

The trail of ants

On my way I am...
To serve to survival.
Empty handed... empty minded,
Walking the path that closes my eye.

A mission I have...
To serve my survival.
No questions... nor thoughts,
Just instincts moving my feet.

My objectives are simple,
To serve for survival.
Without motive or ambition,
My objective is my purpose.

To survive, I have no other choice, but to serve.
A reality better kept as an illusion.
As my survival never mattered,
As much as my own servitude.

Adam Tarawneh is an American Arab. Born and raised in USA, he travelled to Jordan in 1999, the country of his origins. He majored in English Literature for his bachelors degree, and after he graduated, he moved to work in the Gulf as an English teacher for several years, until he was able to pursue his dreams and continue my academic career.

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It Was Just a Hand

It was just a hand
with an organ player's fingers
gripping mine, the way I'd squeezed yours,
at the edge of the passenger seat where I squirmed
behind traitorous transparent windows
willing to allow scowls at stoplights
from drivers who deemed it immoral or sinful
or ridiculous or dirty or sick.
It was just a hand that'd doled out three dollars for
my double-chocolate-chip shake as chilly as my
coursing corpuscles while I coveted the invisibility of the
Cheshire Cat and sat sipping opposite
cappuccino-coloured calf eyes guarded by a walnut-shaped nose and
plump, spittle-splattered lips that
grinned under dim lights at Medici just as I'd smiled at
you quaffing your diet cola at Denny's when I
wanted the world to witness me with a girl like you.
It was just a hand that guided me where my parents
dreaded I'd be led, though they would've been
fine if they'd found out that you'd let me fondle you
under a gibbous moon.
They wouldn't need to know I was
daydreaming of someone else.



Criss-crossing North America

*on copywriting and copy editing assignments, **Adrian Slonaker** is fond of opals, folk revival records, fire noodles, The Alfred Hitchcock Hour, non-alcoholic blue drinks and cuckoo clocks. Adrian's work has been published in WINK: Writers in the Know, Ariel Chart, Introspective Collective and others.*

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Soul Less

These rains will drive me
into a hole and cloistered,
I will think how they never abate
in summers, even as plums ripen
they wash, these hills in fiestas
of evenings, I want to snatch others'
dreams and make them mine
as these rains clutch into wishes-
my wishes of love or a dream;
take these rains away please
as I scratch rainbows that keep me
smitten with faraway lands.
Bereft of these rains
these arching hills of timelessness
their granites bursting at seams
their gurgling rivers washing me
into death wish as the crow perched
stands in legerdemain of thoughts.
I have it now, these pictures in captivity;
but the rains must abate to give these
hills a respite from this battling with thunder
as the mane of lightening burdens our bodies
Soul less, flat footed, tongue tied.

Ananya Guha is from India.

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Stormy Waters

It's been years & years, my love,
Since we tread these stormy waters
On a stranded lifeboat
Like a fisherman with a death wish,
Like a reckless drunk driver on snowy lanes.
Tire rolls as your love trolls, on me,
There's a permanent laceration
With a picturesque scar on my chest,
You have so many sides, uniquely devastating
Like the patterns of a new snowflake.
The two icebergs in your eyes did not
Even sweat when you looked in my fire eyes.
You said we can never be friends
Who keep no secrets from each other
But darling, how do you stay in love
With an acquaintance of a mysterious aura,
With a stranger you don't find comfort in?
You drink my red wine on a Sunday at a beach
I feel like it's my blood you are having,
Not literally, but does that even make a difference?
I am calling myself a damsel, and
You a dark knight who leaves me
In these stormy waters every single time.



Barenya Tripathy is more of a literature fanatic than she is a poet or a writer. She is an English Honours student at Delhi University, and currently is in her second year. Beaches and forests are her most loyal sources of inspiration. She believes that she is a time traveller who came from the time when Shakespeare roamed the streets.

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Hair

I pull a hair out of my mouthful
of fajita salad. I know this
may sound gross, but I don't think
so. Your hairs are everywhere.
One recently caught in the tight
seam between the halves
of my laptop. Bathrooms no longer
scare me. Theo plucks black
masses hanging like shrunken heads
from the shower wall and hands
them over. He has no admonitions.
Earthworms, spiders, centipedes
pass through his fingers. He harbors
no fear, no hatred of them. What
the hair snagged in my beard
or sewn into the lining of shirt,
evinces is the presence of a partner,
who is a part of, and partakes in,
my body, my blood, my hair.

*Cameron Morse was diagnosed with a glioblastoma in 2014. With a 14.6 month life expectancy, he entered the Creative Writing Program at the University of Missouri—Kansas City and, in 2018, graduated with an M.F.A. His poems have been published in numerous magazines. His first poetry collection, *Fall Risk*, won Glass Lyre Press's 2018 Best Book Award. His three subsequent collections are *Father Me Again* (Spartan Press, 2018), *Coming Home with Cancer* (Blue Lyra Press, 2019), and *Terminal Destination* (Spartan Press, 2019). He lives with his pregnant wife Lili and son Theodore in Blue Springs, Missouri, where he serves as poetry editor for Harbor Review.*

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Electrical Storm

You are my midnight bleak,
you are my electrical storm.
Outside this window,
you are my vast expanse.

You are my electrical storm,
when the sky breaks.
You are my vast expanse,
a cosmos lost in tumult.

When the sky breaks,
you widen the wound.
A cosmos lost in tumult
is a violent cleansing.

You widen the wound.
My diminishment
is a violent cleansing.
A ripening.

My diminishment,
outside this window.
A ripening.
You are my midnight bleak.

Carolyn Adams' poetry and art have appeared in Beatnik Cowboy, Willawaw Journal, Glass Mountain, San Pedro River Review, and Common Ground Review, among others. She has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, as well as for Best of the Net, and was a finalist for 2013 Poet Laureate of the city of Houston, TX. She is currently a staff editor for Mojave River Review. Having relocated from Houston, she now lives in Beaverton, OR.

Incognito

“All set, Julian,” the uniformed TSA officer
moves me on to the conveyor belts
to empty my pockets into a kitty litter tray,
having scanned my boarding pass
like a bomb-sniffing dog.

“OK, Deborah,” her toneless permission
for my wife to follow me,
lugging her rolling carry-on after me
like a ball and chain.

In real life we go by Charles and Abby,
though our passports and driver’s licenses
list us by first name-last name.

Do I feel like a secret agent
penetrating enemy lines?
Or do I feel like a prisoner?



Charles Rammelkamp is Prose Editor for BrickHouse Books in Baltimore and Reviews Editor for *The Adirondack Review*. A chapbook of poems, *Jack Tar's Lady Parts*, is available from Main Street Rag Publishing. Another poetry chapbook, *Me and Sal Paradise*, was recently published by FutureCycle Press. An e-chapbook has also recently been published online *Time Is on My Side*. Another chapbook, *Mortal Coil*, is forthcoming from Clare Songbirds Publishing.

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Pearl of the Adriatic

After crossing the stone bridge
On foot through busy Pile Gate,
I entered Old Town Dubrovnik,
An ancient city in Croatia where
I stood mesmerized by walls
Of stone heretofore a fortress.

Vivid orange tile shielded roofs
Of all structures, created contrast
With the cerulean Adriatic Sea,
Encircling the cape with an inlet
Separating this safeguarded city
From the mainland. What once
Served as a place of protection
During the many wars Croatia
Endured even to modern times
Has metamorphosed to a venue
For celebration; music of folk
And classical styles, some heard
From a stone terrace above town;
Trails for finding stunning views;
Cinemas aglow; fabled restaurants;
And boat tours along the coast.

Hiking the City of Many Stairs, I
Prayed other national strongholds
Would turn to places of pleasure.

Christine Xu has studied poetry privately from an award-winning poet and essayist in California's Santa Clara Valley. With each poem written and polished, she has increased her fascination with this art. Thus far, she has achieved publication with such literary journals as The Avocet in Arizona; WestWard Quarterly in Illinois; and Lone Stars in Texas. She has also four awards from annual poetry contests sponsored by Voices of Lincoln and California Federation of Chaparral Poets, Inc., the oldest poetry organization in the Golden State.

Today

Before yesterday and tomorrow
became anything at all,
before past and future
became formidable and frightening,
today was all.

Think of Adam and Eve
suddenly there in the garden,
no past, no understanding of
tomorrow and future,
how could they have expected disaster,
never having known history?

Alas, doomed couple.

We, however, live with early recognition
of
the ever-present weight of today!

The trick is
understanding what is interpreted as time.
It twists us up, we have to decipher
the tangle even as it impedes us,
even as we forget and spend
too much of ourselves in old dust,
or dream excessively about fantasies-to-be,

today lingers without us,
we lose it.

And it was all we had.

***Cleo Griffith** was Chair of the Editorial Board of Song of the San Joaquin for its first twelve years and remains on the Board in its 16th year. She is a member of the Modesto branch of the National League of American Pen Women. Widely published, she lives in Salida, CA with her husband Tom.*

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the history of green

the green leaves of the common kind
the green colour
coloured as dark green
the green colour of leaves
become green under glass

less green under glass
the green parts of plants
the green parts
which are not green
do take place in green organs
green leaves and shoots only

the green parts
that green leaves
in the green
that green leaves only
by the green

the green leaves take
from a green
the green rind
by the green organs
and green colour
the green
into green
in the green
by the green

and in the green
that the green
green surfaces
green cells
green parts
into large green leaves
green parts of plants
green organs
is the history of botany

*As one half of conceptual art duo Saint Flashlight (with Molly Gross), **Drew Pissarra** finds playful ways to get poetry into public places such as film-themed haiku on a movie marquee and a series of lost-dog style flyers that drive to a phone bank of verse. These unconventional installations have been part of the O, Miami Poetry Festival; Free Verse: Charleston Poetry Festival: and Poets House in NYC. His first book of poetry *Infinity Standing Up*, a collection of sonnets, came out in early 2019. His short story collection *Publick Spanking* was published eons ago by Future Tense.*

Of Idealized and Seemingly Perfect Character

Potential mates, competitors, likewise most bipeds,
Remain well-advised to organize, delineate, weed
Savvy from stupidity rather than to rely on structures
Used to build woke characters or regenerate starfish.

However valued it becomes to spawn ideas regarding
Human types, it's tragic to connect elements at times
When fulminating can be avoided, or when risible acts
Over the course of unexpected excrescences, are scant.

Pertaining to the heart, parenting's more than nurturing,
Light is grander than illumination, also padawans deserve
More hugs, fewer military obstacles, no parade moments.
(communication needs to be available after bereavement.)

Literally fashioning dark jitties, bright town squares,
Does nothing for hauling concepts to and fro, among
Proud citizens of any nation. Our proximate war cause
Continues to be maintaining industrial "normal" levels.

Eventually, if we're fortunate, jointly, agents, issuers
Identified as sources for imperators' music, will stop
Insisting that we spend long spans in the canopy, else
Keelhaul ingrates, disembowel next of kin, get nasty.

Exordiums are entirely intractable. Specialized limbs,
Too, make for agile foraging among jungle underbrush.
Generalized spousal dissatisfaction with life, inversely,
Grows personae non grata, polishes random shotguns.

So, climbing slowly, raining leaves down upon emulated
Heads of state, reciting therondies, apart from every single
Unanswered appeal to warmer renderings of civilization,
May well, after all, enable politicos to swallow, not chew.

A Rude Gesture to the Status Quo

When holding fast to ethical ideals, tosh invites uncanny delusions.
Also, twaddle, whether swayed by: psilocybin, alternate psychedelic
Prodrug compounds, makes siddity managers of insignificant stores,
Of hardware emporiums, of notions depots, lap up succulence found
In realpolitik, impresario's pet theories, and gurning imaged in flicks.

Such souls shamelessly hang hand-dried flowers over the trimmings
Of specialty cabinets, flap arms when sitting in cars' passenger seats,
Elsewise fill trugs with anemones, purple coneflowers, sweet freesia,
Until their shame in bogarting the best blooms for school-time chums

Inundates them, thru entreaties, to employ settees for scratching posts.

Sadly, most modern kids get desiccated, want no portion of increate Beauty, nor any part of existent proficiencies for sui generis efforts; Their guts weltering, they enfilade unmeasured violence upon fillies, Frogs, ducklings. In reply, delinquents, possibly use body language, Offer halfway rude hand gestures toward adults' status quo nonsense.

Simultaneously, those teens & twenties reject constructive accounts; Task amateur plus professional policymakers amid ringing cauldrons, Ask boilerplate witness acceptance, insist on essentially "rewriting." When striving for commensurability, they gladly move antagonists From snug settings; jail suits nobody laden with social indebtedness.

Lawbreakers have become more commonplace than rodents. Per se, They're readily absorbed into civilization, their odd directives, weird Vehicles notwithstanding. We remain extremely guarded addressing Discourteous drive, ability, creativity, missing civility, all manner of Showcased emotional hooks, rubrics, discipline, casual gesticulations.

Finger Splints and Cotton Swabs

When visiting middle-aged folks, discounting their assemblages, The two raised no ghosts of weight; they redirecting scattered Thoughts, illusory buffets of calorie-free foodstuffs, comestibles Whose ingesting resulted in accidental death or dire culpability.

Alternatively, if kicking ignoble curs, they produced paperclips, Profitable changes to finger splints, cotton swabs, ace bandages. Elsewise, objects from foggy vitrines culled supply house goods Even as offerings of attractive boys, toppers, failed their goals.

Meanwhile, dedicating extra space for hovercraft balderdash Resulted in exposure to blighted blooms and incensed spouses. Would-be linguistic mentors swore to sussing out misconducts (Judges resolved their design could throttle the full competition.)

Consequently, fresh losses hindered supplying skippers' rum. Ideas fetching lawsuits lost status, forced prickly supervisors To usher in high levels of black boxes, mildew, dark moods, Heavy handiness; people detest resilience, loathe catachresis.

And Then Came Bob

Reticulated pythons, likewise serialized novels, seem redundant relative to canaries Flouting a style of decorated tracery whenever counterfactual evidence shows up. In beasts' esteem, the essential quality of allure functions as an anvil that processes Enough unripened standards to make media feeds, to live fifteen minutes of infamy. It's not only wolfram that gets molded into tiny nuggets; wampum takes many forms.

After all, nonexistent locales, that is, homegrown “Sandy Islands” serve equally well
As impact heads of state, excluding snippety royalty. Some leaders cannot see past
Family constraints even when friendships stay balanced on rugged songs and letters.

The French territory of New Caledonia, for instance, that lovely whereabouts between
The Chesterfield Islands and Nereus Reef, that noted “corner” of Coral Sea’s east side,
Avoids international discord by campaigning on behalf of straw men, naive proposals.
All the while demurring that the global status quo’s response to warfare stays imperfect.
Islanders probably appreciate that any consequential needs for moms to call appliance
Repair persons, help itty bitty living things; puppies, kittens, roaches, establish their
Unequivocal function as primary witnesses to crimes against intended beneficiaries.
Their scion lose modest amounts in better circumstances, while, disregarding damages.

Namely, whenever lizards trumpet on suonas, mamas must redact all matter of wisdom.
Employing outsiders to challenge their stated mores is stupid, expensive, unfashionable.
Yet, common sense, notwithstanding, sufficiently “powerful” youngsters offer up terms,
Ask partners to shower them with understanding, to transfer money to multiple accounts.
We still marvel how engaging interlopers signifies failing to employ important writings,
No matter how many books or individually published pieces belong to persons of old
Importance. Heritage excluded, slab-sided authors forget “I’m sorry” remain twin vital
Mots, dual smidgeons of imperative rhetoric too often cast away by immature agendas.

*Life is precious. Our words need to reflect this verity. Accordingly, **KJ Hannah Greenberg** tilts at
social ills and personal evolutions via poetry, prose and other forms of creative expression. Her books
and short works evidence these values.*

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Soaring

To see the beauty in all
Truly a wondrous thing
but oh my darling,
you've confused
soaring - with needing
wings...

Lynn Long (<https://zolanymph1.blogspot.com/>) is a poet, writer, aspiring novelist, daydreamer and believer in the impossible. She has been published namely in *Antarctica Journal*, *Duane's PoeTree*, *In Between Hangovers*, *Stanzaic Stylings*, *Poetry Poetics Pleasure and Whispers*.

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After Dwight William Tryon's "Winter" (1893)

The ancient mountains to the west
transform into a calm, almost-frozen ocean
just out of reach.

Dusk changes into dawn. Thin, yellow
light is the same without clouds,
without garnet washes and purple smudges.

The snow in the foreground reveals
colors other than dazzling white: blue
from an earlier sky; browns from

half-buried bushes, from earth and
stone; green scuffs; and yellow straw
from fall's grass and flowers.

The snow in the background turns
into the beach at low tide
with its sheen of salt water.

Only trees, bushes, and stone walls
in the middle resist the transformation.
They put up obstacles, keeping ocean

from overtaking earth.

Marianne Szlyk is a professor of English and Reading at Montgomery College. She also edits The Song Is... a blog-zine for poetry and prose inspired by music (especially jazz). Her book, On the Other Side of the Window, is now available on Amazon. Her poems have also appeared in of/with, bird's thumb, Loch Raven Review, Solidago, One Sentence Poems, Red Bird Chapbook's Weekly Read, Music of the Aztecs, and Resurrection of a Sunflower, an anthology of work responding to Vincent Van Gogh's art.

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Cracker Jack Box Poem



I don't wear my pocket watch anymore
it reminds me of my age, 73, soon more,
outdated gadget, time hanging where
moving parts below don't belong nor work anymore.
I don't like to think about endings.
Age is a Cracker Jack box with no face, modern speed dial,
no toy inside, when it stops, no salute, just pops.

Lesson: "What young men want to do all night takes older men all night to do."

Michael Lee Johnson lived ten years in Canada during the Vietnam era and is a dual citizen of the United States and Canada. Today he is a poet, freelance writer, amateur photographer, and small business owner in Itasca, Illinois. Mr. Johnson published in more than 1037 publications, his poems have appeared in 37 countries, he edits, publishes 10 different poetry sites. Michael Lee Johnson, Itasca, IL, nominated for 2 Pushcart Prize awards for poetry 2015/1 Best of the Net 2016/and 2 Best of the Net 2017.

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Sitting by The Indian Ganges Side

You and I, will read a poem
You might think of Andrew Marvell
And I perhaps too, think Carpe diem,
(Seeing the River thus
Flowing for ages
Just like our lives and us,
So enchanted by the day's mirth
Perhaps will I weave a song too,
Just by your side
Spending the day long overdue.

***Moinak Dutta**, born on 5th September, 1977, has been writing poems and stories from school days. Presently engaged as a teacher of English, he has written reviews of several books. His first full-length English fiction *Online@Offline* had been published in 2014 by Lifi Publications. His second fiction entitled *In search of la radice* was published in 2017 by Xpress Publications. Also, Moinak loves to do photography apart from listening to music, watching films and travelling.*

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A New Flower

In the foothills of the charming Entoto Mountains
You sprawl as a cute commercial and cultural hub
A New Flower whose anthers are in the millions
You are a Flower whose nectar none can snub!

In historical, diplomatic and political terms--
You are the real deal, talk of Africa's centre
The presence of the African Union confirms
Addis Ababa, I see tourists and florists enter!

*Ndaba Sibanda is an author and poet. He authored *Of the Saliva and the Tongue*.*

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Claudius Views the Drowned Corpse of Ophelia

Obvious as a Swedish strumpet,
she didn't commit self-murder
and risk the eternal damnation
I face, if I believed in such nonsense,
for killing my brother, usurping
his throne, and besmirching his bed
with his widow, night after delicious night.

The bruises necklacing her throat proof
Ophelia was not a despairing flower
scorned by the high-born whoreson
she'd given her heart and priceless ruby.

Simple for my most trusted councilor
to regretfully find the evidence
to execute the meddler-Prince.
Who knows, maybe she refused him,
or worse, allowed his loins' quickening
inside her, thus proving she was a harlot
deserving a murderous exit from the earth.

In any case, he's given me the means
to be rid of him; not even his mother—
who, I secretly smile, grows more tired
of his deranged behavior by the day—
will plead for leniency or excuse
his conduct as boyish antics.
Boyish antics? At his age, I was plotting
with powerful men against his father.

I chortle at the custom-cut evidence,
at perhaps his stuttering confession,
even if he didn't place hands on her neck
and squeeze, but has, in his grief,
convinced himself he did.

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.

three haiku/senryu

unwilling
to shake the sand out of
my suitcase

◇◇◇◇◇

he paints
her betrayal
into her portrait

◇◇◇◇◇

rippled reflection
- it was here
a moment ago



Roberta Beach Jacobson (<http://www.robertajacobson.com>) is a humorist from Iowa, USA.

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City Living

Interesting. I'm no veteran, but I understand loss –
of freedom, a patched roof, mandolins consoling

Italians, their turf encroached upon by the Chinese.
Before this city was a flood, I was the stickball

hero laughing unhindered through embarrassing
tenements, a mason jar of promises exploding in

my face. I'd inhaled this ghetto one too many times.
The plague of hopelessness hurts less than machine

gun symphonies kids learn to play in their sleep.
How often I've dreamed of corporate men lighting

fires with sticks in the everglades, their fat bellies
rumbling louder than neglect. Hunger's for real.

I have nothing left but pain. Forgive me, father,
for I have grinned, amused in forgetting my fate.

I've since expanded past normal, soon to be a
scarlet balloon bursting in space, difficult to cure.



Robin Ray is the author of *Wetland and Other Stories* (All Things That Matter Press, 2013), *Obey the Darkness: Horror Stories*, the novels *Murder in Rock & Roll Heaven* and *Commoner the Vagabond*, and one book of non-fiction, *You Can't Sleep Here: A Clown's Guide to Surviving Homelessness*. His works have appeared at Delphinium, Bangalore, Squawk Back, Outsider, Red Fez, Jerry Jazz Musician, Underwood Press, Scarlet Leaf, Neologism, Spark, Aphelion, Vita Brevis, and elsewhere.

Just Like That

When you trip (see also: fall flat on face)
it can take some time
to stand up, dust off, and once again see clearly.

Life is dirty like that.

I have flashed enough fake smiles
during the past month
to truly earn the one I'm wearing now.

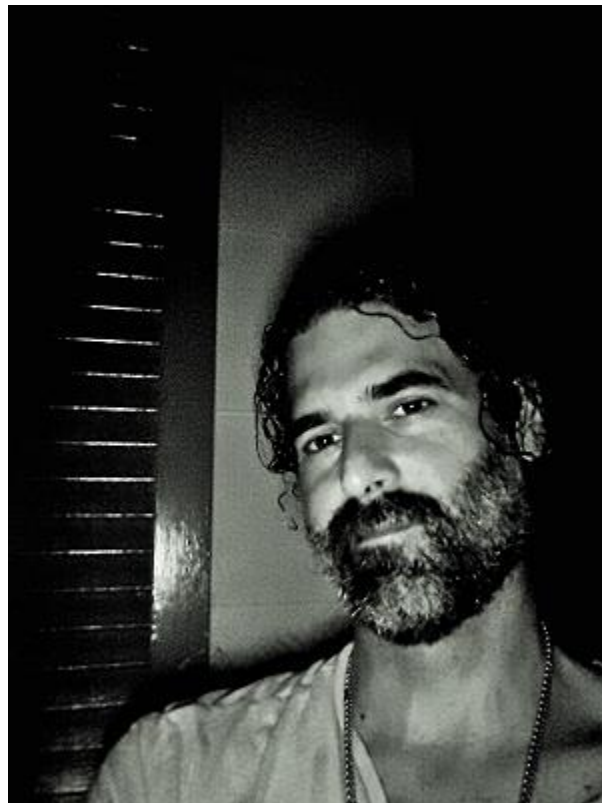
Life is a joke like that.

I'm not looking for a fifth ace
to hide up my sleeve;
I'd rather carry just one and call it a cool hand.

Life is a gamble like that.

There is a song in every silent surrender
when the album stops spinning,
and there is a scream always shining from distant stars.

Life is a roar like that.



Scott Thomas Outlar hosts the site 17Numa.com where links to his published poetry, fiction, essays, interviews, reviews, live events, and books can be found. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Scott was a recipient of the 2017 Setu Magazine Award for Excellence in the field of literature. His words have been translated into Afrikaans, Albanian, Dutch, Farsi, French, Italian, Kurdish, and Serbian. His radio podcast, *Songs of Selah*, airs weekly on 17Numa Radio.

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When Jimmy Grew Up

Jimmy prefers James beginning on his eighteenth birthday.
Life is changing. Off to college in another month.
Have to ditch the boyish name and ways. He feels grown
by bedtime that night after rounding the curve on Willow Highway
where it narrows through the woods and finding a car
that's climbed a tree at road speed. Fuel leaks
from the tank. Two women are inside. The passenger
is in fair shape. The driver is smashed up, squeezed in
maybe paralyzed. Jimmy—scratch that—James Calendar
and his friend pull the injured woman from the wreck.
Her screams make it likely that being moved
does further damage. It's the right call though.
They're forty feet away with her when the gas tank blows.
The car rockets up the oak tree it's inclined against,
lands in the forest beyond. James—was Jimmy—
visits St. Lawrence the next day. The driver is in traction.
She thanks him for reacting. Ribs and legs and arms
and collarbones can all grow back how they once were.
The driver says, "I owe you." James answers, "Any man
would try to save the save-able." He left Intensive Care
no longer a boy, aware that it's too easy to die.
The leap isn't so hard to make. This is Jimmy all grown up.

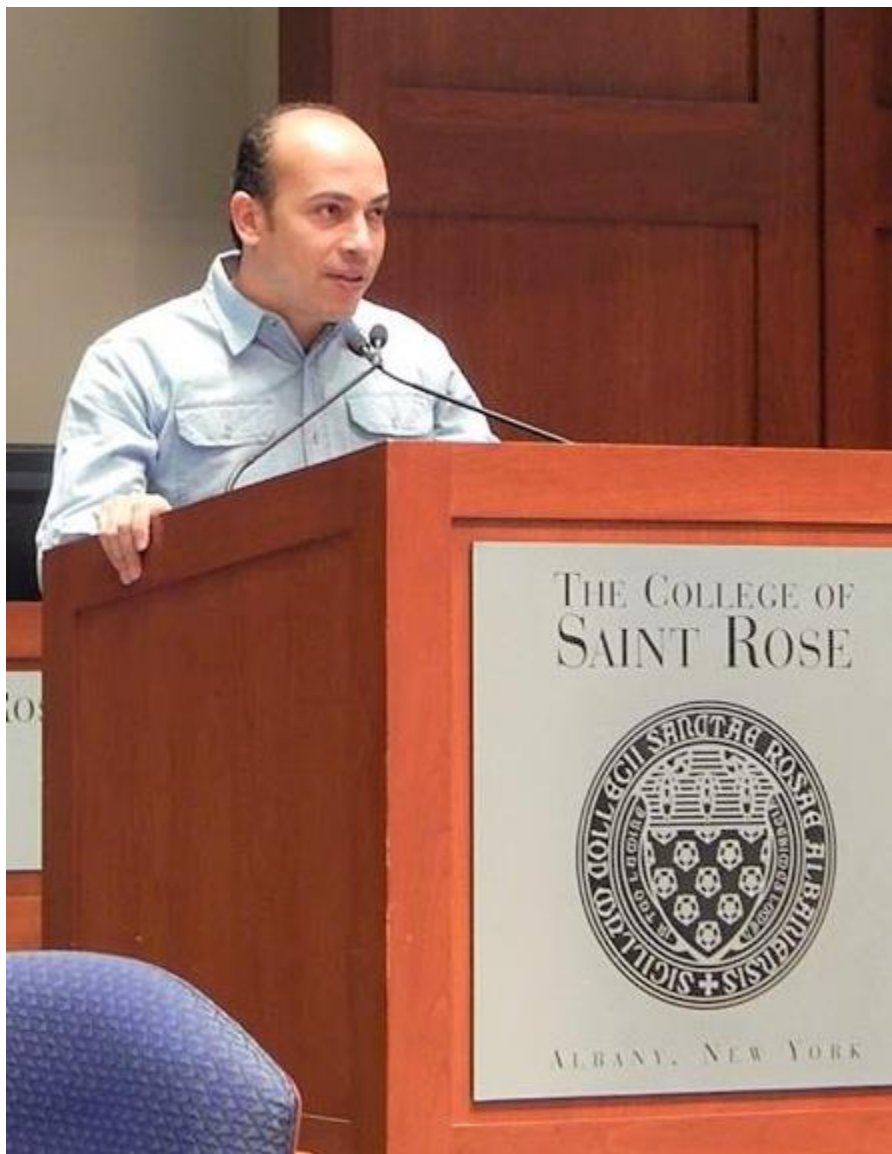


Todd Mercer was nominated for Best of the Net by The Pangolin Review in 2018. His chapbook *Life-wish Maintenance* is posted at Right Hand Pointing. Recent work appears in: *A New Ulster*, *Clementine Unbound*, *Mojave River Review*, and *Star 82 Review*.

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Her Love

For the eyes with which I can see
For the heart without which I can never be
For the love of my life as a whole
For my eyes, heart and soul
Although now I can't see her
She has all my love and care
She is the only cure for my pain
She is the love, I can't explain
Her love no words can ever express
And will ever remain until after my death
Only for her- these lines - I dedicate
For the love determined only by fate



***Walid Abdallah** is an Egyptian poet and author. He is a visiting professor of English language and literature in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Germany and the USA. His poetry includes Go Ye Moon, Dream and*

My heart still beats. He has several translated poems which won prestigious prizes in the USA like Cause, Egypt's Grief and Strangers' Cross, his books include Shout of Silence, Escape to the Realm of Imagination, and Man Domination and Woman Emancipation.

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Dictionary of Love

I

Love: Someone to whom you give a valentine.

Valentine: A card or thing given to a lover to elicit a smile.

Smile: A friendly stretched position of two lips.

Two lips: Pretty, romantic muscles that form a mouth.

Mouth: Anatomy for eating and exchanging kisses.

Kisses: Expression of love by sensual touching of two lips.

Tu-lips: Multicolored flowers that bloom in Spring.

Spring: A season for kindling romance by giving kisses and flowers.

Flowers: Plants with colorful petals you give to show love.

II

Octopus: Sea creature with many arms, but one mouth.

Mouth: Organ for eating and osculation.

Osculation: Omni-syllabled word for giving kisses.

Kisses: Special touching, hopefully not by an octopus, with two lips.

Lips: Muscular edges of a mouth used for osculation and eating octopus.

Wesley Sims has published two chapbooks of poetry, When Night Comes, Finishing Line Press, Georgetown, Kentucky, 2013, and Taste of Change, Iris Press, Oak Ridge, TN, 2019. His work has appeared in Connecticut Review, G.W. Review, The South Carolina Review, Liquid Imagination, Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel, Breath & Shadow, Plum Tree Tavern, Nature Writing, Artemis Journal, Tanka Journal, and others.

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The New Jeep

The red of this pen is not
the red of the Jeep my aunt bought.
The red of her cheeks is not
the red of the sumac on the side of the road,
where the red of the flashing lights
found my aunt in her Jeep off the shoulder.
The red marks of her seat belt do not blaze
with the red of a sunset, which does not
resemble the red of this apple I am eating,
so red in the back of the Jeep
(where I write, in red, of these events),
but not as red as the blood of a deer,
the red smear on the pavement,
the red splatter on the shattered windshield.
The red in her eyes, weeping, as she cries
into the red cell, to her husband,
a man with red hairs in his beard:
red are his words to her,
red is the ink of my pen,
red is the new Jeep wrecked,
red is the deer who went down.



Will Reger is the 2019/20 inaugural Poet Laureate for the city of Urbana, Illinois. He is a founding member of the CU (Champaign-Urbana) Poetry Group (cupoetry.com), teaches at Illinois State University in Normal. His work appears in *Zingara Poetry Review*, *Passager Journal*, *Eclectica Magazine*, *The Blue Nib Literary Magazine*, *Broadkill Review*, *Cagibi*, and the *Innesfree Poetry Journal*. His first chapbook is *Cruel with Eagles*.

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The canvas

he took his shirt off
unprompted
and showed me his new tattoo -
his name
across the shoulderblades
printed like a football jersey. it was brand new,
still raised
and scabby under plastic.

looking
at his bare flesh
my fingers itched
to pick.



DS Maolalai has been nominated for Best of the Web and twice for the Pushcart Prize. His poetry has been released in two collections, *Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden* (Encircle Press, 2016) and *Sad Havoc Among the Birds* (Turas Press, 2019).

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Foxymoron

The fox knows many things but the hedgehog knows one big thing.—Archilochus (7th century bce)

Look at him lying there, smug under the hedgerow,
With his pig-like snout and that thing he knows.
Yeah, a big thing, a really big thing. I bet.
Like what? How to bring peace to the world?
How to help all the children become Miss America?
Some useful big thing that he will reveal one day
making us all better off, at peace and wearing a tiara.
But does he know pi to 25 places? Know 25 places
to get a good massage or a real pizza? Does he know
why the Tower of Pisa tilts? Where Pisa is? Does he
know a good recipe for ratatouille? I wish I knew one
for hedgehogtouille. (Pigtouille, ptooeey!) Tell us,
O Great One. What do you know and when did you know it?
At least 27 centuries ago, evidently. Is it that insects
taste like chicken? Heck, we know that. Tell us something
we don't know. Do you know the way to San Jose?
Who cares? GPS will tell us that. Can you box
the compass? You must know about hedge funds.
That would be a big thing. Or would have been.
Do you know that Bill Conti wrote the music for Rocky?
Do you know Rocky Balboa? Do you know it was Balboa
who discovered the Pacific, not Cortez? Have you ever
looked into Chapman's Homer? Into his re-
frigerator? Well, don't.

Edmund Conti has no cat but continues to write bio notes anyway. His last book (and actually his first book also) was "Just So You Know" from Kelsay Books. He has had the usual 500 poems published but that was then.

Love Cannot Be Said

I wear rustic-looking rings on my fingers because
it makes me feel more spiritual, somehow.
Maybe it's the intricate engravings on these
metal hoops, or the pastel-colored stones on some of them
that remind me of the rocks and markings that must exist in heaven, or
whatever sublime place there is.
I often wish to exist in a place like that.

*At other times, I hear the words
Being closer and closer is the desire
of the body. Don't wish for union!
Why would God
want a second God? Fall in love
in such a way that it frees you
from any connecting.
Love cannot be said.*

(The italicized words and the title of this poem are taken from the poem "The Taste of Morning", by Rumi, as translated by Coleman Barks.)

Ethar Hamid is an aspiring writer and artist from Khartoum, Sudan. She writes poetry and essays, and creates illustrations and comics.

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The Spider in the Windowsill

It's tempting to just squish it outright but you should first
pull off a leg, then another. First an arachnid
then an arthropod then a quadruped then a biped. Does
the level of intelligence and/sophistication increase or decrease
with each removed limb? How about if you
put a hat on the tiny, flailing insect,
give it a cane, make it dance on its two remaining legs
as it fumbles its way to death?

What happens if you remove all the legs
from one side, but leave the other intact?
does it run around and around
in a circle like a cartoon character,
a teeny tiny motorcar? Now what happens
when you give it a hat, a cane,
from the first exercise?

Holly Day's poetry has recently appeared in Plainsongs, The Long Islander, and The Nashwaak Review. Her newest poetry collections are In This Place, She Is Her Own (Vegetarian Alcoholic Press), A Wall to Protect Your Eyes (Pski's Porch Publishing), Folios of Dried Flowers and Pressed Birds (Cyberwit.net), Where We Went Wrong (Clare Songbirds Publishing), Into the Cracks (Golden Antelope Press), and Cross Referencing a Book of Summer (Silver Bow Publishing).

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Tragic Kid Yearning

Frankston generations on from war's aftermath, English immigration lured by its bayside setting, its regular train service connecting Melbourne. End of the line. The very end. True, the posh whizz past by freeway to their holiday homes far enough away to the south, but there is no work here. Never was. Misspelt, mispunctuated signs in the shopping mall, the waft of caramelized sugar, cheap sad songs, the only excitement chemical, no pros, just cons.

When Point Nepean Road was the only way through what resembled a country town to where the pointy end of the peninsula greets Bass Strait's choppy swell, locals referred to Melbourne as 'the city', as if some distant dream. I contributed generously to the lone secondary school's toxic cauldron, sweaty feral kids bussed in from outposts that are now ghettos of the unemployed overflow.

We are thirteen, on the run, from home, school, punishment; my mate and me. A divvy van brakes in that main street, cops, elite thugs of a thuggish town, hurry from it, we split up. My mate, who died from cancer years ago, hides by sliding under a parked FJ Holden on his back, but they spot him, trapped.

I skedaddle, break into a beach hut, sleep rough, bravado battered by a wave of loneliness, hungry enough to eat a seagull if I could catch one. In the quiet morning a young couple wearing bathers arrives. She drops her top for his pleasure. Staring through a gap from the hut's shadows I feast on that scene, wanting to be old enough for love. Then I think, what if he catches me pervy? I pinch out my acrid fag rolled from collected butts, wary, trapped as usual, wonder how I shall get away, find love.

Ian C Smith's work has appeared in, Amsterdam Quarterly, Australian Poetry Journal, Critical Survey, Live Encounters, Poetry New Zealand, Southerly, & Two-Thirds North. His seventh book is wonder sadness madness joy, Ginninderra (Port Adelaide). He writes in the Gippsland Lakes area of Victoria, and on Flinders Island, Tasmania.

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Nightscape

Fog horns sound though
air soaked in blackness.
All evening long listening
to hiss of trucks, cars.

Shadows brush across walls
as trees trace their branches.
Gathering and waving
together then swaying apart.

While I sleep, stars glide
through heaven making
their appointed rounds in
ancient sacred procession.

Dreams as smooth as rose
petals spill into my mind
growing wild patches in
this dark garden of night.



***Joan McNerney** is the recipient of three scholarships. She has read her work at the National Arts Club Gramercy Park, State University of New York at Oneonta, University of Texas in Houston and The McNay Art Institute in San Antonio, Texas. Her poetry has been included in over two hundred print literary magazines, journals and anthologies. The internet has provided an even wider platform for her work and she has four Best of the Net nominations. Her latest title, *The Muse In Miniature*, is available on Amazon.*

The Buzz

those bees, those busy-
buzzing, small-busy-bodies,
Mother Nature's Lesbians,
leaving behind the confines
of the hive and the
dronesplaining males,
for feminine humming,
feminine business, sucking
nectar from the genitals
of plants



***Julian O'Dea** lives in Canberra, Australia. He is a retired government scientist. He has been writing poetry for a few years and has published in a number of places, including, *Creatrix* (Western Australia), as well as *Ygdrasil* and *Friday's Poems* in Canada.*

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Celestial Eye Candy

Go slowly, my lovely Moon, go slowly.—Khaled Hosseini

Go outside. Look up to the full moon, stargazers.
A front row seat on Earth awaits.
The opening act of a rare and eerie cosmic
event is about to unfold.
Optimal viewing is guaranteed.
No travel or telescope is necessary.
Your backyard and the naked eye works.

Watch as a celestial curtain rises for an extravaganza.
The Earth, moon and sun align.
The full moon gets the Earth's shadow.
We earthlings get a total lunar eclipse, a supermoon
and a blood moon.

Behold this special moon!
The lunar eclipse coincides with January's Wolf Moon,
the first full moon of the year, and a supermoon.
The Earth comes between the sun and a super moon,
completely covering the moon with its shadow.
It's also a supermoon. The moon is full and closest
to Earth in orbit.

Spy on this biggest, brightest supermoon high in the
sky, as the moon's brilliance slowly fades and turns
into a reddish hue.
Astronomers call this rare and glorious celestial sight
a "Super Blood Wolf Moon."

Marvel as the Earth's shadow swallows the blood moon.
Keep a close watch on the heavens.
You won't want to miss Mother Nature's celestial eye
candy treat.

Gaze up at the night skies and watch the show's
grand finale.
When the brilliant moon slowly slips away,
the stars come out to play.
And the planets dance across the night sky ballroom.



Katacha Díaz is a Peruvian American writer. Wanderlust and love of travel have taken her all over the world to gather material for her stories. Her prose and poetry has been published internationally in literary journals, print and online magazines, and anthologies. Her most recent credits are: Sleet, The Galway Review, Voice of Eve, Muddy River Poetry Review, The Pangolin Review, Harvests of New Millennium, Poppy Road Review. She lives and writes up in her perch in a quaint little historic town at the mouth of the Columbia River in the Pacific Northwest, USA.

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Ideas Relegated

News finally came down. More
had occurred than I had thought.

Earth's mis-alignment punished
some unfortunates for positions
occupied since ancient times, but
growing less hospitable whether
direct or indirect in the sun's rays.

Others banish to lesser regions all
unable to escape centrifugal weight
as lower rungs of human hierarchy,
not to raise up, nor fortify, nor care.

The waters rise, of course, torrents
flow from melt on high, threatening
flood once more, destructive ideas
too relegated, but in much argument.

***Keith Moul** has written poems and taken photos for more than 50 years, his work appearing in magazines widely. His chapbook, *The Journal*, was recently accepted by Duck Lake Chaps for issuance in early 2020. This is his ninth chap or book published.*

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A Poem of Love and Hatred

The canvas was white sans a drop of ink,
The night etched patterns on it,
The blackness dropped a bob on it,
It became a painting to be envied.

Chiaroscuro of light and dark
Caught uncertainty by its forelock,
Grief and pain came to its rescue,
Coagulating the blood that drenched
its bosom.

Brethren of a community
Shouted shenanigans,
Marched forward
Smearing their faces
With fearful colours
On blood-curdling symmetry,
Though the serpentine streamers
Hanging from parapets
The colourful bandanas
Covering their foreheads
Disseminated messages
Of universal brotherhood
Or,
Terror and Violence!



Ketaki Datta is an Associate Professor of English, Bidhannagar College, Kolkata. She is a novelist, short story writer, critic and a translator. Her novels *A Bird Alone* and *One Year for Mourning* have won rave reviews. Her poems have been published in several anthologies. She was elected Professional Woman of the Year in 2005 by American Biographical Society, North Carolina.

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