwoven. Think back to school lessons of white men learning how to make snowshoes, canoes, travois, and trading for caribou hide clothing that would keep them warm in this cold and rocky land. We once shared the same language of survival. In that time, *settler* meant a newcomer whose sustenance depended on working alongside and trading with the first peoples. The barriers between us were not always this strong. Once upon a time, they were porous, until fear and greed poisoned relationships.

I hear echoes of that earlier time speckled in daily conversation. I cannot travel in any direction without every map asserting this truth. Moose Jaw — from the Cree name “*moscâtani-sîpiy*,” which means a warm place by the river, Nipawin — from “*nipowewin*,” which means a standing or waiting place, and Lake Athabasca comes from the Wood Cree word “*aōapaskaw*,” a place where plants grow abundantly. Along the river routes I trace forgotten Métis names, like Gabriel's Crossing. It is named for Gabriel Dumont and lies just north of my river city.

This unravelling of truth and history is overdue. It is too slow, and I am impatient with the past, and uncertain of the future. In some ways, it is like how I once learned to read the glacier's path at the ravine. I followed the erratics and pieced together the slow movement of ice and crumbling sandstone. I see how the land shows an undeniable truth, and once I have seen it, I cannot unknow it.

My journey to Reconciliation has been similar, though more often obscured. The land that holds the remnants of the glacier's path waited patiently. The truth of reservations, residential schools, and tuberculosis sanatoriums is different somehow. It is present but often inaccessible. The parts that scream across news headlines are disorienting. I cannot tell you that the sandstone suffered the glacier's weight. The small creatures that were crushed under the weight of the glacier left only silent bones behind. But the pain of truth is blinding, especially when an Elder shares a story of abuse and torment at a mandatory residential school. The world becomes uncomfortable when news stories contain trigger warnings of abuse, suicide, and addiction. There is so much pain being exposed that it becomes hard to breathe.

We are not good at dealing with pain. We look away, even when we cannot avoid hearing. We have forgotten how to simply be. We have forgotten how to bear witness. We have forgotten how to sit vigil. We have forgotten much, and this act of remembering is painful. Remembering reminds us of how closely our fates were once entwined. It casts down men once known as heroes and nation builders. It stains all of our hands with darkness. Remembering challenges the truths we believe to be self-evident about progress and sends us scurrying for comfort and certainty.

It is trite to say that Reconciliation is like losing a tooth. Something that I'd assumed permanent, history, is gone. It hurts as it leaves, and after, there is a bloody gap of softness that is too tender. No matter the reassurances, it feels scary and the ooze of blood repulses. When you see the tooth in your hand, you are surprised by its small size. In the next days, you run your tongue over its absence. Even when it causes pain, you cannot stop exploring this change. Over time, the gap heals. But at the most innocuous times, a piece of food slips in and the pain startles once again.



A child might have a new tooth replace the lost one, and it will be stronger and more deeply rooted and in time, they can forget the loss. But what of us adults? Will we tiptoe forever around the gap? When does the pain stop?

When I start to carry the identity of *settler*, it chafes. I wonder, how can I be a settler when there is no homeland for me to return to? Does accepting this identity mean that I will be forever homeless? And how can that be, if generations of my family were born here? How can we not belong when the soil and water and contaminants have sunk into our very beings? I circle the thought until I conclude *settler* means so much more than a place of origin. It instead means a way of journeying through life, a way of being. Like Anishnaabeg, *settler* is something more than a noun.

This idea lingers with me, and I walk with it and the dog for weeks before I dare to speak it aloud. What if I am not only a noun like the colour blue? To me, *settler* is also a verb. Just as in Cree, the verbs contort and release into meaning. When I make copper ink, the pigments are “doing blue.” Here I am “doing settler.” Though at first, I am not sure what “doing settler” means.

**Carmen Gilmore** is a Saskatoon-based writer focused on heritage and natural history research. She is interested in land-based learning and connecting with youth through art and mapmaking. Gilmore is an ecological essayist, and her debut creative nonfiction work, *Field Notes from the Ravine*, blends memoir and history and weaves a story of land across time. She has received heritage awards for her work connecting youth with history and land stewardship. She holds a Master's in Public Policy and worked in energy and environmental policy before devoting herself to writing.



# THE COLOURS WE TASTE

Earl Briones

There is a moment, just before a dish reaches the table, when the eyes take in what the tongue has yet to confirm. It is the colour of food that seduces us first—the golden crust of a freshly baked pandesal, the deep emerald of malunggay leaves swimming in tinola, the fiery red of siling labuyo crushed into vinegar. Before the first bite, before the aroma curls into memory, it is colour that tells us what to expect.

In Filipino cooking, colour is more than just an aesthetic choice—it is a promise, a history, an emotion plated with intent. The soft, sunset glow of atsute-stained kare-kare speaks of comfort and nostalgia, an umami-laden embrace. The almost-neon violets of ube halaya whisper of both indulgence and ingenuity, a root transformed into a confectionery marvel. Even the deceptively plain white of freshly steamed rice carries a weight of meaning—a foundation upon which everything else is built.

But food's vibrancy is not just visual. It carries into flavour, shifting the way we experience taste. Imagine the difference between a green mango and a ripe one—one, bright and electric with sourness, the other, warm with golden sweetness. The transformation of colour signals the change in taste, the progression from one sensation to another, a spectrum of flavour as vivid as paint on a canvas.

Some colours, however, are cultural. In the West, bright blue is often associated with something artificial, something unnatural. But in Southeast Asia, the striking cobalt of butterfly pea tea is a reminder of nature's quiet magic—a flower's pigment shifting with the acidity of what it touches, as if the drink itself is alive. Similarly, black is often linked to the burnt or the bitter, yet in Filipino cuisine, black food is bold. There is nothing timid about dinuguan, its darkness rich with the depth of blood and vinegar, an unapologetic declaration of flavour.

When I cook, I think of colour as language. A plate too pale can feel unfinished, like a sentence missing its punctuation. A dish bursting with reds, oranges, and greens is a celebration in itself. Colour is how food speaks before we taste it, how it tells us where it has been, who it belongs to, what it wants to say. It is, in many ways, a reflection of life—messy, radiant, sometimes subtle, sometimes bold, but always meaningful.

So I cook with colour. I let turmeric stain my fingers golden, let beets bleed their magenta into broth, let the deep blues and purples of ube remind me that even the most unexpected hues can be delicious. Because food, like life, is best when it is vibrant, unapologetic, and full of flavour.

**Earl Briones** is a Filipino-Canadian chef, food writer, and culinary storyteller. He explores heritage and identity through food, blending his background in anthropology with nearly two decades of experience in the kitchen. Earl is the creator of the *Rice and Mysticism* dinner series and Food and Drinks Editor for *Kapwa – The Filipino Magazine*. His work celebrates the depth of Filipino cuisine and its place in the global conversation. Earl is passionate about connecting communities through shared meals and cultural narratives, continuously rediscovering the flavours of his roots.



# Poetry



Photo Credit: Rhea Farwell



# SPIDER BITE

David Romanda

I had this spider bite  
between two knuckles  
on my left hand.  
Waiting for the morning bus,  
I gently scratched at the bite.  
An older guy was standing beside me.  
Glasses, gray hair, and gray sweater.  
He said, “Don’t scratch it.”  
I looked into his bright blue eyes. I said, “Sorry.”

**David Romanda’s** work has appeared in places such as The Dalhousie Review, Grain Magazine, and PRISM International. His book is *Why Does She Always Talk About Her Husband?* (Blue Cedar Press, 2022). Romanda was born in Kelowna, British Columbia. He lives in Kawasaki City, Japan. Check him out online: [www.romandapoetry.com](http://www.romandapoetry.com).



# STARTING WITH BLUE

Frances Boyle

you scrub a corner of the stained glass  
marveling at the pictures that emerge,

the shapes and the colours saturated  
with light, the mildly grey day beyond

the glass streaming through as crimson  
amethyst, amber, each fold of gown or halo

its own source of incandescent splendour—  
you hesitate to commit to such a word,

but here it is in the way your sodden lump  
of rag is infused with warmth and mobile suds,

becomes a living thing to skirl among the dust-  
laden angular pieces of glass, clear away

the grime, or push it into the recalcitrant joins  
where gritted lead traps soap residue, snags

threads from the worn cloth, builds up, so you  
scrub a little harder, think about vinegar

though you don't want that sharp note to sting  
your nostrils or rest in the back of your throat

when you prefer this odour of sanctity, soap  
and warm water overlaying dust, damping down

the nose-tingling notes your first swipe set free  
to linger in air, caught by the coloured light,

belonging to the colours derived of light and waft.  
painting abstract pictures in the shadowy



chapel, shapes with indistinct edges your cloth moves  
through becoming stained glass rectangles of blue,

oblongs of vivid greens, diamond reds as you go about  
your business of revealing what has been obscured.

**Frances Boyle** (she/her) is the author of three books of poetry, most recently *Openwork* and *Limestone* (Frontenac House 2022) and *Light-carved Passages* (Doubleback Books 2024). Her other books include *Seeking Shade* (The Porcupine's Quill 2020), *Tower*, a novella (Fish Gotta Swim Editions 2018) and *Skin Hunger*, a novel (Guernica Editions, forthcoming 2026). Recent/upcoming publications include work in *PRISM international*, *Glass Poetry*, *Ampersand Review*, *The South Dakota Review*, *Vallum* and *The Ex-Puritan*. Raised on the prairies, Frances has long lived in Ottawa. Visit [www.francesboyle.com/home](http://www.francesboyle.com/home) and follow @francesboyle19 on various social media platforms.



# FORECASTING LILACS

Martha Patterson

It's March, and the forlorn landscape is  
Coloured weedy brown. Wind blows hard  
Like the bark of a dog. But optimistically,  
I'll walk a while in these new leather boots,  
Thinking of this rough yet finite season,  
And I'll dwell on green and virgin spring –  
And budding lilacs, a purple rush of hope.

**Martha Patterson's** 27-story collection "Small Acts of Magic" was published by Finishing Line Press in 2021. She is a playwright, essayist, fiction author, and poet whose work has been published in numerous anthologies and journals. Her playwriting work has been produced in eight countries and 21 U.S. states. She earned her B.A. from Mount Holyoke College and an M.A. from Emerson College, both degrees in Theatre.

Website: <https://mpatterson125933.wixsite.com/martha-patterson->  
Books: <https://www.amazon.com/author/marthabpatterson>



# COLOUR WHEEL

# Susanna Rich

## Green card, green Friday money

they pay my mother—

she is green for her stained coat

from a midnight walk home,

green for the blanket on her bed

while I sleep with Mumchy.

## Green because

Mumchy loves me more than her, because

I turn to Mumchy, instead, to cry with me,

sing with me in the back seat

while my mother has to grip the wheel,

drive through roads lined with green lawns

with trees we don't have

our car winding and spilling

through hills into

the blue skies that are my father—his blue ink and lead,

nails blue from hammers

he doesn't know how

to use,

but must

for all the out-of-the-blue that happens

to him making him blue

from yelling. Blue from the blues

for the blue Danube, the bridges he couldn't save

from the war

he lost.

Blue for the blue stuffed elephant

from FAO Schwarz he never bought me,

for the forget-me-

notes he draws, for the skies

above our every-other-Saturday park. For his blue eyes



I am red

for crying over them

being apart,

for them when they were together. Red for the red  
of the elephant in the window.

For the all and only red clothes and painted shoes

Mumchy makes me

wear to protect me. Red

from running

I don't know from what

or to where, tripping, falling on my knees,

falling, bloody, falling

into Mumchy, her white dress,

white spools of gauze she spins out

over my wounds, her

white hair

hiding under black dye from a box. She

is white for her skin

white from too much washing. White for the white

half-moons and stars in her nails,

because she's hungry,

from all the spinning, blurring, blanking

of our greens, blues, reds

back into herself.

**Susanna Rich** is a bilingual Hungarian-American poet and translator, a Fulbright Fellow in Creative Writing (Hungary), a Collegium Budapest Fellow, and Distinguished Professor Emerita of English at Kean University (NJ). With two Emmy Award nominations for poetry, Susanna is the founding producer and principal performer at Wild Nights Productions, LLC. Her repertoire includes the musical Shakespeare's \*itches: The Women v. Will and ashes, ashes: A Poet Responds to the Shoah. Susanna is the author of five poetry collections, most recently Beware the House and SHOUT! Poetry for Suffrage.

[www.wildnightsproductions.com](http://www.wildnightsproductions.com)



# SUMMER SOLSTICE

*after Henri Cole's "Twilight"*

Amy Gaizauskas

There's a rumble, a low purring, coming from the bramble.

See the bear!

See her swaying

over brush. From bush to bush her slow sashay issues forth

her scent—a souring

hunger

and, oh that fur—it's nearly white,

with deep, darkening berry stains.

As a body,

she's a boundless thing;

like the drying of a spring, it seems absurd

the air inhales or that what once ran has changed

like a bear absorbed by a bush, throwing

back the juice of barely ripe fruit

or like us in your car

squeezing the stilted

atmosphere: you asking

a question, me answering,

though things were evaporating

even as we spoke—new summer's over

saturated blues running black against its washed-out whites.

Immutable, absolute: it can't be that.

The floor was singing. We curled the air,

coaxed a bear... ok: we were merely dancing,

but we saw the meadow glow—

a golden field to scythe.

We had pails to throw—

we threw them; a place to see

our startling bare—

to see her as she roamed

in her brightest yellow

blue-spotted coat.

**Amy Gaizauskas** is a Toronto-based writer, educator and performer interested in embodied poetics. Her work explores desire and its psychodrama, memory processes, and boundaries and their limits. Her writing has appeared in *Yolk Literary Journal*, *C Magazine*, *Taddle Creek*, *CommuterLit*, and elsewhere. She has performed her poetry with contemporary dancers through the organizations Meaningful Movement and Wind in Leaves Collective. Currently, she is working on *Small Animals*, a poetry-memoir manuscript that explores transformation, myth-making, survival and the idea of "the self." Lately, she has been writing about and identifying with the colour green, her first colour-love, the colour of her childhood bedroom (in 4 different shades!) and the colour of her eyes; however, pink continues to be a favourite and in heavy rotation in her closet and vibes.



# SISTERS

# Diane Taylor-Sexton

i Willow

Fingers, toes, grip burly-burls – shinny up – climb sister climb  
crown of wind      blow us home.

Each slender leaf, water-green, a sip; so shake  
rain tree – a million drops – shake our laughter down.

Feather finikins lace wings, breast, ruddle-down ears. Talons ready.  
Lips of almost-bone wait – wait. Owl's eyes: jonquil rings, glossy beads of jet  
and pearl – *Planetary*, you whisper – open, open – as if to devour us whole.

Such a little dress you made me once.  
Emerald crush, so soft, so soft.

ii                      Panic

I say, breathe. You say, can't. I say, calm. You say, won't.  
I say, Summer. You say, What? What? Where are you?  
Toronto, I say, you're going to be okay. Hold your phone closer.  
Hear me? – Good. Wish you could see this.  
Blush of robins in the pond. Flapping. Splashing. Shit everywhere.  
Ha! you laugh, Well, birds *are* your life.  
True, I say. Feeling better?      Much. Thank you.      That singing? I say.  
Yes, there's a children's choir by the nursing station. It's Hallelujah.  
Lovely.      How's the babe? you say.  
Never guess what she came out with yesterday –  
*Grandma, there's a hole in your sock. The wind gets in.*



iii          Eclipse

At the willow stump you showed me  
this the honey                  that the wood mason                  over there  
along the bank, bumbles hum pollen from wild raspberry.  
You took my hand and we wandered the river all day, our kerchief hats  
shading blindness from the amethyst veil of sun.

One perihelion per year. For you sister then, 76.  
Your last night, last light,  
a blood opal moon.

**Diane Taylor-Sexton** is a poet, visual artist and educator living in Toronto, Canada. She is the recipient of the Dorothy Shoemaker Literary Award for Poetry and the Hart House Poetry Prize. Her poetry collection *Rift* was published in 2023. She holds a Master of Arts in Creative and Critical Writing from the University of Gloucestershire. A selection of her poetry can be found in the University of Gloucester's Arts Anthology, *Unbreakable*.



# THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE IN FOG IS LIKE MY COMA

Margot Wizansky

I float in space

death, indecisive, suspends me

that bridge insubstantial in open ocean

fog obscuring the orange paint

sometimes only a slender bright line

visible

death dangles me as if from a cable

pushes me into blackness

dense, impenetrable blackness

to secure the bridge of gold, twelve stories tall,

three and a quarter million cubic feet

of ocean bottom had to move

600,000 rivets fasten it

awakened, I'm riveted by words

and black is not a memory

**Margot Wizansky's** poems have appeared in *Missouri Review*, *Bellevue*, and elsewhere. She edited *What the Poem Knows*, won residencies with Carlow University, Innisfree, Ireland, and with Writers@Work. Lily Poetry Review published *Wild for Life*. Kelsay Books, *The Yellow Sweater*, and her new collection *Random Music in a Small Galaxy* (2025).



# VISUAL SCIENCE AT THE SUNSET CAPITAL OF THE WORLD

Bobby Steve Baker

you will be tempted but cannot  
pan the gold  
of the shoreline at sunset  
    can't harvest it  
    like a field of glowing wheat  
yours to see  
not have and hold  
    don't try, just listen, to the rippling music  
    watch the dance  
of the glancing flecks of champagne  
and honey  
reddening in the setting  
of an ever larger sun  
    saffron to ocher  
    ochre to tangerine  
    tangerine to crimson  
as you watch  
the ritual of nature being nature  
you may wander intellectually and ask yourself  
what force  
has evolved this sensitivity  
to the frequency-array of colours  
    infinite degrees of luminosity  
    saturation, tints, and shades  
how does this celebrated ability  
have value to survival of the species  
of course anyone who asks  
    has sadly suffered a deletion  
    of the genetic code for romance  
has never watched a sunset  
with a lover  
    like love itself  
    it doesn't have to make sense  
not produced or governed  
by the neocortex  
    much deeper  
    much older  
from the belly of the brain  
where all the dopamine is stored

**Bobby Steve Baker** is a Canadian/American writer/photographer/neuro-ophthalmologist. He grew up in rural Ontario, but has spent most of his professional years at academic institutions in the American South. He now owns a 100-year-old house on the Northeast shore of Lake Huron and spends every summer there. Many of his poems come from the enjoyment of isolation and self-reliance that the ecosystem encourages. Bobby has published poetry in about 200 literary publications over the past 15 years and will have his website up detailing them soon. His most recent book of poetry and photography is *This Crazy Urge To Live*, Linnets Wings Press.



# THE SKY IS ORANGE

Yolanda Hansen

The sky is orange all summer.

The sky is a traffic pylon.

The sky is a winter tangerine glowing in the fruit bowl.

The sky is a split honeydew melon from my backyard garden, cradled in my dirt-streaked palms.

The sky is the burnished orange 70's Le Cruiset Dutch oven my mom makes winter chili in, stirring contemplatively in the early dark.

The sky is a child-sized life jacket, winter storage musty, rubbing my stubborn-set jaw when I wished I was anywhere but that fishing boat.

The sky is a sawhorse screaming CAUTION, abandoned on the corner of my street, taunting the school children.

The sky is a Halloween pumpkin slumped on my front step, squinting eyes and lopsided grin slowly caving in on itself.

The sky is butternut squash soup, swirled with sour cream and pepitas.

The sky is a marigold blinking under tomato leaves.

The sky is a Baltimore oriole flashing in the maple tree while I lay in my hammock, breath stuck in my throat like a stone.

The sky is a monster of wildfire smoke hunched over my city like a horror film, obscuring distant towers, stinging my eyes, slipping into the pink of my lungs, the red of my blood, an angry sunset inside my soft animal body.

**Yolanda Hansen** lives and writes in Treaty 4, where she works with the writing community. She has an MA from the University of Regina and her work has been published in Briarpatch Magazine, Deep Wild Journal, MANTIS and is forthcoming in two poetry anthologies. She reads voraciously, eats locally, and likes to wander outside.



# ANOTHER DEAD RACCOON

Matthew Rooney

At first it was a cardboard box, brown  
and damp from rain on the median,  
windswept there, perhaps, from a truck.  
It's harder to imagine, for some reason,  
a car stopping to pick a dead or dying  
thing up from the road and move it aside  
than a procession of distracted drivers crushing  
the accidental creature into asphalt.  
But when I saw them—red and purple shining  
through the blood-damped fur—the exposed organs,  
stomach and what have you, I had to stop,  
look away, and think the death was sudden—  
as meaningless as ancient human pathways  
or property lines cut across the landscape.

**Matthew Rooney** (he/him) is a PhD student originally from Halifax, Nova Scotia. His poetry has most recently appeared in *Queen's Quarterly*, *Humber Literary Review*, *Canadian Literature*, and *Best Canadian Poetry*. His scholarly work is forthcoming in *ESC*, and he is the 2023 recipient of the Alice Munro Festival Short Story Award.



# Art



Photo Credit: Lydie Hua



# MEMORIES THAT SHAPED US

Victoria Ojo



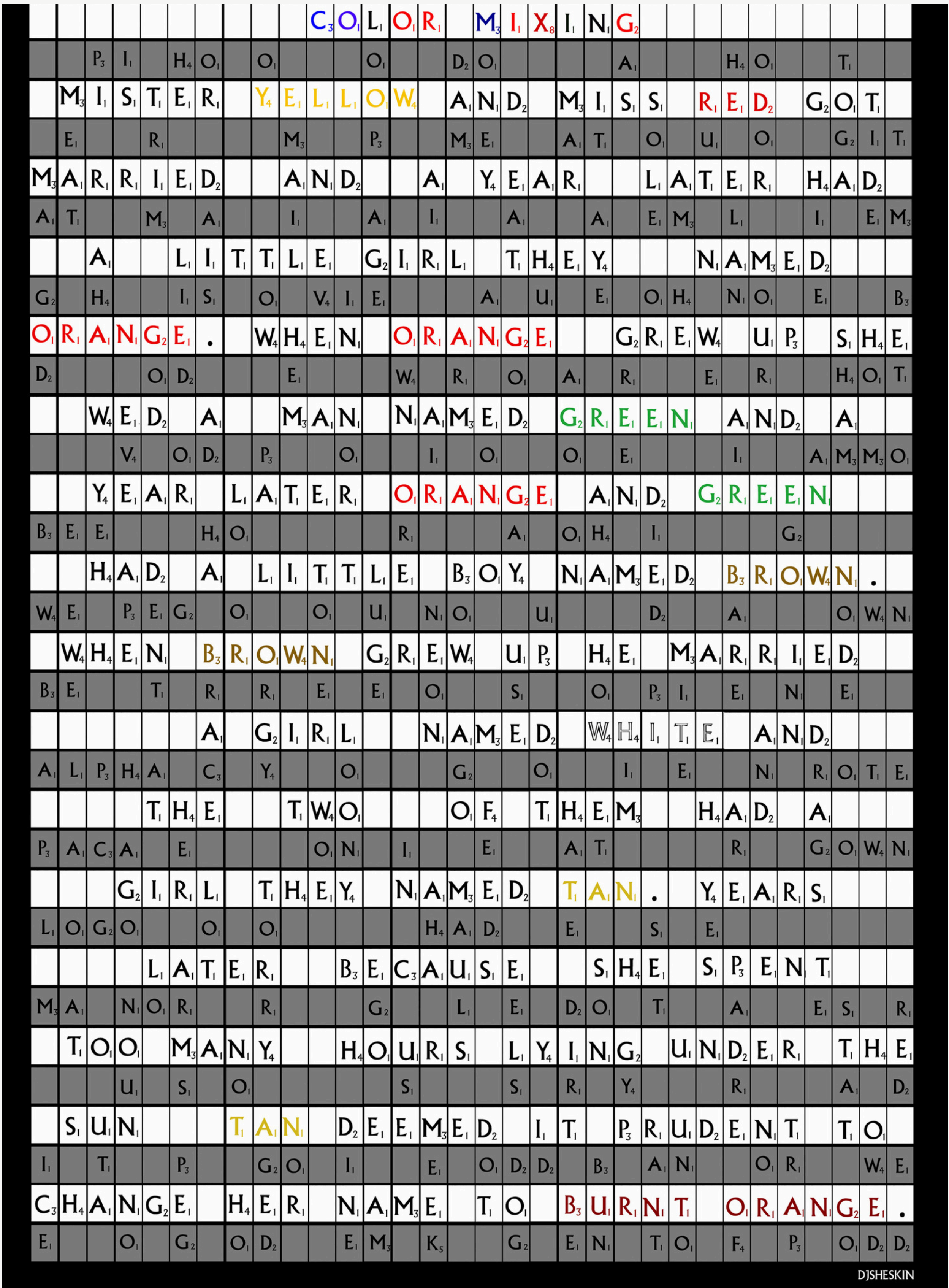
**Ojo Victoria Ilemobayo** is a Nigerian Literary Enthusiast and a smartphone photographer whose works have appeared in *Christian Century*, *Christian Courier*, *Ake Review*, *Typehouse*, *Thema*, *Sunlight Press*, *Eboquills*, *Non-Binary Review*, *A Coup of Owl*, *Firebrand*, *Mad Swirl*, *Eco Punk*, *Mande*, *Loveliest Review*, *Toad Shade*, *Does it have pockets*, *Gemini*, *Exist Otherwise*, *All My Relations*, *Breath & Shadow*, *Lolwe*, and other online literary platforms. She is a fellow of the Muktar Aliyu Arts Residency 2024(Female Category). She won the April-June Wakaso Poetry Prize 2024, WGT3 2023, the MUSPA Prize 2022, Lagos Hilltop Poetry Prize 2021. Ilemobayo enjoys reading, capturing moments, dancing, strolling, discussing poetry, traveling, and meeting new people. She has worked with Radon Journal & Lucky Jefferson Literary Review, and now she is currently working with Zoetic Press and PoetryColumn.

IG handle: @ilemoba-joy



# COLOR MIXING

David Sheskin



A self-taught artist from Connecticut, **David Sheskin** made his first work of art at the age of 40. His initial efforts were pen and ink drawings. He then began to paint in acrylics and subsequently utilized sculpture, mixed media, collage and digital technology to create an extensive yet diverse body of art. His works have been exhibited in galleries and museums, and over 200 of his images have been published in magazines, as well as within the format of note cards, calendars, jigsaw puzzles and prints. Among the magazines his art has appeared in are Geist, Qwerty, Palooka, Quarterly West and Shenandoah.



