

CARVE

H O N E S T F I C T I O N



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FICTION

Sydney Rende
Sam White
Kimm Brockett Stammen
Caroline Kim

POETRY

Michael Quinn
Ruth Baumann
Will Thomas
Mureall Hebert

NONFICTION

Jory Pomeranz
Christie Tate

PLUS

Illustrations
Story Statshot
One to Watch
Decline/Accept
Contest Winners

CARVE

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SPRING 2021

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Mail: PO Box 701510, Dallas, TX 75370
Phone: 214.425.7860
Email: info@carvezine.com
Website: www.carvezine.com

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CONTENTS

SHORT STORIES

<i>The Hole in Your Heart Is Mine</i> Sydney Rende.....	06
<i>Experience</i> Sam White.....	23
<i>Impossible Tess</i> Kimm Brockett Stammen.....	37
<i>After Leopold</i> Caroline Kim.....	49

WHAT WE TALK ABOUT

Sydney Rende.....	18
Sam White.....	31
Kimm Brockett Stammen.....	45
Caroline Kim.....	58

DECLINE/ACCEPT

<i>Red Ribbons</i> Jacqueline Keren.....	63
--	----

POETRY

<i>Home</i> Michael Quinn.....	66
<i>Poem for the Left Behind</i> Ruth Baumann.....	67
<i>San Luis Valley</i> Will Thomas.....	68
<i>Thirty-Two Miles West of the Edge of the Sea</i> Mureall Hebert.....	69

NONFICTION

<i>Gazebo</i> Jory Pomeranz.....	72
<i>The Family Recipe</i> Christie Tate.....	77

PROSE & POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

<i>The Girl With Precise Interests</i> Mona'a Malik.....	84
<i>How Do I Set Your Absence Somewhere?</i> Ryan Little.....	99
<i>Fruit Snack Fairytale</i> Alisha Acquaye.....	100

ONE TO WATCH

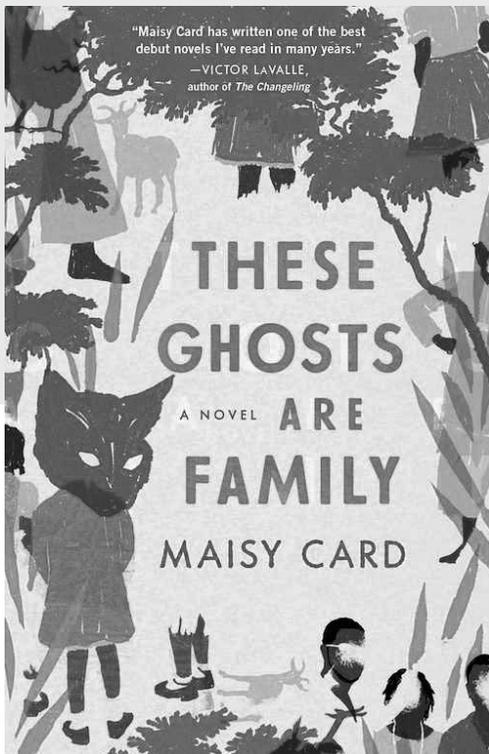
<i>Interview with Maisy Card</i> Sejal H. Patel.....	104
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ONE TO WATCH

What we're watching: literary events for writers, books by former contributors, and interviews with the authors of debut works the *Carve* community is excited to read.

These Ghosts Are Family by Maisy Card

SEJAL H. PATEL



I AM A FIRST-GENERATION AMERICAN-BORN WOMAN WITH INDIAN PARENTS, BUT I CANNOT TRACE MY FAMILY HISTORY. And I have tried. Temples in rural India did not keep records like churches did, and three of my four grandparents were illiterate and kept no journals or records. Apparently the one literate grandparent did keep a diary, but one of my uncles accidentally threw it away decades ago. I cried when I found out about that diary because I did not think that my uncle understood the value of those handwritten pages. I now have only my two parents to tell me what they remember, which means that my family has exactly one generation of decent oral history. And that's only if they feel like talking. I say that with deep sadness, though I cannot work out quite why it should matter that I feel like my siblings and I dropped out of the vast American sky sometimes. Our skin color makes us visibly Indian, even though that assignment frankly confuses me.

Maisy Card's brilliant debut novel, *These Ghosts Are Family*, brought to light so many issues I have thought about for years—why it matters where we came from and how valuable it is when we can find anything to make meaning of it. Card's novel traces a family from a plantation in Jamaica in the late 1700s to one descendant, Abel Paisley, traveling to England. His friend's death prompts Abel to assume that man's identity and shed his own. Abel, now Stanford Solomon, also shed his wife and two children in Jamaica by faking his death. When the novel begins, Abel/Stanford steadies himself to reveal his secret to three women—the daughter and granddaughter from his second marriage and a daughter from Jamaica who thought her father had died long ago. The book then blossoms into a series of stories about this family over two centuries, in New York and in Jamaica, provoking existential questions about whether what our ancestors endured and who they were affects, or perhaps even afflicts, who we are.

Card and I delved into the big themes in her book, as well as her process in piecing together her own family history in drafting this novel. The book inspired questions that are central to understanding our own humanity and the humanity of others. Can we ever really understand our own actions, and what does it mean to characterize them as right or wrong? Can we escape how others treated us—whether it is in a familial or in a systemic sense? How much autonomy do any of us have over our own worlds? Card's vivid descriptions of characters and setting and her stirring dialogue between characters transports us from fields and towns in Jamaica to the busy diverse streets of New York City.

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us, Maisy. Your novel begins with the stunning revelation that a Jamaican man named Abel Paisley faked his death and assumed another identity, leaving behind his wife and children in Jamaica and marrying someone else and having a child with her. You ask the reader to imagine being the man who did the deceiving, then to imagine being someone affected by this news—a daughter and granddaughter who knew him to be the man he is, and another daughter who thought her father had died long ago. The first section is written in Abel's voice, and he begins by telling us that he is ready to die. Subsequent characters in this chapter consider how Abel's actions could have changed the course of their lives. Can you tell us why this chapter is the first of the novel?

It's actually one of the last chapters that I wrote. I had the premise already in my head but was having a hard time putting it down on paper. I initially tried to write the chapter in third person, but I felt very distant from Abel as a character. In first person, I almost felt too empathetic. I decided to write it in second person, with the "you" in the story shifting between multiple characters—Abel, his daughters Irene and Estelle, and his granddaughter Caren. I wanted people to reflect not on the question of how Abel could be forgiven or punished but rather how one person can have such a uniquely devastating effect on other people's lives. The novel is told in stories, with each chapter focusing on a different character affected by Abel's lie. The first chapter

is a kind of blueprint for how the rest of the novel is structured.

Racial identity plays an enormous part of the story here, beginning with the family's early origins in the slavery complex in Jamaica. The earliest ancestor appears to be perhaps a mulatto slave who bears a child with a white man with red hair who works on the plantation. The red hair then becomes a signature feature of the descendants. The child of these earliest known ancestors believed that she was white because she had such fair skin, but then discovers that her mother was at least mulatto and was a slave. Her reaction to this news is not relief at knowing who her mother was or pride in her racial identity. Rather, she feels shame. I can say as an Indian woman that I wished white skin for myself, too, throughout my youth, and I only found pride in my racial and ethnic identity in my adulthood. The only thing that assuages my guilt over those feelings is when others share that they felt that way, too. Is this shame over racial identity something that we can relegate to the past, or do you believe that this same perception exists today? In other words, are our young brown children proud to be brown today? And if we have work to do to make them feel that pride younger, how do we do that?

In the Jamaican family I grew up in, having light skin was a source of pride. This was a big problem for me because I was the only dark-skinned child in my family when I was young. My father's side of the family mostly shares my skin color, but I didn't know them when I was younger because they hadn't immigrated. My mother's family is mostly light-skinned or many of my cousins are mixed race. No one ever explicitly said, dark skin is ugly. I picked up this message not by noticing what was openly degraded but noticing what was celebrated. I think whether children are proud to be brown or dark-skinned today really depends on the messages they're receiving from the people around them. It feels like in the 80s and 90s we had more Black family sitcoms where the actresses who played the daughters and mothers were dark-skinned than we do today. I think representation is important, but also language.

You pose the insightful question about whether evil is heritable. When describing a white woman who finds out that she is related to a cruel slave owner in Jamaica, this character

named Debbie thought about whether evil was passed down. "She used to think that she was a good person," you write of her. How is someone to process the news of cruelty in a prior generation? Some are quick to dismiss it, saying that some ancestor's past deeds have nothing to do with what a person who lives today should or shouldn't do. Others feel deeply aggrieved by their relationship to someone cruel, however distant, and feel the need to apologize in some fashion for their family's complicity in these acts. Sometimes those efforts at reparations are touching and appropriate, while at other times they can feel clumsy and inadvertently disrespectful. Tell us whether your characters do believe that this evil is passed down and, if it is, whether their actions are appropriate in making whatever amends they can.

I think erasure is often passed down, which is a type of evil. I guess for some characters in the novel like Debbie and Abel, they want to dictate what atonement means instead of letting the people who were negatively impacted decide.

Mothers occupy a central role in this novel, and you give us such a range of different sorts of mothers here. We have one who was abandoned by her husband and ends up a cruel and arguably destructive force in her children's lives, though we are made to pity her, too. Another is a single mother who raised her child as best she could but then begins to pull away as the child grows up. Yet another is a drug addict and ends up needing to be legally removed from her daughter's life. Several characters do not mourn the deaths of their mothers. As I considered the role of mother here, the one scene that really left my heart in my throat was in the chapter entitled "Past Lives." Irene, one of Abel's children, is a home health aide and knows that her elderly patient kept her deceased daughter's room intact—dolls and all—after the young girl drowned in their swimming pool years ago when the patient went to answer the phone while the child was swimming. Irene says to the patient, "You should have been a better mother." Irene then says that she felt both triumphant and ashamed of herself. Irene is, of course, processing the recent death of her own mother Vera and their complicated relationship. What did Irene learn from this episode? Are we meant to see this as her making peace with her past? In other words, can we ever really "get past" painful memories with our mothers, or does that treatment live within us always?

Some people who experience childhood abuse or trauma just learn to survive by numbing their emotions. I think Irene feels like a piece of her humanity was stolen by her mother. We're taught that when family members die, we should automatically feel something, ideally sadness, but when Irene realizes she's just numb or extremely ambivalent about Vera's death, that creates a problem she has to fix. She wants to feel human. For her to feel human she has to figure out how to release her emotions toward her mother. In her case, most of the emotion she has for her mother is rage, some of which she unfortunately takes out on her patient. Once she realizes that she's abused another person, one who is essentially just as vulnerable as she was when her mother abused her as a child, she realizes that she's become the worst version of her mother. At the end of the story, she has this brief memory of witnessing her mother having sex with one of their servants as a child. What stood out to her was that her mother was laughing. She's unfamiliar with this happy version of her mother, but Irene doesn't want to just live with this abusive version of her mother—in that moment she tries to understand and connect with this other Vera, too. That's where the supernatural comes in. In real life we don't get to have these massive breakthroughs without intense spiritual and psychological work. But in that moment, Irene lets herself believe that she's being possessed by her mother, in the same way Betty, her patient, does in order to deal with her grief for her own daughter. She's possessed by this version of her mother frozen in this moment of euphoria. It does allow her to make some peace with her past in that she doesn't have to just remember Vera as a monster.

Irene says of her mother Vera, "She would never get to look Vera in the eye and tell her what a bad mother she'd been." Why is it important for someone hurt by another to tell them that? And what does the regret over missing that opportunity mean?

I think the hardest part for Irene, and it's just mentioned in a few sentences, was that in Vera's later years, she behaved like a regular mother. The kind of mother she'd wanted throughout her childhood.

She doesn't acknowledge that she hurt Irene when she was younger. I feel like I keep repeating the same Malcolm X quote in interviews, but it's a perfect way to explain what true healing or atonement involves: "If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, that's not progress. If you pull it all the way out, that's not progress. Progress is healing the wound that the blow made. They haven't pulled the knife out; they won't even admit that it's there." No one will admit that the knife is there in Irene and that's why she struggles. She's also a caregiver now to strangers and her own children. Her husband has abandoned her and basically everyone just expects her, as a Black woman, as an immigrant, to be strong and hardworking with no complaint. She doesn't know who would even acknowledge her pain if she were to speak it out loud.

You write the chapter "Ancestors" in alternating first-person points of view as a series of confessions. I loved this choice because I felt so close to both characters as you explained how these two young narrators ended up involved in harboring a criminal, arson, and finally, murder. And what I took away from the story was that this entire family's existence depended on a few chance occurrences. How did writing this affect your own views about where you and your family ended up in life? I ask because this is a subject that I think many immigrant kids think about—but for certain circumstances, for example, I would have been a village kid in rural India, so how on earth did I end up here? It is some mix of wonderment and gratitude—but over just chance or something else?

Yes, that's exactly what that story was about. I was just thinking of the many chance occurrences that have affected my life, as well as the historical atrocities like slavery. I came to America through my grandfather, who came either through his sister or his ex-wife, it's not clear. It's not the typical route. I had never met my grandfather until he brought us over. I keep thinking how this man I'd never even met at the time loomed so large over the trajectory of my life.

When I first started writing "Ancestors," I was thinking a lot about surnames in West Indian families and African American families. In Jamaica,

from what I read, it wasn't very common for slaves to take the slaveholder's last name. Enslaved people changed their names when they were baptized or when they were manumitted. Overseers and bookkeepers and other white men on the plantation also preyed on slaves. In looking at my own family history, I did see one instance of an enslaved person becoming pregnant by a neighboring slave owner, not her master, and her descendants taking his last name, and I wondered more about how that happened. There was so much predation, is the simple answer.

One of the books I read while writing that chapter was *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire* by Trevor Burnard about the diaries of the Jamaican slaveholder Thomas Thistlewood. Thistlewood kept extensive diaries about his time in Jamaica. He documents the sexual assault and rape of slaves by himself and other white men. He documents multiple gang rapes of enslaved women by white men. I think too many novels I've read about Jamaican slavery depict some of these relationships as a love story. I wrote "Ancestors" partly in response to that as well.

I think I get more frustrated with the maternal side of my family because they attempt to rewrite history or pass on these myths that I know aren't true to make meaning where there is none or to take pride in an element of the past that nobody should be proud of. Growing up, I was often told that my grandfather's grandparents lived in Europe. I remember it being different countries when I was little, depending on which uncle was telling the story, but according to my grandfather and his sisters, they were in Scotland and that's why he'd never met them. That side has a lot of pride in their light skin and their assumed proximity to whiteness. I have a few cousins who are biracial but don't acknowledge that they're Black at all. My mother believed this myth and sometimes growing up, when talking about my grandfather, she would remind me, "You know seh him is a white man." Even as a kid, I would just roll my eyes. But the standard for "white" in Jamaica and "white" in America

are a bit different. It was only much later that I realized that the grandparents in Scotland were a way for them to take pride in their light skin without dealing with the ugliness of how their ancestors got it. I didn't know if this story my grandfather told was myth for sure while I wrote this "Ancestors," I just assumed it was. My maternal grandfather's last name came from a pretty prominent slaveholding family in Jamaica, so it wasn't really that hard for me to imagine the history of how he got that name. After I finished the book, I found someone who I think is my great-great grandfather in records and he was not born in Scotland. He was born in Jamaica in 1824, during slavery, and was baptized as a "free octoroon." That ancestor's parents were two free colored people who married, but a generation or a few generations before there's no doubt that their ancestors were enslaved. The history I imagined and the real one are probably not that far off. I wanted the family in the book to learn to take pride, just as I did, in the courage and resilience of their ancestors, without celebrating or mythologizing the people who victimized them.

Let's talk about ghosts—which interestingly appear in both Jamaican and Indian folklore. The title of the book is *These Ghosts Are Family*, implying that our pasts forever haunt and inspire us, if we take the broader view of a ghost as a presence and not just a frightening one. And from your title, I also take that we all are part of some family structure. So if I were to say not only that these ghosts are family but also that these ghosts are very much who we are, what would you say to that?

That's really part of the message I'm trying to convey in this book. Our ancestors have left an imprint on us, history has left an imprint on us, our parents and grandparents leave an imprint on us, whether we can see it or not.

I recently read Isabel Wilkinson's book *Caste*, in which she states that it is actually social standing that is the root of inequality and not race alone. We see that in the treatment of Bernard, the loyal and devoted house servant to Vera, who is so poorly treated by everyone that he ends up exacting revenge on the entire family by kidnapping children. We also see this in how Abel's children Irene and Vincent adapt to life

in the United States. What is your view of the intersection of race and caste in this book?

Because Jamaica is a majority Black nation, I think people from the outside looking in often focus on the class system and how it drives inequality, but there is and always has been a color hierarchy. I remember taking a West Indian literature class in college where our professor described how the British created a “buffer class” of people between them (the ruling class) and the majority of the people that they colonized or enslaved. The frequent rape of slaves created this caste of mixed-race Jamaicans and from them came this caste of free colored/light-skinned Jamaicans who you could visibly see had more power and wealth than darker-skinned Jamaicans as a whole. I wanted to explore that system in the book through Abel and Vera and Bernard. Their story begins in the sixties when lines were more rigid than they are now. Vera is someone whose family has benefitted from this system of colorism, and she only begins to comprehend or question the system later in life. Bernard is at the bottom, but he doesn’t grasp the injustice of it until after Vera dies.

Perhaps in a related question, characters here observe the difference between being dirty and being clean throughout the novel. We begin with Irene, one of Abel’s children, describing her role as a home health aide and the changing of colostomy bags and spoon-feeding strangers. Abel’s other daughter, Estelle, is a drug addict, and her daughter Caren describes her as dirty—“her bare feet...dirty, almost as black as her wig.” Bernard, the caretaker for the wife Abel abandoned in Jamaica, performed dirty jobs, like disposing of a dead dog and slaughtering a goat. Can you tell us what these images represent in the way we are to see these characters—and how they might see themselves?

When I was young and we’d go back to Jamaica, I always felt like we were special. We lived in America and my family back home took that to mean that we were living this glamorous life. You automatically gained this air of respectability just by being in America. But the reality was that we were poorer than we’d been when we lived in Jamaica. My mother was a home health aide. When I was young,

she earned six dollars an hour. We were the first that came over, and years later, when some of my other family members came over, I could see how disillusioned and miserable they became once they realized that they’d been lied to. Some of them had helpers/servants in Jamaica, and now they are doing similar work. I think the images about dirt are there to show the inversion of social class that sometimes happens when you immigrate. Many people sell off everything back home and have to start from scratch. For some people it’s worth it and for some it’s not. For many of the characters in the book, it’s not. America did not solve all their problems, characters like Irene are now both struggling economically and still dealing with the same ghosts that they had hoped to leave behind by leaving Jamaica.

One of the key pieces of “evidence” in this book is the diary of the slave owner William MacDaniel. His descendant Debbie later destroys it by ripping the pages out and letting them float away in the river abutting his plantation, nearly two hundred years later. Are we made to forgive Debbie for destroying the accounting of this man’s sins so that she could atone privately?

No, I didn’t want any character in the novel to be forgiven or redeemed, but I did want people to understand why they behave the way they do. Debbie thinks of herself as an ally, and she makes an effort to be a good person. But one of the motifs in the novel is trauma, whether from family, society, or more distant historical forces. The Black characters are aware that some of their trauma is inter-generational, that their ancestors experienced racial trauma. They may not be aware of how it manifests in their present-day lives, but they’re aware of its existence. Debbie, on the other hand, is raised to believe that this history has nothing to do with her. Then one day she is literally just handed this trauma to process when her father gives her the journal. She makes an effort, but she just doesn’t know how to accept it into her life, to make it a part of her. The other characters don’t really have a choice. I want readers to understand why she did what she did but still understand that she shouldn’t have done it.

The novel ends with a haunting story of the disappearance of three young girls. We do not know whether the story is real or make-believe, and the voice of the story has a folklore quality to it. I found the tone of this chapter to be a beautiful ending to the book, where questions over what is and is not real arise again and again. In the end, I wonder if we are just not supposed to know sometimes. Can you tell us about the last story and why that felt like the place to end the book?

It didn't feel right to have finality to this family's story because the struggle continues, so to speak. I think of the reader as someone who's able to time travel through someone else's family tree. I guess that's how most family sagas are structured. The difference is that this family's tree is a mess. In many sagas that I read they are able to fill in the blanks. I didn't want that here. I wanted this to be written much like my actual experience of learning about family history. So much of it is myth and folklore. You have to figure out where the truth lies in these stories. The last story is based on Jamaican folklore. It's also a continuation of a tragedy that occurs earlier in the book. When I read about folklore, I realized that a lot of it sprung from trauma. It was the stories these communities told to make sense of tragedy. Myth is what ends up surviving. Generations of future Paisleys will probably not know about Abel Paisley faking his death, but they'll know this bedtime story about these three little girls.

I would love to hear about the research you conducted to bring this book to life, as I know that the book was twelve years in the making. I am familiar with how hard it can be to be one of a few historians of a place, as I had a hard time finding much about the Indian villages where my parents came from, too.

I read a lot about the history of Jamaica through various texts. I mentioned the book on Thomas Thistlewood, which was part of the inspiration for "Atonement" and "Ancestors." I read other history books about Jamaica. I also looked at a few memoirs written by people living in Jamaica in the nineteenth century. For the part of the book set in 1966, I read archived copies of the *Jamaica Gleaner* newspaper from that year. I also watched archival

footage filmed on Grounation Day, the day that Haile Selassie came to Jamaica.

Your approach to voice in this book is nothing short of masterful. Rather than write in a third-person omniscient or a first person (which would have been somewhat easier in that you could have settled in a single voice), you write in first-, second-, and third-person voices throughout the book. And those third-person points of view also shift, requiring you to constantly be thinking about which character you are and imbue that person with the traits that make the voice unique. It is a truly difficult feat, and you do it beautifully. Why did you decide to write the book this way instead of choosing a single point of view?

Sometimes I would shift POV out of boredom to be honest. I spent twelve years writing this book and there were many times when I was really sick of it and didn't want to continue. The POV shifts or character shifts were a way for me to breathe new life into the book when it felt stale or connect to a character who I was having trouble understanding. But then the structure started to feel like a more accurate reflection of the overall themes. This book is about the complicated nature of Jamaican families, of any family whose past has been erased or obscured by enslavement and colonialism. Trying to make sense of family history and separate reality from myth is a difficult puzzle. I would ask a simple question like, who was my grandfather's grandfather, and the answer would be different based on which family member you asked. That was my experience. I'm still sorting through many things. I guess this book is a reflection of my confusion. I also didn't want anyone to really emerge as the main character. I wanted this to be a more wholistic look at a family's story.

Because this book is based on your own family history and research, why did you decide to approach it as a novel and not a memoir?

The connections are very loose. I would say it's inspired by my family and my experience of researching my own family history and genealogy rather than being based on it. It is fiction because I wanted interesting and exciting things to happen in this book. If it was based on my real family, the characters would do something cruel or shady to

each other and then no one would acknowledge it. Instead they just wouldn't speak for ten years, then they'd come back together and pretend nothing ever happened. During that time, we wouldn't get to know what's happening in everyone's interior world because no one would talk about it. In the novel, gaslighting and disavowal occur but we can actually experience each character's interior struggle. They are constantly struggling to remember the past as it actually happened and not the version that someone else is trying to impose on them. Some of the characters remember different versions of the same incident or the same family member, but at least we get to understand why. We get to see Vincent come to terms with the fact that he's been trying to gaslight his sister Irene into thinking that the abuse she experienced didn't happen or was her fault. Most of the characters in the book own their bad acts. That doesn't usually happen in real life, in real families.

We always love hearing about the very first piece our authors published and how they came to be. Would you share your story with us?

The first piece I published was actually a version of the chapter called "Estelle's Black Eye." It was the last story I workshoped in the MFA, with Amy Hempel as the instructor. I sent it to lit mags over a three-year period. I had rarely submitted anything before that. I was working on the book that would eventually become *These Ghosts Are Family*. I'd been working on it since 2006 and I think I started sending the story out in 2011. I felt like I wasn't really making progress with the book or my writing career, so I just wanted to prove to myself that I could get something published. I told myself that would be my sign that I should keep writing. The story got rejected over sixty times. I would get a bunch of rejections in one year and then I would revise and submit it to a new batch of magazines at the start of the new year. The experience taught me a lot about revision, but I eventually gave up submitting and forgot about it. Then out of the blue, I think maybe about six months later, the editor of the Ampersand Review contacted me and wanted to publish it on

their website, and I went back to writing/revising the rest of the book. 📖

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

FICTION

CAROLINE KIM's collection of short stories *The Prince of Mournful Thoughts and Other Stories* won the 2020 Drue Heinz Literature Prize and was long listed for the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize. Find her at carolinekim.net and [@carolinewriting](https://twitter.com/carolinewriting).

SYDNEY RENDE is pursuing her MFA in fiction at Syracuse University. She is working on a short story collection.

KIMM BROCKETT STAMMEN's writings have appeared or are forthcoming in *The Greensboro Review*, *Pembroke Magazine*, *Prime Number Magazine*, and many others. She received an MFA in Creative Writing from Spalding University in Louisville, KY. Visit her at kimmbrockettstammen.wordpress.com.

SAM WHITE is a graduate of the University of Toronto's MA in Creative Writing program. His work has appeared in *Sequestrum* and is forthcoming in *Broken Pencil*. His story "Tesseract Man" was shortlisted for the CBC's Short Story Prize.

POETRY

RUTH BAUMANN is the author of two poetry collections: *Thornwork* (Black Lawrence Press) & *Parse* (Black Lawrence Press). She is also the author of five chapbooks. She holds a PhD from Florida State University & an MFA from the University of Memphis.

MUREALL HEBERT lives near Seattle. Her work can be found in *Carve*, *Hobart*, *[PANK]*, among others. She's been nominated for Best New Poets, a Pushcart Prize, and was a finalist in Split Rock Press's 2020 chapbook contest. She holds an MFA from NILA.

MICHAEL QUINN is a writer born in Philadelphia. His poetry has appeared in or is forthcoming in *Rust + Moth*, the *Chiron Review*, and the *New York Quarterly* anthology *Without a Doubt*. Follow him on Twitter at [@saintcignatius](https://twitter.com/saintcignatius).

WILL THOMAS is a poet from Denver, CO. He currently resides in New York.

NONFICTION

JORY POMERANZ is a chef who lives in Cincinnati, OH. His work has appeared in *Entropy Magazine*, *The Penmen Review*, *Ponder Review*, and others. Insta: [@Captionist](https://www.instagram.com/Captionist) Twitter: [@JoryPomeranz](https://twitter.com/JoryPomeranz)

CHRISTIE TATE is a Chicago-based writer whose work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Atticus Review*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. Her debut memoir *Group* was published by Avid Reader Press in October 2020.

PROSE & POETRY CONTEST

ALISHA ACQUAYE is a Brooklyn bred writer and workshop bae who loves cartoons, music, and Afrofuturism. She has been published in *Teen Vogue*, *Catapult*, *GQ*, and more places. Alisha is currently writing her first book of essays.

RYAN LITTLE is a high school English and creative writing teacher who has recently rediscovered an inspiration to write poems. Ryan lives in Sacramento, CA, with partner Amy and seventeen semi-healthy houseplants.

MONA'A MALIK's stories have appeared in *The Fiddlehead*, *Joyland*, and *Event*, among others. She received an Arts and Letters NL award for poetry, and her play *Sania The Destroyer* was a finalist for the QWF Playwriting Prize.

DECLINE/ACCEPT

JACQUELINE KEREN's stories have appeared in the *Santa Monica Review*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Calyx Journal*, and other journals. She works for a hospital coordinating a health screening program for the uninsured and teaches writing at a federal correctional facility.

ONE TO WATCH

MAISY CARD is a public librarian. Her debut novel, *These Ghosts Are Family*, was shortlisted for The Center for Fiction's First Novel Prize and long-listed for the PEN/Hemingway Award for Debut Novel. Her writing has appeared in *The Paris Review Daily*, *AGNI*, *The New York Times*, and others.