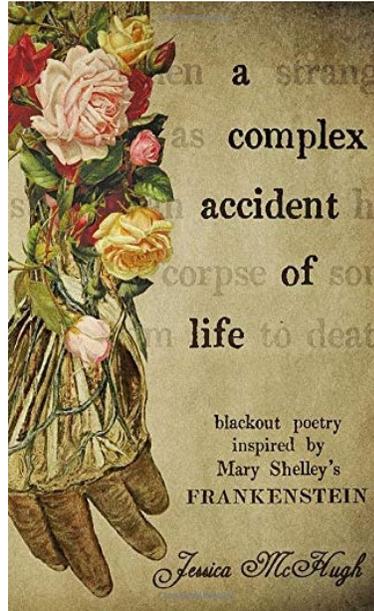
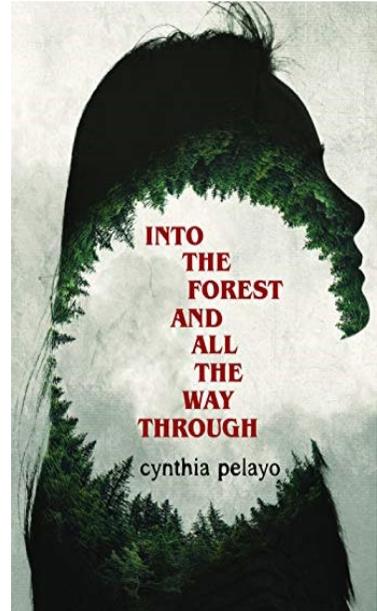
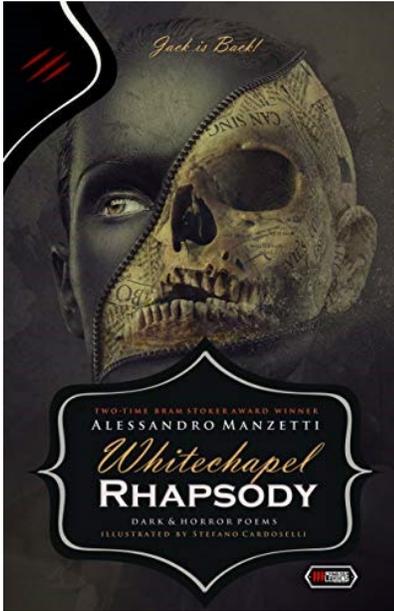
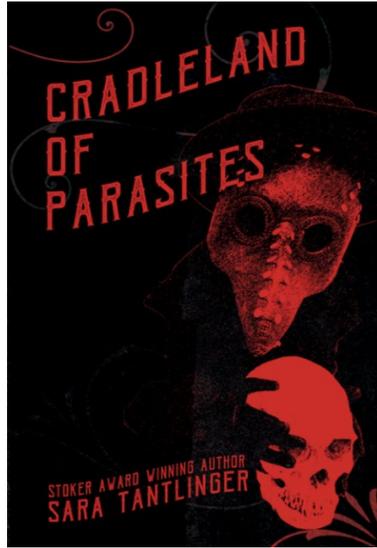


**2020 Bram  
Stoker  
Nominees for  
Superior  
Achievement in  
Poetry**

*By David E. Cowen  
Bram Stoker Nominated Author of  
Bleeding Saffron (Weasel Press 2018)*



The Finalists for the 2018 Bram Stoker Award for Superior Achievement in Poetry have been announced they are (listed alphabetically):

**Superior Achievement in a Poetry Collection**

Manzetti, Alessandro – *Whitechapel Rhapsody: Dark Poems*  
(Independent Legions Publishing)

McHugh, Jessica – *A Complex Accident of Life* (Apokrupha)

Pelayo, Cynthia – *Into the Forest and All the Way Through* (Burial  
Day Books)

Sng, Christina – *A Collection of Dreamscapes* (Raw Dog Screaming  
Press)

Tantlinger, Sara – *Cradleland of Parasites* (Rooster Republic Press)

Each of the authors was gracious enough to share their favorite pieces  
from their books:

## **Cradleland of Parasites by Sara Tantlinger**

### **On a White Horse**

I am the rider of the white horse  
enigmatic in interpretation

I do not ride as the Holy Spirit,  
you will find no gospel spread  
beneath my horse's hooves

I do not ride as prosperity  
nor as war, but you could find  
both, if summoned correctly

In the name of Pestilence, I ride,  
your sacred lord of contagion

bow down beneath divine damnation

As my horse gallops on, I draw back  
my bow, a bleeding sun overhead  
turns sky to crimson as my brass  
quiver demands death; arrows  
poisoned with disease fly through  
the world, spreading epidemics  
abroad in devastating silence

Noble demise in hallowed ground  
beckons, come to my earthen embrace  
sleep forever in bodily betrayal  
as organs shut down, as blood runs  
infected and uncured -- follow white  
mane and tail through the darkness  
to me, your blessed liberator gifting  
kernels of bacteria to burrow inside skin

In the name of Pestilence, I ride

### **Cradleland of Parasites**

You will walk in blood after the birth  
and the very violence of such a thing,  
how an origin shreds through membrane  
how copper stains your lips and tongue,  
will terrorize each atom in your body.

Sickness has always been here,  
waiting in light and dark, hovering  
in your air, and swimming through  
each breath and drop of water,

did you ever think something as microscopic  
as a germ could hurt this much?

You will take my hand when the air aches  
when clouds have only acid lakes to absorb,  
before your organs break down into dust  
before life exits your body in an angry burst,  
shut your eyes, tell me what bacterium curses you.

In the cradleland of parasites, beginnings  
are always brutal, the way plague rips  
venomous disease from contagion's womb  
spilling her gore across a vermillion wasteland,

does love still exist in this place where flesh  
spills open and the maggots come to feast?

You will walk in blood after the birth,  
taste spores sprouting through atmosphere,  
remember the origin must always be violent  
remember humankind will not survive this,  
we will rebuild our cradleland from their bones.

### **Medico della Peste**

This will pass as medicine, for now  
morbid work must always exist,  
but how much death will God allow?

We haunt the streets, blackbirds on the prowl,  
seeking out hacking coughs, lumps, and cysts;  
this will pass as medicine, for now.

Overcoat soaked in suet, a belief to somehow  
repel plague's lure, its miasma in the air like mist,

but how much death will God allow?

Wooden cane in hand, we walk and they howl  
patients broken by hellish agony plague enlists;  
this will pass as medicine, for now.

Bound to remedy and coin, we must disavow  
conspiracies set forth by the traitors in our midst  
but how much death will God allow?

Between bloodied beaks, we turn and bow  
complimenting each doctor the infection missed;  
this will pass as medicine, for now,  
but how much death will God allow?

### **When My Lover Gives Birth to Plague**

When my lover gives birth to plague  
her twisted spine warps further, sending  
seizures to coil around her bones,  
perverse contractions as boils burst  
allowing pus to seep down sallow skin  
where diseased fleas bathe in her sickness

When my lover gives birth to plague  
black rats swim from her broken water,  
travel down a blood canal after gnawing  
through her raw uterus, tasting the cervix  
as a cherry treat for their months spent  
engorged inside her pustule-covered belly

When my lover gives birth to plague  
infestation spreads with mucus-covered mayhem  
seeking out every crevice of flesh to wedge

dark globs of gangrene horror beneath,  
to morph skin into rotting froths, fizzing off  
skeletons who once had names, homes, lives...

but when my lover gives birth to plague  
there is no escape, no hiding one's self  
from omnipotent pathogens come to collect  
what is promised; all the ruin and devastation,  
all the science and medicine in the world won't  
protect you when pestilence breaks free of its womb

### **Underwater Snow**

When this is all over,  
let's go away, you and I  
across the ocean to new  
adventures; as we fly over  
the vast expanse of sea,  
I will tell you of the viruses  
floating in the water, how if  
you lined each one up  
end-to-end, they'd stretch  
out 42 million light-years

Our brains unable to make  
sense of such numbers,  
but I'll trace my fingertips  
against your skin, tell you  
of bacterial blooms, the way  
algae breathes and releases  
precious gas, seeding clouds  
that help cool the planet

When we arrive we'll go see  
those impressive White Cliffs

of Dover, marvel at such splendor  
formed from morphing tiny  
algae skeletons to chalk,  
waiting all those years  
below sea level, only to rise

In the grassland we might find  
jackdaws and skylarks,  
rare buds of spider orchids,  
the tell-tale brightness of red  
admiral butterflies fluttering  
about our heads, and we will  
know how all this exquisite life  
stemmed from seawater viruses  
ripping open a host, sticky  
molecules snagging carbon  
bits down into the underwater  
snowstorm -- how sometimes it takes  
great pain and darkness  
to seek out even greater beauty

## *A Collection of Dreamscapes* by Christina Sng

### **Allegra**

Her name soothes  
The mighty beast, enthralled  
By her ethereal song.

A tale  
Extending far beyond  
Our collective memories,

A relic of echoes  
Unbound by the years  
And retold

By Allegra,  
The protagonist  
Of songs.

\*

It began with love,  
Of Prometheus and  
Allegra, his love.

They danced through time,  
Entwined in a symphony  
Of fire and ice,

Swirling amid  
The ancient stars  
They called by name.

They were there  
At their christening,  
At the birth of the world;

Our universe,  
Their interstellar playground.  
And Allegra sang,

Her song stirred  
The heart of life  
Into bloom,

Planting barren planets  
And moons with  
Seeds from her hands.

Prometheus, jealous  
Of Allegra's passion,  
Returned to raze the land.

Ignited, his fires burned,  
Annihilating flourishing worlds  
Allegra had sung to birth.

And Allegra,  
In silence and grief,  
Departed from him,

Fell to Earth,  
With whom  
She fell in love,

And sang,  
Stirring  
The muted land.

For Prometheus,  
She built a pyre, a promise  
To spare Earth his fire.

And for a million years  
Life sprang up, painted  
In incandescent colors.

Her hands shed corpuscles.  
She'd been clawing the soil.  
And Allegra,

Exhausted,  
Fell into eternal sleep,  
Enveloped

In the red and green  
Flowers and leaves  
She'd beckoned awake.

\*

The cycles pass  
In a harried frenzy.  
But her song

Endures the twisted  
Passage of time.  
It is our voice

That echoes it.  
A plea to the fire bearer,  
To him who destroys peace.

And again,  
The symphony of ice  
Quenches the flame.

Prometheus, redirected,  
Leaves us  
Untouched again.

## **Never Happy After**

It'd be so poetic to stab them

With my old glass slippers,  
But that would leave far  
Too much evidence behind.

Instead, I bide my time,  
Wait till the stars align,  
Find my way back to the castle,  
Where you've made a home with her,

The courtier, infamous  
For destroying families.  
For fun, for sport, no one knows,  
But everyone condemns her terrible deeds—

Mere whispers in the castle till today  
When I slice her in two, head to groin,  
Both halves falling onto the throne room floor,  
Creating a path for me and my scythe

To reach him, cowering in a corner,  
Begging for his life,  
Which does not move me  
But fuels my rage at the waste,

At a decade's worth of indignities  
And his dark, callous cruelty.  
I do not hesitate,  
Slashing him into pieces,

My scythe making graceful strokes,  
Imitating the masters, splattering  
His blood all over the marble wall.  
It is still an art piece I marvel at today,

Walking to the throne, scythe returned

To its rightful owner who was glad  
To take a break and lend me the reins.  
“Well done,” Death says,

Patting my arm as I put on the crown,  
A faint glimpse of pride beams in her face.  
From that day forth, my dreams are sweet,  
Covered in blood and sleet.

And oh, do I welcome it.

### **When There Are Monsters**

When there are monsters in the house,  
You learn to move silently in the dark,  
Tread lightly on tiptoe, make no sound.

You learn to lock doors behind you,  
Slowly and softly so they won't  
Follow you in and surprise you,

Corner you and maim you,  
Invade you and desecrate you,  
Then discard you when they are done

With what's left of you,  
In bloody shards, broken and burnt,  
Most of you lost in ashes.

You awake the next day,  
Raw, in pain,  
Gingerly

Walking and talking  
Like a person,

But there is nothing there. Not anymore.

When there's a monster in the house,  
You learn to duck behind doors  
And walk with the shadows.

The dark is far safer than the light  
Where monsters can see you,  
Seize you and destroy you

When you let your guard down  
And forget just for a moment—  
They always move faster than you.

So I have joined the darkness.  
I have joined the shadows.  
No one can touch me in the dark.

### **The Tooth Collector**

Some people collect stamps.  
I collect teeth,  
Mostly from terrible people.

You see,  
I was born  
With a capacity for violence

And in the world  
I grew up in,  
It was necessary.

I haunt the streets  
Where monsters hide  
In plain sight,

Waiting to seize  
Young girls  
In broad daylight.

Here's where I step in.  
I grab his hand  
Holding the girl,

Snapping back his fingers,  
Breaking his hold.  
I tell her to run

While I twist and pull,  
Breaking every single one  
Of his fingers, knees, and toes.

A sharp punch  
And I dislocate his jaw,  
Pull out my pliers,

Clamp open his mouth,  
And yank each tooth  
Out of its root.

I choose the nicest one,  
Drop it in a candy tin  
Before I take it home,

A reminder of the good  
That I do  
And the lives I rescue.

Today, a girl does not run  
But asks me, "Can you teach me

To do what you do?"

I smile  
And nod.  
Now we are two.

Soon,  
There are others  
Who do what we do.

Crime is down,  
Shockingly,  
For the first time in years.

But like roaches,  
The monsters  
Always stage a return.

I've collected  
Countless jars of teeth  
While the girls

Collect other trophies.  
A museum's worth,  
It seems.

### **The Girl and Her Wolf Dog**

I follow your tracks to the deserted road.  
They lead me to the deep forest.  
This is where we loved to roam,  
In a time not too long ago.

Your paw prints end near the broken cabin  
And behind, there, your bones.

I pull out my scythe from its tattered sheath  
And enter the killer's home.

Here he sits, surrounded by bottles,  
Your collar around his wrist.  
In a single blow, I cut off his arm  
And catch your collar in my fist.

He pulls out his gun and I sever that arm  
And stab him till he is finally dead.  
I gather your bones into my arms  
And breathe life back into them.

Slowly your flesh knits, layer by layer  
Till you are good and whole again.  
I return you your collar and hold you close  
As you deeply inhale and lick my nose.

I kiss each head and whistle your name  
With our common refrain,  
"Come, Cerberus,  
It is time to go home."

## **Whitechapel Rhapsody by Alessandro Mannzett**

### **BLOODY RHAPSODY**

Deep Red, Deep East End  
smell of men and women  
of misery, sweat and then the rainbow  
of blood right after the knives's storms

and all shades of red, see,  
violet, purple, amaranth and vermilion  
splashed on the sidewalk  
by the Titian of Whitechapel  
who knows well all colors  
flowing inside people  
arteries, veins, ventricles, secret boxes  
odalisques with white, warm skin  
porcelain trained from life  
in the universities of the alley  
between cold kisses and whistles of policemen  
wearing stiffened mustaches  
with their heart always scared.

Deep Red, Deep East End  
the ghost with the razor, Death  
with a black and white face  
and a necklace of sharp oyster shells  
reading Shakespeare's sonnets  
around every dark corner  
blowing storms of hanging clothes  
and the first five symphonies  
of the spectre that everyone calls  
The Ripper, tall and thin, short and fat  
alive and dead, Jesus Christ and Lucifer  
an angel with a blue tongue

or a demon with a long, coiled tail  
lit like a fuse and ready to detonate  
grenades of shouts, prayers  
waking pimps in underwear and braces  
who're sleeping under the sharp roofs  
of London slowly dying, bled out.

## **ANNIE**

September 8, 1888

An alley that crosses two buildings,  
a bloody courtyard, a five-foot high palisade  
some coins on the ground, an abandoned leather apron,  
and then, in the middle, Annie's corpse,  
like the sculpture of a red and violet still life,  
with an handkerchief around her neck,  
what she had waved, a few seconds earlier,  
from the imaginary balcony of a black ship,  
to greet the planet earth in a hurry.  
She had beautiful teeth.

A man who crosses an alley, running,  
powered by a wind which smells of strawberry tree honey.  
A knife in his hand, with a long and thin blade,

and a coat, full of treasures of pleasures, soft and warm,  
which seems winged, able to making him disappear  
as fast as a shot, leaving there  
the last traces of his cascading thoughts:  
"She had beautiful teeth"

*Annie, can you hear me?*

Asks her Fortune 199, her drunk guardian angel  
rushed to the spot with its curled up wings  
and the crazy, errant, confused gaze of a tramp.  
She can't hear, no more,  
[try another way, poor angel, with your golden melody]  
she can't stop staring with dead blue eyes  
at those four lighted windows  
which hide figures of sacred people.  
*She had beautiful teeth*, thinks the angel.

Annie, a too modern sculpture  
for both the living and the dead,  
something never seen before  
by Phoenician or Victorian eyes, a motionless dancer  
with legs drawn up, and feet resting on the ground.  
No one can see her music, her beauty,  
she got sucked up by a vortex  
and shot up into the sky, like an iron bird,

toward a new constellation, where  
her slashed throat and the mutilated Venus' equipments  
are not so alien, where good satellites  
they start spinning around her beautiful teeth,  
like flies in love.  
Look up there, those distant ivory lights.

[29, Hanbury Street]

### **THE ANGEL IN BUCK'S ROW**

August 31, 1888

*Don't do it*, says the blue-eyed boy  
from the rooftop playground of the Board Shool.  
Afternoon, Jack sniffs the gray air  
of Buck's Row, observing his shadow  
on the line of cottages on the left,  
inhabited by ghosts still alive.  
Here, he thinks, here you can smell the honey  
of what is fading, fading away.  
Honey, chestnuts and dark bread.  
The life which tries to shorten the legs of Death.

*Don't do it, it's a pity*, says the blue-eyed boy  
over there, behind the rusty railing.

Jack looks up, hears that subtle voice  
haunting him for hours, a curse  
with a mouth full of baby teeth;  
such a stupid divine spell.  
Here, he must be here, he thinks,  
tonight, when Buck's Row will transform itself  
in a forge of cheap lovers and diamonds,  
making the street swallow man's juice.

*Don't do it, she will scream!* says the blue-eyed boy  
up there, rising from the building  
with his wings made of newsprint.

Jack lowers his eyes, that angel  
shines too much, blinding his special vision:  
she, Magdalene, Salome, Olympia,  
on the sidewalk, with the throat cut,  
and the night dancing around her  
dressed in a skeleton suit,  
with the North Star gripped between its teeth.

[Buck's Row, everywhere]

**LICE**

**[LITTLE IS KNOW OF YOU]**

July 17, 1889

Little is known of you, Alice  
but I counted all your freckles  
one by one, for whole days.  
Nobody pays much attention to me,  
I'm so ordinary, thin as air,  
and I always go unnoticed  
like the death of a stranger.

Little is known of you, Alice  
but they should remember  
that July night in London  
when we couldn't breathe from the heat  
and inside the Whitechapel nest  
three eggs hatched, one after the other.  
Poison, the blood of misery.

Little is known of you, Alice  
and of the snakes born that night,  
young, inexperienced reptiles  
with a great desire to live and bite.  
One of them crawled up to you  
attracted to your French perfume.  
You were dressed like Olympia.

Little is known of you, Alice

and many think it was me  
to take your life away, together with  
a piece of your Mount of Venus.  
But nobody blinks twice at me,  
evanescent like a summer dream,  
not even a snake on its first hunt.

Little is known of you, Alice  
of the many days I spent following you  
and all the nights waiting,  
motionless like a quadrant of sky  
when you offerered yourself to all,  
jumping on the first boat coming along...  
That captain, looking for any star,  
had never seen you before.

Little is known of you, Alice  
and of that snake number two  
yellowish, already sick for some time,  
left-handed like the devil,  
which cut your left carotid artery  
as an amateur, like a lover who  
after having spent ten years in jail  
stands finally in front of his aged Diva.  
Too much haste, and too little depth.

Little is known of you, Alice  
but I saw you dying  
and your left breast blooming blood,  
but no one notices me, you see  
I'm a frameless mirror  
into which that serpent had looked  
to see his name written in the newspaper,  
to kill another useless day ready to start.  
Friend snakes, killers and rippers, crawl  
and bring my name to history,  
like the Mona Lisa.

[Castle Alley]

### **WHITECHAPEL RHAPSODY**

Deep Red, deep East End  
overcrowded houses strangled  
by hanging clothes, ropes and beads  
green painted insane asylums,  
hordes of toothless poor people  
riding horses, locomotives and whores  
fast as razors and slow as cancer  
in the faded alleys of Whitechapel  
under the chimneys, the reddish roofs  
among the rows of rusty graves of people  
still alive, where it comes from

scent of chestnuts, and a big man  
with the white hat of a cheesecutter  
who's the king of those four ways  
a cross of passages, of upside down shops  
a sign that shines like a diamond  
the opium den, next to a pub  
showing a denture made of black pots  
and red flowers, with its shop windows  
capturing passersby, equine and human eyes  
hearses, skinny bicycles.

Deep Red, deep East End  
the factories, the anguished gates  
lips smeared with charcoal  
a potato soup and a wife to beat up  
who sells postcards and their own breasts  
on the shore of the morning when  
prayers in Russian are spilled on the street  
together with buckets of blood and soap  
jump between pools, steal a donut  
the whistle of a policeman, the whisper  
of a whore wearing a hussar hat  
and the cries of hospital's wards and floorboards,  
where Madame Syphilis walks on tiptoe  
fucking you at night, with her magic hammer  
the relief, the night shift and the out of hours brain

of a madman at the window at dawn  
who counts his fingers and the eyes already awake  
who meet by chance, to live or die.

## **Into the Forest and All the Way Through by Cynthia Pelayo**

### **Remember Me**

Into the forest and all the way through, I ask you to follow my voice  
Across the stream and through the hills, you'll find a copse of trees  
Unknown to many, lost to time, and tucked behind a bare branch  
A ball of twine, a cigarette butt, a crumpled polaroid, you hear a  
giggle  
The crunch of leaves, and the dread stabs your insides, and your  
breath  
Oh! Your breath, how your breath catches in your throat, and you  
Fall all the way down, into a hole so long ago hidden there, and now  
You are within the ground, you smell the damp earth and pain, and  
When you hear her voice you spin around and gain all the terror she  
holds,  
Before you there, a girl who no longer is a girl, a girl who is bone and  
moss  
Leaves tangled within her eye sockets, stretched down to her finger  
bone  
Pointing above and pointing you out, and you climb against the rock  
And stone, and she bids you adieu, begging you, pleading you, to  
make it  
Safe, all the way home

## **You Are Not Looking, I Am Right Here**

In a shallow grave. Your skin smelled of oranges, bright  
And warmed by the sun, streaks of luminous hair  
Blemished by earth, tainted by the touch of someone  
Who did not love you. The medical examiner could  
Not find you, within your breaks, and so thought both  
Were separate, the missing and the murdered. You  
Skipped school that day for the beach, and no young  
Girl should be rewarded with terror in search of adventure  
For twenty-seven years you were one of many, Jane Does  
Missing. Persons. Pictures. Posters. On walls lined. In  
Databases cold. In cabinets. Yellowing pages of dried ink.  
Have you seen her? Tell me have you seen her? Almost  
Thirty years is a long time to wait. Your mother died  
After twenty-two years of waiting. And when police  
Officers finally approached the man suspected in your  
Murder, in the murder of Elizabeth, and Tammy and Mary,  
And Rosario, and many more — he killed himself, because  
That is what cowards do.

Name: Colleen Emily Orsborn

Remains found: Daytona Beach, Florida

Race: White

Age at disappearance: 15

Year missing: 1984

Case status: Remains found, unresolved

Investigating agency:

Daytona Police Department, 386-671-5100

## **Doe-Eyed**

The littlest doe, doe-eyed, Jane  
Doe. I want to paint your nails,  
Red, but not the red that stains  
Your cream-colored knit sweater  
I want to play dollhouse with  
You, but not the moldy, brutal  
Mildewed house whose basement  
You were found. I want to comb  
Your hair, your beautiful hair, I  
Can only imagine it was smooth  
As a spider web, but only those  
Insects know where your face is  
Now, as that was missing when  
They found, you there

Name: Jane Doe

Remains found: St. Louis, Missouri

Race: Black

Age at disappearance: 8-11

Year discovered: 1983

Case status: Unsolved

Investigating agency:

St. Louis Police Department, 314-444-0100

**Discard the Words**

High-risk, that's what police call it when they insinuate  
Your murder was meant to be, justified, yet what they  
Do not call high-risk, whose life styles they do not question  
Are those skilled with the ways of bloodstained bath tubs  
Who stab, cut, slice, dislodge. Who trace steps. Track humans  
And carry dismembered parts of a body, wrapped in  
Plastic, a present, an offering for dumpsters and landfills  
Humans most foul who are unapologetic for those they have  
Castaway, whose screams thrilled them and filled them with  
Joy, who subsist and sustain themselves on terror, let's bury  
The words "high-risk lifestyle" and instead replace them with  
The man who murdered you, a man, who is not just a man, a  
Serial killer

Name: Audrey Lynn Harris  
Missing from: Woonsocket, Rhode Island  
Race: Black  
Age at disappearance: 33  
Missing since: 2003  
Investigating agency:  
Woonsocket Police Department, 401-766-1212

## **The Demons You Live With**

Mom and dad said not to speak or the demons and vampires  
Inhabiting us would break through our skin, and take over  
The smoke that went into mom and dad's mouth, they spoke of  
Possessions and spirits, cleansed only by a concoction of bleach

Drank daily, burned back beatings, burnt feet, cigarette lighters  
And visions of a pale little girl on the floor, limp and cold  
The twisted sickness of parents who ingested poison, saying it  
Was their children who needed cleaning and not them, monsters  
Addicted to vice, culminated in a closet with a pruning saw  
Incinerated in the family's fireplace, remnants scattered across  
The Sacramento River. A year of abuse continued on, and it was  
Not until a teacher found chemical burns on my skin that I  
Could finally tell the story of the little sister I had and the  
Demons who threw her away and told me never to tell

Name: Alexia Anne Reale  
Missing from: Elk Grove, California  
Race: Asian, Biracial  
Age at disappearance: 5  
Missing since: 1997  
Investigating agency:  
Sacramento County Sheriff's Office, 916-443-4357

## **Fields Solve Nothing**

Your murder as reality show  
Crime scene, crime news, crime  
Cruises, but has anyone solved  
The crime? We worship the death  
On screen, but need to know more

Information, overwhelms about the  
Programs, but not about you, who  
Were you? Show me more, the fields  
The killing fields, where your head  
Ached, and your body slumped  
Kidnapped and decomposed, human  
Fertilizer, harsh isn't it? It's grueling  
To think of a beautiful woman, gone  
Dead, skull fractured, questions, so  
Many questions, but if the questions  
Are all answered they cannot profit  
From your murder

Name: Eugenie Boisfontaine

Missing from: Iberville Parish, Louisiana

Race: White

Age at disappearance: 34

Missing since: 1997

Investigating agency:

East Baton Rouge Police Department, 225-389-2000

**[CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE]**

# A Complex Accident of Life by Jessica McHugh

## *Bent Branches*

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carried at my body, and fired I sank to the ground, and my injurer, with increased swiftness, escaped into the wood.

'This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and as a recompense I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound which shattered the flesh and bone. The feelings of kindness and gentleness which I had entertained but a few moments before gave place to hellish rage and gnashing of teeth. Inflamed by pain, I vowed eternal hatred and vengeance to all mankind. But the agony of my wound overcame me, my pulses paused, and I fainted.

'For some weeks I led a miserable life in the woods, endeavouring to cure the wound which I had received. The ball had entered my shoulder, and I knew not whether it had remained there or passed through; at any rate I had no means of extracting it. My sufferings were augmented also by the oppressive sense of the injustice and ingratitude of their infliction. My daily vows rose for revenge, a deep and deadly revenge, such as would alone compensate for the outrages and anguish I had endured.

'After some weeks my wound healed, and I continued my journey. The labours I endured were no longer to be alleviated by the bright sun or gentle breezes of spring; all lay was but a mockery which insulted my desolate state and made me feel more painfully that I was not made for the enjoyment of pleasure.

'But my tale is now drawn near a close, and in two months from this time I reached the environs of Geneva.

'It was evening when I arrived, and I retired to a

# Cultivation

## LETTER

2

To Mrs. Saville, England

Archangel, 28th March, 17--

How slowly the time passes here, encompassed as I am by frost and snow! Yet a second start is taken towards my enterprise. I have hired a vessel and am occupied in collecting my sailors; those whom I have already engaged appear to be men on whom I can depend (and are certainly possessed of dauntless courage).

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy, and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate in my joy; I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I shall consequently be obliged to paper it in true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me, whose ear would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes

## Fortunate

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murderer on its bridal bier. Could I behold this and live? Alas! Life is obstinate and clings closest where it is most hated. For a moment only did I lose recollection; I fell senseless on the ground.

When I recovered I found myself surrounded by the people of the inn; their countenances expressed a breathless terror, but the horror of others appeared only as a mockery, a shadow of the feelings that oppressed me. I escaped from them to the room where lay the body of Elizabeth, my love, my wife, so lately living, so dear, so worthy. She had been moved from the posture in which I had first beheld her, and now, as she lay, her head upon her arm and a handkerchief thrown across her face and neck, I might have supposed her asleep. I rushed towards her and embraced her with ardour, but the deadly languor and coldness of the limbs told me that what I now held in my arms had ceased to be the Elizabeth whom I had loved and cherished. The murderous mark of the fiend's grasp was on her neck, and the breath had ceased to issue from her lips.

While I still hung over her in the agony of despair, I happened to look up. The windows of the room had before been darkened, and I felt a kind of panic on seeing the pale yellow light of the moon illuminate the chamber. The shutters had been thrown back, and with a sensation of horror not to be described, I saw at the open window a figure the most hideous and abhorred. A grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife. I rushed towards the window, and drawing a pistol from my bosom, fired; but he eluded me, leaped from his station, and running

A B

## Letter

FRANKENSTEIN 23

well content if nothing worse happen to us during our voyage.

Adieu, my dear Margaret. Be assured that for my own sake, as well as yours, I will not rashly encounter danger. I will be cool, persevering, and prudent.

But success *shall* crown my endeavours. Wherefore not? Thus far I have gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas, the very stars themselves being witnesses and testimonies of my triumph. Why not still proceed over the untamed yet obedient element? What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man?

My swelling heart involuntarily pours itself out thus. But I must finish. Heaven bless my beloved sister!

R. W.

### Author's Bios:

**Sara Tantlinger** is the author of the Bram Stoker Award-winning *The Devil's Dreamland: Poetry Inspired by H.H. Holmes*, and the Stoker-nominated works *To Be Devoured*, *Cradleland of Parasites*, and *Not All Monsters*. Along with being a mentor for the HWA Mentorship Program, she is also a co-organizer for the HWA Pittsburgh Chapter.

She embraces all things macabre and can be found lurking in graveyards or on Twitter @SaraTantlinger, at saratantlinger.com and on Instagram @inkychaotics

**Christina Sng** is the Bram Stoker Award-winning author of *A Collection of Nightmares*, Elgin Award runner-up *Astropoetry*, and *A Collection of Dreamscapes*. Her first novelette *Fury* appears in *Black Cranes: Tales of Unquiet Women* and her next book of poems *The Gravity of Existence* is forthcoming in 2022.

**Alessandro Manzetti** (Rome, Italy) is a Two-time Bram Stoker Award-winning author, editor, scriptwriter and essayist of horror fiction and dark poetry whose work has been published extensively (more than 40 books) in Italian and English, including novels, short and long fiction, poetry, essays, graphic novels and collections. Website: [www.battiago.com](http://www.battiago.com)

**Cynthia (Cina) Pelayo** is a two-time Bram Stoker Award ® nominated poet and author. She is the author of LOTERIA, SANTA MUERTE, THE MISSING, and POEMS OF MY NIGHT, all of which have been nominated for International Latino Book Awards. POEMS OF MY NIGHT was also nominated for an Elgin Award. Her recent collection of poetry, INTO THE FOREST AND ALL THE WAY THROUGH explores true crime, that of the epidemic of missing and murdered women in the United States. Her modern day horror retelling of the Pied Piper fairy tale, CHILDREN OF CHICAGO is available by Polis / Agora Books. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism, a Master of Science in Marketing, a Master of Fine Arts in Writing, and is a Doctoral Candidate in Business Psychology. Cina was raised in inner city Chicago, where she lives with her husband and children. Find her online at [www.cinapelayo.com](http://www.cinapelayo.com) and on Twitter @cinapelayo.

**Jessica McHugh** is a novelist, poet, and internationally-produced playwright running amok in the fields of horror, sci-fi, young adult, and wherever else her peculiar mind leads. She's had twenty-four books published in twelve years, including her bizarro romp, "The Green Kangaroos," her YA series, "The Darla Decker Diaries," and her Bram Stoker Award-Nominated blackout poetry collection, "A Complex Accident of Life." Please visit [JessicaMcHughBooks.com](http://JessicaMcHughBooks.com) for more samples of the McHughniverse.