

## **A Casualty**

The day after Pearl Harbor  
his whole basketball team signed up

so he did too  
because that was one sure way

to get out of going to school  
And the Marines

taught him  
everything he needed to know

to become a sniper  
and a scout

before sending him,  
to Iwo Jima.

where he was taught  
to spray the caves with fire

to force the enemy to come out  
which they did

including one very young soldier,  
just a boy,

in flames.

And the only thing

he never learned

was how to live with that.

### **Something Falling**

I saw a shadow of something falling

As if from the tree to the grass

And I wondered if it were a bird

Or maybe a shadow

That looked like a bird -

That had the shape that a bird needs

To surf the skies-

But no hardiness yet in the wings

Now I think it was

a fledgling love

That tried the air

And fell to earth

Before it knew

The strength it takes to fly

*Maryalicia Post first long-form poem won the Gerard Manley Hopkins International Poetry Competition and was subsequently published as a book, 'After You', by Souvenir Press UK. Her five-line tanka and six-line cherita appear in online and print*

*journals. Other work has been published by Ogham Stone and Poetry Quarterly. She is a travel writer based in Dublin, Ireland.*

### **A Man Like Fire**

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

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

He approaches with his trademark swagger,  
leans over the table and almost staggers.  
A tumult of thoughts, hatred and regret,  
his desolate ego sensing a threat,  
he lights up another one and extends his hand,  
weathered aristocrat and the firebrand,  
a union like brimstone and ice,  
one to cool the other, a last throw of the dice.

Brown leather jacket and chainsmoker's breath,  
relentless anger of infinite depth,  
aged silver chains around his neck and wrists,  
he strikes the names off his long list.  
Outwardly despised, secretly adored,  
such black charisma can never be ignored.  
Those same chelsea boots, now scuffed and worn,  
stepping on the same oaken floor.

### **Meditating at the Crossroads**

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

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

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

To the North he sees a soldier, aged and weathered,  
clad in steel armour, in his helm a red feather,  
a man respected, a man-skilled and resolute,

loved in his lifetime, a legacy of high repute.

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

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

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

### **Aesthetics**

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

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

### **An Old Blue Oak**

Not as old as the Civil War, but close.  
The Blue Oak spreads its twisted arms

around a hospitable sky,  
arms decayed from the senseless violations  
of humans  
with their digging machines that sever roots  
and trucks that belch forth concrete.

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

### **Bicycle Chain**

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

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

## **An Uncanny Place**

Breaking of dawn

Crimson but pale

A place hardly recognizable

It is dark certainly

Still grey folds

Pleat themselves

It is made even more complicated now

The night lingers, shine of stars

In his eyes; but the waves

Roll back to the ocean

The blending of blue and black

Beneath the drip of soft-melting

Moon holding the diamond

Against which Love will be weighed

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

## **Augmented**

Look at you.

Talented designer, engineer,

marketer, entrepreneur.

I see you there.

Marching separately towards me

Down my lane searching for oil

You have done good by your trade.

There is good in you no doubt.

One could be intimidated  
With your machines snug underarm  
But not a geographer of here.  
We have seen this all before  
All entering new territory you are.  
Time to get the feet dirty and  
Breathe the good cold air.  
Technology is allowing you to  
Enter my realm of geography and memory.  
You need a guide.  
That way it will be better for us all.  
For I too am one of you rebels,  
Digging at the boundaries that  
Others cannot see.

## **Fuel**

Born 1985.  
A stone's throw away from Holy Cross School.  
1998, the microcosm that is North Belfast  
Such an oddity to hear of peace agreements  
Our greatest of endeavours  
Yet experience more walls built.  
One right through my Alexandra Park.  
Only divided park in Western Europe.  
And there was always the invisible geographies.  
Geography your fancy sat-nav could never show  
Or understand.  
That's where they are  
Ye best have a guild



If you know what good for ye wee lad.  
Plenty of psychic fossil fuel  
As Heaney would say  
Under the surface.  
Spawned a curiosity in me I guess.  
Clearly important this thing is, place, memory, land,  
Our place in it.  
Never satisfied with text books, the  
Geo-political answer always felt wrong.  
Few could understand,  
Handful could articulate,  
Curious to find out,  
Maybe possible you could change it then.

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

### **Because My Body Was Never Mine**

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

Bathed in the sweatiness  
Of unknown curses  
Sticky as the muddy sperm  
Before it turns to blood,  
My voice deafens the earth –

Like a bra  
That would not protect  
The breasts when rusted,  
Watery fingers arrived.  
Oiled in the middle, I,

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

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

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

Into a hip-hop –  
This chaos, of course, is  
What makes my skeleton  
An impatient tourist  
In its own grave.

They said – & I believed them:  
My body is the vast sea  
With wrecked ships,  
Drowning folks that once owned it  
Cried out for help but found

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

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

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

*Bola Opaleke is a Pushcart Prize-nominated poet. His poems have appeared or forthcoming in a few Journals like Frontier Poetry, Poetry Quarterly, The Indianapolis Review, Poetry Pacific, Drunk Monkeys, Temz Review, St. Peters College(University of Saskatchewan) Anthology (Society 2013 Vol. 10), Pastiche Magazine, and others. He holds a degree in City Planning and lives in Winnipeg MB. Find him at [www.bolaopaleke.com](http://www.bolaopaleke.com).*

**Bicycle**

On the potholed tarred road, pedalling at time's pace  
Three young men smile at life, in sorrow and solace  
Dew flowers half awake, they welcome the No Race

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Big Questions, Little Sleep**

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

### **Lost and Found**

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

### **The Sea's Secret Song**

Forgive your foes and give them grace,  
Show them your happy heart with smiles.  
Among your friends give them a place.  
Forgive your foes and give them grace.  
Gift unto them goodwill of face  
That they may sit with you awhile.  
Forgive your foes and give them grace,  
Show them your happy heart with smiles.

*Linda Imbler is the author of the published poetry collection Big Questions, Little Sleep. She is a Kansas-based Pushcart and Best of the Net Nominee. Her work has appeared in numerous national and international journals. Find more about Linda's creative process at [lindaspotryblog.blogspot.com](http://lindaspotryblog.blogspot.com).*

### **Billiards And Darts**

A teacher asks Little James  
What balls are those that don't have hairs  
And Little James answered quickly:  
- None, teacher, because all the balls  
And more those of Villar  
Have hairs.  
There was laughter by spoonfuls  
Like garlic soups  
In Roa de Duero, Burgos  
Before corralling bulls.  
Little students from Aranda de Duero  
Know this joke very well  
And always talk of it  
When they go to the wine cellar  
And, into the deep of it  
They touch the balls among them  
To see which of them  
Have more grown hair.  
To who that has the longest hair  
They sent him to Burgos  
With free expenses  
As a prize for competing  
In a competition of Billiards and Darts

To a place called “At Plane”, in Gamonal  
Telling him at the Bus Station  
Before car begging to move:  
- Take care, Villar, you’re going to Burgos  
To compete at Plane  
Ones with darts, others with sticks.

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

## **Canal**

I’ll curl inside  
the conch shell  
of a poem

take a nap  
on salty pink  
and creamy peach

smooth and cool  
beneath my hip  
and cheek

the scallop  
of my ear  
awake

to a faint rush

a muted roar

a speck of

driftwood

washing in

and out

of a canal

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

## **Cascade**

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

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

I stand silhouetted at the top of barren hill  
and look to the last hill I have left to climb.  
I would trade it for cotton candy clouds.



I shiver at the unfairness of rain and wind-chill.  
wishing for the warmth of love and compassion,  
and lying on my back under cherry trees.

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

### **Charging**

Ever since they became erectus, and

Domesticated wheat, dogs and chickens

They have murdered almost all...

Destroyed numerous...

Poisoned every ...

Altering the natural course of...

Rewriting the original codes of...

And even redrawing their own genetic maps...

As they keep moving everywhere

Albeit I have placed in loudest human voice

My repeated charges

That are ignored with repeated ignorance

Now

For their next revolution to achieve:

Happiness

Immortality

Deity

## **Converting to Dataism**

1/ The End of a Beginning

Given each organism as a biochemical algorithm

Your life is a programmed process proving

Your consciousness is actually far less

Valuable than a fucking Frankenstein's AI

2/ The Beginning of an End

Through human-computer interface

My mind has become part of a robot

While the robot part of me

As data exchanges with my consciousness

Or flow between each other on their own

Where can I find my true self?

## **Rocky Calls**

Far away. Everyone

Yells aloud: go and

They burst out of their own presence  
Like the air from a broken balloon

While I get stuck here, lost  
Among muted consonants

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

### **Copper Town**

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

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

A squall

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

and storm. Rains bed down  
the terraced waste; wind  
stirs and blows it

through a town set deep  
in realigned hills. Connecting  
  
copper to the clouds, a rainlit arc  
beams out of the shattered ground.

*David Chorlton was born in Austria, grew up in Manchester, England, and lived for several years in Vienna before moving to Phoenix in 1978. His newest collection is *Bird on a Wire* from Presa Press, and The Bitter Oleander Press published *Shatter the Bell in my Ear*, translations of poems by Austrian poet Christine Lavant. He will soon have a new book, *Reading T. S. Eliot to a Bird*, from Hoot 'n Waddle, based in Phoenix.*

## **Dancing**

The girl across the street was learning ballet.  
I wanted to, though I couldn't see.  
At the age of eleven,  
with a private teacher young and energetic,  
I learned to plie, sashay.  
  
With a cassette tape she made  
that contained music and her instructions,  
I jumped, kicked, skipped across our Arizona kitchen floor.  
  
We moved to Wyoming a year later.  
With a different teacher, old and crabby,  
I tried a class with other girls,  
couldn't tell what they were doing,  
dropped out, moved on.

*Abbie Johnson Taylor is the author of a romance novel, two poetry collections, and a memoir and is working on another novel. Her work has appeared in The Weekly Avocet, Magnets and Ladders, and other publications. She lives in Sheridan, Wyoming. Please visit her website at <http://www.abbiejohntaylor.com>.*

### **Disarming**

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

### **Place Settings**

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

which fork to use  
in an etiquette book.

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

because I got no color  
and haven't been homeless  
in years. Taught myself how to talk  
right with sitcoms—these days,  
I only slip up sometimes. Usually,

when the drinks kick in or in catching

the smell of a fellow interloper,  
overlooked uninvited guest. And we smile,  
tight lips coating teeth because a feast  
is always better when it's free

and a gorging  
always sweeter for the starved.

### **Dominican Man**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Doubt**

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

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

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

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

Where find I any wholeness?

in the field of my doubts?  
in the ambience of my fear?  
in the labyrinth of my disbelief?

Or

in the joyful discomfort of my shyness?

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

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

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

### **Pristine Decay**

She is beauty  
beauty is charm  
charm is cross

Sizzling with  
tempt  
to incite



and excite

In her wake

flaunts

a drunken

pelican

flapping

its wings

Numbed to bare

the yolk of wild

Playing

the play

he inclines

Impulses dance

desires hum

excitement surge

sizzle to rash

brash and crash

into regret's

sea

On pleasure's altar

in leisure's temple

adrift in moment

drumming

a dance of impulses

tuning

a rasping of instincts  
offering therein  
a destiny  
eaten unripe.

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

### **Drawing Dragons**

An old man learns to draw  
he draws dragons  
the way he remembers them.  
the dragon looks so real  
that the old man  
lightly shades what must be  
its breath  
and waits for it to breathe.  
When it does the old man  
gets sucked up,  
fears he will die forgotten.  
The grandchild runs into the room  
tries to pull grandpa's feet  
from the canvas.  
Then the mother rushes in  
to save the child.  
The room is so hot  
perhaps from the dragon's breath  
perhaps from everyone's efforts.

In the end,  
everyone is left  
with a rush of impressions.  
It grows into  
three maybe four  
variations of a myth.

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

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

At the club, Alice could be anyone  
a gift for transparency and denial.  
I spot a girl by the bar,  
gluttonous blue eyes  
drifting though the human-fog,  
the wounded smile  
of a failed grifter  
her haunted goods  
left behind.

*Kyle Hemmings is a retired health care worker. His work has been featured in [b]oink, The Aironaut, Bones, Burning Word, Sonic Boom, and elsewhere. He loves street photography and obscure garage rock bands of the 60s.*

## **Echo**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Enchanting and Mysterious**

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

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

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

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

## **Eve of Earth Day**

Storm has rinsed the sky blue, just a few  
white clouds this morning. Down the creek trail,  
stenciled festival signs point the way

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

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

### **Gone**

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

Even before dawn broke over the mountains  
I missed you, then and now, late and early,  
when last here, here last, even more now  
than ever, the late summer color you love  
so terribly exquisite in the late breaking sun,  
the fruit trees, especially peach and saggy plum,  
all full-figured wonders, the ground flowers aglow,  
as expected, but still absent from your touch,  
as am I, flying solo, as it were, in your garden,  
lost among hydrangeas and tulips and violets,  
daylilies, one with lavender petals and a deep

red heart ready to die at a moment's notice,  
the speckled Blue Monarchs' haunt, all Asia  
waiting for you, your touch, the color, as I note,  
all so exquisite in the late-day sunshine,  
and you, and you, and you just gone.

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

### **Heron and the Moon**

Soft is her breath as the full moon rises  
smiling looking down at smooth calm waters  
warm breezes whisper to the gentle ripples  
the lonely heron stands stoically entranced  
serenity lulls the heart and warms the spirit.  
Sounds of the city, lights and people are null  
seagulls and terns have found their roosts  
fog horn speaks from the rocky outer banks  
swells carry seaweed on a high running tide  
stars strive to shine through the bright lunar glow  
a ketch cruises by with her mizzenmast down.  
Venus clams squirt water all along the beach  
a ghostly chill suddenly wraps all around us  
the wind changes to an on-shore sea breeze  
the great blue heron extends her wings wide  
captures the zephyr and rises into the night  
reflected by the light of the beautiful full moon  
off to the sand dunes to nap until the sunrise.

*Ken Allan Dronsfield is a disabled veteran, poet and fabulist who resides in Seminole, Oklahoma, He is a three-time Pushcart Prize and thrice Best of the Net Nominee for 2016-2018. He has three poetry collections, The Cellaring, A Taint of Pity and Zephyr's Whisper. Ken loves writing, thunderstorms, walking in the woods at night and spending time with his cats Willa and Yumpy.*

### **I Live...**

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

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

I live... I do... I live...

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

### **I Will Carry You**

Today I will carry you in my fingertips and in  
the orange sunrise and in the soles



of my arched feet.

I will wear you in the wisps of my frustrated

hair and the enamel

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

Today I will imbibe the amber shadows

and salt spilled for you and I will find you in the honeysuckle

that I have not but know.

Tomorrow the echo of your voice will soothe my breast,

shake laughter,

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

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

### **I Never Asked You to Listen**

*(after the painting by Wengechi Mutu)*

I always knew you were listening

to the rhythm of my heart,

the river-rush of blood

through veins and arteries

and for the words

I could not speak or ever will.

If you must listen  
without permission  
without the hope of knowing me  
as you imagined  
you will learn how silence speaks  
the truest feelings of the heart.

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

*(After the painting by Wengechi Mutu)*

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

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

as well as you.

### **A Dragon Kiss Always Ends in Ashes**

*(after the painting by Wengechi Mutu)*

If you kiss a chicken  
on its beak  
the worst that can happen  
is that it will cluck at you;  
if a frog,  
you might not get  
the handsome prince you imagined  
but a case of warts instead;  
a chameleon, more likely,  
will change from blue to green  
a sign that it sees in you  
a perfect mate;  
but kiss a dragon on its lips  
or on its tail  
and watch its anger grow  
its eyes get red  
with malevolent intent  
and feel it breathe ferocious fire  
as you are turned to ash.

The moral, then:

never love another woman  
more than she cares for you  
and know how to kiss your wife  
when you come home.

*Neil Ellman is a poet from New Jersey who has published numerous poems in print and online journals, anthologies and chapbooks throughout the world. He has been nominated twice each for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net.*

### **If It Knew Everything I'd Ask It**

How many strands of salt and pepper

How many toenails, fingernails

How many skin cells

How many gigawatts of static

How many sweat

How many units of halitosis

How many drain fulls of toothpaste, hand soap, shaving cream

How many squandered seconds

How many meals rushed

How many coins walked by

How many blood in the sneeze, the shave, the mole, the gum

How many mucus

How many noise pollution

How many ghosts in our comfort zone, under our very thumbs, how many

How many addicts in our attic

How many hanging in how many scrapbooks

How many drowned in the Danube running

How many running still

How many hungry, how many pancakes, whip cream

How many industrialized-revolutionary-picks-itself garlic to feed the world

How many weed to make it cool, how many cocaine to rise from the blood pooling on the kitchen floor

How many bondsmen, how many hail repair

How many freerange chihuahuas, how many trapped in a car

How many arteries clogging, toilets seizing, drains erupting

How many irons singeing, how many knees turned inside out and how white the fat wiggling about

How many clouds liquidating their entire inventory

How many Ry Cooders, how next, big Buddy Hollies

How many new by doing something old in a different accent

How many money in the world spent on feeling good

How many silhouettes of horses darting before the Californian flames

How many rabbits saved by white teens

How many hard drives to the bottom of the ocean

How many PowerPoints

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

### **In Praise of Broomsticks With Names**

At the cubbyhole, the broom, just as it was left.

A weak knot of jute yarn holds together, that

which dies to war, to retort, to elope, to see the

world, to be popular, no, reclusive, corrects the

next, to bask under varied moonlit coconut leaf

dreams—all brought to knee, to a common noun,

to an autoimmune silence, obeisance, leaving just

cryptic lattices of protest in the courtyard mud, to

be rewritten by insignificant cat paws and rain

fingers. Who sums us up better than this?

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

## **Just A Boy**

He is just a boy learning to be a man

He will make mistakes as he does not understand

Pick him up when he falls and ruffle his mane

He is just a boy learning to be a man

Someday he will look back proud of his father, tall he will stand

He is just a boy learning to be a man

He will make mistakes as he does not understand

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

## **Ladies' Compartment**

I know nothing of you

except your smile

that I carry with me

through the rat infested station,

on a bone-weary train

filled with musty shadows,

already mocking

the shimmer in my eyes.

## **Passion's Secret**

You are my familiar -

child in hand,

pressed for time,  
seeking nourishment for the day.  
In search of the perfect recipe,  
neck-deep in yesterday's laundry,  
eager reminder of tomorrow's chores.

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

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

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

When you reveal  
the way of the world,  
speaking of trials  
that almost crushed your spirit,  
you are no wife of mine.

When we retire for the night  
and you undress me with your eyes,  
shameless  
in your desires,  
you are no wife of mine.

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

### **If Tomorrow Comes Another**

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

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

and the lemon tea



will leave the taste  
of ashes  
in your throat

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

into dust mites  
spreading across the cavern

we once called home.

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

### **Lady in the Bottle**

*(For Ladies at the Prostitution Place)*

She's like a crystal sculpture  
Inside the transparent bottle  
Her beauty shines at night  
While world is sleeping soundly  
Her crystallized tears  
Mounted with her bitter life  
To form jewelry for her neck  
Her cries went unheard  
Embedded in her heart of stone

No dream of freedom  
Until one day  
Someone comes and breaks the bottle  
To set her free  
To fly  
To breathe  
To feel  
To live.

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

### **Letter to Love**

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

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

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

As I have fallen for you!

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

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

### **Life Is Priorities**

Of the numerous projects in a new house  
there are birds inside your chimney.  
Hear their nest of peeps meek & restless.  
Know you needed to intervene,  
but there are regurgitating pipes  
that weird walk-in ant closet invasion,  
an unexpected washing machine death  
all the residue, morass of glass  
the last hurricane & owner left  
atop the bones of a porch reflecting  
pine trees & baywater in its cedar beams.  
It means only these other things come first.  
Until a baby bird bursts from a chimney  
full force into a plate glass window & dies.  
Now, in midst of the rest of all this mess,  
you must direct the funeral of  
a small mottled black infant with wings  
two things that bow forever backwards  
into a plumed heart to bury.  
It fits inside of your palm  
& makes of you a murderer.

*Kristin Garth is a poet from Pensacola and a sonnet stalker. Her sonnets have stalked magazines like Five: 2: One, Glass, Anti-Heroin Chic, Luna Luna, and many more. Her chapbook Pink Plastic House is available from Maverick Duck Press. Follow her on Twitter: @lolaandjolie, her column spidermirror.com/the-sonnetarium and her website kristingarh.wordpress.com.*

### **Losing Geography**

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

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

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

## **Love in Pencil**

He laughed like river light in a dance.

He believed...

Two people will always live two  
different journeys.

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

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

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

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

He was so clear and eloquent in  
cynicism-I thought

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

## **Luck Of The Draw**

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

“You know whiskey is a expensive habit ”.

He said to me looking over his glasses in his usual snarky tone.

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

I replied.

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

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

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

Went home to four empty walls just as I.

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

I will never understand the sober man's point of view .

And he can never grasp mine .

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

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

I believe I had won this battle for now.

Cheers.

**People Are Different Writers Are Worse**

We sat at the bar and the conversation just fell into place .

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

“Has your writing ever got you laid”?

I didn't bat an eye with my reply .

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

“What about the one in the middle ”.

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

“Well the third was a editor ”.

She looked at me puzzled .

“So I give , What does that mean”?

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

“Was it any good ”?

“Well any sex beats no sex my dear ”.

I ordered us two more and we kept joking. The night moved well.

And soon she went home with me.

Things looked up.

She stayed the night .

And stole a book of mine .

I never heard from her again .

Until I read about our encounter in some oddly named ezine.

Apparently she was a critic .

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

### **A Romance Fit For The Slaughterhouse**

We were the worst kind of storm.

A tornado that destroyed everything within its path .

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

In our passion we lost sight till we just eventually lost one another .

Skip forward and now we exist without what once we claimed we could never live without .

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

With time being the marker and a sunset's watercolor portrait.

It seems we burnt out long before our dreams could find legs .



Nothing stands forever .

Let alone the brilliance that was our chaos.

And this is but another life's chapters close.

Whatever it was is certainly dead now.

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

## **Melanoma**

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

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

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

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

“Or else it's something,” he nodded.

“We’ll know in a week.”

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

### **Memories of Childhood Fireworks**

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

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

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

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

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

*Matthew Johnson is a poet and an irrational fan of the New York Giants. He is a graduate student in North Carolina. He is a former sports journalist who once wrote for the USA Today College. His poetry has appeared in The Corvus Review, The Roanoke Review, Plum Tree Tavern, Jerry Jazz Musician, and elsewhere. His debut*

*collection is scheduled to be released June 2019 by Kelsay Books. You can find him on Twitter at: [https://twitter.com/Matt\\_Johnson\\_D](https://twitter.com/Matt_Johnson_D).*

## **Message Across Space and Time**

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

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

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

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

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

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

continue walking, run if you must  
you will grow old, though you think

life won't see the age of ten

it's there, just over the bridge

a step over adulthood

hold on a little longer

there are no promises of rainbows

riches or even happiness

just possibilities

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

### **My Account**

The day it ended was long before

it actually ended. A random thought

of course or off-course. Or off what

I thought we both thought was our course.

Seemingly out of the blue but more like

out of the grey, yellowy muck that bubbles

away, sulphuric on Aeolian island of Volcano.

Nobody outside my body would've seen

the scene as it then chemically altered.

Not her. Not me.

### **Half Awake**

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

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

*Allan Lake has lived in Vancouver, Cape Breton Island, Ibiza/Spain, Tasmania, W.Australia, and now calls Melbourne home and retreats to Sicily often. He has published two collections; Tasmanian Tiger Breaks Silence (1988); Sand in the Sole (2014) plus a chapbook, Grandparents: Portraits of Strain (1994). He won Elwood (Aus) Poetry Prize 2015 & 2016, Lost Tower Publications(UK) Poetry Comp 2017 and Melbourne Spoken Word Poetry Festival/The Dan Competition 2018.*

### **My dream**

I wish not to be young again,  
for that is a fool's request.  
I only ask to live comfortably-  
that physical anguish be minimal-  
that the winds of change

should be gradual,  
not devastating,  
and when my time shall end-  
let it be in peaceful sleep.

*That, today, is my dream.*

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

## **New Moon**

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

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

*Marianne Szlyk is a professor of English and Reading at Montgomery College. Her poems have appeared in of/with, bird's thumb, Mad Swirl, Setu, Solidago, Red Bird Chapbook's Weekly Read, and Resurrection of a Sunflower, an anthology of work responding to Van Gogh's art. Her full-length book, On the Other Side of the Window, is now available from Pski's Porch and Amazon. Visit and submit poems: <http://thesongis.blogspot.com/>.*

## **November Storms**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Open-mindedness**

How the eucalyptus sway!  
They remind me  
of when I was a child.  
I looked at them with amazement  
and every time  
I asked how they managed  
not to blow away  
when the wind  
decided to howl  
and every time  
they answered me  
that they could touch the ground  
with their foliage  
and the more rigid you are  
the weaker you must be.

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

### **Overlooking Paddle Boats**

When I am very old  
I will remember a young man  
With a jacket tied 'round his waist,  
Lying next to me on a hillside  
Overlooking paddle boats.

And the breeze that couldn't ruffle  
his thick black hair



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

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

### **Part 15: Objectified**

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

### **Part 14: Objectified**

When you think  
Of

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

### **Part 8: Objectified**

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

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

## **Plastic Morning**

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

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

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

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

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

*Michael Madden has worked for many years in the IT industry, as a result of which he has been quoted in publications as prestigious as the New York Times. In 2017, he created *Elvis Under The Covers*, exploring the legacy of Elvis Presley through the*

*artists who have recorded his most often covered original songs. Originally from Sale in Cheshire, Michael now lives with his wife Sally in the more peaceful surroundings of Whaley Bridge, in the Peak District.*

## **Profession**

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

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

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

So I'll write, "Clown,"  
"Lion Tamer," "Knife Thrower,"

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

follows instructions.

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

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

### **re·al·i·ty**

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

*Antony King is a writer/ poet from Eastern Kentucky. Antony spent his formal years in Cleveland Ohio where he underwent private instruction in The Arts, Music, and*

*Literature. His love of the classics guided him to poetry and fueled his passion for writing. After art school, Antony spent 23 years in the world of advertising, and design. He began honing his skills both as a writer, and an artist. Antony has been very fortunate to have his work published in several literature journals.*

## **Salomé and the Baptist**

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

*Naeema Abdelgawad, an ex-Fulbrighter assistant professor, interpreter and translator, is a fiction and non-fiction writer, critic and published scholar in the premise of cross cultural, ethnic and interdisciplinary studies as well as translation theory.*

### **Sandy Will Be Back**

*(Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey, USA in 2012)*

Sandy will be back

She will take her due

It is still a shock

Sandy will be back

So much to unpack

Climate change is true

Sandy will be back

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

### **Santiago Climes**

Many days, dull smog

obscures the skyscrapers &

hills of Santiago

But today it is

a molasses fog seeping

down the avenues

When a rain bathes the  
sere concrete, washing away  
acid air, on the  
near eastern horizon rise  
the snow-blanketed Andes

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

### **Sea Dance**

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

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

At night, always at night... one imagines...



but that's the pull. A sea,  
gathering itself,  
to drag the very cliffs into its  
throat. My insides flutter and  
spray ice-blocks my face.

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

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

The sea resents my escape,  
claims me. Heart bursting, I strain ever  
upwards and away.  
An avenging arm stretches and reaches,  
craftily sneaks up from behind,  
drenching me from hips  
to feet, taking my breath.

I make a soggy stain  
on the seat  
of the car.

### **Patterns**

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

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

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

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

dropped  
stitches.

### **The Lie**

I catch myself peeling back frayed edges,  
inhaling the glistening stink of old scars.

The intent behind the lie cuts deeper than the naked lie.

## **Spin**

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

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

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

## **Sleepless Nights**

Many nights I lie in bed unable to fall asleep,  
And I start thinking about you and the life you led.  
You lived for others, and not for yourself.  
When I'm under the blankets, my eyes begin to tear;  
I let them bury into my pillow, and I cry in silence.  
I ask myself: What happened to me?  
Then I remember that it also happened to you,

And I feel sad for both of us;  
I realize almost nobody took care of you,  
And I had people around me at all times.  
I recall your limp left side, just like mine,  
And how you never went to the doctor,  
And you recovered almost completely, just like me.  
And you forged ahead like a warrior, for your children  
Just like I did for my only daughter,  
And we both raised our children alone  
I don't know if you ever realized your dreams,  
And I never knew what they were.  
I, on the other hand, ended up doing better  
And more than I or anybody else expected;  
I became a writer, I'm sure you'd be proud of.  
You deserved to be happier and better loved and respected.  
I hope you can see from above the kind of person  
I turned out to be, and know I didn't disappoint you.  
Rest in Power, dear mom.

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

### **Song for the rill**

Sitting by the side of the rill  
Flowing through the valley green  
Being part of a wonderful scene

How with songs of life me fills

And I think I must have been

Blessed by the Lord above

For who could have so been

Sensed the passion of Love

Sitting by the side of the rill

How draped me with sublimity

How I get decked by words

And the infallible mirth of His Beauty

### **On breaking of statues**

Dynasties will pass

They always do

And breaking of nations

Will just continue,

From one regime to another

We will just go

And breaking of statues

Our TVs will show,

You will wear a black badge

I will say it has been right

You will stand there with slogans smudged

I will embrace the night,

Then we will walk past

Our broken country with hate  
You will raise your sword  
I will think of bullets,

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

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

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

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

### **Summer Ghazal**

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

Skin chafed from wringing hands. Sallow regret rivets marking face from salty tears.  
Why surprise with your silent goodbye? Oh, to shed this old skin and peel loss!

Enter God's house, the place of comfort and solace. Prostrate, humble, searching  
All of us together, broken souls and healers one and all. Praying we kneel loss.

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

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

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

### **teetering**

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

sure i'm crazy  
and the proof is hobbled though i am  
i still want to live

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

### **Tell Them That I Love Her**

Tell them that  
I love her  
and I always  
will

tell them I  
love her  
and dreams  
fall from  
her skies

tell them  
I love her  
walking out  
to see  
what the reason  
is for living  
carrying on  
being me.



*Randal Rogers, 56, is the editor of the online and quarterly hardcopy, The Beatnik Cowboy. A former international Sociology professor he now teaches at Oglala Lakota College, the Rapid City, South Dakota, branch. He is also a taxi driver. His book of poems, Cambodian Poems is available at the local Mitzies Bookstore.*

**The Beautiful Ones Not Yet Born**

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

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

*Erykah Badu, excerpt from On & On*

With passion forged upon

Pain, time is the terrain

Of a stubbornly persistent

Technicolor cosmos that speaks

In the tumultuous tongue

Of a mutating Earth under fire

Of myriad blinks of an eye

Manifest in a maelstrom of motley

Mayhem; & love, the heirloom

Of our souls sown together, in spite

Of the media free for all

With its defamations of character

Scrawled on the wall, as we

Bear the wait of dreams to come

Embracing the face of faith

With grace to loosen the noose of angst

That has held us hostage

To a history scraped free of its old  
Price, enthralled in the legacy  
Of ancestral sacrifice -- by DNA  
We are locked into the cipher  
Exhumed from the speechless dead  
For the beautiful ones not yet born.

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

### **the courtship of danae**

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

asleep on the couch,  
her eyes parturient with slumber.

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

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

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

red not like the aegean, but a relic

of menstruation. she cannot stomach

the five fingered hand with its six rings,  
the proud bearing of his heavy chest,

she could not reconcile her ideal  
of that god of gods with his grey beard

and crooked smile; his hand a mallet,  
his lips lacking the thunder of legend.

later writers will say he rained upon her  
in a flurry of gold, but her memory only holds

the quick finish and the smell of mold.

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

### **The Dark Night**

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

I poked a mighty  
foe.  
Thrashing my feeble flesh,

slashing my bones from head  
to toe.

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

### **Street Life**

The bags under his eyes,  
drooped heavy, weighed  
down by hungry cold skies  
and early morning fights,  
beaten black and blue  
by street life.

Dark circles shaded cracked  
eyelids and blistered skin,  
on a once handsome face.

Now, twisted, sallow, thin.

A guttural voice begged  
for change.

With each donated coin,  
it was clear, his life  
would remain the same,  
as the day before,  
and a thousand more.

*Seán Maguire, 58, has been writing for 30 years. He grew up in Belfast in Northern Ireland before moving to Newry, County Down in the mid-1970s. He has a collection*

*of poems called Harvest Soul published by Sessyu Press in 1998 and various self-published ones. He is currently working on a new poetry collection and a compilation of short stories.*

### **The Salesman**

Elderly Navajo  
sells belt buckles  
alongside quiet road  
laced with shifting red sand.

Midday sun  
bouncing blindingly off  
polished silver  
inlaid with turquoise.

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

Aged Navajo  
and his belt buckles  
pass time  
within a timeless landscape.  
Tourists in fast cars

occasionally make  
sudden cloudy halt,  
tires sliding upon dirt;  
interrupting  
eternal  
high desert silence.

*Torie Cooper is an Australian-American poet whose work has appeared in The Avocet and The Stray Branch. She is the author of two volumes of poetry - Nature: A Collection of Poems and Laying Nana Down: Poems of Caregiving and Loss.*

### **The shadow dance**

On a sultry night, when I stared blankly around,  
My eyes drifted like a balloon until  
They gently cast a spell on a wall -  
A yellow buttress of a brackish life,  
The stage of stories, the stage of end!  
It was here a pluralistic world was born,  
From a black river in a bevy of shapes,  
Flowing through the figurines of time,  
Beautiful idols or dancing puppets?  
Revolving like the Earth, eclipsed by memories.  
Their blood were thoughts transfused  
Through my copious mind -  
A camaraderie with the erudite,  
Company may sometimes be fleshless,  
That which imbibes light, lies poisoned in dark,  
A shindig of a few shells, danced through  
The squalls of reminiscences, the mind henpecked,

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

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

### **The Waterfall**

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

*Amit Shankar Saha is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Seacom Skills University. He is also a short story writer and a poet. His articles, stories and poems have appeared in newspapers, magazines, journals and books nationally and*

*internationally like Ann Arbor Review, Harbinger Asylum, Tuck Magazine and I am Not a Silent Poet namely. He has won the Poiesis Award for Excellence in Literature (2015) and Wordweavers Prize (Poetry-2011, Short Story-2014) amongst other awards. He has co-edited a collection of short stories titled Dynami Zois: Life Force and authored a collection of poems titled Balconies of Time.*

## **To Be**

I should grow a beard

to look like a poet.

I should sport a moustache

to be seen as a poet.

I should wear philosophy

like a turtleneck

to seem to be a poet.

I should be as serious

as the wailing wall

to feel like a poet.

I should drink more wine

and speak darkly

about things that don't matter

to be known as a poet.

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

## **Tonight**



tonight's  
crescent moon  
- more than just a comma

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

### **Uncle Lucifer**

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

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

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

## Winter's Cold Thumb

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

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

**Would it?**

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

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