A Casualty

The day after Pearl Harbor
his whole basketball team signed up

so he did too
because that was one sure way

to get out of going to school
And the Marines

taught him
everything he needed to know

to become a sniper
and a scout

before sending him,
to Iwo Jima.

where he was taught
to spray the caves with fire

to force the enemy to come out
which they did

including one very young soldier,
just a boy,

in flames.
And the only thing
he never learned
was how to live with that.

**Something Falling**

I saw a shadow of something falling
As if from the tree to the grass

And I wondered if it were a bird
Or maybe a shadow

That looked like a bird -
That had the shape that a bird needs

To surf the skies-
But no hardiness yet in the wings

Now I think it was
a fledgling love

That tried the air
And fell to earth

Before it knew
The strength it takes to fly

*Maryalicia Post* first long-form poem won the Gerard Manley Hopkins International Poetry Competition and was subsequently published as a book, ‘After You’, by Souvenir Press UK. Her five-line tanka and six-line cherita appear in online and print
journals. Other work has been published by Ogham Stone and Poetry Quarterly. She is a travel writer based in Dublin, Ireland.

A Man Like Fire

Brown leather jacket and chainsmoker’s breath, radiating arrogance and an ignorance of death, brown chelsea boots, perfectly scuffed, a fiery laugh, a youthful wrath, slicked-back black hair, taking names, he is diesel - the whole room is in flames. A bleak and bitter nihilism projecting an uncontrollable magnetism.

One blonde here, a brunette there, reckless disregard and a renegade flare, women like trophies, pills and cocaine, hatred and abandon, vicious and inhumane, beyond true to his nature, an intense life, the essentials: cigarettes, switchblade knifes. At the back, he sees the man in the bespoke suit; and he wishes to be him. That pain is acute.

He approaches with his trademark swagger, leans over the table and almost staggers. A tumult of thoughts, hatred and regret, his desolate ego sensing a threat, he lights up another one and extends his hand, weathered aristocrat and the firebrand, a union like brimstone and ice, one to cool the other, a last throw of the dice.
Brown leather jacket and chainsmoker’s breath,
relentless anger of infinite depth,
ageed silver chains around his neck and wrists,
he strikes the names off his long list.
Outwardly despised, secretly adored,
such black charisma can never be ignored.
Those same chelsea boots, now scuffed and worn,
stepping on the same oaken floor.

Meditating at the Crossroads

The journeyman sits, his robe muddied and stained,
an unkempt beard, his expression bleak and pained,
a crow circles above and snakes hiss in the grass,
cross-legged he sits at the four-pronged impasse.

To the South he sees fire, and a man among the flames,
a pale arsonist, amidst ruins and human remains,
a city crumbling, a people turned to ash,
such great wealth and beauty, all lost in a flash.

To the East he sees rain, and a farmer tending to wheat,
his face is troubled, he is cheerless by the sugar beet,
he carries just enough strawberries to placate a child,
and his eyes envy the foxes, so free and so wild.

To the North he sees a soldier, aged and weathered,
clad in steel armour, in his helm a red feather,
a man respected, a man-skilled and resolute,
loved in his lifetime, a legacy of high repute.

To the West, a rider, wearing a red bandana, riding through forest, mountain and savanna, a radiating smile on his sun-kissed face, as he gallops away, towards the setting sun’s embrace.

The journeyman stands, his robe muddied and stained, an unkempt beard, a smile determined but restrained, a crow circles above and snakes hiss in the grass, as he sets off, through the half-blocked narrow-pass.

**Wojciech Toczydlowski** is a seventeen-year-old Polish immigrant who has lived in Somerset for over ten years. He has been fascinated by words, languages and linguistics for most of his life. He currently attends Exeter College in Somerset and aims to become a writer professionally later on in life.

**Aesthetics**

Perched easily on a power pole, a crow Hacks at a dead bird gripped in a talon. Its feathers drift down like snowflakes, Glistening in sunlight. Beautiful.

**Don Thompson** has been writing about the San Joaquin Valley for over fifty years, including a dozen or so books and chapbooks. For more info and links to publishers, visit his website at www.don-e-thompson.com.

**An Old Blue Oak**

Not as old as the Civil War, but close. The Blue Oak spreads its twisted arms
around a hospitable sky,
arms decayed from the senseless violations
of humans
with their digging machines that sever roots
and trucks that belch forth concrete.

Arms that care in spite of it all
and fight for the life bestowed.
Arms that push forth a canopy of green
that shades the heads of the guilty.
Arms that also reach the ground,
embracing it, palms up,
with lichen covered fingers
and stalks of nascent grass
that rush to take them in.

**Bicycle Chain**

When running as it should,
dirt from miles around
hops on for the exalting ride.
Those little overlapping plates
their black beards
hugging pins at their junctures
travel round a spinning Ferris wheel
serving an expedient pair of feet.
A thousand moving parts
squalidly pressing and squeezing
precisely against one another
to give birth to the motion
that feeds on a clean blue horizon.

**Marianne Brems** has an MA in Creative Writing from San Francisco State University. She is a long time writer of textbooks in her teaching area of English as a Second Language. Her poems are often whimsical. They have appeared in Door Is A Jar, Mused, and Soft Cartel. She lives in Northern California.
**An Uncanny Place**

Breaking of dawn  
Crimson but pale  
A place hardly recognizable  
It is dark certainly  
Still grey folds  
Pleet themselves  
It is made even more complicated now

The night lingers, shine of stars  
In his eyes; but the waves  
Roll back to the ocean  
The blending of blue and black  
Beneath the drip of soft-melting  
Moon holding the diamond  
Against which Love will be weighed

*Christiana Sasa* loves to write. *Through writing, she finds a vent for her strangled feelings and emotions. She believes in love, peace and humanity.*

**Augmented**

Look at you.  
Talented designer, engineer, marketer, entrepreneur.  
I see you there.  
Marching separately towards me  
Down my lane searching for oil  
You have done good by your trade.  
There is good in you no doubt.
One could be intimidated
With your machines snug underarm
But not a geographer of here.
We have seen this all before
All entering new territory you are.
Time to get the feet dirty and
Breathe the good cold air.
Technology is allowing you to
Enter my realm of geography and memory.
You need a guide.
That way it will be better for us all.
For I too am one of you rebels,
Digging at the boundaries that
Others cannot see.

Fuel

Born 1985.
A stone’s throw away from Holy Cross School.
1998, the microcosm that is North Belfast
Such an oddity to hear of peace agreements
Our greatest of endeavours
Yet experience more walls built.
One right through my Alexandra Park.
Only divided park in Western Europe.
And there was always the invisible geographies.
Geography your fancy sat-nav could never show
Or understand.
That’s where they are
Ye best have a guild
If you know what good for ye wee lad.
Plenty of psychic fossil fuel
As Heaney would say
Under the surface.
Spawned a curiously in me I guess.
Clearly important this thing is, place, memory, land,
Our place in it.
Never satisfied with text books, the
Geo-political answer always felt wrong.
Few could understand,
Handful could articulate,
Curious to find out,
Maybe possible you could change it then.

Chris Mc Alorum is a Chartered Geographer, Designer, and Surveyor, who enjoys working at the intersection of art, geography, and design. This is reflected in his poetry which aims to be appeal simultaneously to the universal and the locale often returning to his hometown of Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Because My Body Was Never Mine

In wanting to be held,
I too – like a butterfly,
Dissolved into the hands
That had never hold anything
Without breaking it.

Bathed in the sweatiness
Of unknown curses
Sticky as the muddy sperm
Before it turns to blood,
My voice deafens the earth –
Like a bra
That would not protect
The breasts when rusted,
Watery fingers arrived.
Oiled in the middle, I,

An adulterer voided
By that rapeseed;
Pilloried under the horrible sky
That promised to language me
Into immortality but failed.

I surrendered easy
To that famed urgency
Of my sterility, a smoke
Of steaming tears
Blinding my eyes. &

As to my body –
The muchness of which pours
Itself into other bodies
With different muchness
To make an elegy

Into a hip-hop –
This chaos, of course, is
What makes my skeleton
An impatient tourist
In its own grave.
They said – & I believed them:
My body is the vast sea
With wrecked ships,
Drowning folks that once owned it
Cried out for help but found

Only Deathlets carrying
Dark cudgels across
Their shoulders, licking
Their wishful prayers with
Their tongues, a folly fully sated

While Death, himself, lounges
At the shore – watching,
Waiting for when the basket
Of souls would be filled.
Of the sea & the drowning folks,

I see Death & his Deathlets
ascending – my body ruptured
in their hands, helpless in that rapture.

Bola Opaleke is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet. His poems have appeared or forthcoming in a few Journals like Frontier Poetry, Poetry Quarterly, The Indianapolis Review, Poetry Pacific, Drunk Monkeys, Temz Review, St. Peters College(University of Saskatchewan) Anthology (Society 2013 Vol. 10), Pastiche Magazine, and others. He holds a degree in City Planning and lives in Winnipeg MB. Find him at www.bolaopaleke.com.
On the potholed tarred road, pedalling at time’s pace
Three young men smile at life, in sorrow and solace
Dew flowers half awake, they welcome the No Race

Over there the wind sings, litter disturbs the grass
Flowers sit on the floor, the young men are at work
They pick up the litter, the grass breathes with bliss

Flowers stir on the floor, even down --- are lovely
Day in day out rules change, boss’ whims and folly
Tending flowers and ferns, they agonisingly

Gripping the handle bars, sweating and wilting --- Harass
is the word which triumphs, the big boss goes berserk
When friends and flowers bond; barbs and barks they dismiss

On the floor they are crushed, in the store tears are brushed
Forced to forget their friends, thus three young men are rushed
When death tolls, boss is gone, when bards call, buds are hushed

In a window display, flowers, ferns are in glass
The friends in glazed pottery, still in the shadows lurk…
In mum’s arms is a gift, the girl gives her a kiss

*Nature has always been a companion to Brinda Runghsawmee. In childhood and even in her teens, she did not really understand what Nature was telling her but Nature always communed with her. Brinda also views poetry as therapy of the soul. She writes for the abused and dalits of society.*

**Big Questions, Little Sleep**
Not plates nor tools nor art from walls
Would I choose to remember you.
Please just come back and keep it all,
Not plates nor tools nor art from walls.
Your Will on which your name is scrawled,
Someone remove it from my view.
Not plates nor tools nor art from walls
Would I choose to remember you.

Lost and Found

Looking for marks upon the doors.
Old Herod strove to find one blessed.
The drowned of Katrina searched for.
Looking for marks upon the doors.
Pharoah sought out those he abhorred.
What tragedy this represents.
Looking for marks upon the doors.
Old Herod strove to find one blessed.

The Sea’s Secret Song

Forgive your foes and give them grace,
Show them your happy heart with smiles.
Among your friends give them a place.
Forgive your foes and give them grace.
Gift unto them goodwill of face
That they may sit with you awhile.
Forgive your foes and give them grace,
Show them your happy heart with smiles.
**Linda Imbler** is the author of the published poetry collection Big Questions, Little Sleep. She is a Kansas-based Pushcart and Best of the Net Nominee. Her work has appeared in numerous national and international journals. Find more about Linda’s creative process at lindaspoetryblog.blogspot.com.

**Billiards And Darts**

A teacher asks Little James
What balls are those that don’t have hairs
And Little James answered quickly:
- None, teacher, because all the balls
  And more those of Villar
  Have hairs.
There was laughter by spoonfuls
  Like garlic soups
In Roa de Duero, Burgos
Before corralling bulls.
Little students from Aranda de Duero
Know this joke very well
And always talk of it
When they go to the wine cellar
And, into the deep of it
They touch the balls among them
To see which of them
Have more grown hair.
To who that has the longest hair
They sent him to Burgos
With free expenses
As a prize for competing
In a competition of Billiards and Darts
To a place called “At Plane”, in Gamonal
Telling him at the Bus Station
Before car begging to move:
- Take care, Villar, you’re going to Burgos
To compete at Plane
Ones with darts, others with sticks.

Daniel de Culla is a writer, poet and photographer. He is a member of the Spanish Writers Association, Earthly Writers International Caucus, Poets of the World, (IA) International Authors, Surrealism Art, and others. Director of Gallo Tricolor Review, and Robespierre Review, he participated in many Festivals of Poetry, and Theatre in Madrid, Burgos and Berlin namely. He has exposed in many galleries from Madrid, Burgos, London and Amsterdam. He is moving between North Hollywood, Madrid and Burgos.

Canal

I’ll curl inside
the conch shell
of a poem

take a nap
on salty pink
and creamy peach

smooth and cool
beneath my hip
and cheek

the scallop
of my ear
awake
to a faint rush

a muted roar

da speck of
driftwood
washing in
and out

of a canal

Scott Waters is a native of Indiana, a graduate of Indiana University, and a long-time resident of Oakland, California, where he lives with his wife and son. He graduated with an M.A. from the San Francisco State creative writing program, and has published previously in The Santa Clara Review, Oblivion, and NatureWriting.

Cascade

If all the world were indeed a stage
I would trade it for cotton candy clouds
and lying on my back under cherry trees.

The old sky wears a coal-color coat.
I would trade it for a warm blue robe
If all the world were indeed a stage.

I stand silhouetted at the top of barren hill
and look to the last hill I have left to climb.
I would trade it for cotton candy clouds.
I shiver at the unfairness of rain and wind-chill.
wishing for the warmth of love and compassion,
and lying on my back under cherry trees.

Lou Marin was born and raised in the western hills of Maine, then spent 20 plus years wandering the country and world in the United States Air Force. He is a published poet and short story writer who now mostly writes faith based devotionals. 
He lives in Bethel, Maine. His five poetry anthologies, published by Publish America and entitled, “Awash With Words, Old Waves, New Beaches, Whisper of Waves, and Sea To Shining Sea, Version 1 and 2, are available in print and online.

Charging

Ever since they became erectus, and

Domesticated wheat, dogs and chickens

They have murdered almost all…
  Destroyed numerous…
  Poisoned every …

Altering the natural course of…
Rewriting the original codes of…

And even redrawing their own genetic maps…

As they keep moving everywhere
Albeit I have placed in loudest human voice
  My repeated charges

That are ignored with repeated ignorance
Now
For their next revolution to achieve:

Happiness
Immortality
Deity

Converting to Dataism

1/ The End of a Beginning

Given each organism as a biochemical algorithm
Your life is a programmed process proving
Your consciousness is actually far less
Valuable than a fucking Frankenstein’s AI

2/ The Beginning of an End

Through human-computer interface
My mind has become part of a robot
While the robot part of me

As data exchanges with my consciousness
Or flow between each other on their own
Where can I find my true self?

Rocky Calls

Far away. Everyone
Yells aloud: go and
They burst out of their own presence
Like the air from a broken balloon

While I get stuck here, lost
Among muted consonants

Yuan Changming currently edits Poetry Pacific with Allen Yuan in Vancouver; credits include ten Pushcart nominations, the Naji Naaman’s Literary Prize 2018, Best of the Best Canadian Poetry, BestNewPoemsOnline, Threepenny Review and 1,469 others worldwide.

Copper Town

A half green, half rock canyon
leads to topography planned
by architects of gravel, who took

what they wanted and left the rest
in stacks of slag
erosion turned
into a model of the badlands.
A squall

washes smoke to earth
from smelter chimneys and a sky
divided between light

and storm. Rains bed down
the terraced waste; wind
stirs and blows it
through a town set deep
in realigned hills. Connecting
copper to the clouds, a rainlit arc
beams out of the shattered ground.

David Chorlton was born in Austria, grew up in Manchester, England, and lived for several years in Vienna before moving to Phoenix in 1978. His newest collection is Bird on a Wire from Presa Press, and The Bitter Oleander Press published Shatter the Bell in my Ear, translations of poems by Austrian poet Christine Lavant. He will soon have a new book, Reading T. S. Eliot to a Bird, from Hoot ‘n Waddle, based in Phoenix.

Dancing

The girl across the street was learning ballet.
I wanted to, though I couldn’t see.
At the age of eleven,
with a private teacher young and energetic,
I learned to plie, sashay.

With a cassette tape she made
that contained music and her instructions,
I jumped, kicked, skipped across our Arizona kitchen floor.

We moved to Wyoming a year later.
With a different teacher, old and crabby,
I tried a class with other girls,
couldn't tell what they were doing,
dropped out, moved on.
Abbie Johnson Taylor is the author of a romance novel, two poetry collections, and a memoir and is working on another novel. Her work has appeared in The Weekly Avocet, Magnets and Ladders, and other publications. She lives in Sheridan, Wyoming. Please visit her website at http://www.abbiejohnsontaylor.com.

Disarming

My psychologist says (don’t you love when poets start like this?)
she suspects
I’ve been neutralizing my brain
for years. You see,
this particular organ has a way
of fucking up time and space.
More than we’d like to think,
it doesn’t store trauma right—
lets it stick in the hippocampus
when in actuality that shit
should have gone prefrontal cortex
deep years ago. Stress, after all,
feeds psychosis. That, she said
is why you need to write. I’ve been self-
medicating without the meds
my whole life. What luck,
(can you believe it?),
that all my drugs are free.

Place Settings

I’ve never belonged at any table,
but I pass
the salt and looked up

which fork to use
in an etiquette book.

All my family’s dead so nobody’s
left that knows there’s an Indian
girl with a sick head
who grew up poor and sometimes
likes to fuck women gone
and snuck into this little fête.
They don’t look too close

because I got no color
and haven’t been homeless
in years. Taught myself how to talk
right with sitcoms—these days,
I only slip up sometimes. Usually,
when the drinks kick in or in catching
the smell of a fellow interloper,
overlooked uninvited guest. And we smile,
tight lips coating teeth because a feast
is always better when it’s free

and a gorging
always sweeter for the starved.

**Dominican Man**

You want a Dominican man
to not be a Dominican man, act
like the culture’s rinsed clean
off soon as the white gate keepers say, *He did real good.*
You stack

that Dominican man up real high,
tangled parts and broken bits—
an effigy thirsty to burn. Take that DR and saw the big R in half
so it don’t roll no more. Trills are too hard
for some folks but *everyone*
respects a doctor. You say, *Dominican man,*
tell us how, but how

do you write & publish & sell
misogyny and machismo, forced kisses and grabbing asses
if you don’t live & breathe & be it, too? Dominican man,

he opened doors wide
like young thighs—
and everyone loves a gentleman.

*Jessica (Tyner) Mehta*, born and raised in Oregon and a member of the Cherokee Nation, is the author of thirteen books, including eight collections of poetry, four novels, and one nonfiction book. She has received several writer-in-residency posts around the world, including the Hosking Houses Trust with an appointment at The Shakespeare Birthplace (Stratford-Upon-Avon, UK), Paris Lit Up (Paris, France), the Women’s International Study Center (WISC) Acequia Madre House post (Santa Fe, NM), the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts (Nebraska City, NE), and a Writer in the Schools (WITS) residency at Literary Arts (Portland, OR).

**Doubt**
I fear a lot
I doubt a lot
I disbelieve a lot
shy I am, a lot

They sing
and dance
on
my mind,
whisper
and laugh
in my heart,

they are me.
I am them
I live them.
I act them.

How come they?
a certain lack
that seeks fulfilment
a certain incompleteness
that craves wholeness
a certain meaninglessness
that seeks meaningfulness
a certain withdrawal
that finds joy in being alone,
in me creates them.

Where find I any wholeness?
in the field of my doubts?
in the ambience of my fear?
in the labyrinth of my disbelief?
Or
in the joyful discomfort of my shyness?

In my fear is a fearlessness
in my doubt is doubtlessness
in my disbelief is a belief
in my shyness is a leisure

A fearlessness of what?
a doubtlessness of what?
a belief of what?
a leisure of what?

A fearless fear
a doubtless doubt
a belief that disbelieves
a leisure that enjoys solitude.

**Pristine Decay**

She is beauty
beauty is charm
charm is cross

Sizzling with
tempt
to incite
and excite

In her wake
flaunts
a drunken
pelican
flapping
its wings

Numbed to bare
the yolk of wild

Playing
the play
he inclines

Impulses dance
desires hum
excitement surge
sizzle to rash
brash and crash
into regrete’s
sea

On pleasure’s altar
in leisure's temple
adrift in moment
drumming
a dance of impulses
tuning
a rasping of instincts
offering therein
a destiny
eaten unripe.

Ifeanyichukwu Eze studied Philosophy at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. His works have appeared on TSSF Journal, Expound, Brittle Paper, Parousia, and a few other places. When he is not writing he plays about on Facebook.

Drawing Dragons

An old man learns to draw
he draws dragons
the way he remembers them.
the dragon looks so real
that the old man
lightly shades what must be
its breath
and waits for it to breathe.
When it does the old man
gets sucked up,
fears he will die forgotten.
The grandchild runs into the room
tries to pull grandpa’s feet
from the canvas.
Then the mother rushes in
to save the child.
The room is so hot
perhaps from the dragon’s breath
perhaps from everyone’s efforts.
In the end,
everyone is left
with a rush of impressions.
It grows into
two maybe four
variations of a myth.

**Alice White Leaves Me for the Last Time**

In bed, she twisted away from me
her fickle movie star persona,
always second billed to a woman
whose strawberry scent Alice claimed
to have smelled on my thin skin.
It was really Alice’s own scent.
She said “good-bye” and “go fuck yourself.”
The only thing that rolled from my mouth
was more night.

At the club, Alice could be anyone
a gift for transparency and denial.
I spot a girl by the bar,
gluttonous blue eyes
drifting though the human-fog,
the wounded smile
of a failed grifter
her haunted goods
left behind.
Kyle Hemmings is a retired health care worker. His work has been featured in *b]oink, The Airgonaut, Bones, Burning Word, Sonic Boom, and elsewhere. He loves street photography and obscure garage rock bands of the 60s.

Echo

To lose a laughing woman
Acquaints you with a silence
That memory cannot fill
Until... Until... Until...

To love a laughing woman
Who’s suddenly taken from you
That’s not the greatest loss (I know)
Although... Although... Although...

Laughter can be manufactured
Unlike happiness, that ghost
Staring across infinity’s field
Conceal... Conceal... Conceal...

To love a laughing woman
Then to lose a laughing woman...
Oh, she’d get tired of this song!
“Move on! Move on! Move on!”

Frank Diamond has 30 years of writing and editing experience for newspapers, magazines, and television, and is currently the managing editor of Managed Care Magazine. His poem “Labor Day” was nominated for a Pushcart Prize Award. He has poetry published in Philadelphia Stories, Fox Chase Review, Deltona Howl, Artifact Nouveau, Black Bottom Review, and Feile-Festa.
**Enchanting and Mysterious**

*Encantado*, enchanted, you are a mystery  
Pink dolphins living in tropical freshwater rivers,  
not in the ocean, and not just any rivers  
Whirling free, out in the Amazon River.  
Swimming low, in a submerged jungle,  
Hard to spot in dark-as-night waters.

*Encantado*, you are unique and fascinating  
Relying on echolocation to communicate and  
navigate in dark muddy river waters hunting for prey.  
Pink bendy bodies, turning and twisting, whirling  
Surfacing by the side of the canoe,  
SPLASH! A flashing glimpse of pink body,  
Leaving a wake and a trail of bubbles.

*Encantado*, you are a mysterious creature  
Thousands of kilometers from the ocean,  
how did you enter the Amazon basin?  
Was your journey through the Pacific Ocean,  
before the formation of the Andes?  
Or did you make your way into the mighty Amazon River  
from the Atlantic Ocean?

Wanderlust and love of travel have taken Katacha Díaz all over the world to gather  
material for her stories. She earned her BA and MPA from the University of Washington. She was a research associate at the University of California, Davis. Among the children’s books she has authored is *Badger at Sandy Ridge Road* for the Smithsonian Institution’s Backyard series. Her writing appears or is forthcoming with Anak Sastra, The Galway Review, Barely South Review, Westview, Visual Verse, The MacGuffin, Medical Literary Messenger, Cecile's Writers', Peacock Journal, Flash Frontier, New Mexico Review, Gravel, Foliate Oak, and elsewhere. She lives and writes up in her perch with a wide view of the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest.

**Eve of Earth Day**

Storm has rinsed the sky blue, just a few  
white clouds this morning. Down the creek trail,  
stenciled festival signs point the way
from meadow with its cedar-bark tepees
into the maze of canyon. Tomorrow, school kids
will learn about the abandoned gold mine
from Forty-niner days – hard labor with pick
and candle flame, ever deeper into earth.
Will they run their fingers along rough-hewn
walls that still exude a tactile charge
of the close dark, the fever for gold? I’ve felt
the pull of those adits, shafts, and tunnels –
wood-beams rotting with time. Bad air.
Leach of metallic remnants, neurotoxins.
Die-off of bullfrog tadpoles. Silence
on the ponds. Let the young learn their lessons
well. This morning has done its laundry,
rinsed its sky. I’ll walk under a canter of clouds.

Taylor Graham is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the Sierra Nevada,
and served as El Dorado County’s inaugural poet laureate (2016-2018). Besides,
The Pangolin Review, she has been included in Villanelles (Everyman’s Library)
and California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present (Santa Clara University).
Her latest book is Uplift (Cold River Press, 2016).

Gone

I want to go back to that time . . . / To the real./
To the magnitude of pain, of being that much alive.
— Jack Gilbert

Even before dawn broke over the mountains
I missed you, then and now, late and early,
when last here, here last, even more now
than ever, the late summer color you love
so terribly exquisite in the late breaking sun,
the fruit trees, especially peach and saggy plum,
al full-figured wonders, the ground flowers aglow,
as expected, but still absent from your touch,
as am I, flying solo, as it were, in your garden,
lost among hydrangeas and tulips and violets,
daylilies, one with lavender petals and a deep
red heart ready to die at a moment’s notice,
the speckled Blue Monarchs’ haunt, all Asia
waiting for you, your touch, the color, as I note,
all so exquisite in the late-day sunshine,
and you, and you, and you just gone.

**Tim Gordon** is widely published. *Everything Speaking Chinese* received the *SunStone P Poetry Prize* (AZ). Recognitions include NEA & NEH Fellowships and nominations for Pushcarts and *The NEA Western States’ Book Awards*. He divides professional and personal lives between Asia and the Inter-Mountain Desert Southwest.

**Heron and the Moon**

Soft is her breath as the full moon rises
smiling looking down at smooth calm waters
warm breezes whisper to the gentle ripples
the lonely heron stands stoically entranced
serenity lulls the heart and warms the spirit.
Sounds of the city, lights and people are null
seagulls and terns have found their roosts
fog horn speaks from the rocky outer banks
swells carry seaweed on a high running tide
stars strive to shine through the bright lunar glow
a ketch cruises by with her mizzenmast down.
Venus clams squirt water all along the beach
a ghostly chill suddenly wraps all around us
the wind changes to an on-shore sea breeze
the great blue heron extends her wings wide
captures the zephyr and rises into the night
reflected by the light of the beautiful full moon
off to the sand dunes to nap until the sunrise.
Ken Allan Dronsfield is a disabled veteran, poet and fabulist who resides in Seminole, Oklahoma. He is a three-time Pushcart Prize and thrice Best of the Net Nominee for 2016-2018. He has three poetry collections, The Cellaring, A Taint of Pity and Zephyr’s Whisper. Ken loves writing, thunderstorms, walking in the woods at night and spending time with his cats Willa and Yumpy.

I Live…

I survive the night on the darkness I drew from your fading day
I veil the darkness I drew with the murky clouds flapping away
I sense the clouds on my nerve amid a piece fleeting instant
I attempt to clasp on to a piece fleeting instant not too distant

I yearn to be taciturn amid the intensity of urban lifetime
I cease outrageous urban outpouring with fleeting time
I feel absent amid the opulence of societal countenance
I endure to be optimist, adhering to the very quintessence
   I strive to plunge in perpetual endurance
   I live to contest for amity in sustenance

I live… I do… I live…

Rajdeep Chowdhury is a trend-setting author, award-winning poet and an academician. He is the Curator and the Editor of 5 Poetry Collections, namely; Creative Corner: Crafting Emotion, Cologne of Heritage: Incredible Bengal, Spring: The Season of Love, Love at First Sight & Heart to Heart. His poems have been widely anthologized in more than 25 Anthologies, both in India and abroad. He is a recipient of innumerable prestigious awards and distinctions.

I Will Carry You

Today I will carry you in my fingertips and in
the orange sunrise and in the soles
of my arched feet.
I will wear you in the wisps of my frustrated

hair and the enamel

of my teeth and in the worn clothes you gifted softly.

Today I will imbibe the amber shadows
and salt spilled for you and I will find you in the honeysuckle
that I have not but know.
Tomorrow the echo of your voice will soothe my breast,

shake laughter,
cry memory, shimmer joy, meet rage, reveal nothing.

Amy Nocton lives in Storrs, Connecticut, with her family. She teaches Spanish at E.O. Smith High School and English composition for non-native speakers at the University of Connecticut. She has also taught high school Italian. Amy adores reading, cooking, traveling, and visiting with family and friends.

I Never Asked You to Listen
(after the painting by Wengechi Mutu)

I always knew you were listening
to the rhythm of my heart,
the river-rush of blood
through veins and arteries
and for the words
I could not speak or ever will.
If you must listen
without permission
without the hope of knowing me
as you imagined
you will learn how silence speaks
the truest feelings of the heart.

**Try Dismantling the Little Empire Inside of You**

*(After the painting by Wengechi Mutu)*

Inside of you
an empire grew
from molecules
and single cells
to complex organs
villages to city states
of every kind
and shape
with a single purpose
to stay alive.

Take one away
and the others fail—
such is the fate
of empires
great and small
inside of you and out
they come and go
in the blink of an eye
every one of them
as well as you.

**A Dragon Kiss Always Ends in Ashes**
* (after the painting by Wengechi Mutu) *

If you kiss a chicken
on its beak
the worst that can happen
is that it will cluck at you;
if a frog,
you might not get
the handsome prince you imagined
but a case of warts instead;
a chameleon, more likely,
will change from blue to green
a sign that it sees in you
a perfect mate;
but kiss a dragon on its lips
or on its tail
and watch its anger grow
its eyes get red
with malevolent intent
and feel it breathe ferocious fire
as you are turned to ash.
The moral, then:
never love another woman
more than she cares for you
and know how to kiss your wife
when you come home.
Neil Ellman is a poet from New Jersey who has published numerous poems in print and online journals, anthologies and chapbooks throughout the world. He has been nominated twice each for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net.

If It Knew Everything I’d Ask It

How many strands of salt and pepper
How many toenails, fingernails
How many skin cells
How many gigawatts of static
How many sweat
How many units of halitosis
How many drain fulls of toothpaste, hand soap, shaving cream
How many squandered seconds
How many meals rushed
How many coins walked by
How many blood in the sneeze, the shave, the mole, the gum
How many mucus
How many noise pollution
How many ghosts in our comfort zone, under our very thumbs, how many
How many addicts in our attic
How many hanging in how many scrapbooks
How many drowned in the Danube running
How many running still
How many hungry, how many pancakes, whip cream
How many industrialized-revolutionary-picks-itsel garlic to feed the world
How many weed to make it cool, how many cocaine to rise from the blood pooling on the kitchen floor
How many bondsmen, how many hail repair
How many freerange chihuahuas, how many trapped in a car
How many arteries clogging, toilets seizing, drains erupting
How many irons singeing, how many knees turned inside out and how white the fat wiggling about
How many clouds liquidating their entire inventory
How many Ry Cooders, how next, big Buddy Hollies
How many new by doing something old in a different accent
How many money in the world spent on feeling good
How many silhouettes of horses darting before the Californian flames
How many rabbits saved by white teens
How many hard drives to the bottom of the ocean
How many PowerPoints

Tim Staley writes and teaches in Southern New Mexico, USA.

In Praise of Broomsticks With Names

At the cubbyhole, the broom, just as it was left.
A weak knot of jute yarn holds together, that
which dies to war, to retort, to elope, to see the
world, to be popular, no, reclusive, corrects the
next, to bask under varied moonlit coconut leaf
dreams—all brought to knee, to a common noun,
to an autoimmune silence, obeisance, leaving just
cryptic lattices of protest in the courtyard mud, to
be rewritten by insignificant cat paws and rain
fingers. Who sums us up better than this?

Aditya Shankar is an Indian poet, flash fiction author, and translator. His poems, fiction, and translations have appeared or is forthcoming in the Ghost Parachute (U.S.), Unbroken Journal (U.S.), Egophobia (Romania), The Expanded Field (Netherlands), 300,000 Years of Us (France), Otoliths (Australia), The Queen Mob’s Teahouse (UK), Modern Poetry in Translation (UK), Armarolla (Czech, Cyprus), Kitaab (Singapore) and elsewhere. Books: After Seeing (2006), Party Poopers (2014), XXL (Dhauli Books, 2018). He lives in Bangalore, India.
Just A Boy

He is just a boy learning to be a man
He will make mistakes as he does not understand
Pick him up when he falls and ruffle his mane
He is just a boy learning to be a man
Someday he will look back proud of his father, tall he will stand
He is just a boy learning to be a man
He will make mistakes as he does not understand

Troy DeFrates lives in northern Wisconsin, U.S.A., and is an avid outdoorsman. He earned his M.B.A. from Western Illinois University where he found his love of poetry during his studies. He has been published in Spillwords and With The Coffee Magazine. A budding poet, he loves to share his art and attempts to get others to be inspired.

Ladies’ Compartment

I know nothing of you
except your smile
that I carry with me
through the rat infested station,
on a bone-weary train
filled with musty shadows,
already mocking
the shimmer in my eyes.

Passion’s Secret

You are my familiar -
child in hand,
pressed for time,
seeking nourishment for the day.
In search of the perfect recipe,
neck-deep in yesterday’s laundry,
eager reminder of tomorrow’s chores.

I engage in your rhythm,
the rhythm of my familiar
and together,
we avert the storm
for another day.

Though when you take respite
on the windowsill,
mesmerized by visions
blind to me,
you are no wife of mine.

When you are lost
in song
and my heart beats
to the lilt of your voice,
you are no wife of mine.

When you reveal
the way of the world,
speaking of trials
that almost crushed your spirit,
you are no wife of mine.
When we retire for the night
and you undress me with your eyes,
shameless
in your desires,
you are no wife of mine.

And how can you be?
For when you leave our bed
with swollen lips
and a waist latticed
by my fingerprints,
I know
you had succumbed
to a stranger too.

If Tomorrow Comes Another

If tomorrow comes another
in your wake
and I the nightmare
that has escaped
tangled sheets -

the ravens
at the windowsill
will mock your kindness
as dewy flowers nip
your fingertips

and the lemon tea
will leave the taste
of ashes
in your throat

and I will chase
your trail of spices
from the kitchen,
grab your jutting collar bone
and watch your form collapse

into dust mites
spreading across the cavern

we once called home.

*Munira Sayyid* writes like she almost means it. Her flash and poetry can be found in various online literary journals and magazines. If you come across her work, send some love to the editors of those publications.

**Lady in the Bottle**

*(For Ladies at the Prostitution Place)*

She’s like a crystal sculpture
Inside the transparent bottle
Her beauty shines at night
While world is sleeping soundly
Her crystallized tears
Mounted with her bitter life
To form jewelry for her neck
Her cries went unheard
Embedded in her heart of stone
No dream of freedom
Until one day
Someone comes and breaks the bottle
To set her free
To fly
To breathe
To feel
To live.

Deborah W. Setiyawati lives in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. Born February 2nd, 1978. she is a writer of Short Stories and Articles in National Daily and blogger of Kirana Kasyasih. She has had some collaborations of Poetry and Photography art with Carl Scharwath (photographer) who lives in Florida.

Letter to Love

Love,
On this night,
My heart hammers loudly
I have spent the day
Wondering about the games you play
I have bit my lips till they bled
And I have prayed
Till the Gods have willed me to stop!

Love,
Our connection is so deep,
The past birth is the central point of it all
Relaying is this one to the next one
And I,
Have had the butterflies in my heart
Morphed into moths,
Moths flying around nervously
Searching to light!

Why Love,
I wish I had come to this Earth with magic
At the tips of my fingers
With one touch
I would have caused you to fall
For me,
As I have fallen for you!

Love, someday,
I wish to hold your hand
And say to the Gods
To forgive me for having chosen to run
From you, merely out of emotional caprice
And to thank you
For having deemed it best
To follow me and to save me!
Why Love, when away from you
My heart keeps telling me to free the morphed moths!

Anoucheka Gangabissoon is a Primary School Educator in Mauritius. She writes poetry and short stories as hobby. She considers writing to be the meaning of her life as she has always been influenced by all the great writers and wishes to be, like them, immortalized in her words. Her works can be found in literary magazines like SETU, Different Truths, Dissident Voice, In Between Hangovers Press, WISH Press, Tuck’s Magazine, Blue Mountain Review, among others. Selected to be among the Most Influential Women in Mauritius for the 2017 category Arts and Culture, she has also been awarded the Promising Indian for the year 2017 for the same category.

Life Is Priorities

Of the numerous projects in a new house
there are birds inside your chimney.
Hear their nest of peeps meek & restless.
Know you needed to intervene,
but there are regurgitating pipes
that weird walk-in ant closet invasion,
an unexpected washing machine death
all the residue, morass of glass
the last hurricane & owner left
atop the bones of a porch reflecting
pine trees & baywater in its cedar beams.
It means only these other things come first.
Until a baby bird bursts from a chimney
full force into a plate glass window & dies.
Now, in midst of the rest of all this mess,
you must direct the funeral of
a small mottled black infant with wings
two things that bow forever backwards
into a plumed heart to bury.
It fits inside of your palm
& makes of you a murderer.
Kristin Garth is a poet from Pensacola and a sonnet stalker. Her sonnets have stalked magazines like Five: 2: One, Glass, Anti-Heroin Chic, Luna Luna, and many more. Her chapbook Pink Plastic House is available from Maverick Duck Press. Follow her on Twitter: @lolaandjolie, her column spidermirror.com/the-sonnetarium and her website kringarth.wordpress.com.

Losing Geography

Fog comes on, fog, as any novice knows,
being its own truth
over time &
over time
we move, gaining geography only
in our marrow, the residue of this flat,
that house with
the avenues, even water bodies between,
no matter how labeled or how often traveled,
belonging to most any time/place
when faces fill hearts, feed dreams, faces

being the real sign posts, guides
as in touchstone/lodestar,
guides despite the seldom, guides
despite frequency, as you are someone’s
landscape of cartwheels, somebody’s chosen
breath-lit ocean, & me, me too
perhaps I am your country.

Stephen Mead is an Outsider multi-media artist and writer. Since the 1990s he has been grateful to many editors for publishing his work in print zines and eventually online. He is also grateful to have managed to keep various day jobs for the Health Insurance.
Love in Pencil

He laughed like river light in a dance.

He believed...

Two people will always live two different journeys.

This should be accepted or one could exist with an unreal purpose like the scarf that warms the neck of a snowman.

In case of sharpness, draw life in un-ink where erases can reach with ease like a return button that brings living back to a blank page.

To hunt for forevermore-ness is like a search for seams on the side of a raindrop

Or, to feel for hard corners on an ocean wave. One cannot live with the safety of breast milk for a lifetime.

He was so clear and eloquent in cynicism—I thought

Beverly M. Collins is the author of the books, Mud in Magic and Quiet Observations. Her poems have appeared in California Quarterly, The Journal of Modern Poetry, Poetry Speaks! Year of Great Poems and Poets, The Altadena Review, The Hidden and the Devine Female Voices in Ireland and many other publications. She was nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2015 for her work that appears in Rubicon: Words and Art Inspired by Oscar Wilde’s De Profundis.

Luck Of The Draw

The man at the liquor store looked at me as I placed four half gallon jugs upon the counter.

“You know whiskey is a expensive habit ”.
He said to me looking over his glasses in his usual snarky tone.

“So are women and least this one kills you honestly my friend”.

I replied.

He didn’t say a thing he knew I was beyond the simple conversation.

And besides if I wanted to hear a assholes opinion I would fart.

The man that worked the liquor store had been sober five years.

Went home to four empty walls just as I.

except I would have a reason for being so damn miserable when the following day I awoke.

I will never understand the sober man’s point of view.
And he can never grasp mine.

The only difference between us is he was on the other side of the coin.

I got a buzz and he just watched reruns till he passed out to face another day.

I believe I had won this battle for now.

Cheers.

**People Are Different Writers Are Worse**
We sat at the bar and the conversation just fell into place.

We spoke about our jobs all the normal kill the time and hopefully catch a buzz bullshit.

“Has your writing ever got you laid”? 

I didn’t bat an eye with my reply.

“Three times, the first lasted nine years, the last was eight”.

“What about the one in the middle”.

I lit a smoke handed my friend of the moment one as well and lit it for her.

“Well the third was a editor”.

She looked at me puzzled.

“So I give, What does that mean”?

“Well she took months to except me, Fucked me once then just as soon forgot me”.

“Was it any good”?

“Well any sex beats no sex my dear”.

I ordered us two more and we kept joking. The night moved well.
And soon she went home with me.
Things looked up.

She stayed the night.

And stole a book of mine.

I never heard from her again.
Until I read about our encounter in some oddly named ezine.

Apparently she was a critic.

I would fill you in on the details but needless to say it wasn’t a rave review.

**A Romance Fit For The Slaughterhouse**

We were the worst kind of storm.
A tornado that destroyed everything within its path.

Broken people often take comfort in their vices and we sought shelter within the madness that our relationship was.

In our passion we lost sight till we just eventually lost one another.
Skip forward and now we exist without what once we claimed we could never live without.

It’s funny the lies we allow ourselves to believe.

With time being the marker and a sunset’s watercolor portrait.
It seems we burnt out long before our dreams could find legs.
Nothing stands forever .

Let alone the brilliance that was our chaos.
And this is but another life’s chapters close.

Whatever it was is certainly dead now.

**John Patrick Robbins** is the editor of *The Rye Whiskey Review* and the author of *A Cold Beer Beats A Warm Heart* published by Alien Buddha Press. His work has appeared in *Angry Old Man Magazine, Horror Sleaze Trash, Red Fez, Blue Pepper* and *In between Hangovers* namely. His work is always unfiltered.

**Melanoma**

After the dermatologist gouged my numbed skin for the biopsy,
scooping out the rough brown patch on my thigh
the family doctor’d seen at my check-up
a couple of weeks before –
a chocolate smudge I’d taken to be a birthmark –
told me the lab results would come back
in about a week,
I asked him what
the worst-case scenario was.

The doctor looked at a loss for words,
which I tried to interpret with a muttered,
“Death, I suppose,” making a face,
doing my best to be fatalistic,
all along sure it was nothing.

“You mean you don’t want to know the best-case scenario?” he smiled.

“Well, then it’s ‘nothing,’” I shrugged.

“Or else it’s something,” he nodded.
“We’ll know in a week.”

Charles Rammelkamp is Prose Editor for BrickHouse Books in Baltimore, where he lives, and Reviews Editor for Adirondack Review. His most recent books include American Zeitgeist(Apprentice House) and a chapbook, Jack Tar’s Lady Parts (Main Street Rag Press). Another poetry chapbook, Me and Sal Paradise, is forthcoming from FutureCycle Press.

Memories of Childhood Fireworks

Even as a seven-year old at 10:42 p.m.,
Way past the bedtime hour,
I never got excited about fireworks.

Summer was supposed to be a time
For downhome fun in the backyard; but I hated summer nights,
As you couldn’t play football or freeze tag in the dark.

The noise felt anticlimactic; I preferred sparklers.
After banging the bass and drums like we were at a front-row metal concert,
Was this it? Was this all? My conscious was crushed for what?

Even with all the vapors of funkadelic, patriotic colors
Slow cooking in the July-sky oven,
I simply wasn’t thrilled with fireworks like the rest.

Maybe it was because I felt
That with fireworks, we had guns drawn on heaven’s door,
And the barrage to break down the gates was just ordered.

Matthew Johnson is a poet and an irrational fan of the New York Giants. He is a graduate student in North Carolina. He is a former sports journalist who once wrote for the USA Today College. His poetry has appeared in The Corvus Review, The Roanoke Review, Plum Tree Tavern, Jerry Jazz Musician, and elsewhere. His debut
collection is scheduled to be released June 2019 by Kelsay Books. You can find him on Twitter at: https://twitter.com/Matt_Johnson_D.

Message Across Space and Time

mud-stained, bruise-faced, ego-strangled
on the way to school, while there, and
chased home to more of the same

while almost everyone escapes blackness
in one place or the other, you suffer
everywhere, all the time

your parents wish you didn’t exist
laughing at your fears
silencing your dreams

classmates throw rock-encased snowballs
you wonder how a child can
survive in a unforgiving world

voices tell you don’t belong
crushing you before you’re fully formed
but you find a way to stay strong

please believe it gets better little one
keep your head down, arms tucked in
so you don’t get pulled down the wrong path

continue walking, run if you must
you will grow old, though you think
life won’t see the age of ten

it’s there, just over the bridge
a step over adulthood
hold on a little longer

there are no promises of rainbows
riches or even happiness
just possibilities

Yong Takahashi won the Chattahoochee Valley Writers National Short Story Contest and the Writer’s Digest’s Write It Your Way Contest. She was a finalist in The Restless Books Prize for New Immigrant Writing, Southern Fried Karma Novel Contest, Gemini Magazine Short Story Contest, and Georgia Writers Association Flash Fiction Contest. Some of her works appear in Cactus Heart, Crab Fat Magazine, Flash Fiction Magazine, Gemini Magazine, Meat For Tea, and Twisted Vines.

My Account

The day it ended was long before
it actually ended. A random thought
of course or off-course. Or off what
I thought we both thought was our course.
Seemingly out of the blue but more like
out of the grey, yellowy muck that bubbles
away, sulphuric on Aeolian island of Volcano.
Nobody outside my body would've seen
the scene as it then chemically altered.
Not her. Not me.

Half Awake
Special gifts are for the (un)lucky few.
My few music lessons only served
to confirm I was a generalist. His parents
weren't musical so call his gift a natural
wonder or thank a god if you like.
He could make instruments speak true
and truth makes the world grand.

He also fell under Jehovah's spell so
violin now waits – in case – piano keys
stand mute in darkness while he spends
his time tap-tapping on doors and repeating
refrains of a long-gone, talented philosopher
who, during his own brief time, gave
his special gift everything he had.

Allan Lake has lived in Vancouver, Cape Breton Island, Ibiza/Spain, Tasmania,
W.Australia, and now calls Melbourne home and retreats to Sicily often. He has

My dream

I wish not to be young again,
for that is a fool’s request.
I only ask to live comfortably-
that physical anguish be minimal-
that the winds of change
should be gradual,
not devastating,
and when my time shall end-
let it be in peaceful sleep.

That, today, is my dream.

Edgar Davis, 59, is a retiree who resides with his career-driven wife in Boise ID with works published or set to be published with various online literary journals and blogs both in the US and in the UK.

New Moon

We can’t follow the new moon.
It hangs in the smudged sky
cleared of clouds.
Already setting, the moon
shows up on our way home.
It’s been hidden all day
while we’ve been watching
thunderclouds pile up on the horizon,
the storm that never happened here.
The new moon is leaving us
like the airplane taking off
for Chicago or California,
maybe even Japan.

Venus lingers for a time,
standing in for the stars
we cannot see.

November Storms

Thor is smashing
his hammer tonight.
spectacular light & sound
the rain falling in torrents.

Lured outside
I peeled off my clothing
cooled and cleansed in no time
huge rain drops
skin & hair drenched
looked to the sky
arms extended

Air smells clean but wild
begins a heavy breeze
thunder & lightning ovation
rain pelts down
Perhaps I will unclothe again

Dancing turbulence of palm fronds
shiny & fresh their greenness
wind joined the fray

Geckos around seconds ago
have disappeared
with the exception of one
now he too has gone

Born in Adelaide, South Australia, Jenn Thorley has always been drawn to all forms of the arts thanks to her creative parents. She has always dreamt of being “published”; perhaps now is the chance. She currently lives in North Queensland Australia.

Open-mindedness
How the eucalyptus sway!

They remind me

of when I was a child.

I looked at them with amazement

and every time

I asked how they managed

not to blow away

when the wind

decided to howl

and every time

they answered me

that they could touch the ground

with their foliage

and the more rigid you are

the weaker you must be.

Gianfranco Aurilio was born in Rome. After graduating from a Humanities-centered secondary school, he got his Law degree from the University of Rome La Sapienza. He has published eleven collections of poems and drawings. His poetry has been published in several national and international anthologies.

Overlooking Paddle Boats

When I am very old

I will remember a young man

With a jacket tied ’round his waist,

Lying next to me on a hillside

Overlooking paddle boats.

And the breeze that couldn’t ruffle

his thick black hair
Will ruffle through my mind
As I recall the excitement of
Love’s first kisses,
Along with the tune of a distant carousel
Still loving him, though his hair
be snowy white.

_Shelly Sitzer_ has been published in several poetry anthologies. She loves poems of nostalgia and romance and is a retired vision therapist living in beautiful central Virginia where she enjoys gardening, painting and singing.

**Part 15: Objectified**

When I think
Of
Man
I think of
Husband best ~
Why?
He's my friend.
My saving Grace
A gift from the Lord Above!
Thank You Lord
For my Man
He is truly
Amazing ~

**Part 14: Objectified**

When you think
Of
Man ~
What do you
Know?
I know so many things...
But I choose!
I choose to
Focus on
Man’s
Potential for beauty ~

Part 8: Objectified

When you think
Of
Woman
Are you ~
Terrified?
When you think
Of
Woman
Try to
Be
Mystified...
When you
Are
Woman
Stay ~
Stay soft

Mary McWilliams, 51, married, with two awesome kids, is a domestic engineer.
Plastic Morning

I stumble to the bathroom, unseeing unthinking
Toothpaste onto a plastic brush from a plastic tube
Soap, ah yes, it is wrapped in shiny paper
But my floss is housed in a sanitized plastic cube

Refreshing water clears my weary eyes
I look around the room at all that would be mine
Of lotions, creams and ointments standing there
An everlasting and unruly plastic line

Downstairs my coffee will revive
A jar wrapped in plastic film with plastic top
Juice in plastic bottle, fruit in plastic carton
Plastic yoghurt, plastic bars where will it stop?

The postman knocks, delivering a parcel
A plastic bag torn open in my haste
Reveals a shirt in plastic film with plastic clips
A plastic home for plastic waste

For now the avalanche is halted
I don my clothes of finest silk and cotton
And for an hour the plastic mountain rolls
Not here, not now, but not forgotten

Michael Madden has worked for many years in the IT industry, as a result of which he has been quoted in publications as prestigious as the New York Times. In 2017, he created Elvis Under The Covers, exploring the legacy of Elvis Presley through the
artists who have recorded his most often covered original songs. Originally from Sale in Cheshire, Michael now lives with his wife Sally in the more peaceful surroundings of Whaley Bridge, in the Peak District.

**Profession**

On those mailings
that political parties,
candidates, and good causes
that aren’t tax deductible
send me, there’s always a blank
to fill in for, “Profession,”

the cause or candidate
informing me they must
make “a good faith effort”
to find out this information
for the federal government.

I’ve grown tired of writing
“Retired,” or “Retired Teacher,”
both sound more mundane
than sorting the dried dinner dishes.

So I’ll write, “Clown,”
“Lion Tamer,” “Knife Thrower,”

though as a kid, I never had a yen
to join the circus, nor do I now:
just an imp the years haven’t
filed down into a man who always
follows instructions.

And what are they going
to do to me: mail back
my donation, send agents
in wraparound shades,
to force me into
an overcrowded Volkswagen?

Robert Cooperman's latest collection, Draft Board Blues, was named one of ten
great reads for 2017 by Westword Magazine. Forthcoming from Main Street Rag
Publishing Co. is That Summer and from Liquid Light Press, Saved by the Dead.
Robert's work has appeared in the Sewanee Review namely.

re·al·i·ty

What is reality
That we breathe air
That we live and die
Love is fleeting
Friends will lie
What is reality
Are we truly here?
Or a moment in time
Our deepest fear
Just what is, reality
A ring on a hand?
No repercussions
Or that we, be damned.

Antony King is a writer/poet from Eastern Kentucky. Antony spent his formal years
in Cleveland Ohio where he underwent private instruction in The Arts, Music, and
Literature. His love of the classics guided him to poetry and fueled his passion for writing. After art school, Antony spent 23 years in the world of advertising, and design. He began honing his skills both as a writer, and an artist. Antony has been very fortunate to have his work published in several literature journals.

Salomé and the Baptist

The history of Salomé and John the Baptist
Is one of the best, and yet, the dirtiest!
Every now and then, it undergoes resurrection
And in each time, Salomé seeks the hermit’s destruction.
Hers is a dance of deliberate temptation
That she mantles with airs of infatuation.
‘Salomé and the Baptist’ is a story of fear and awe,
If you don’t believe me, let’s go!
Here’s Salomé wickedly hooks the bait
In form of a light convincing debate.
‘I’m determined and will decoy
That innocent and shy boy.
‘My last dance will ever be the best
Which repercussions would rock the east and the west.’
‘His head will be soon on the silver tray;
In no time, the boy would be my prey.’
She sneaked to poor John’s cell
Willing to convert his peace to hell;
Not minding that he was praying to God.
‘It’ll comfort me to bathe in his blood.’
The end of the story is known to everyone
But wait! The new version isn’t yet done.
However, there would remain forever a question:
Has Salomé got her desired satisfaction?
Naeema Abdelgawad, an ex-Fulbrighter assistant professor, interpreter and translator, is a fiction and non-fiction writer, critic and published scholar in the premise of cross cultural, ethnic and interdisciplinary studies as well as translation theory.

Sandy Will Be Back

(Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey, USA in 2012)

Sandy will be back
She will take her due
It is still a shock
Sandy will be back
So much to unpack
Climate change is true
Sandy will be back

Yevgeniya Przhebelskaya is a founder and facilitator of Bergen Poetry Workshop, and an Administrative Assistant at Leonia United Methodist Church. She earned a Master’s in Education from Hunter College, CUNY and Bachelors in Comparative Literature and Creative Writing from CUNY BA Program. Her poems have been published in Ancient Paths, Anti-Heroin Chick, A Blind Man’s Rainbow and Literary Yard, Time of Singing and The Penwood Review.

Santiago Climes

Many days, dull smog
obscures the skyscrapers &
hills of Santiago

But today it is
a molasses fog seeping
down the avenues
When a rain bathes the sere concrete, washing away acrid air, on the near eastern horizon rise the snow-blanketed Andes

*Lorraine Caputo* is a documentary poet, translator and travel writer. Her works appear in over 100 journals in Canada, the US, Latin America, Europe, Asia, Australia and Africa. She has also authored a dozen travel guidebooks. Follow her impressive travels at: www.facebook.com/lorrainecaputo.wanderer.

**Sea Dance**

A rough evening, sharp needles of rain.
I skitter the slope slicing cliffs through greenery, 
no - blackery –
for dusk is falling fast.

Clack clack
down ragged steps past craggy fissures in eroding chalk, 
past crumbling frontages of long-gone hotels, 
past blocked-off steps to coffins of old seaside cafés where white curl-crested spectres race for land.

At night, always at night... one imagines…
but that’s the pull. A sea, gathering itself, to drag the very cliffs into its throat. My insides flutter and spray ice-blocks my face.

Ahead, the coastline curves away to confront the demon-frenzy. I forget to fear encroaching darkness as the void spills from my head. I scurry, shoulders hunched, swift, tiny steps. Another swell – attack, retreat, and I run, run, run.

Blood throbs through my veins. I calculate, dodge, jump, stop, wait, dash, heartbeats out-pounding the crashing, killing surge.

The sea resents my escape, claims me. Heart bursting, I strain ever upwards and away. An avenging arm stretches and reaches, craftily sneaks up from behind, drenching me from hips to feet, taking my breath.
I make a soggy stain
on the seat
of the car.

**Patterns**

The sea is drowning the hungry
red-dragon sun, clinging to day
till its last breath glows pink.

A gentle wash of waves reaches
for shore, silver-tipped,
wedgewood green.

Bladder wrack glistens, hides
strange secrets in the undertow,
wet-licks from a demon’s tongue.

A car backfires on the clifftop road -
as a single organism, grey sandpipers rise,
a hundred Vs pattern the sky like

dropped
stitches.

**The Lie**

I catch myself peeling back frayed edges,
inhaling the glistening stink of old scars.
The intent behind the lie cuts deeper than the naked lie.

**Spin**

Stop –
here’s a bandwagon! – everyone, jump on,
let’s make comparisons of misery, the
Modern Status Symbol.

Keep your black cat indoors for mine is
loose, insidious, its shadows stretch out far,
its claws cleaving, carving,
twisting and tunnelling — so that
suddenly is a black hole in my mind and I know
that’s where my love has gone?

_Janet Cameron_ has an MA in Modern Poetry and has been published in Acumen, Equinox, Logos (Open University) Connections, Cellar Arts and other quality lit mags. Mostly she has earned her living writing on history and philosophy as well as teaching and writing university courses, but now retired she wants to devote herself to her first love - to be as good a poet as she can. She is shortly returning to tutoring in writing poetry and loves reading her work at festivals and events.

**Sleepless Nights**

Many nights I lie in bed unable to fall asleep,
And I start thinking about you and the life you led.
You lived for others, and not for yourself.
When I’m under the blankets, my eyes begin to tear;
I let them bury into my pillow, and I cry in silence.
I ask myself: What happened to me?
Then I remember that it also happened to you,
And I feel sad for both of us;
I realize almost nobody took care of you,
And I had people around me at all times.
I recall your limp left side, just like mine,
And how you never went to the doctor,
And you recovered almost completely, just like me.
And you forged ahead like a warrior, for your children
Just like I did for my only daughter,
And we both raised our children alone.
I don’t know if you ever realized your dreams,
And I never knew what they were.
I, on the other hand, ended up doing better
And more than I or anybody else expected;
I became a writer, I’m sure you’d be proud of.
You deserved to be happier and better loved and respected.
I hope you can see from above the kind of person
I turned out to be, and know I didn’t disappoint you.
Rest in Power, dear mom.

Martina Gallegos began writing after surviving a massive hemorrhagic stroke and other life-threatening health issues; she became a school and hospital volunteer after hospitalization, resumed and completed a Master’s Degree, and began publishing during her recovery. Her works have appeared in: Hometown Pasadena, Spirit Fire Review, Altadena Poetry Anthology, Poets Responding, Central Coast Poetry Shows, Poetry Super Highway, Lummox, and others. She lives in Oxnard, CA. She recently published Home in a Bucket and Ode to Mother Nature, available on Amazon.

Song for the rill

Sitting by the side of the rill
Flowing through the valley green
Being part of a wonderful scene
How with songs of life me fills

And I think I must have been
Blessed by the Lord above
For who could have so been
Sensed the passion of Love

Sitting by the side of the rill
How draped me with sublimity
How I get decked by words
And the infallible mirth of His Beauty

**On breaking of statues**

Dynasties will pass
They always do
And breaking of nations
Will just continue,

From one regime to another
We will just go
And breaking of statues
Our TVs will show,

You will wear a black badge
I will say it has been right
You will stand there with slogans smudged
I will embrace the night,

Then we will walk past
Our broken country with hate
You will raise your sword
I will think of bullets,

Then one day on ruined broken earth
We will crawl like men bereft of all
You will think of Jean Paul Sartre
And I would think of how we did fall,

You will then try to mumble and sing
A song of love and brotherhood
I will also my self towards you bring
And over our acts with solemn face brood,

By then our country will turn into desert
Without our huts, homes and settlements,
We will just lie on sands, taken apart
By our own acts of pure nonsense.

Born in 1977 to an immigrant family, Moinak Dutta has been writing poems and stories from his school days. A postgraduate in English. He works as an English teacher. His debut work Pestilence was published in 2009.

Summer Ghazal

My loss of you crept up unexpectedly, like a huge wave knocking feet out from under,
Stuffing nostrils with sand; salt water choking screaming throat, insuring that I feel loss.

Skin chafed from wringing hands. Sallow regret rivets marking face from salty tears.
Why surprise with your silent goodbye? Oh, to shed this old skin and peel loss!
Enter God’s house, the place of comfort and solace. Prostrate, humble, searching
All of us together, broken souls and healers one and all. Praying we kneel loss.

Scabs start to form. Skin shows hints of burgeoning rosy glow. It becomes easier to
breathe deeply without gasping for air. Universe screams it is possible to heal loss.

At the beach again, the seagulls sing, Luanne, shape up, get moving, get over
yourself! Make good use of your limbs, your voice, your heart. Losing LIFE is the
only real loss!

**Luanne Pumo Jacoia**, CSSW, began her career in child protective services, and
currently facilitates parenting workshops. She and her husband are parents of two;
hands-on grandparents of three. Her poems often reflect the difficult and exhilarating
experiences that happen within families as they grow. Luanne began submitting
poetry at 70.

**teetering**

i walk in narrowed steps these days
no more free longlegged stride
the edge of unreality is far too close
one slip
one faulty foot
and over i go
knowing perfectly well there’s no one
to pull me back from that long fall
i teeter on the brink most every day
like sisyphus shoving a huge rock
in front of me all the while
i keep my eyes trained on the path
the straight and narrow like my steps
afraid to lift my eyes to see the sun
sure i’m crazy

and the proof is hobbled though i am

i still want to live

A Connecticut writer/digital artist, RC deWinter has been anthologized in New York City Haiku, a collection published by the New York Times, and in Uno: A Poetry Anthology. Her poetry has also appeared in print in 2River View, Pink Panther Magazine and Another Sun namely. Her art has been published both in print and online and also used as set décor on ABC-TV’s Desperate Housewives.

Tell Them That I Love Her

Tell them that
I love her
and I always
will

tell them I
love her
and dreams
fall from
her skies

tell them
I love her
walking out
to see
what the reason
is for living
carrying on
being me.
**Randal Rogers**, 56, is the editor of the online and quarterly hardcopy, *The Beatnik Cowboy*. A former international Sociology professor he now teaches at Oglala Lakota College, the Rapid City, South Dakota, branch. He is also a taxi driver. His book of poems, *Cambodian Poems* is available at the local Mitzies Bookstore.

**The Beautiful Ones Not Yet Born**

*If we were made in his image, then call us by our names*

*Most intellects do not believe in God, but they fear us just the same.*—

_Erykah Badu, excerpt from On & On_

With passion forged upon
Pain, time is the terrain
Of a stubbornly persistent

Technicolor cosmos that speaks
In the tumultuous tongue
Of a mutating Earth under fire

Of myriad blinks of an eye
Manifest in a maelstrom of motley
Mayhem; & love, the heirloom
Of our souls sown together, in spite
Of the media free for all

With its defamations of character
Scrawled on the wall, as we
Bear the wait of dreams to come

Embracing the face of faith
With grace to loosen the noose of angst
That has held us hostage
To a history scraped free of its old
Price, enthralled in the legacy
Of ancestral sacrifice -- by DNA
We are locked into the cipher
Exhumed from the speechless dead
For the beautiful ones not yet born.

Michael David Saunders Hall is a true imagineer of pyrotechnic poetics. He believes when you write how you feel, all dimensions of yourself come to light and cannot help but be exposed as genuinely real. His poetry has appeared in AIM, Black Thought, Little America and and Xavier Review namely.

the courtship of danae

he hands her a bouquet of black dreams
before watching her fall

asleep on the couch,
her eyes parturient with slumber.

she cannot recall
if it was a green pill or a yellow one,

if he hauled her to into the room
or is she meandered there herself

in a stupor of dizzying wakefulness.
she sees the chalice filled with wine

red not like the aegean, but a relic
of menstruation. She cannot stomach
the five fingered hand with its six rings,
the proud bearing of his heavy chest,
she could not reconcile her ideal
of that god of gods with his grey beard
and crooked smile; his hand a mallet,
his lips lacking the thunder of legend.

Later writers will say he rained upon her
in a flurry of gold, but her memory only holds
the quick finish and the smell of mold.

Kenneth West is a writer from Monroe, Louisiana. He can be found on Twitter @gildedchalice.

The Dark Night

I rode into battle on a trusty
steed,
sword held high to the sky,
to perform a deadly
deed,
to fight, the dark night.

I poked a mighty
foe.
Thrashing my feeble flesh,
slashing my bones from head
to toe.

The only choice on
the cards
was to seek counsel, from
Celtic Bards,
before a dignified surrender.

**Street Life**

The bags under his eyes,
drooped heavy, weighed
down by hungry cold skies
and early morning fights,
beaten black and blue
by street life.
Dark circles shaded cracked
eyelids and blistered skin,
on a once handsome face.
Now, twisted, sallow, thin.
A guttural voice begged
for change.
With each donated coin,
it was clear, his life
would remain the same,
as the day before,
and a thousand more.

*Seán Maguire*, 58, has been writing for 30 years. He grew up in Belfast in Northern Ireland before moving to Newry, County Down in the mid-1970s. He has a collection
of poems called *Harvest Soul* published by Sessyu Press in 1998 and various self-published ones. He is currently working on a new poetry collection and a compilation of short stories.

**The Salesman**

Elderly Navajo
sells belt buckles
alongside quiet road
laced with shifting red sand.
Midday sun
bouncing blindingly off
polished silver
inlaid with turquoise.

Old man is deep brown,
wrinkled, thin as bailing wire.
Dusty felt hat
with beaded band
maintaining
position on gray head
despite warm breeze;
long thin pony-tail
flicking across his back
like a horse’s tail swatting flies.

Aged Navajo
and his belt buckles
pass time
within a timeless landscape.
Tourists in fast cars
occasionally make
sudden cloudy halt,
tires sliding upon dirt;
interrupting
eternal
high desert silence.

_Torie Cooper_ is an Australian-American poet whose work has appeared in _The Avocet and The Stray Branch_. She is the author of two volumes of poetry - _Nature: A Collection of Poems_ and _Laying Nana Down: Poems of Caregiving and Loss._

**The shadow dance**

On a sultry night, when I stared blankly around,

My eyes drifted like a balloon until

They gently cast a spell on a wall -

A yellow buttress of a brackish life,
The stage of stories, the stage of end!

It was here a pluralistic world was born,

From a black river in a bevy of shapes,

Flowing through the figurines of time,

Beautiful idols or dancing puppets?

Revolving like the Earth, eclipsed by memories.

Their blood were thoughts transfused

Through my copious mind -

A camaraderie with the erudite,

Company may sometimes be fleshless,

That which imbibes light, lies poisoned in dark,

A shindig of a few shells, danced through

The squalls of reminiscences, the mind henpecked,
Hit the beachhead from where it saw no egress.
The black river flowed as a buccaneer,
Feeding on the detritus of images,
Both worlds were galled, slaking wishes
Of figures and mind in the fray,
Tore down by the river and earth on its banks,
Swilling the shapes to free the mind of troubling thieves,
And their perfidies, vanishing that night,
A planet of shadows howled within me!

Richa Sharma is an Indian national residing near New Delhi, India. She loves reading and writing poetry in her leisure time. Her first short story ‘Helping Hand’ was published by Reader’s Digest India in 2016 as a part of their cover story ‘Better Together’. Her work can be widely found on social media.

The Waterfall

At the waterfall the wind ruffles
the hair of water, shaking off drops
like flakes of dandruff from the head
of a crevice top. How unkempt?
It befits the rugged terrain though,
where sprays of Dionysiac thoughts
get frozen in the cold lake
by the hill like thawing frost.
And under a violet sky
with the air of smoke-like clouds
there flutters with a greenish tinge
purple faith of a violent heart.

Amit Shankar Saha is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Seacom Skills University. He is also a short story writer and a poet. His articles, stories and poems have appeared in newspapers, magazines, journals and books nationally and
internationally like Ann Arbor Review, Harbinger Asylum, Tuck Magazine and I am Not a Silent Poet namely. He has won the Poiesis Award for Excellence in Literature (2015) and Wordweavers Prize (Poetry-2011, Short Story-2014) amongst other awards. He has co-edited a collection of short stories titled Dynami Zois: Life Force and authored a collection of poems titled Balconies of Time.

To Be

I should grow a beard
    to look like a poet.
I should sport a moustache
    to be seen as a poet.

I should wear philosophy
like a turtleneck
    to seem to be a poet.

I should be as serious
as the wailing wall
    to feel like a poet.

I should drink more wine
and speak darkly
about things that don’t matter
    to be known as a poet.

Dennis Herrell writes with diversity and lives in Houston, Texas, possibly the most diverse city in the United States. He finds his poems by keeping his eyes and ears open and his mouth shut. Mostly. But this time, he would like to announce the publication of his 4th poetry book, Peering Around the Corner.

Tonight
tonight’s
crescent moon
- more than just a comma

*The poems of Roberta Beach Jacobson have been published in The Independent Review, Haiku Headlines, The Christian Science Monitor, Haiku Journal, Japanophile, and Bear Creek Haiku.*

**Uncle Lucifer**

Dear lady, I confirm it is indeed me
hiding in the unbidden shadows
of your child’s bedroom.
He tells you I am here, and you chide him for silliness
as you tuck him in – “there’s no such thing…”
choosing not to see me as you pass.
But I pour a tincture in your vulnerable ear:
“Cowboy Gun”…

And on this special morning – he unwraps it;
a silver-barrelled, pony-handled six-shooter: Such fun;
such untrammeled joy in his blazing eyes,
and off he scoots to shoot-up everything;
vases, flowerheads, you – the sun,
off along the garden path
for a summary execution of the neighbour’s cat,
where I wait in the shade with ancient advice:
“The world is yours, my wild and beautiful dark-eyed boy”.

*John Hawkhead is a widely published poet and illustrator. His book of haiku Small Shadows is available from Alba Publishing at http://www.albapublishing.com/*
Winter’s Cold Thumb

you were the black
beyond the blue song
of night,
the whisper that stars
hid behind;
the moon's mortal enemy
destroyer of hearts and bringer of nightmares—
i did not know enough to believe
the truth of you
because starving hearts when they are hungry
can feed off scraps and lies
i loved you with all of me,
but you only carved into me with your tongue
of lust;
an insincere compliment to my depths—
your shallows were empty and broken
as the dreams you abandoned
when you forged your identity in the lyric
of your pain,
and i know hurting people can hurt people;
but that's no excuse for how you wounded me
leaving me for dead
with words so cold and cutting they could have
been mistaken for winter's cold thumb.

Linda M. Crate's poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has five published chapbooks A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn (Fowlpox Press - June 2013), Less Than A Man (The Camel Saloon - January 2014), If Tomorrow Never Comes (Scars Publications, August 2016), My Wings Were Made to Fly (Flutter Press, September 2017), and splintered with terror (Scars Publications, January 2018), and one micro-chapbook Heaven Instead (Origami Poems Project, May 2018). She is also the author of the novel Phoenix Tears (Czykmate Books, June 2018).

Would it?
If I smoke crayons,
Would the smoke fill my lungs with dulcet colours,
Would the smoke kill the monsters within me,
Would it engulf the grief?

*Rishika Reddy* loves reading. *She writes poetry in the middle of boring classes and loves going to aesthetic cafes to gossip with her friends.*