

# HARBINGER ASYLUM

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*You never know what you will  
find inside...*

## **HARBINGER ASYLUM!**

Dear readers,

Poetry may be making a comeback. According to newer research more people are reading poetry than before. An NEA research team discovered that poems are being shared and read online at higher rates. Several years ago, the rate of readership was dropping bit by bit.

According to poets.org, “We know that for all the interest and engagement we now have thanks to technology, people still crave human experiences.” As a former host of poetry readings, I believe these places of open expression are the most fruitful in a world seeking silence. You can meet face to face with other people and engage in discussion. I have many intriguing discussions with participants after readings about everything from social affairs, to political hype and lies, to urban planning and the goings-on in the city of Houston. Readings are an important space for people who seek to reach an audience and wish to interact with other open-minded people. Stimulating conversation is superior to social networking.

We also know that poetry is popular during times of fear, strife, and uncertainty. That describes our current environment in this country. For more information on these trends see: <https://www.arts.gov/art-works/2018/taking-note-poetry-reading-%E2%80%94federal-survey-results>

Recently TZPress hosted a fundraiser in downtown Houston at the legendary Last Concert Cafe. Our turnout was not the most exciting— nine paying attendants. Yet the flavor of the night was remarkable. The music fun, loud, and enriching. An artist, Vera Ikon, sold prints of her work and also took the stage with rambunctuous rants and sexy poetry. Overall, in spite of low participation, the event was pleasant.

This edition includes many freshly published poets. Several poets in this edition are young. Stuti Shree in India and Nic Schaedig are adventurous in their use of language. These poets are crafty and you will enjoy them. We also have Iris Orpi, a young Filipina American, with strong poetry to excite your bitter imagination. Tevin Church is back with his slam-style lyrically driven poems of hope in hard times. There is also Shawn Anto, a 23-year-old living in Bakersfield. This little volume is charming.

So if you are included in this small and worthy collection, sound your barbaric yawp across this wasted empire of melancholy! Let the world know. Buy a copy and tell others!

Thank you.

With grace,

*Dustin Pickering, Editor*

# CONTENTS

## Biographies / 7-12

- We Pray for You* by Julianne di Nenna / 13  
*Words on the Paper* by Julianne di Nenna / 14-15  
*You Never Told Me* by Julianne di Nenna / 16  
*Reality and Fiction Take the Stage* by Nic Schaedig / 17  
*Realizations* by Nic Schaedig / 18  
*Paris After All the Wars* by Lennart Lundh / 19  
*Anatomy of a Heartbreak* by Tan Shivers / 20-21  
*Northern Lights* by Jessica Goody / 22  
*The Moon Stalker* by Jessica Goody / 22  
*Runestones* by Jessica Goody / 23  
*Reveklations* by Jessica Goody / 24  
*Images* by Jessica Goody / 25  
*Songs...* by John Kojak 25  
*Moloch's Retort* by John Kojak / 26  
*The Candle in the Wind* by Daniel de Culla / 27-28  
*Falling and Floating* by Jen Banta / 29  
*Haiku Sunflower* by Fred Rosenblum / 29  
*Modeling for the Gods* by Fred Rosenblum / 30  
*Onyx Delight, Witness to the Brothel Incident:  
Gold Creek, Colorado Territory* by Robert Cooperman / 31-32  
*Pastor Lazarus Markham, After the Murder  
of Lily Bartell: Gold Creek, the Colorado Territory*  
by Robert Cooperman / 32  
*Magi Poem* by Alan Britt / 32  
*The Painted Backdrop* by Robert Joe Stout / 33  
*What About Now* by Louis Marin / 34  
*Train of Paperclips* by Louis Marin / 35  
*Her Tattoo* by Susan Mitchell / 36  
*The Fight is Won* by Susan Mitchell / 37  
*Poison of Choice* by Iris Orpi / 38-39  
*They Signed Their Fake Names in Cheap Ink* by Iris Orpi / 39-40  
*Being Here* by Iris Orpi / 40-41  
*Poem* by Pat St.-Arnaud / 42  
*Falls Apart* by Tevin Church / 43-44  
*Settle Down* by Tevin Church / 45  
*Withstand the Drought* by Tevin Church / 46-47

*Want* by Melissa Chappell / 48-49  
*life in sunlight* by Daniel Moro / 50  
*CLOUD II* by Karina Bush / 51  
*KARMA MAN* by Kartina Bush / 52  
*ASHES* by Karina Bush / 53  
*The Scarlet Water.* by Stuti Shree / 54-56  
*The Clock is Ticking* by Stuti Shree / 56-57  
*With the Motor Running* by John Grey / 57  
*Turn, Turn, Turn* by Scott Thoams Outlar / 58  
*Eternal and Infinite* by Scott Thomas Outlar / 59  
*graveside* by ayaz daryl nielsen / 59  
*poem* by ayaz daryl nielsen / 59  
*Never Land* by James B. Nicola / 60  
*Parade of Shackles* by Shawn Anto / 61  
*The Antlers* by Shawn Anto / 62-63  
*Follow the Rules* by Shawn Anto / 63  
*Videshi* by Shawn Anto / 64-65

# BIOGRAPHIES

**Julianne di Nenna** is a member of the Geneva Writers' Group of Switzerland where she won two prizes for poetry. Her poems, short stories, and essays have been published in: Adanna Literary Journal; Gyroscope Review; Years to Months; Stanford Medical School blog (forthcoming); Offshoots; Italy, a Love Story; Susan B & Me; Every Day Reading; Airplane Reading; as well as others. She works in Switzerland and live in France.

**Nic Schaedig** is a high school Junior who vents through her writing. Born and raised in small town Michigan, months before turning sixteen she picked her life and moved to the midwest. Insecure about her writing, she kept it hidden, until a stranger made her thoughts change. Nic now is stepping forward to make her poetry known, make it heard. She has something to say, and wants to be heard. Nic most importantly wants people to understand through her writing, that they are not alone. It took a stranger on a website called Omegle to push her in this direction, and she hopes her writing can move people in the right direction too.

**Lennart Lundh** is a poet, short-fictionist, historian, and photographer. His work has appeared internationally since 1965.

**Tan Shivers** is an IT Specialist from Charleston, SC. She has been writing poetry since age seven. Tan has a dog, Prosperity, and a turtle, Mike whom she loves with all of her heart. Her previous work has been featured in Harbinger Asylum and the Rising Phoenix Review. Poetry has always been one of Tan's favorite therapeutic outlets. Some of her favorite hobbies include boxing and football.

**Jessica Goody's** writing has appeared in over three dozen publications. Her poetry collection *Defense Mechanisms* (Phosphene Publishing, 2016) was chosen as a "Power Read" by *The Hilton Head Monthly* and a Book of the Month by *The Creativity Webzine*. Her second, *Phoenix*, will be released by CW Books in 2019.

**John Kojak** crafts his writing to speak in diverse voices. His short story "Don Pedro" appeared in *Beyond Imagination* magazine, "American Hero" in *Down In The Dirt*, "Beauty and the Beast" in *Third Wednesday*, "Happy Hands Cleaning Service" in *Bête Noire*, and "Elizabeth Beatrice Moore" in *Pulp Modern*. His poetry has also appeared in *Poetry Quarterly*, *Dual Coast*,

*The Stray Branch* (featured writer), *The Literary Commune*, *Dime Show Review*, *The Los Angeles Review of Los Angeles*, and *Chronogram*.

**Daniel de Culla** is a writer, poet, and photographer. He's 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 Theater in Madrid, Burgos, Berlin, Minden, Hannover and Genève. He has exposed in many galleries from Madrid, Burgos, London, and Amsterdam. He is moving between North Hollywood, Madrid and Burgos.

**Jen Banta** is a licensed psychologist in the state of CA with Ph.D. from APA-accredited program in clinical-community psychology.

**Fred Rosenblum** is an aspiring bilingual Left Coast poet residing in San Diego with his wife of 45 years. He is the author of two books of poetry (*Hollow Tin Jingles*, *Vietnumb*) and has appeared in an eclectic list of publications throughout the US and Canada.

**Robert Cooperman's** latest collection is *DRAFT BOARD BLUES* (FutureCycle Press). Forthcoming from Main Street Rag is *THAT SUMMER*. Cooperman's work has appeared in *THE SEWANEE REVIEW*, *SLANT*, and *CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY*.

Preferring to "lean and loafe at his ease," **Alan Britt** is troubled by the corruption and ambivalence that permeates the Great Experiment, so politically speaking he has started the Commonsense Party, which ironically to some sounds radical. He believes the US should stop invading other countries to relieve them of their natural resources including tin, copper, bananas, diamonds, and oil, also that it's time to eliminate corporate entitlements and reduce military spending in order to properly educate its citizenry, thereby reducing crime and strengthening the populace in the manner that the Constitution envisioned. He is quite fond of animals both wild and domestic and supports prosecuting animal abusers. As a member of PETA, he is disgusted by factory farming and decorative fur.

**Robert Joe Stout** lives and writes in Oaxaca, Mexico. His published books include the poetry volume *Monkey Screams*, a non-fiction analysis of U.S.-Mexico frictions over immigration and narcotics commerce and three novels, *Miss Sally*, *Where Gringos Don't Belong* and *Running Out the Hurt*.



**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 photographer, published poet and short story writer who now also pens faith based devotionals. He lives in Rumford, 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.

**Susan J. Mitchell** has three books, *After the Heroine: A Mother's Story in Poetry*, *Directionally Challenged (but finding my way home)* and *Snapshots*. She is also an award winning photographer. Susan lives in Southeastern Kentucky.

**Iris Orpi** is a Filipina poet, novelist, and screenwriter currently living in Chicago, Illinois with her husband and son. Her alter ego is a university mathematics instructor who likes to incorporate CSI episodes and milkshake recipes in trigonometry and calculus problems. Drawing a hyperbolic paraboloid on chalkboard remains one of her greatest personal achievements. She is broke but plans to travel the world someday.

Born of Montreal, now retired to the rural Acadian South Shore, **Pat St-Arnaud** is better known for his work in the tech industry than for his poetry, but is driven to write both and more.

**Tevin Church** always has, and always will continue to harbor a love for literature and poetry. An avid lover of music, his primary inspirations are the lyrics he hears in Hip-Hop and Post-Hardcore. As a child, he spends a lot of his free time drawing characters derivative from numerous cartoons and video games, figuring out at an early age that he needs compelling narratives to further develop these ideas. In adulthood, he still pulls heavily from his childhood creativity, but mostly metaphorically and often in contrast to the mature urgency that has come to define his most recent works. In essence, a large majority of his poetic products seek to craft rhythmic landscapes as attempts to sonically escape to realms unseen and places unknown.

**Melissa A. Chappell** is a writer who lives in South Carolina where, in her writing, she advocates for survivors of sexual assault. Ms. Chappell is a survivor of sexual assault, and her poetry reflects the reality that hope and exuberance are possible in sexual relationships after one emerges from the shame of assault. She is also a survivor of mental illness, and writes out of

the deep depressions of her bipolar I disorder. Resilience is possible even in darkness. Besides writing, Ms. Chappell enjoys the piano, the lute, her dogs, and her front porch rocking chair.

**Daniel Moro** was born in a small town in southern New York state. His work has appeared in Triggerfish Critical Review. He likes to hike and play music.

**Karina Bush** is an Irish writer, born in Belfast and now living in Rome. She is the author of three books, 'BRAIN LACE' (BareBackPress, 2018), '50 EURO' (BareBackPress, 2017), and 'MAIDEN' (48th Street Press, 2016). She is currently finishing up a collection of stories set in Belfast, a story from this collection was recently published by Akashic Books. She is also a visual poet and released a set of video poems to accompany 'BRAIN LACE'. For more visit her website [karinabush.com](http://karinabush.com) and Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/karinabushxxx/>.

**Stuti Shree** is a 17 year old girl from India. She has studied from Delhi Public School, and currently doing her Bachelors in English Honours from St. Xavier's College, Ranchi. She is an intense lover of art and understands the profound meaning hidden beneath those treasures. Stuti loves to write poems and sing. Being an old-school girl, she still keeps all her pieces of writing in a particular diary, which she has named as- 'Right to the pen, left on a paper'. William Wordsworth is her favorite poet of all times. 'A slumber did my spirit seal' is her best-loved poem by him.

**John Grey** is an Australian poet, US resident. Recently published in the Homestead Review, Poetry East and Columbia Review with work upcoming in Harpur Palate, the Hawaii Review and North Dakota Quarterly.

**Scott Thomas Outlar** hosts the site [17Numa.com](http://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 French, Italian, Dutch, Persian, Serbian, Albanian, and Afrikaans. His radio show Songs of Selah airs weekly on 17Numa Radio.

**ayaz daryl nielsen**, veteran and former hospice nurse, lives in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Editor of *bear creek haiku* (30+ years/145+ issues) with poetry published worldwide (and deeply appreciated), he is online at: *bear creek haiku poetry, poems and info*.

James B. Nicola's poems have appeared in *Harbinger Asylum*; the *Antioch*, *Southwest* and *Atlanta Reviews*; *Rattle*; *Tar River*; and *Poetry East*. His full-length collections are *Manhattan Plaza* (2014), *Stage to Page: Poems from the Theater* (2016), *Wind in the Cave* (2017) and *Out of Nothing: Poems of Art and Artists* (2018). His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience* won a *Choice* award. His poetry has received a Dana Literary Award, two *Willow Review* awards, a People's Choice award from *Storyteller*, and four Pushcart Prize nominations—from *Shot Glass Journal*, *Parody*, and twice from *Trinacria*—for which he feels both stunned and grateful.

**Shawn Anto** is 23 years old from Bakersfield, California. He's originally from Kerala, India. He currently studies at Cal State Bakersfield looking to receive his B.A. in English & Theatre. His writing has been featured or are forthcoming in The Paragon Press, Edify Fiction, Susan/The Journal, Internet Void, Ink & Voices and Mojave Heart Review.



## **We Pray For You**

*Julianne di Nenna*

I am the blond who sits in the car behind yours in the school pick-up zone  
but you do not see me, not that anyone would notice beyond my hair,  
I slipped in at the back, starved and dehydrated

I am the thick-haired curvy-bodied brunette you knock into at the grocery store  
by accident – on a lucky day you might excuse yourself to the shades, notice the hips,  
you can't see my purple eggplant eyes, I dart past towing kids and cart

I am the dark, kinky-haired mother who cleans your house,  
whose kids subdue their aches and pains on the playground or in parked cars  
while I earn three-fourths of a dollar that He will take from me

We are the women who cross your lines because our borders were double-crossed  
the same hands that once caressed us tuned on us,  
beat us, burnt cigarettes into our backs, strangled our throats

Tattooed our faces, beat fists into our breasts, made us beg and talk to the feet  
that kicked our bellies in the first, second, and third trimesters  
that knocked us down the stairs, knocked us over over-turned chairs

Held guns to our heads, yanked our hair till it ripped out in their hands,  
twisted our wrists behind our backs and preached to beg God  
We are your mothers, your sisters, your cousins, your daughters,

We are not blue statues at church where you light candles, we give birth to your heirs,  
We are the ones who turn from you in shame, beg for forgiveness  
when the hand became a fist, when the fist became a foot

When the foot became – God, we can not say what blunt object  
split our scalps, sliced our lips, trashed our teeth,  
spilled blood from our noses, bruise our mouths for speaking,

You are the Border Control stopping us at the border and ripping away our children,  
You are the police arresting us and throwing us back into the fire, You are the God  
we fear, you will never ask our names, you know our husbands and fathers,

Drink wine with them, break bread with them, collect their coins. You would rather  
have us gagged, raped, gunned down, parched along the low-way than save us  
– and yet, and yet– there is always a 'yet' –

This Trinity of Bridegroom, Gang, Border Police,  
barking on about our bodies – we carry on carrying kids,  
refusing your orders, praying for you.

*“We Pray for You” will be published in Unruly Women Write, vol 4 in January 2019.*

## **Words on the Paper**

*Julianne di Nenna*

Words in black and white  
the rights we are losing  
rolled back like tin foil  
We're sorry for your loss,  
a national loss in Maryland.

The Constitution weeps with us  
paper drenched in cold water  
and wrung dry for recycling  
starfish don't spin in circles  
but assemble peacefully, like Marylanders,

in news-telling and libraries.  
An aging and widowed woman  
shuffles in slippers at night  
groping in her dark mind  
searching every room of her

crumbling house for her children  
just yesterday they played here  
was it the first Amendment,  
freedom of religion and its  
squelched twin sisters free speech

and press, or Amendment 2  
the right to state security,  
the word 'guns' isn't mentioned:  
the paper reports school sports  
the paper reports Chesapeake health

the paper reports community events,  
our right to know when  
men violate laws and limits,  
our bodies don't belong to you,  
your praying hands don't matter.

Will blue crabs live alongside  
rising jellyfish, will they remember  
our dead who died for  
upholding rights, not ideology spread  
like plastics in the oceans?

oh Chesapeake we love your  
shores, your inlets, your crabs.  
Capital Gazette, the heart of  
our state oyster ripped from  
its shell, you'll remind us

to keep the Bay alive,  
clean the watershed, beaches,  
mind our dunes, mind our  
children, neighbors, fields of corn,  
and rise up and speak

and to stay with this old  
woman, drenched, on her knees  
rummaging for beloved Amendment 8  
the second part –her favorite  
'nor cruel and unusual punishment'

and let us not forget  
the runt of the litter  
the wrinkling, disappearing Amendment 9  
"certain rights shall not be  
construed to deny or disparage

others retained by the people"  
this ebb of the tide  
liberty and justice for all  
in this one nation – divisible  
[land under water] un-der God.

## **You Never Told Me**

*Julianne di Nenna*

You never told me  
oranges were blood red  
acid, burning holes in the belly.

The sun was big fire ball orange.  
Raspberries were red and we pulled out  
viscera by plucking them from the vine, and

blueberries more purplish, almost like figs, yes,  
cranberries were the burgundy of Chianti:  
things we had in common from bees.

Moro reds followed after you, from home,  
bitter fruits you carried in your own basket,  
blood oozing down from your womb.

Sanguine, stark, bitter-sweet, you called after  
puncturing the peel, pouring guts.  
You never told me.



# **Reality and Fiction Take the Stage**

*Nic Schaedig*

Reality and fiction take the stage  
They begin their dance  
By twirling past my eyes  
Passing by  
Blurring together  
Creating such astonishment  
It is unknown  
If it even really happened  
They move their show  
To my ear drums  
Where they tap dance  
Slightly off beat  
The music  
Does not seem to match their number  
Finally comes the final act  
They take their places  
On my nerves  
They fly from one  
To another  
They send chills  
And sensations  
Like no performance has before  
Reality and fiction take a bow  
Go their separate ways  
And await their next casting call

## **Realizations**

*Nic Schaedig*

You are the human equivalent  
To a brick wall  
No amount of begging  
Or pleading  
Will move you  
In a feeble attempt  
To save you  
You are a mountain  
Standing tall and proud  
When all you are  
Is a creation of chance  
That just creates an obstacle  
To anyone who gets too close  
You are every single one  
Of the seven deadly sins  
In one body  
Not just a demon  
But the devil in disguise  
Whispering empty promises  
Only to drag  
Every  
Single person  
Through all the seven layers  
You call  
Love

## **Paris After All the Wars**

*Lennart Lundb*

A couple stands kissing in the doorway  
down the street from the *Quatre Saisons*.  
The man in the well-tailored tuxedo  
leans on a balcony above the Boulevard,  
as though captured by Caillebotte.  
Young revelers dance by the Seine  
to the sounds of a makeshift band.

They are not us. They never were.  
Still, you marvel at their happy lives.

Young *filles de joie* stand in the shadows  
across the street from a doorway  
near an emptying laborers tavern.  
The rough-dressed children dance  
a ring around the rosie on a flat roof.  
A war-widow sells flowers from a bridge  
near Notre Dame, looks down to the  
boats crowded with wealthy tourists.

We are invisible. We always have been.

You will now forget you read this.

# **Anatomy of a Heartbreak**

*Tan Shivers*

“I can’t do this anymore”, she wrestled the words from her lips  
My feet went numb. The same feet  
that took late night walks with her  
on the beach during those cool  
summer nights

My legs felt as stiff as the oak  
trees we scurried under to find shelter  
from the pop up Charleston rain showers  
on our occasional walk through the park

My knees buckled like the old makeshift  
bridge we crossed while trekking across the  
pond to our secret hideout. Each step felt as  
dangerous as our love, but still worth the risk

My thighs burned like the bonfires we watched  
as we sat camp side with friends. No matter  
where she sat in our little group, she’d always  
end up in my lap; it was her favorite place to sit

My stomach knotted like the old rope we used  
to tie around a worn out tire we found in the back  
of her uncle’s red pick up truck. We hung it on a  
tree on his farm and made a charming little swing

My hands tingled like my tongue after being  
forced to consume the worst sour candy as payment  
for losing a friendly bet. She’d always laugh at  
the silly faces I made as I tried to brave the tartness

My arms felt as heavy as the bulky, sun beaten  
wicker baskets I carried after we spent the majority  
of a mid July afternoon picking peaches. She’d always  
try to convince me there was room for one more peach

My chest sunk like the coins she'd gleefully toss into the wishing well at the mall. She'd close her eyes so tight, it made her forehead wrinkle a little. After letting out a sigh, she'd release the coins as if releasing doves into the sky

My neck tightened like the chain on her bicycle after having to repair it for the millionth time. I always felt like a surgeon performing a critical operation the way she'd study my hands as I carefully affixed the metal chain back to its proper place

My mouth was dry like the air on those cold winter mornings we spent cuddled in our warm bed hoping the alarm clock had somehow made a mistake by ringing too early ahead of its designated time. We took turns hitting the snooze button

My nose felt congested like the traffic after a baseball game at the Joe Riley stadium. I found her frustration with the sluggish pace of the cars to be considerably entertaining. I'd jokingly keep track of the number of times she'd yell, "Just drive, people!"

My ears rang like the cowbells she'd playfully clank to summon me to the kitchen table to partake in one of her masterfully crafted meals. The more I pretended not to hear it, the louder she'd clang them together

My eyes filled with tears like the ones that trickled down her face after engaging in a nuclear war of words. My arsenal consisted of the most hurtful things I could think of and, sadly, I used them without hesitation

My heart broke just like hers after I'd selfishly shatter one of many promises, never realizing the pain it caused her. She'd tirelessly try to explain the physical distress each heartbreak produced but I never quite understood it... until now

## **Northern Lights**

*Jessica Goody*

The pack ice resembles a mosaic of broken tiles where pups croak and croon, rolling playfully, enjoying the sensation of snow. Mothers plump and banded nurse pups who expand balloon-like as their fur gradually

darkens: ice-white, butter-blond, and dappled silver. They swirl in greenish water, trailing auras of bubbles behind them in a serpentine interpretive dance, joyful, reveling in their element. The silent fireworks of the

aurora borealis flash overhead like searchlights, mint, mauve, cobalt, barium green and methane blue, glowing while above them, polar bears stalk the icy plateau like wardens, waiting, tints glinting in their colorless fur.

## **The Moon Stalker**

*Jessica Goody*

I

Tigers stalk the night,  
prowling in the green darkness,  
glowing like the moon.

II

A golden surprise,  
their eyes flash in the shadows,  
striped with smoke and flame.

## **Runestones**

*Jessica Goody*

The words ring inside me,  
reverberating off my ribcage,  
bouncing between bones.

They burn on my tongue,  
each one a different color.  
Peel them out of my skull,

bleed them from my fingertips,  
syllable by syllable, like rain.  
I soak in language like a warm bath,

bursting from the water, soaking the pages  
with my thoughts. Stories wind their way  
through my bloodstream, cell by cell.

Seized from the marrow of my bones,  
they burn across the page like wildfire,  
unearthed letter by letter, like sand-scoured runes.

Memories breathe and burn, setting my senses alight.  
My skin is streaked with my past lives,  
their music swelling my flesh, ripe as bursting fruit.

## **Revelation**

*Inspired by W. B. Yeats*

*Jessica Goody*

I am swollen with your own potential,  
teetering on a precipice over the sea.  
While I wait, the moon ticks toward retrograde.  
When the last grain of sand clears the hourglass,

you will lose me, the child-melon of my stomach  
rising like a red balloon, a dream on a string.  
She will tear you apart and pick your bones clean.  
Later, will you climb upstairs in the dark,

desolate and seeking sympathy,  
a single, symbolic candle throwing shadows  
on the wall, and come to me, an afterthought?  
The clandestine moon might have an answer.

I could consult the cards, the ghosts,  
my moon-belly smooth and swollen as new fruit.



## **Images**

*Jessica Goody*

I am a treasure hunter,  
eager as a wildcat stalking silent prey.  
Captivated by texture and those precise accidents

known as serendipity, my subconscious  
links details into patterns, finding synchronicity.  
The human eye is clouded, overstimulated by detail.

The black box of the camera parses the scene,  
sweeping away the nimbus obscuring the view,  
deepening the revelations caught by the mirror

of its eye. I thrive on these discoveries, the explosion  
as a thought breaks the surface of the complex  
rivers of neurons and joyfully catches the light.

## **Songs...**

*John Kojak*

Some people are so lonely,  
there are no songs for it.  
They would never get played.  
Alone in their madness,  
they weep.  
Only the gadflies are on parade.

## **Moloch's Retort**

*John Kojak*

*In Part II of his poem Howl, Alan Ginsburg uses Moloch, the ancient pagan God of child sacrifice, as a metaphor for the evils of capitalism and the military industrial complex that he believed was slaughtering the youth of his generation and suppressing their freedoms. This poem is envisioned as Moloch's retort to the young poet.*

Mr. Ginsberg,

You are nothing—a bohemian pimp,  
wasting his Zig-Zag days in dead-beat hotels  
while piSSing hypnotic libations on the walls.  
You have no language control.  
It's all Hiroshima howls and fuck yoUs,  
using your jewGANTIC nose and niggardly prose  
to peddle dream machines to those with EyEs wide closed.  
I am the new hAte, same as the old hAte,  
the resistance to your gasoline dreams.  
An all-KKKnowing Cyclops of american EXceptionalism,  
laying waste to the gyzym junky generation  
littering the streets of this Mad House nation.  
Silence! May \$ale philosophy to fools,  
But america is dead (broke), so keep your non-cents.  
I'll take the change, and a bus to Rockland.  
Go see your mother, and mother-fuck her.  
Karl killed the Wobblies, she told me so,  
so shut your pinko pie hOle  
you twittering twit-twat. Lest I,  
Moloch, the gloriously crowned King of the South,  
bugger you and fuck your mOuth.

Moloch

## **The Candle in the Wind**

*Daniel de Culla*

It's the story  
When there was no on Earth  
Light and electricity industry  
And Wo/Men  
Took great care of their candles  
Using in their defense  
Facing the mysteries of the night  
Or placing by the day  
At the foot of prints and imagery  
For to they help them  
Carrying their heavy load  
Of daily life.  
It happened, one day  
that a certain Zagan  
That he was a farmhand  
And worked in the herd  
Of a gentleman from Requena de Campos  
In the Palencia ' s province  
He came to a covered place  
On a street or square  
Built on pillars  
Bringing a candle in his hand  
To walk or to get rid  
Of the Moon or of the shadows  
When, suddenly, from somewhere  
An air came to him in movement  
Even if It was at rest  
That brought smelling as a trace  
Leaving the hunting pieces

Or the bullet's gap  
In the bore of the firearm  
That it turned off the candle  
And it turned it off again  
When he tried to light it  
And that suddenly touching his nape  
As it usually does  
In the bone that dogs have  
Between the ears  
Saying in his ears:  
-Whoever goes out at night and watches  
Nothing is revealed  
That at night all cats are brown  
And what is done at night  
In the morning it seems.

## **Falling and Floating**

*Jen Banta*

I am spinning  
I am floating

I am Sufi  
I am Islam

I am Buddha  
I am Rumi

I am lost  
I am tired of seeking  
I know there is no rest

For my soul beats to a drum my eyes can't see  
And my spirit flies on sparks my skin can't touch

I am falling  
Floating in the Dead Sea  
Waiting for the sun  
To kiss my skin

## **Haiku Sunflower**

*Fred Rosenblum*

Blackcaps ride the face  
Of a giant on the wind  
Its feeder teeters

*Published by the Aurorean, Vol. XXI, Issue 2, Fall/Winter 2016/17*

## **Modeling for the Gods**

*Fred Rosenblum*

A bull moose ruminated on the tender buds of a fallen white birch  
I'd felled the day before

Wool-capped and flannelled, I bucked-up green fuel to season and sell warm and feed my  
family in the year to come

And still ... snowflakes fell, thick and wet from the heavy grey veil  
of late spring's precipitous anomaly. A smear of a star, our sun

Faint in the flurry of a nimbostratus, low flame ceiling. Heatless aloft the broken spears in  
a drift that sprang with sprouts of embittered buddings –

Nutty chewables, that I too, though with doubt and an angst for its difficulty consumed  
with cold visibilities of pulmonary escapement –

Frigid respirations, to illustrate that we were somehow, to some degree, enough akin, so  
as to begut these same acrid edibles

A breathtaking demonstration of mandibles proving, save the obvious lingual and digestive  
disparities, a connection in this microcosm beyond the snow globe of our imaginations

*Published by Gold Man Review, Issue 7*

## **Onyx Delight, Witness to the Brothel Incident: Gold Creek, Colorado Territory**

*Robert Cooperman*

After slave days I thought I'd the right  
to name myself, but got snatched up  
by Madam Jezzy, fast-talking me  
into the slavery of sweaty pallets,  
open thighs and grunting men.  
Come to think of it, I had it easier  
as a house servant, even with Master  
sneaking into my attic room some nights.

When Silas Stillwater tossed lye at Mary  
for a man's evil joke, I grabbed, a gent's gun,  
but someone hissed,

"Be easy, or you'll get the same."

"Bastards!" I shouted; some of us gals  
hauled Mary to Doc's. He dabbed her  
with cool, soothing water, smeared on lard,  
poured laudanum down her throat  
like a summer sizzling sarsaparilla.

When I stepped out the next morning,  
Sheriff grabbed me, dragged me to my room,  
pistoned me like a locomotive, then tossed me  
like a bale onto the first stage.

"You come back," his slug-finger pointed,  
"you'll hemp-dance longer than the War."  
I laughed to myself: while he was at the nasty,  
I'd groped through his tossed aside britches,  
found his dust pouch and a gold watch.

Maybe I'll set up my own brothel,  
or find a man ain't afraid of farm work,  
though men like that are harder to come by  
than a lode wide and rich as the Mississippi:  
a sobbing shame Mary never found one either.

**Pastor Lazarus Markham, After the Murder  
of Lily Bartell: Gold Creek, the Colorado Territory**

*Robert Cooperman*

Sin begets sin,  
so I would preach,  
had I the courage.

**Magi Poem**

*Alan Britt*

Adoration of the Magi becomes a love affair  
between two jays & a catbird, between a zucchini  
flower tumbling the saffron ledge of her ceramic  
Sun God pot more sacred than any pyramid on  
the Giza Plateau, that is to say when one is head  
over heels in love with being in love—that's the  
hold you have on me, the way we verbally wrestle  
like two Tasmanian devils caught in a roulette wheel  
praying for the ivory ball of fate to rig the sails  
of our romance around an ever expanding  
obsidian ring upon the Indian ocean.



## **The Painted Backdrop**

*Robert Joe Stout*

“In theater there are curtains, there’s a stage,  
the curtains open and one sees  
a painted backdrop—that’s what the government,  
the businesses, have done, painted  
a scene: sailboats, palm trees, sidewalk cafes.  
Paid actors dance across the set, laughing people  
cheering Carnaval, sipping margaritas,  
bikini-clad on sparkling white sand beaches  
hugging, kissing, black sombreroed caballeros  
waving as their silver-bridled horses prance.”

Don Martín lifts

trembling fingers to sun-cracked lips then hoarsely:  
“Fake! A fantasy!” Behind the painted backdrop  
huddles the real, not scripted make-believe.  
Hunched women digging, sorting, morgues stacked  
with bones, torn shirts, rotted flesh. Three months  
stretching into four, five, six waiting for comparisons  
of DNAs. Every week another site, another dozen,  
twenty, forty bodies. The government—no help;  
maybe pay out millions to build new morgues.  
“That’s Veracruz, Veracruz behind the pretty  
painted scenes. Tell the truth and you’ll be one  
of thousands pulled in pieces from an unmarked grave.”

## **What About Now**

*Louis Marin*

I guess the tears will eventually dry  
though they seem in endless supply.  
Misty mornings and red-eyed nights,  
    make me wonder at my future.  
    I beg for a broken heart's cure,  
and a rediscovery of life's delights.

Sadness clouds everything now,  
    skews my former rosy brow.  
I would give all for a smiling mirror,  
    but the reflection moans in hurt,  
    my soul feels drug through dirt,  
and love's healing is no nearer.

I admit I do tend to dramatize  
    when life brings tears to my eyes.  
    Though damaged, my body is alive.  
I will throw my hat back into the ring,  
    and find another new ballad to sing.  
    This broken heart will still survive.

## **Train Of Paperclips**

*Louis Marin*

The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad  
rolls along river banks through woodlands.  
Cars of potatoes by the hopper load  
are carried along the rail's steel bands.

From the fields of Northern Maine  
steadily south the train steams,  
through small towns into forest again,  
an unending journey it seems.

Black smoke, steel wheels, pistons,  
all is noise as she passes by,  
shaking the earth with 400 tons,  
a grand sight, few can deny.

*"Lou, just hand me a paper clip,  
quit pretending they are a train  
or some kind of spaceship.  
What is wrong with your brain?"*

## **Her Tattoo**

*Susan Mitchell*

I saw the woman as she walked  
before me. A tattoo lay across her skin:  
one wooden cross standing straight,  
pointing upward from her calf,  
its own perpendicular arm stretching  
the width of her well-muscled leg.

The left side of the cross was draped  
in an angel's wing, heavy with glory  
and light with flight.  
The right side engulfed in stunning  
flames a sunset's color with a dawn's regret.

With each step, the tattoo's wing  
fluttered and the flame danced.  
I followed her even beyond  
my own destination.

I heard her laugh at  
Something her companion said  
and watched the tattoo disappear  
around a corner.

When I arrived at the intersection  
she and her tattoo were gone  
and yet I still did not know  
on which side I belonged.

## **The Fight is Won**

*Susan Mitchell*

Some don't like my poetry because  
it is so see-through like a second  
wedding with a blushing bride:  
everyone knows she should not blush.  
Some tell me writing is frivolous  
and act as though it is a waste of time  
but my guts keep churning, my brain  
hurls itself against my skull until  
I pick up a pen,  
write words that  
I mark out and some I keep.  
I wrestle with adjectives and verbs  
until one of us yells "uncle!"  
Days and nights the match continues  
with the crashing of phrases  
and the gnawing of adverbs.  
At last, I lay panting on the floor,  
my body sweats. I reach over,  
grab a cigarette, light it,  
take a few quick deep  
drags then put it out in the wine glass  
that has one last drink still inside.  
I lay back and read the first final draft.  
Oh, what it takes to write something  
so frivolous.

## Poison of Choice

*Iris Orpi*

Let's talk, before the layers,  
the peeling back—the sound it makes when  
you put a knife to the comfort responses  
and expose raw will to the questions,  
when you pick apart the abstract constructs  
like semantics and “cultural nuances”  
and the past distorting the present,  
what didn't you have enough of in life,  
or what was on TV when you were most  
impressionable. Can we call it what it is,  
you know there is power in naming things.  
Or will that make you feel “personally  
attacked”? Is it desire? If it's the most  
irrational kind, I can try to understand that.  
Vindictiveness? Like one of those soap  
opera villains who spend all their energy  
trying to destroy someone?  
Is money involved? A quid pro quo?  
What's the sun your world revolves around?  
What book might you take a right-hand  
oath on that would make you think twice  
about perjuring yourself?  
Where's your line in the sand?  
I mean you might as well be judged  
for who you really are, right?  
If you don't care, you don't care.  
Maybe other people's currencies don't mean  
anything to you. So maybe just say that?  
So they can stop haggling and everyone can  
move on. I don't have all day to stand here.  
Describe for me the method of hurting when  
you coerce from behind the briar the one  
or two actual motives that would be  
otherwise unclothed, pungent like screams.  
Let's talk about the kind of conversation  
it takes to draw the truth out like blood.

Away, away from emotional rhetoric.  
We are not our vulnerability, our  
exploitability. We are the evils we choose  
to fight for, emaciated and god-like,  
on the other side of the needle's eye.

## **They Signed their Fake Names in Cheap Ink**

*Iris Orpi*

The biggest lie that they told,  
having stood tall and proud in the sun  
for the longest time,  
flaunting its bold, synthetic colors  
and tastefully disguised malice  
now covered under the darkening sky.  
I saw the first rain of the season  
picking at its skin like drops of acid.  
It must have felt pain,  
but it dared not cry out  
as a puddle of faded, empty glory  
formed at its feet.  
The purity of the water  
made short work of its clothes.  
Everything wore off, all the patterns  
bled out into a wash of confusion,  
of chaos, before dissipating  
completely into less than nothing:  
a waste of time,  
a waste of space.  
A length of pavement  
on which the offended faith  
must now find its way back.  
The carefully misused little truths,  
the half-truths and omissions,  
the tricks and misdirection,  
and, at the core,  
the blatant untruths,  
came undone in layers,  
soaking up dirt and turning into mud.

It would have stained anyone,  
had anyone been standing nearby.  
But there was no one now.  
It stood alone,  
naked and exposed  
and ashamed.  
Still, it betrayed no sign of anguish.  
It was that kind of monster.  
It was almost beautiful.  
But I knew better.

## **Being Here**

*Iris Orpi*

With misty eyes  
I stand and watch as the ambiguity  
of the fall unravels, becomes  
apologies and algorithms  
enough to power a city.  
Aren't revelations just lines of code  
in another language? We study  
the end while it peers back at us  
through the keyhole of retrospect,  
forges a kinder word than pity for  
the passion about to be misspent.  
It had been everything  
before the morning after  
became hyper-real. And then  
the senses become so hungry  
and form an addiction to the dark  
literature of second chances.  
Wintry melancholy.  
Rain of crude emeralds,  
love choking on knives  
and the expiry dates on all  
the jars in the cupboard.  
Once, I drew a Venn diagram of  
things that usher in the future  
and things that become the sky



when you lift them high enough;  
I wrote a line connecting one  
with the other.  
This is that line,  
prism of finally understanding,  
deconstructing the colors  
on the kitchen floor:  
orange, purple, chartreuse.

## Poem

*Pat St-Arnaud*

Apatride -  
Funny that  
often told  
Speak white, boy, speak white  
and here am I writing white  
about my mother tongue  
French son of French parents  
Canadian, at that  
from Montreal  
due East of the center of its universe  
Far West of what the French think French should be  
certainly not dusty bottomed farmers  
often told  
often enough anyway

Then I'm outta there  
burn out by city lights  
overpriced poor apartments by the track  
EE  
for three hours at three AM  
Got me a house by the seashore  
- my brother gave it six months, it's been six years  
smack down in Acadiana, right by the wharfs  
where they were told they didn't speak the bon français  
sometime between the deportation and the modern survival  
pretty amazing to think of it that they'd still speak it  
must have been strong mothers  
but anyway - here they are  
still brarethreading their culture but hanging on  
and they speak white to me , speak white  
because someone told them they didn't speak the bon français  
as if joul was any better  
as if uniform beige was any better  
than the power of their color.

# **Falls Apart**

*Tevin Church*

[VERSE 1:]

Won't blink, just hear the beat and lose sleep  
Don't think, I'll drink the pool that's too deep  
Can't sink, or reminisce, but lost thoughts  
Bring bliss, and dreams of Spring underneath  
The casket turns as we feed the worms  
I'm not concerned, since I have no fear  
Hear here, the sounds of doubt'll ring clear  
Go near, you might find something else  
About yourself, that you might not like  
Won't fight the fate, I'm what you love to hate  
Blow smoke, go ghost, like a token black  
With his baseball cap turned backwards after  
Batting average laughter made him lavish, dapper  
Brand new clothes, let me feed the matrix  
I'll close my eyes and still see the hatred  
When it rains it pours, I never snore, I'm boring  
Such a gracious morning, hear the Reaper yawning  
I'm not conforming, 'til you feel my torment  
It's a torrent that turns the shorelines to porridge  
Like a perfect storm... The breeze of heathens...  
I wish love was in season...  
It could be the reason...  
May my restless soul become a tested beacon

[REFRAIN:]

You can have my heart before it falls apart  
Footsteps in the Dark, where art thou? I'm lost.

[VERSE 2:]

No remorse for the damned, just a man with a plan  
And the moxy of Uncle Sam  
Mayhem and damage, I'm a savage bastard  
That regrets every single action that mattered  
Your faults don't make you weak, don't blink  
Don't think, don't cry, just be...  
The time that we have is precious, so learn your lesson  
And stop with the second-guessing

Rome wasn't built in a day, but how will you know  
Where you'll go if you don't try anyway?  
Rather die anyday? Take your life  
Because this world has no place for weakness.  
I've seen it all... I've lived and died and made peace  
With the fall, if I'm big or small, I'll walk tall  
I'm a dog, I'm a wolf, never shook or sorry  
Even if you harm me, can't erase my stories.

[REFRAIN:]

You can have my heart before it falls apart  
Footsteps in the Dark, where art thou? I'm lost.

## Settle Down

*Tevin Church*

*5.10.14*

[Verse 1]

(Some say my) Best verse is, the one that curses  
Me to be true, too cool for you. No  
Dues to undo, so blue for who it is  
I rue to rule out; Kind of like  
Partly cloudy days, that crush rays of the  
Sun to slay the shade. A switchblade in a  
Brush, to rip the scene I paint green on a  
Page, I record dreams that play; Every-

[Refrain]

-Day when I awake into a  
State I just can't place, and see a  
Face that takes my breath a-wayward  
Fragrance I can taste, it makes me  
Settle down, settle down, settle down, settle down; It makes me  
Settle down, settle down, settle down, settle down.

[x2]

[Verse 2]

(Some say I'm) Hardly real, but I'm hardly nervous. No  
Words in person to defeat the purpose, My  
Vibe's enough; Not obvious--I'm not  
Live enough, but my drive's enough. You  
Liven up, my qualities; She's  
Got me wanting her desperately. Du-  
-ality, personality, my reality, with you; Every-

[Refrain]

-Day when I awake into a  
State I just can't place, and see a  
Face that takes my breath a-wayward  
Fragrance I can taste, it makes me  
Settle down, settle down, settle down, settle down; It makes me  
Settle down, settle down, settle down, settle down.

[x2]

# Withstand the Drought

*Tevin Church*

*1.13.2018*

## [VERSE 1]

Awakened from my passive meditation, I am  
Greeted by a world filled with massive imitation; Every  
Facet and aspect has a drastically negative conno-  
-tation... Unhappiness leads to assimilation...  
Soothsayers seek the fountain of youth; What will you  
Lose in the pursuit of truth? The very fabric of a  
Being with his dreams torn and split at the seams; Compre-  
-hending the meanings of all things for offsprings  
Use my clout, I'm reaching out, never had doubts I'd bring about  
A shift in minds, new paradigms, two pairs of dimes- it all adds up  
Lust to trust, but too dangerous. It's a must I have bucks,  
grand slam your luck  
Grandstand, I can make these hands backflip, somersault;  
Doze off, won't pause  
Sit back and wonder... and let my mind wander... It's an  
Exhibition, like the chess division, afflicted late night restless depictions  
Of Worlds unseen, sights unknown, alone on this road so gone; Will I  
Ever go home? Man, I don't know anymore, so I must be strong, go on.

## [REFRAIN]

A mere demonstration, back-to-basics, when you  
Never have to 'fake it 'til you make it,' meaning greatness; I don't  
Stay for conversations, or party favors, I'd rather chase this  
Paper, come alive and recognize it's do-or-die. Choose a  
Side, or pick the pieces up; not trying to be facetious, but I  
Mean it; I'll say I'm not leaving without a reason to. In-  
-vincible and badder-than-average, but can you manage to  
Withstand the drought? We're far out, you'll fall out...

## [VERSE 2]

Forgetting to regret my actions, like  
Spilt milk-erased and then replaced by napkins (Oh!)  
Out of the frying pan, and into the stove; Heating up  
This humble aboad with the souls of R.I.P.'d rappers  
I'm the king of this ethereal plane, and your  
Material things are like worms within the wings...

This is merely the beginning; I told you once before, I'll you twice again, I'm never ever finished winning. You jamokes think you're slicker than smoke, I got a Ghost that is quicker than most, I'm no joke; Hanging Out, at the Babylon Grove with the bohemians; A Future presentation, still featureless... Reaching Iridescent twilight--I was born in the dark, with a Heart sharper than shards, I don't know where to start. We can remember like a shimmering star, sparkle and dazzle in Fantastic patterns until we simmer appart..

[REFRAIN]

A mere demonstration, back-to-basics, when you Never have to 'fake it 'til you make it,' meaning greatness; I don't Stay for conversations, or party favors, I'd rather chase this Paper, come alive and recognize it's do-or-die. Choose a Side, or pick the pieces up; not trying to be facetious, but I Mean it; I'll say I'm not leaving without a reason to. Invincible and badder-than-average, but can you manage to Withstand the drought? We're far out, you'll fall out..

## Want

*Melissa Chappell*

Driving up to his mountain home:

*God help me*, I want him.

I do not want to be free of him.

I want him

like a drowning woman  
dies for air.

I want him like the river  
wants the ocean.

I want him like a tree's bark  
begs to be caressed.

I want to catch his scent  
as he passes by.

I want him as parched earth  
wants rain,  
and as the waters

want to return,  
to fill to bursting  
some thankful cloud.

I want to feel him around me,  
now wrapped in skin,

bone upon bone,  
blood and blood  
pulse together  
in quarter time.

I want to be his need,  
flowing through his pores,  
like a natural spring  
rising through shale stone  
high in the mountains.

I want him to twine around me,  
vining, like an ancient vine,  
burgeoning with fruit.

I want him within me, in the fulness of our youth,  
when Polaris was ours to pull down from the sky.

I want the mystery of us to come,  
one with another.

I want him to place his mouth upon mine,  
compelled, as a hand is compelled to caress cashmere.



I want him to need me,  
I want to gaze into his face,  
and seeing the want there in his eyes,  
the ocean, in its rocking swells,  
*God help me,*  
he wants me;  
in my possession the key to his freedom,  
a freedom that my prisoner does not want.

# **life in sunlight**

*Daniel Moro*

here bending light flickers  
down each lane and  
the inverted shadows  
of young boys running  
turn the corner  
turning into mystery  
the house of God

you don't have to call it loneliness  
this constant search for something  
and never finding it

we find pain in blue eyes  
in brown eyes  
and in eyes with no color  
there are wounds here

the crickets hum under the deck  
and in the trees and later on  
quieten near dawn  
small mirrored worlds are born  
on the tips of green swords  
small eyes look on, look on  
look on

## **CLOUD II**

*Karina Bush*

Seed to flower to seed  
To flower to seed to flower

The great lotus  
Feeding chain

Navel to brain to navel  
To brain to navel to brain

He bares a man inanimate  
Needing fed

A promise of ecstasy  
Is made

Probing his dissonance  
It pollinates

Back  
Seed to brain to seed

# **KARMA MAN**

*Karina Bush*

Living my karma  
Via you

I asked to be degenerate  
And life brought  
Your constant dissolution

I chose my  
Innate ability to harm myself  
Can learn every lesson but this selfish  
Drive to have the spectrum  
Of intense

Like karma  
My punishment memory  
Is long  
When your time comes  
Don't cry for sympathy  
You picked first  
You were fully grown  
You entered our vow to  
Execute sufficient misery

## **ASHES**

*Karina Bush*

A grey wall  
Between us  
Frames of decay

Sinking into a thought  
I don't want to accept

While my body is young  
Ripe in the midday sun  
An urge to burn  
Unbearable suchness

In the ashes  
In the quantum  
When our bodies  
Finally break down

The matter between us  
Will not exist

The oceans  
The wrong turns  
The deeds

Meanwhile

We miss all the love  
Its impermanence

## **The Scarlet Water.**

*Stuti Shree*

Craved for a rebelling brink  
In this bubble of perfection  
Wrapped in a blanket so shrunk  
Fragile consoling deterioration.

She, a coy feathery being in a dungeon  
Singing a melancholy on a metallic twig  
Dies a zillion deaths in a moment  
Fancied a reviving breeze in a gig

These silvery bars capturing her  
Ceasing her to eat the golden grains  
Such sympathetic seeds weren't her need  
Never wanted to be ordained!

All was a want to jeopardize  
To endanger her blood and bone  
A drive to realize  
The thrill to escape alone.

Looking on her winsome feathers  
Trying to flip and flap it  
When all falls down in shatters  
As she saw rustiness in her plumage and spirit.

The Dawn was ahead  
But no journey of grain to find  
Too much cold once burnt her  
And now too much light blinds.

She shifted feebly in her cage golden  
Which seemed like a thorny rose  
Wanted to flee far now  
Get out of this silhouette show.

Memor of the free dusks and dawns  
Rewind in her thoughts  
Sought to be with her beloved ones  
To achieve the blazing shine.

Maybe her decision was late  
The fate had already else decided  
She chose to dare or die  
Forgetting life and death were just coincided

Her feathers flapped against the bars  
Bruises got worsened  
Sweat was pouring like a shower  
Maybe this was the end.

As she kept fighting with the inanimate  
Drops of her unsullied blood flew  
Down was kept a watery bowl of ferrate  
Which tasted her drooped droplets few  
Coin of fate flipped for her with a nyctophilic love  
An enslaved soul left the shape  
Olive leaves were taken form that dove  
She assumed her freedom was just sour grapes.

Soon another same comes flying  
Sat on the reddish bowl  
Understand the maxim it was saying  
Around must be a cheesy fowl

Sensed quivering kenopsia in the cage hung above  
Standing behind was the trapper  
Took her in his palms so serrated  
Afraid her, was 'bout to shatter

The freedom is exorbitant she thought  
Contused the culprit with her beak  
Fumbled he as she fled away  
To her falling apart was for weaks.

Jouska of the act so evil  
Played as she emerged out of dark bowers  
A vow was taken in her mother's demise,  
For a revenge of the scarlet water.

## **The Clock Is Ticking**

*Stuti Shree*

*Sehnsucht of dead alive  
blacks painted white  
to be washed handsome  
by swords winsome  
battle starts alight.*

*Darkest dawns  
stolen crowns  
tsunami of feels  
real and reel  
fallen masks of smile  
left, a frown.*

*Shatters of soil  
wars turmoil  
rustic defeats  
shining cheats  
as red starts to boil.*

*As been told  
the darkest bold  
sussed secrets  
anecdote speeches  
telldates untold.*

*Voice behind wars  
long gone star  
left the dark behind  
covered sunshine  
an orb full of scars.*



*Classic of contemporary  
smoke filled bowers weary  
all forgotten crimes  
with punishment sublime  
mastering the robbery.*

*Swords up the throat  
on portrayed villains  
by made up heroes  
with hollow furrows  
lastly in the end  
let the clock spend.*

## **WITH THE MOTOR RUNNING**

*John Grey*

inside the garage,  
the world went out of focus

a man was bent over the  
steering wheel  
while the motor ran

no one was going anywhere  
except the smoke out  
the hastily opened door

the cop looked in  
at a dead man

who stared at his discoverer without interest  
as if the one peering in the window  
was the slab of cold meat

## **Turn, Turn, Turn**

*Scott Thomas Outlar*

This is not a poem  
but a simple reminder  
that all of these experiences  
are temporary  
and fleeting,  
yet still  
far more beautiful  
than any fallen human being  
could ever ask, hope,  
or dare dream of.

Like a cat fight  
by an oak tree  
under the blanket of midnight.

Like a last kiss  
on a bridge stained  
with the smell of smoke.

Like a first breath  
from two fresh lungs  
inhaling accidental evolution.

Everyone has a breaking point.

The trick  
is to come away  
at the end of the process  
with even more  
pieces of the puzzle  
in place  
than there were  
to begin with.

*originally published in Dissident Voice*

## **Eternal and Infinite**

*Scott Thomas Outlar*

Are those stars  
or the headlights of a car?  
O my dear,  
we are all just deer  
staring at God.

### **Graveside**

*ayaz daryl nielsen*

three pall bearers  
a defrocked priest  
and an ex-wife's  
hangover

### **Poem**

*ayaz daryl nielsen*

what the magpie  
of gastrointestinal distress  
must have done—  
dribble, slobber,  
barf, then chortle  
in the font  
of my morning's  
karmic dues

## **Never Land**

*James B. Nicola*

Spun like a weightless tale in Neverland  
where everyone's half-dreaming or half-dead  
and souls do not age, I beam as light, in-  
substantial, blazing, fading, unrooted,  
free and feral as an electron spin-  
ning on a random quest for protons and  
neutrons to make a nucleus whose charge  
will hold mine with its hope. The world's full of  
potential passing, ionized as air,  
and somehow I've remained a soul-at-large  
who would engage and bond—have, here and  
there—  
but orbit on, merely observing love.

Applause, though, has spurred me to blinking bright-  
er, faster. Yes, I feel the isotopes  
you've freed and circle, tingling. Yes! Tonight  
shall we both find completion?—or, possessed,  
never land, like hummingbirds with high hopes,  
exhausted by the never ending rest?

## **Parade of Shackles**

*for the elephants of Kerala*

*Shawn Anto*

Around us– do you hear a deep rumble?  
One festival to another, we sing & dance  
As they are being paraded around  
Beneath the scorching sun, hours with no rest  
What creature knows their own soul  
Suffering in silence, embodiment of Lord Ganesh  
Raise a hand to the veil–hailing ‘tradition’, hailing ‘culture’  
But what about extravagant, majestic calmness?

Hear the ringing, exploitation  
How does one preach love & compassion but  
Live so deeply in hypocrisy, behind the pomp  
The ancient rumble  
How does one preach religious love, but condone suffering?

Bow–Thrissur Pooram  
Garland golden festive attire, running down their trunks  
Ivory spears & chains so tight, festering sores  
Raw barbaric bleeding wounds  
What glamour became gore  
What glory became their memory, they remember & so will you.

One must not be willfully blind  
To revel in the presence of beauty,  
We–the true monsters, the true beasts, come watch us ruin.

## **The Antlers**

*Shawn Anto*

I am the formal regeneration  
I am the formal authority  
I mean—control. I want my speaker in control—I am the speaker  
I want control.

Ask something—ask it.  
Honest something—honest it.

Why do the antlers fall off?  
Why do the unavailable fall off the heart?

I—or not I—come with demise  
Pitter—patter—two dimensional, sharp.

These faux relationships make forest  
Make hell make hoping  
Make maybe, make one day  
Make one night.

Eventually it gathers to become real  
Or it never does  
But what will, never will, will never extract.

Did the antlers never have a choice to stay put?  
Did you ever have a choice to make your reality  
& what voice was there & who whispered.

If there is something running, life is running  
After change, after regeneration  
After thinking differently  
“WOW THAT’S INSANE”  
The antlers grew back first on your head  
Then on your back.

But also, it’s true sanity  
Telling the self the same story  
The same forest the same the same the same.  
Bad things are authority

Bad things are happening  
Always will.

Or children of men are antlers  
Devotion to changing the narrative  
Who is the victim now & what is the how in our voice.  
Play a different song, the antlers grow back  
& how long does it take?  
Walk in the forest—change the story....wait.

## **Follow the Rules**

*Shawn Anto*

- I.  
Pit selves against one another, run out into the field—breathe.
- II. summarize in three breathes what it felt like to exit and become another.  
  
III. silence thoughts with more silence, shrivel up any creature.
- IV. nothing is everything, crashing down.  
  
V. hold me alive in burnt arms tasting of fresh bread.
- VI. watch fire roll out of the mouth.
- VII. I'm coming back to the room with a dagger & prayer.
- VIII. all the glory will last as long as this setting-sun
- IX. in this portal wound, I mask myself from caring embrace.
- X. no one will disturb me, not even these ghosts at my feet.

## **Videshi**

*For my culture*

*Shawn Anto*

*Foreigner,*

This is– Refraction, unsettling prismatic quivering  
pulsing between my Indian blood

Am I you? Or, Are you me?

Light ray, altered & pressed

New dominion over sky & sea

Brilliant color colonizing open horizon

transcendent dawn, symphony of hues await

irreversibly homogenized.

Now–Our skin

Rather die than be Americanized.

*All of this, will soon perish*

there are no wolves here, nor witches

only human nature–inevitable snare trapping us in two worlds

morphing old name, new name

from this very inception to annihilation

our hands are tied.

look back at beauty in desolation

Vexes, continues colonizing you

A trembling, tenuous glow

Sultry stitching through a perpetual, invisible rain

Bent, unscathed doppelganger facing me, who am i? who am I becoming?

Imitative, pas de deux, with yourself, one became fragment scattering

risking humanity.

I am trespassing against mother nature

Self-destruction, glimmering

my own reflection pained– awe-struck

slithering another Enemy

toward mutation.



*Stranger,*

Come bright, phosphorous boom  
Into the Genetic prism of gender & culture intertwined  
Echoing "We tend to see what we believe"  
Essence washing me toward someone I can no longer claim.  
Menacing symbol, old force  
As if Sonia Ghandi  
Who thrust into dynasty power  
hands crumbling, grieving  
*I become who I am forced to be.*

What remains grows ravenous  
Filtered through eyes glinting  
I beg for you to preach, pray for safety  
Groan: Man became flower  
Some order collected in disoriented light  
*They say all will perish in millennial hands*  
Undulating darkness, became opposite  
Rewiring our brain to become another  
In Falling out identity  
Must never say die, unless  
This becomes your land too.  
Say it once, red, white, blue reminding  
Us of every ivory gleaming country  
Glaring at brown skin  
Possessing one in the prism of my own trap, my own individuality  
Refracting  
Bending it once more  
Do I see?  
Tell me what you see.

*Now who's Alien,*

Am I You?

*kya aap mai hoon?*

