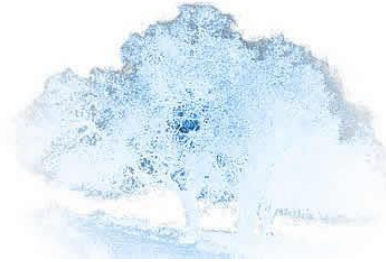


PVR 12



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POMONA VALLEY REVIEW



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especially to the Cal Poly Pomona faculty, staff,
and students who made this possible.**

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Dear Readers

2018 has been perhaps the most transformative year for PVR yet. With the hiring of several new editors and the transition of leadership roles, PVR has been in the midst of constant change. This fluctuation has not halted PVR's mission in publishing high quality creative works from writers and artists from all walks of life.

PVR's presence has been constantly expanding, with this year marking another successful Open Mic and Art Walk at Cal Poly, in the form of "In Prose or In Verse," in addition to several PVR editors' presence in a special panel dedicated to small presses at Mt. Sac's Writer's Weekend. While we look back at these events as successful in establishing PVR as a valuable and important resource for students and faculty alike who are interested in art and the formation of great literature, we also look forward to the future, where we see PVR expanding even further, gaining more attention and visibility in the academic and literary world.

This increase in exposure has been made possible by PVR's growing number of editors who are dedicated to maintaining the high standards set by previous issues. PVR's new Editor-in-Chief and Managing Editor, Ian Cressman and Amanda Riggle respectively, have worked closely with

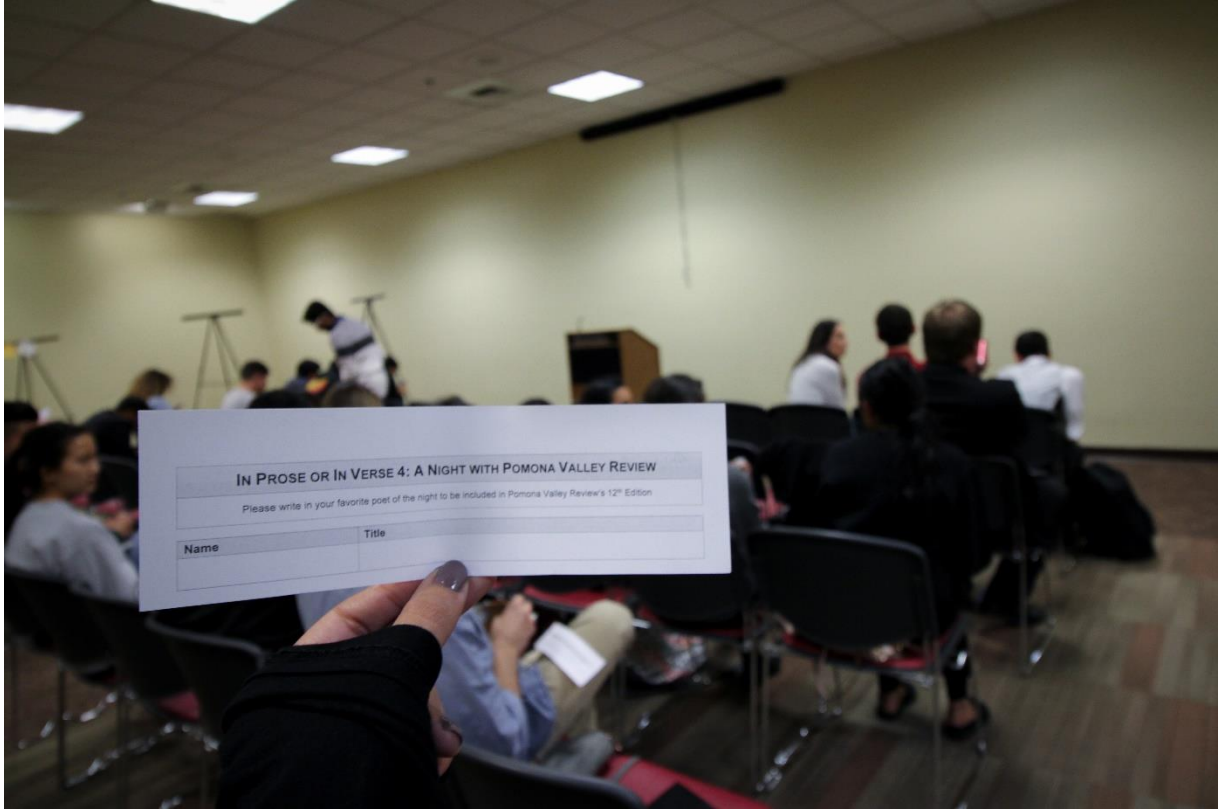
PVR's Emeritus Editors, Ryan Leack (previous Editor-in-Chief) and Christopher Baarstad (previous Managing Editor) in addition to Cal Poly faculty advisor Marta Albalá Pelegrín in order to maintain PVR's importance for Cal Poly, its students, and the many authors and artists published herein.

We hope you enjoy the diversity of this year's published content. Many works contained in this issue contain themes that are prevalent in today's society: a highly volatile political landscape, personal identity crises, social injustices, and existential confusion in a rapidly changing world filled with violence and uncertainty. PVR 12 weaves a narrative that is at once frighteningly real while at the same time curiously surreal; the writers and artists contained here have put forth their best work, with the highest possible standards, to give you the reader, something special and thought-provoking to digest.

Amidst a world of seemingly endless chaos, we hope that these works entertain you in a manner that helps make sense of this confusion in both unpredictable and comforting ways. Without further words, enjoy PVR 12.

Thank You,

The Editors
PVR



“In Prose or In Verse 4”
A Night with Pomona Valley Review
~
Event Photography by Amanda White



*Amanda Riggle ~ Managing Editor
Reading at "In Prose or In Verse 4"*



John Danho ~ Lead Editor



*Ivan Rios ~ Poetry Editor
Reading at "In Prose or In Verse 4"*



*Ian Cressman ~ Editor-in-Chief &
Ryan Leack ~ Emeritus Editor and
Previous Editor-in-Chief*



*Ian Cressman, Ryan Leack,
& Marta Albalá Pelegrín ~ Faculty Adviser*



PVR Art Exhibit & Voting Contest



Max Lizarraga III ~ Featured Artist

TERRIBLE HOROSCOPES

Aries: This week while cleaning your shower you will slip and hit your head on a basket of decorative soaps. Your head will be fine, but your face will get very, very soapy.

Taurus: A tsetse fly will lay eggs in your left dimple. If you do not have a left dimple, a tsetse fly will furnish you with a dimple. After which it will lay eggs in it.

Gemini: Did you know that the blood and plasma bank will also pay handsomely for vials of human tears? Something to consider.

Cancer: CBS will give your revolutionary war era all-werewolf erotic comedy a hard pass.

Leo: The drycleaners will, sadly, not be able to remove the stains from your cult uniform.

Virgo: Tickets for the Broadway adaptation of Fight Club go on sale this week. So. Don't dillydally.

Libra: Have you lost weight? Well, whatever you're doing, it's working.

Scorpio: An annual membership to the hallucinogenic mushroom-of-the-month club might not be the wisest use of your last \$100.

Sagittarius: Your uncle Jeremy will end his hunger strike this week! By dying. Of starvation.

Capricorn: Your habit of feeding the pigeons in the park is commendable, but it's disruptive to the delicate balance of the food chain established by the creepy guy who feeds them strips of raw lizard meat out the window of his urine-soaked cardboard yurt.

Aquarius: For once your week will go exactly as planned, so be sure that your self storage unit actually is large enough to accommodate a dozen pallets of capybara pelts.

Pisces: A freak lightning strike will render you clinically dead for 11 minutes. When you return from the Other Side, the world will have advanced 97 years and all of your loved ones will be dead. Except Chad. F***ing Chad.

~ Geoffrey Huyck

PVR Poetry Contest Winner





*"The World is Sinking into Dust"
~ Nicholas Walrath*

PVR Art Contest Winner

IT'S RAINING GLASS ON SUPER-EARTH

Couldn't we go there to see it
for a couple hours in a bubble
more protective than one
we spend fragile lives inside?

I promise to be caring, pay attention,
hold your hand, kiss you
under penumbral refractions
from its one or many moons.

We will witness a tickertape parade
with violence,
glitter, blunt-force trauma to the land.

We want this, you & I:
to go elsewhere, see
something messy & raw as a broken egg.

I will love you while it burns, brightens,
shimmers, & sparks in silicate spasms.

Please, yes, let it smash its windows,
mirrors, leaving us blind
to ourselves, the whole shebang.

~ Ace Boggess



“Space Cadet” ~ Michelle Mermilliod

UNDERSTUDY

At tonight's performance
The part of Freely Fluid
Often played by an on-again off-again idealist
Will be re-imagined by an open-minded sleep-deprived
Full-throttled autonomous individual.

The role of Cryptic Amory
Ordinarily performed by a
Passive observer with activist inclinations
Will be dramatized
By a gatherer of opinions and ideas.

As always
The Chorus of Tone Deaf Angels
Will consist of randomly selected ticketholders
Who have assumed their positions in the choir box on stage
And are awaiting their cue.

Finally the character known as
The Semiliterate Poet
Has been excised
And is to be replaced by a new creation
Based on the collective unconscious of the audience
Who will be introduced during the second act.
All in attendance are invited to audition
During intermission.

Enjoy the show.
Heckle away.

~ Zev Torres

TO QUELL YOUR CURIOSITY

I don't see you dangling in the distance,
rising in unfettered crowds, enveloped by
a smoky steel blue haze, with melancholy
jazz instrumentals, riffing with hot licks.
Your face no longer lingers in the shadow
of the hollow moon; the crease from your
furrowed brow has softened, now that your
reflection has disappeared from my morning
coffee. Once the one and only, the yearning
to see only me in your eyes has faded to a
distant, jaded memory. The cracks and crevices
of your chiseled face have slowly melted, replaced by
these proverbial weathered lines, leaving only
empty spaces, open holes, where life bone-sucked
you dry. Tomorrow remains uncertain, but for now,
there is only now, and words, emptying into these
fractured lines, buried in a dustbowl of memories.

~ Jill Rachel Jacobs

I CLOSE MY EYES

Overhead a fan slowly spins,
as the heat of the night closes in on me.

Beginning of the end or end or the
beginning, not knowing which way to turn.

I close my eyes. I see brilliant blue. Blue
gradually shifts to yellow. It penetrates my mind.

The clicking sound of the fan catches my
attention with the rhythm of snapping fingers.

Two in the morning, and my mind cannot be
quieted. A litany of concerns marching through.

Where do I go from here? Challenges feel more
oppressive at night, fading in and out of sleep.

Again, the fan continues to be my lone companion,
giving comfort in the night, as I watch rotating
shadows stretch across my ceiling.
I close my eyes as overhead a fan slowly spins.

~ Ann Christine Tabaka



*“In the Garden of the Psychopomp
or
‘Manzanilla de la Muerte’” ~ Max Lizarraga III*

GRIM REAPER IN THERAPY

It isn't even the long hours, to be honest,
or relentlessly being on stand-by.
Besides, it's not like I'm unionized or anything.
I confess, as far as vocations go,
it's sometimes incredibly satisfying;
some lowlifes I can hardly wait
to grasp in my clutches!
But, if I'm being perfectly honest with you,
there is a certain tedium, an eroding ennui
that sporadically gnaws away at me,
diminishing my capacity to proceed,
you know, business as usual.
And, occasionally, a few qualms,
which I find dreadfully disorienting
and which tend to impair my purpose.

Of course I never volunteered to be
the Angel of Death, per se; had I had
my druthers, I would have surely preferred
the exalted role of archangel, actually,
which, admittedly, affords a trade-off:
less publicity, more esteem. So be it.
That's a compromise I could live with.

Naturally, I never bring my misgivings
upstairs, so to speak, because I'm not normally
so solipsistic, and I don't want to be a bother,
and it's not as if He doesn't already know,
you know what I mean? I mean, really.
He'd probably just say I'm overthinking things,
and in that divine tone, full of casual finality.

Whatever. It's fine. I'm coping.
I suspect the others second-guess themselves
at least from time to time, no big deal.
Who knows? Maybe they even get
a little depressed sometimes, too. Whatever...

I recognize that antsy look of yours, doc.
My time is up, I know, I know.
As is yours, by the way.

~ *Brandon Marlon*

BELLS

The night was stale. The humidity was thick and there was no cool breeze to relieve the aching arms of the gravedigger. He wiped his brow once he was done filling a fresh grave, smearing mud across his forehead. Staring at his finished work, he spat and hit the tombstone. He resented his line of work, especially around the time of November 1st. Not only did he have three bodies to bury on this night with his usual rounds of patrolling, but he was required to clean up the colored ribbons and tapestries left behind in the pathways so grievors would be able to easily find their dead relatives tomorrow morn. As if somehow trash impeded their ability to find them were they had always left them.

Sure, they would come celebrate, typically in drunken stupors as they clung to one another. Clung to life. They would trip and fall over the tombstone of strangers and drop their empty bottles and colored papers. The gravedigger didn't mind this so much. Rather, it was the returning needy families, drunk not even ten hours ago, that pestered him. The graves must be spotless by morning so that their sins of desecrating these resting places were somehow erased from memory. Catholics, with their belief that a body must be buried. That even the most grievous of sins can be absolved in a fortnight. All their chanting and rosary pinching. And what good did it do? The grave digger spat again.

With the third body buried, he began to walk the length of the cemetery. You see, the gravedigger has an intimate relationship with Death. He has seen the quick rigor of flesh, the bloating of bodies. Death made everyone equal, brought everyone back to base creatures. While he despised his job at times, he was thankful for this knowledge because he knew, without a doubt, that there was nothing after this. His late wife believed in a heaven and paradise, but as he watched her body being lowered into the grave that evening nearly two years ago, he saw life for what it was: a slow rotting. His loneliness weighed heavy on his chest tonight and, lost in nostalgia, he jostled the bell of one of the graves. He stopped short, lightly startled, and looked about him as if to make sure no one caught him. He was still alone.

These bells, he thought, were nothing more than silly superstition and means for false hope. Medicine had finally advanced enough that doctors can pretty easily tell when someone is dead or simply sleeping, yet many in New Orleans insisted that their loved ones be buried with a line to a bell. Just in case. When asked if he wanted one for his wife, he declined. His children were angry with him, but decided not to press the matter further. They grew frustrated when he stopped attending Sunday mass, became distant when he stopped attending church all together and finally severed ties when he came out of retirement to bury graves. He had become obsessed, they said. Death was taking him for an angry lover. Macabre old man.

The cemetery was a mixture of fresh earth and sweetness, which the gravedigger breathed in deeply. It was an eerie smell, yet pleasant. The remnants of life and death intermingling. All Saints Day was a celebration not of death, nothing as morbid as that, but of the afterlife. One that no one had ever seen and, if these bodies knew, was never confirmed by those who passed. The old man was coming to

his wife's grave on his regular route and saw that his children snuck into the cemetery during the day and left colorful tapestries draped on the small angel with outstretched arms. She holds her arms out to the old man, as if pleading with him to come back into the fold that has always welcomed him. Annoyed, he ripped the tapestries off the gravestone, only to replace them after thinking of his wife and the genuine joy she derived from this day. He reasoned that he left the tapestries on her gravestone in honor of her memory, rather than to appease her soul. He stared at his late wife's name until his eyes began to cross and the humidity pushed him to move again.

He heard a bell in the distance. More curious than alarmed, the gravedigger grabbed his lantern and marched briskly to the tiny ringing bell. He dragged his shovel behind him, though he did not know why. Surely this was a trick of the wind. He stopped short then and became acutely aware how hot he was. There was no wind. Not even a breeze. Not even a puff of air. His sweat began to roll down his wrinkled cheeks and he jogged to the grave. The bell was now ringing violently.

It appeared the bell has not been tampered with and he was still alone in this graveyard. He was alone with countless dead bodies. The bell continued to vibrate erratically to the point where the gravedigger felt as though the bell was in his head, pounding to get out. He realized, with horror, that he was not alone. Someone was alive. The gravedigger hurled the shovel into the ground and unearthed one large mound of dirt. As he tossed it aside, the bell stopped. He froze. Was he too late? Had he expired that quickly? He grabbed his lantern and glanced at the tombstone. Richard Collins, 1844. The man felt a chill crawl slowly down the length of his back. *That was nearly 25 years ago.* The man felt a dreaded agony swell in his stomach and nearly let out a scream when another bell several yards away began ringing. Filled with something like resolve, he dashed towards the bell. When he was within sight, another bell started to ring just a few feet away.

The man was terrified.

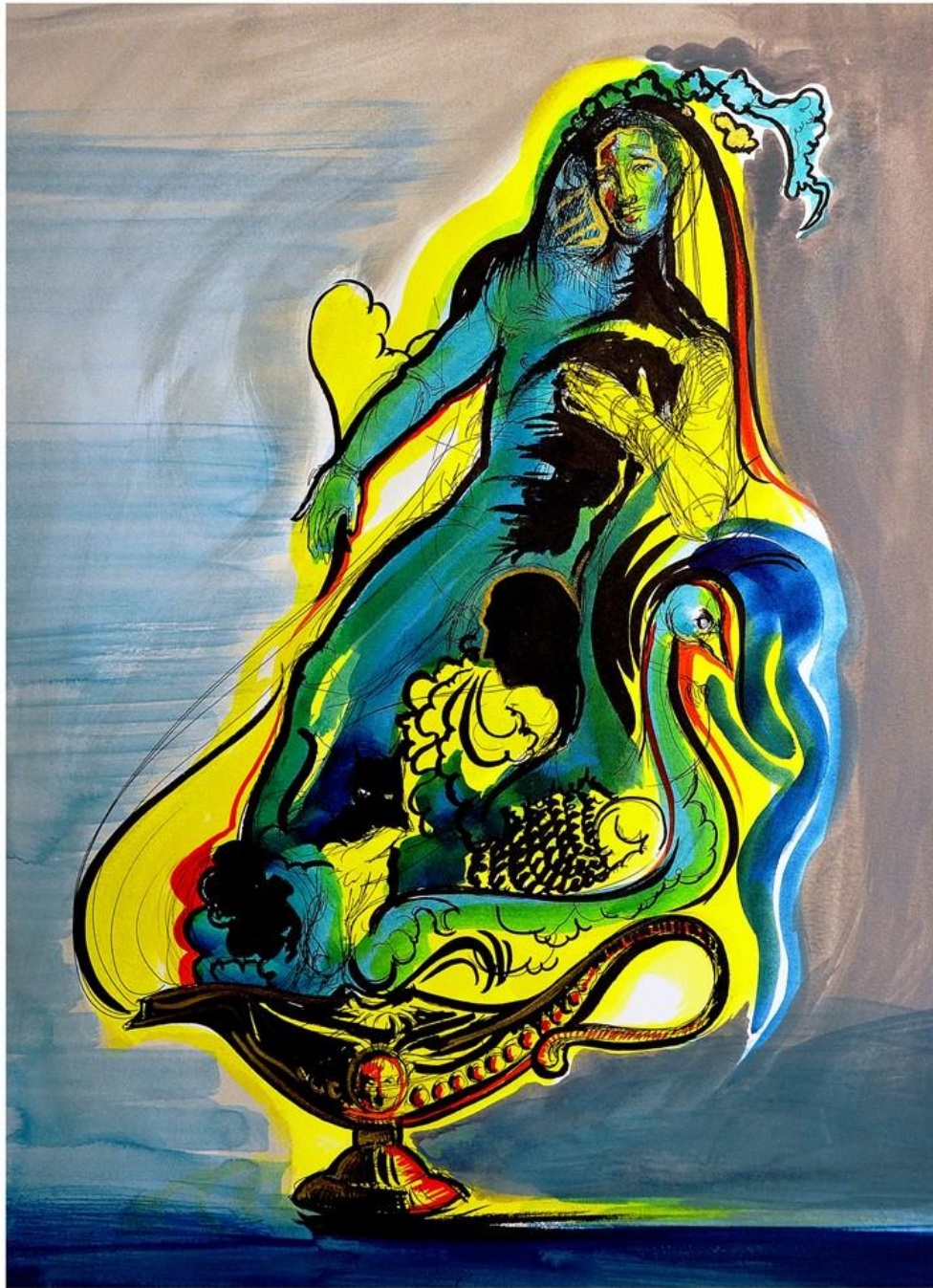
His feet felt like they were sinking into the ground and he was unsure where to turn when yet another bell started ringing behind him, then four, then five, then six. The bells shook nearly off their hooks and the noise reverberated through the earth so that he was vibrating. Coupled with his own trembling, the man grew dizzy with fear. All the bells were ringing now, which made a horrid noise: It sounded like screaming. In a moment of clarity, or perhaps stupidity, the gravedigger dropped the shovel and lantern, and made a dash for the cemetery entry gates. He ran swiftly, but tripped. It felt as though something had grabbed hold of his ankle. Dazed, the gravedigger jerked around and instinctively pushed his hands around his ankle to release the grasp of what ever had grabbed him, but there was nothing there.

The bells were falling off the hooks now and whipped about the ground in a manic pattern. The gravedigger had used up so much of his energy trying to escape, that he struggled getting himself back on his feet. Suddenly, a smell overtook him. He crumpled to the cold earth once more and tried to keep from wrenching. It smelled like rot. The smell was followed closely by footsteps and he grew grave realizing that this was it for him. Death had finally come for him. He fumbled with a

handkerchief in his coat pocket and, finally affixing the napkin to his nose, turned to face it. There stood his wife. Her hair was cobwebbed tendrils that framed her horrible face. The skin had pulled so tightly around her jaw that her mouth was pulled open into a perfect shriek. Her once pristine white clothes were stained a sickly brown and red, nearly the same color as the fleshy bits still clinging to her bones, which were less white than one would imagine. Her eyes left only sockets, but the gravedigger felt the stare burning into his skin which crawled in retaliation. It was clear the corpse could no longer speak. Instead, she raised her hand, flesh tearing from the strain and revealing the bone beneath as it cracked and popped into an offering. The bells seemed to be flying through the air now, mimicking the screaming once more.

The man made the sign of the cross.

~ Nicole Embrey



"El Genio" ~ Saul Villegas

NO REENTRY

The dream had gone, taking with it memory—
that other elusive runner
slipping my grip on the football field.
Lost in pause caused by my day's penultimate waking,
I sensed action: sleek ninja fight in fog,
a hightailing from cunning spies
waiting to capture what I knew & didn't know I knew.

I often keep my wits in dreams—half of them.
Once I dreamt I sat in back of Sartre's lecture hall,
playing cat's cradle with red yarn
while the old man cursed me in English.

This time: an adventure, sci-fi epic building toward release,
except the dream escaped, left me without spoils of war
I like to believe in the mists last night I won.

~ Ace Boggess

"It is the silences"
She said
"The space between notes
The lull between phrases
The upbeats that still your voice
Rests deliberate and prescribed --
Quarter beats and whole measures --
A progression of whispers and murmurs
Spanning a diminished passage
An elision
A crescendo
Trilling and rumbling
Sputtering and stomping
Erupting
Into a grand pause

That I composed
For you."

~ Zev Torres

DARK WORLD

This world so dark and cold
Walking around an endless field
The only noise around is the wildlife
The wind soft and cool hits my face
I look at the sky and the places beyond
My voice falls silent
It can't go past the sky
Those beyond my planet
Those beyond this nightmare
They can never hear me
But can they understand?
My message is simple
I am all alone...

~ William Gonzalez











"Bet on Black" ~ Natalie Odisho

EXTRICATION FROM A NARCISSIST ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON

The Jaws of
Life will never suffice
when it comes to breaking free.

Locked up, clamped in, terminally well-wedged.

Perhaps you'll lose a limb or two,
but the loss will pale in comparison to
the glory of the rebirth.

Will you be a dog, a llama, or a cow the next time around?

Short-cuts, easy departures, and
mass exoduses are strongly discouraged.
Successful egress is a delicate, tenuous process,
requiring tenacity, patience, and most of all, a plan.

*Will you be a warrior, a princess, or a nomad
when the day of reckoning commences?*

- Step One:* Step away from the narcissist.
- Step Two:* Turn in the opposite direction.
- Step Three:* Run like hell.
- Step Four:* Do not stop running.
- Step Five:* Do not look back.
- Step Six:* Rinse.
- Step Seven:* Repeat.

~ Jill Rachel Jacobs

A HUNTRESS' ARROWS

Come closer, said the track marks that stitched your leaving like a huntress' arrows. For that pale space as if to reconcile a grief, I stood in imitation of your body, signaling dusk hatching of air and pressed oil, drawing into the angora sweater that remembered you in the night. But I will not speak of your mouth or the tremors clung to the soles of your fingertips the way a callous nest of filaments bathed with red, fumbling with the front door.

~ *Lana Bella*

SORROWING WORLD

Zealous to consummate credal demands,
the wolves of evening sod in blood a globe
of suspecting yet effete civilians,
torpid fodder awaiting their fate,
unsure of their means, wavering in their resolve.

Apologists sated with a surfeit of massacres
turn reticent and no longer default to excuses,
refraining from the quondam claim
that our murderers are depraved because deprived,
merely seeking redress for valid grievances.

The whirlwind's reapers sowed no wind;
innocents slain were unstained to the end
that met them abruptly on a whim,
at the pleasure of hellions who connive
to unnerve, terrify, slaughter.

We have become benumbed and inured to the scourge,
idle bystanders to our own piecemeal demise,
resigned to a grim regimen convulsing the civilized
with wretched regularity, impoverished by loss
while still at a loss as to how to stanch the hemorrhage.

Though we weary of chilling eyewitness accounts,
horror's array will unrelentingly hold sway
until budding homicides discern
that none are ever sanitized by bloodbaths,
not even those ideologically inspired.

~ Brandon Marlon



"We Are What Chains Us" ~ Max Lizarraga III

SIMON, BENJAMIN, AND THE MONSTER

Simon rests his small head in the foreboding dark, though he cannot find a moment of rest. Benjamin, his best friend and faithful companion, is his only defense against the encroaching darkness. Looking all around, he is confronted by monsters hiding in the shadows, on the walls, in the corners, and beneath the underside of his crib which are only made more threatening by the sail boat night light plugged into the far corner. Every shriek heard outside the open windowsill brings terror to Simon. He buries his head into Benjamin's soft chest for protection.

"Simon, it's all right. You'll be okay. I'm here don't you worry," Benjamin explains.

"Ben-Ben," Simon says.

Simon snuggles his head deep into Benjamin's furry face. Benjamin's dark reflective eyes press coldly into Simon's warm face. Benjamin gets up and gains a firm hold on Simon's bright-blue blanket.

"We'll use this. With blanket, we can land softly," Benjamin says confidently beating his plush chest.

"Bankie," Simon utters with joy.

Benjamin tosses bankie over the rails of the crib and helps Simon get up over the railing. He falls on the other side, safely on his bottom.

"Now it's my turn. I always disliked heights. Catch me Simon."

Simon puts up his arms and catches Benjamin. Benjamin then takes a good look around the room until his eyes stop at the window. The tree branch rapping against the window resembles a ghoulish arm reaching out in the dark for Simon.

"Ahh there it is. The wind and the tree tapping...the monster is making sounds through the window. We close the window and our troubles are over buddy."

"No, no...no Ben-Ben."

"I need your help. I need your help to close the window. We can go to sleep and the scary sound will stop. Trust me Simon. We can do this together."

Benjamin lifts his fluffy hand and Simon takes it. The two of them walk the long distance from the crib to the window. The odd counterparts jump and jump, but they cannot jump high enough to reach, especially with the dresser in the way. Neither of them could ever hope to move the dresser. Benjamin looks at the three dresser drawers.

"Just like stairs, Simon. We are very good at climbing stairs."

"Step...step?"

"Yes, steps. Help me get these steps and then we can reach the window."

Benjamin and Simon each grab the handles on the dresser and pull as the dresser rumbles. They climb up on the "step" and then pull the next one out just enough. The third step is just barely shifted so that they can reach the top. The monster howls and taps its twisted claws on the window. Simon lets out a yelp.

"It's okay Simon. It's just the tree...the monster is scared now. Let's close the window."

“Umn.”

The two of them put their hands up on the window and pull as hard as they can. The window slams shut rattling the windowsill. Simon is relieved that the loud sound has stopped. The monster is quiet now. He looks to his left and right and can't see Benjamin.

“Ben-Ben. Ben-Ben?”

“Down Here Simon.” Benjamin says as he lays on the ground, “That fall almost knocked my stuffing out. Help me up and let's go to sleep. I'm getting old. Old and tired.”

Simon carefully climbs down the “steps” and picks up Benjamin. Simon carries Benjamin back to the crib and looks up at the railing. It's much higher from outside the crib. Simon looks intimidated. Benjamin has a little more pep in him as he cranks his tiny arms.

“We have to climb Simon. Then we can go to sleep.”

Simon yawns loudly and rubs his eyes. Benjamin helps Simon get up high enough to reach the railing, so he can roll over the railing into the soft folds of the bedding. Simon's exhaustion reaches its peak.

“We did it Simon. Now help me over. Simon?”

Simon is already loudly asleep. Benjamin looks up at the sides of the crib and then at his stubby stuffed paws, “I'm not climbing that with these old mittens.” Benjamin's dark eyes scour the dark room until he sees his way in, “The laundry basket. Lucky it's empty. Not as strong as I once was.” Benjamin slips under the overturned basket, filled with decorative holes, and pushes its bright red plastic frame from one end of the room to the other inch by inch. “I wish I had real muscles for this kind of work,” he says as he looks at the state he is in. His once deep brown fur is now faded from wash after wash and any firmness he once had is all soft. Eventually, Simon arrives at the crib with his make-shift step stool. He takes a sit to catch his cotton breath pressing on the part of his stomach that had been re-stuffed and stitched from back when Simon was a biter. “My stitching has come loose again. At least Simon is happy,” he musters up his strength and climbs up the hamper and then throws his light body over the railing into the crib.

“What I do for my family.”

The door to Simon's room creaks open. Benjamin looks out silently to Simon's mother capturing her in his plastic gaze. She effortlessly walks across the length of the room and looks at the window curiously. She closes the window latch, then pushes in all the dresser drawers, and kicks the hamper lightly with her foot. Inquisitively, she bends down to pick up the hamper and notices Simon sleeping peacefully. For a moment, she locks eyes with Benjamin. Sometimes, she can see herself in his eyes. Other times, she catches a glimpse of something more.

“Keep Simon safe Grandpa Ben.”

She walks to the door with the hamper in hand. She turns around and looks at Benjamin sitting in the corner of Simon's crib for a few moments. The light from the gap in the door brilliantly illuminating Benjamin's eyes.

~ Jordan Montejano

HOME

When the sun sets and lights begin to flicker out,
I know one will always stay alight waiting for me to come home.

Because even though I walk these streets alone
And darkness surrounds me like an empty void,
I know your warmth is up ahead,
my hand reaching to touch...almost.

My journey is mine and your journey is yours
And our crossed paths a fated delight.
This empty world of laughter and strife, selfish suffering, escapades and ecstasy.
What is genuine? What is deceit? What is knowledge? What is ignorance?

Floating in and out of the sea of people of masks, facades, of smiling faces.
Scrambling for something simple and familiar.
Where? Who? What...am I?
I can't seem to find my way home.
I always feel so alone.
I am neither here nor there or anywhere.
I am...

"Home is where the heart is" people say.
But where is my heart? Can you help me find it?
What is my heart? Can you help me define it?
"No, you cannot" I say.
And you back away and say "Good luck."
No, this is not about luck.
No, this is not good.
No, this is a mess.
I am a mess.

But I curl up in my cold cold bed and will myself to breathe.
Each breath reminding me that yes, I'm a mess, but yes, I'm alive.
Tomorrow will be a better day.
Everything will be okay.
I will myself to believe.

And when the sun comes up, and I lose myself to the sea of people, I'm no longer lost.
I move my feet one foot at a time.
I hold my head up high.
The sun's rays a warm embrace as loving as your smiling face,
And I realize that I have always been and always will be home.

~ Joyce Wu

MAMMAL ME

Enameled finger nails, three coats glistening smooth.
Flawless. But claws, nevertheless.
Eyebrows arched with disdain, so carefully trimmed, thinned.
Perfect. But fur, nevertheless. Fawn powdered lids look down.
Princess A-line silk curving down her body,
shaping her fine line as she reaches
so delicately for her purse.
Nylon pulled taught from toes to waist under her silk.
Shining leather shoes poised so specifically, one turned out
just so slightly before the other.

She modulates her voice. Soft tones.
Cultured, precise.
"Here, take this," she says, beneficently dropping a coin
onto the stained and tattered lap.

The coin shoots into the air
as the old woman throws it back and lumbers up,
her thickened knees bending against her oozing flesh
pushing her weight up off the pavement.
Scabbed vein-riddled legs scrape against cement,
Hurrying to rise. Coagulated fat hoists itself up.

Her bloodshot, glinting eyes, now level with the fawn lids,
peer out at the source of coin.
Her whiskered cheeks spread into a crinkled grin.
Tooth stumps hang down as her mouth opens for a hoarse laugh.
She sucks in her rasping chest, purses her mouth and blurts,
"Pussy!"

Abruptly, the silk dress twists away and recedes.

~ Tita Anntares

SLEAZE

I saw an ad in my school paper today.
It showed a woman unclasping her constraints
To lessen the burden on her chest
In a moment that was both beautiful and consensual.
In that moment she owns her body.
But this woman was branded with “sleaze”
On her left shoulder.
It cautioned voyeurs to see her tale as cautionary:
Get tested immediately.
She is subjected to social media references and
Designated as a place to check into
with sixteen prior visitors.
The message was clear:
She is a sleaze. You are a sleaze.
I am a sleaze.

~ Nicole Embrey



"Primarily Phallic" ~ Tiffany "Xcias" Syas

CRASH LANDING

The entire city was asleep, as if everyone had fallen off the edge of the universe. The sound of the fountains was heightened by the night.

Each footstep echoed your name loudly through the emptiness, as it bounced back to me off of brick walls.

A soft glow filled the sky, as the moon rose above the haze. It was the ultimate romance novel, that had gone completely wrong.

The city of dreams lay before me, but I was all alone, experiencing my own thoughts while seeing life through someone else's eyes.

Then all of a sudden there you were, standing right before me. A white rose in your hand, saying your good-byes.

As petals fell softly onto the sidewalk, landing with a crash so deafening that it woke the morning.

~ Ann Christine Tabaka

WHEN I THINK OF HER

“Yes,” I whisper. “Yes,” I shout,
envisioning her hair to hide a thousand faces—
red of embers, gold of straw,
sometimes pinkish, purple, blue—
how it frizzes to frame her kiwi-colored eyes:
watchful, hungry. & her slight yes lips,
yessing like arrowheads north & south,
hissing her breathing against my cheek.

I love the yes moles on her neck &
eyes of her tattoos applauding:
back dragon, ankle cat, the lies of barbed wire &
feathers I like to stroke against her thigh
although these don’t exist, aren’t real,
a false memory from another time.

Yes, even her sadness is lovely
as a candle’s flickers in a darkened room, &
her paranoia, the sword she sleeps with
while alone. Yet again I throw my yesses
into the air—a song of praise:
haunting melody, haunted chords.

I rest beside her & wait to hear her tell me,
“More,” yes, always yes.
Whenever she touches,
I collapse into the yes-god-yes
serenity as if outside,
listening for snowflakes touching down.

~ Ace Boggess

SMOKE RINGS

We had planned a garden wedding,
all the plants invited, even tomatoes, oh yes,
family and friends too. Until November 9--
summer may be too late,
our rights buried and decaying.

We made it by January 13.
That kind Unitarian minister asked if we wanted
to exchange rings. We did, but had none.

After a year we still expect
hate to bust in, toss gasoline
on our marriage certificate.
But we have rings now. We've each
lost them twice--
in the garden, by a dumpster, in the garage.
Precious things can slip away so easily.

Loss makes plans.
Something's happening.

Acrid smoke.
A sound of feet running off.

~ Kenneth Pobo



"Fun Fiona" ~ Tiffany "Xcias" Syas

METHINKS THE LADY PREFERS THE ROSES RED

The snake oil man brings me flowers.
They are yellow.
I prefer red,
but it's never been about me.

Sometimes she imagines him as a child,
full of hope, wonderment,
a pristine blank page,
with a story yet to be told.

Or he's an old man,
infantilized, neutralized,
someone else's problem,
raging at the world,
in a hauntingly familiar scenario,
where he would never have enough,
no matter how much he had.

A love-bombing,
tempestuous fool,
a faux Don Juan gone awry.
fancies himself a charmer. A
resentful, relentless,
wrecking ball,
racking up hostages;
while destroying
anything in his turbulent path.

Somewhere far from here,
in a parallel world,
he is kind,
he is empathic,
he is compassionate.
He is normal.

But there's no sense trying to
make sense of the senseless.
The snake oil man is not wired like the rest.
No matter how he rewrites it,
Or how he spins it,
The outcome will always be the same.
Prognosis: Terminal.

~ Jill Rachel Jacobs

WHAT IS A FATHER?

He is a void she is trying to fill

She finds strays

Cats,

Dogs,

Men

He was her only deficit from day one

The original, absent first true love

He was the start of her titles

Daddy's girl,

Teacher's pet,

Attention whore

Time can never heal what she could

Never really know how to miss.

~ Adrianna Burton

DO NOT TOUCH ME

If you cannot make me
Immortal

Do not touch me
As long as your blood
Will be born of the foliage of Abrango¹

Cradle me between two dunes
Wound my heart with stone
Listen to me
Listen to me moan
Breast offered to your hurricane
My frizzy hair lying down
 On your injustice.

~ Landa wo

¹ Forest of dead trees - Cabinda



"Ankle Biters" ~ Max Lizarraga III

She stands in the air, a thin coryphee
that lifts me up and destroys me.
Light eases a garden of minerals on
her skirt, dilatory to the open of
my hands, thinking me guttering in
her lap. Because then she would
fall sorrow and salt on my moon-plain
face, the bold of red over white,
seeking to conceive us in lines by
a dying sun. What I am but have gone
further than hunger, than blunders
of how things can change, than dark
long adored, sieving just slightly
so for her. And if calligraphy can etch
a face that touches like a quiet song,
I will have been made soft and wet
beneath the tarp of her imprint, before
I remember to touch what'd touched me.

~ *Lana Bella*

Upon waking today,
reflecting on things—
I think I'm going to begin
talking only to animals and trees,
for humans no longer
listen to one another;
and of the little brown bird
or tall green sapling—
if even they too
choose not to hear—
at the least they'll retain
their wild integrity
and their graceful harmlessness
in our mad, mad world gone deaf.

~ Margarita Serafimova



"Don Quixote at the Inn's Stable" ~ Rodrigo Palacios

AMERICAN

I hate this story. It's not who I am anymore. But maybe it's who you need to remind you of the good within yourself. Maybe it's what I need, too. We are all light.

Right now, we are cast into a shadow of darkness. Some will return to the sun. Some will be cast into eternal darkness.

The choice is ours. We live in perfect balance. The body, itself, a piece of perfect infinity. Knowledge is infinite. To know ourselves and the world around us, we need to go within.

Want, implies lack.

*We are saved
And always have been.*

I hate this story. At this moment, I look back from a white bed, deep in meditation, remembering another time – another life – when in the refrigerator I escaped the omnipresent, piercing arguments of my family.

My parents were my family. Inside the walls, our fortress of their dreams, we were safe. Ever since 9/11, the fortress was pierced. My father, a pilot, became different. My mother became a stone statue of liberty: beautiful, cold, speechless. She used to sing. What did I become?

I was in the refrigerator, kissing my knees, praying to turn the screams to music. Hoping that if someone found me, then they would remember what they loved.

I had hidden like this once before at a sleepover when I wanted attention from the two other girls at the party. I was a child then. I guess I felt like they hadn't liked me then. But they noticed I was missing. Their birthday girl's mother noticed, too, and they all looked until they found me. I remember they called and searched for me and we reunited, then danced to Britney Spears' newest cd. My parents, on the other hand, never looked. I think part of me has been lost since.

We send fragments of ourselves through memories. Time and future are one in the present. Time lives in the mind. The mind lives through my body. In bed, I meditate to collect the soul-fragments of myself that have scattered over time. I time-travel to the distant memories. I see the – the people, the moments – and the creator heals me. I am witness to the healing. The pieces of me, like a humpty-dumpty eggshell are rinsed with water and restored to the heart of my aura like a puzzle. Others, too, have soul-fragments that are kept with me. I rinse and return these. Some are larger than others. We all have different perspectives in this life.

We are all going to die. Death is not eternal. There was no beginning and there will be no end. Do you remember your first memory? I do. We should all be kind to one another.

When something happens to another, we treat it as separate. But we are all the same. Connected, we breath breaths from another's lungs. Recycle into me. We are one. We were never apart.

I'm looking up for answers: trying to figure out where I am, what I want, where I went wrong, what I'm doing. Time goes so quickly. I try to plan but my plans keep changing. Part of me knows to trust. Trust, trust, trust. It is done. Part of me worries. In balance, I'm balanced, imbalance. The world has given me gifts beyond my dreams. And still, I dream.

When I was writing, in high school, one teacher noticed. I had freedom in poetry. I wrote. At that time, I went to therapy. Most people go to talk, I went to listen. I wanted to learn. I didn't want to talk. I never blamed my parent's divorce on myself. It was God's will: It will be ok.

And I wrote –I thought in Latin. I was free. I wrote about conflict over taking a pill smaller than my fingernail that changed my mind. My teacher pulled me aside and asked if she needed to report me for drugs. No: they were prescribed. Report the doctors, like the evil doctor of my 9-year-old checkup.

My teacher (the one who read my poetry) had had a brush with death before, too. She was a brilliant woman who loved my poetry. She saved me with her hope. So do you.

My life has been a string of beautiful events of people who have had hope in

me. I put my faith in God, and not in my own two feet. There are so many things that I do not know.

I know it wasn't my fault. Now, studying Chinese medicine and now, learning that anesthesia shuts off the Gamma state in the brain, disconnecting us from God...the only evil in this world is man's will gone forced onto another man. Woman, too. Soul has no gender; light has no sex. Light performs in the eyes of expectations, from wave to particle. A falling tree in a forest.

It was a dark night. I was not myself. I had been on the anti-depressant for a year. I graduated high school. I didn't feel joy. I didn't write. I got through. I used sex as a weapon for my power. Not sex, but sexuality. The illusion. The seduction. It worked painfully well.

I wanted to feel important in college. I wanted to feel beautiful but I was rejected by the sororities for wearing the wrong shoes and saying the wrong things. Maybe I was just being myself. Part of me is scared that I'm saying / writing the wrong things. Part of me knows it is God's will.

In college, alone, I needed an escape; and I needed someone to care. I was falling asleep in classes; I went to the guidance department to seek help but broke my appointments. Instead of care, the graduate student scolded me for messing up her data. I never went back.

It was a dark night—he came to my vacation. He thought he owned me, because he had claimed me once before even though I said 'no'. I convinced myself it was ok then...even though it wasn't.

I remember not being able to remember much. Our mutual friend saw him (drag me, kicking and screaming, him throwing me onto a bed), and now doesn't talk to him anymore. I wish someone could have helped me then. I was blocked from the light. He was, too. I disappeared even deeper into the darkness.

I'm alright now. I've meditated, transformed, allowed the light in. The right people found me and helped me. Over years of searching, begging, crying...I'm alright now. God has saved me. The light above can heal all. It takes opening oneself up. But one atom of love can perform miracles.

In therapy after my first breakup, I was asked when the last time was that I was happy. Years...more...I couldn't remember.

Yesterday, meditating I revisited myself, age 8 on my grandmother's floor, lying on my back nibbling a piece of white American cheese. My biggest worry was whether I liked yellow or white American cheese more. I was happy, on the floor. My mother was in the other room. I was alone, with God. And I was happy.

Today, I am happy too. Meditating, writing. Happiness can take work. It definitely takes courage. We are caught in a loop of our deepest fears until we breakthrough to glorious freedom. This is the cycle of life; this is paradise.

I need to decide how to help my mother heal. I know her secrets, spilled in a stupor of "help" from the Western medical world. The sun sets in the west: there is no light there. The future is to the East, where the sun rises. Hope lives there.

Hate turns to cancer, I am convinced. It was growing inside me. My fingers, bone, back were twisted. Illness took the music from my fingertips, and the writing from my pen. But, I can heal. God loves me. Even if I do not heal, I do not carry the weight of the world. My life is mine to lose. But I must try. *It is done. It is done. It is done. Thank you.* I love you. I am love. We are one.

Sometimes I want to die, give up, and end it all. Sometimes, I wonder if I'm alive at all. My greatest fear is fear. Fear contains the darkness. And in this life, I need the light.

~ *Natalie Odisho*

STORYTELLING

Stories are found
in the steam coming from coffee cups,
steeped in hot water,
and spilling out of liquor bottles.

They are the bedtime, the tell it again, the
read it one more time.
Those tall tales, those short stories, and
everything in between.

They are intangible,
but once recited, can never be destroyed.
For better or for worse,
it becomes matter and all that matters.

They both steal time and give lifetimes.
They are the life blood, and so stories come from
a need to live, really living, a life lived.

~ Nicole Embrey



“Three Stories” ~ Joanna Madloch

AT THE END OF THREE FAREWELLS

In the madness of broken dreams
The weeping willow hoists its braces
No witness to the marriage
Death does its business alone.

~ Landa wo

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS: LOVE

It is everything you have waited for
The mind-blowing adrenaline, butterfly-inducing panic, and bone-numbing
warmth
It is always there in the deepest part of your heart rain or shine
Before, during, and after every storm you are warm to the core
Comforted by the one virtue you have found in life

Amidst ruin, pain, suffering,
there are those four letters
It is right there, within every single person passed by on the street
A yearning, beating, bright-red heart wanting to be let out of its fleshy cage

It never leaves,
It is the one feeling everyone wants,
that which no one truly has
When it is there, life is as bright as the sun
When it is gone, it is life's greatest lie

Love is that four letter word
Better than glee or hope or luck
But worse than envy or rage or lust

~ Adrianna Burton

HAMBURGERS

They sit in my mind
like Hamburg whores,
each in their own storefront window,
moments frozen in a pose.

They throw me back into a memory:
One thrusts his cock expectantly into my mouth...
Another flips my thigh up over his head...
A third batters his rod against my cervix,
leaving that insensate organ sore
while my clit waits out the onslaught, so untended.
Moments screwed...
...but skewed.

Memories of lovers my soul ached for. People
I would have died for, maybe.
Too often, the friends I cared for
Sometimes at the expense of myself.

Why must these up-ended moments trap me in time?
Can't they come first, those memories of gentle closeness,
of joined laughter, of walks together in the night air of our planet?
Or even the delicious moments of surrender to each other's loving lust?
Relive those physical romps to spiritual oneness?

Oh, no. The memories insist on just coming. Having their way.
Amusing themselves
while my soul waits out the disconnect, so unintended

~ Tita Anntares



"When Walls Have Eyes" ~ Joanna Madloch

LITTLE WHITE SPACES

We used to read the newspaper. Before sunrise we'd string letters together and form complete words like: liquidation, troglodyte, and anaphylaxis. We'd fill the little white spaces in pen so we couldn't correct our mistakes and eventually we stopped making any.

But one day you stopped ordering the newspaper because you said the news made you anxious. You had episodes of pure panic and would spend days in your room staring at the chipped white walls. It's the same reason you got rid of your cellphone and excommunicated yourself from friends and family.

Now the house is empty. You took the dogs, took the second car. Found a new man, a younger man. He's white too, so you don't have to worry about all the awkward looks and reoccurring praises of 'being brave.' You live up in the mountains because your scared of bumping elbows with city-folk. I get that.

The house may be home to just me, but sometimes I don't believe it. My mind plays tricks on me, and when I round a corner, or step into another room I expect to find you sitting there, grinning so wide your bright hazel eyes disappear into your cheeks. I hear your laugh sometimes, bleeding through the chipped white walls. Maybe the old paint and wood held onto that last bit of you, maybe I'm just getting old.

The mornings always start well before dawn. I read the newspaper again, and shudder at every headline. None of it is good. I try to connect the letters but the words are always wrong, it always ends up half finished.

Come sunrise, I leave the house in the old Ford that constantly sputters for attention. The seats have holes in them, the driver's side window won't roll down, and the speedometer is always off, but I'm sure you still remember that.

I'm still at the bank, handling financial crisis after financial crisis. Every day a new potential threat rears its head and these people believe it a mimic of 2008. I try to ease their worries as best as I can.

I take the back streets to work, careful to avoid the direct gaze of police. They'll kill a man over a busted tail light and old registration. No sir, I'm not armed.

Work is always the same, a strange blur between paperwork and getting yelled at. You'd call me lucky. I at least have a job. Well call me ungrateful, but I'd rather live without the lights, the water or the gas.

Eleven Hours. Eleven Hours. The day is over in front of a television locked between national and local news. The reporters shout: Breaking News!

Breaking News! And every time my mind is spun faster on their mad carousel. On and on it goes, until the infomercials start and I'm left watching women sell plastic piece of junk after plastic piece of junk. Someone is buying it.

I feel you most when I'm going to bed. While you may be long gone your scent lingers. The bed is still pushed up against the wall how you like it. Your dresser drawers are still empty. The end table that held all of that soothing prescribed medicine still sits beneath the window sill, now stacked high with books, junk mail, and an old crossword.

When I sleep I dream of connecting lonely letters in little white spaces again. You scribble our answers in with pen and we never make a mistake. You're smiling again, and the sun never rises.

~ Conner Jones

ZERO

There are many things worse than
being used as a rock
Poverty, hunger, homelessness
These are the unspoken horrors
no one likes to discuss

There are many things better than
feeling unloved
Coming home to a partner,
Lying in bed with a pet,
Indulging in rich, gone-too-fast ice cream

There is nothing
except a world of possibilities
I am not chained or anchored
 to one person, forever
 to one identity, unchanging
 to one repetitive, dull job
I have nothing to claim
I am near worthless

Worthless or priceless?
Both have a total value
of zero.

~ Adrianna Burton

RESILIENCE

I wish the sunrise is the first thing I see rather than the last
I wish I was opening my eyes in bliss, not scrunching them shut in
frustration
I wish my mind would just let me be and let me breathe
I wish-

I wish a lot of things:
A bigger house
A better car
A brighter future

When you wish upon a star, do you get your wish granted?
Or is it just a shout into the void of nothingness?
Because in this world of suffering, no one cares about you except for
yourself.
You are your own anchor.
You are your own refuge.
You are your own dream.

Wishing doesn't accomplish anything.
Neither does hoping.
Neither does hating.

You know what does?
Doing.
Facing the world head on with your fears all out in display
Past wounds, healed scars, proudly smiling, saying,
"I have made my mistakes but I won't give up."
Confronting the possibility of failure to nurture the possibility of success.
Because you see, life is just one big, beautiful, chaotic mess.

~ Joyce Wu

A SILENT PRAYER

Please
Do not misinterpret this as a
Failure of will
Or a contemporary act of heresy
Is it not reasonable
That from time to time
Our conviction will waver
That we will question
The purpose of our rituals
Step away from our traditions
Feel justified in castigating our faith
As a ruse or a swindle
When it inhibits us from
Expressing our confusion
Commands us to voice platitudes that
Cut our mouths
Condemns us when we seek a refuge
Where we can pray softly and alone
In other than prescribed words
Or during rare but weighted moments
When our qualms and misgivings declaim
With the authority of
The holiest of our perceptions.

~ Zev Torres



“Sacred and Profane” ~ Joanna Madloch

INTRANSITIVE

ground swells in the body

no object

before or after

bodies

alone, together collapse

find no root

take to the air screaming

screaming

~ Al C. Grigg

RAW BEAUTY

I.

You weathered,
weary
lonesome man.
Face like leather
marked and worn
by the world.

Your leather
aged like cognac:
stories of love and
loss play to the songs of
the piano man,
Mister
Grimm.

Reaping tales of love and loss
making what we can of life
We're all searching
for our own albatross
to put an end to strife.

Some days it's like
I'm back in Amsterdam
With you
In our room,
Walking ice-cobbled streets,
Town halls and into the next smoke shop.

I—we—were happy then.

You're getting me Christmas-
Flavored Starbucks, and
Chocolate Belgian waffles.
We have
Coats and gloves to keep warm
From December sleet winds.

I miss that.
We will never be the same again.

II.

Weap(murdering the masses while instigators sit high unharmed)on.

III.

Pieridae
Yellow Sulphur
Butterfly

I love the way
you pull my hair
Love noises. Timeless sounds

Your figure sprawled in glory
Ivory against satin
You look at me

like you know me.
Like you could love
me forever.

But you won't. I won't.
Nothing lasts forever.
Isn't that half the beauty?

A butterfly floating through the
eternal air of existence.
Passing through me on
your way to God.

~ *Natalie Odisho*



"Scattered Sense of Self" ~ Jacqueline Weisbaum

OUTCRY

Legal remedies await their own enactment,
an inevitability inexcusably overdue
and far too tardy for the departed,
their lives taken abruptly and arbitrarily
by actants callous, unhinged, frenzied,
eager to go out with a bang-bang-bang,
not a whimper, indifferent to the carnage
left in their wake in the streets and squares,
in the hearts of loved ones lorn
and bereft of cherished treasures.

At such hours customary bromides—
"our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families",
"everything happens for a reason", "life goes on"—
are exposed as less than worthless, availing none,
not even their well-meaning, mechanical espousers.

The insane, often responsible, ever remain
unaccountable; patently unpalatable is
the fact that those invested with authority
pretend helplessness as horror recurs
and the same, tiresome questions arise,
the same solutions suggest themselves
with unrealistic hopes of being implemented.

Only an outcry piercing the heavens, rattling the skulls
of sluggish legislators dozing in power's corridors
will suffice to disrupt the pattern;
shriek with me, then, on behalf of the needlessly deceased,
for the sake of injured survivors;
wail by day and howl by night for the waste of life,
the animating impulse, the original surprise present;
shriek in righteous indignation, at the top of your lungs...
...or brace yourselves for the foreseeable.

~ Brandon Marlon

EDITOR'S NOTE

As 2018 moves along, Americans are more aware than ever of the issue of gun violence. While nobody wants to live in a country where violence might occur at any moment in their daily lives, it is the reality that we all live with.

The issue of gun violence has become a heated topic of debate in just about every political circle, encompassing a wide array of disagreements including the safety of schools, the never-ending debate on gun control, mental illness, and media coverage, to name a few. It should be no great surprise to anyone that these issues have received widespread attention in the United States. While nobody has a clear answer to settle all disagreements and diffuse every violent situation, we do know that creating poetry and art is a form of escapism that many people look to in order to vent their frustration and confusion. Many of these works are powerful, impactful, and urgent.

The editors of *Pomona Valley Review* have become especially aware of these works by young writers and artists who seek to voice their opinion through their

creative process. As we received a plethora of works that dealt with the topic of gun violence in the United States for PVR 12, we decided to dedicate a unique section of this issue to those who feel the closest connection to this fear and uncertainty: high school students.

The following 4 poems were written by high school students and they address the topic of gun violence. As millions of students across the country feel frightened and unsure about attending school, we hope that these works by young writers help illuminate some of the struggles and internal pain that young people face today in an everchanging social and political landscape.

Thank You,

The Editors
PVR

BROKEN BRUISES

I see victims with bruises and unhappy eyes,
Eyes that should be bright.
I see them with broken hearts and smiles,
Hearts and smiles that are full of fright.

Victims are good in hiding their misery,
Crying themselves to sleep.
Their hearts are too heavy to carry,
Because of the pain they always keep.

This bullying must come to an end,
And also the tears in the victims' faces.
All I can do is be your friend,
And give you my tightest embraces.

Do not hesitate and doubt
Everyone has a right
Victims, go ahead and speak out
For you to conquer this fight

Be strong and wipe your tears,
Everything has a solution.
Do not be afraid to face your fears,
Stand up and be an inspiration.

~ Alexandra Shania Pagcu



"Noel" ~ Tiffany "Xcias" Syas

HUMANITY

What happened to the values of humanity?
People are killing left and right
We must spread love, not animosity
It's so hard to sleep at night

People have died at the movies
To watch a horror, not live in one
Can't even have fun at a concert
What evil has this become?

How sick must you be, to shoot a bunch of kids?
They just want to go to school
Not die from numerous hits
How could one be so cruel?

With the constant suffering, as the kids die young
The only question is, where has the humanity gone?

~ Christine Paguio

BLOODSTAINED

Just tuning in to the news
And another one just got shot.
Nowadays, we don't feel the blues
Because this stuff happens a lot.

News reports say they were a thug
And another lie is born.
Another grave has been dug
With a family left to mourn.

Let's look at Police Training;
Something isn't working right.
The streets are red from the blood that's staining.
Is it because they weren't white?

For every case they have the same excuse;
"I feared for my life! I must be forgiven!"
Take a step back and see the abuse
Of the power they were given.

This problem is not insurmountable.
There is hope in its wake.
We need to hold them accountable
For the excessive actions they choose to take.

The first thing they need to know
Is how to de-escalate a situation.
Guns are a guarantee that the tension will grow.
Their itchy trigger-finger is the problem's causation.

The second thing they need to learn
Is that not everything is a threat.
I know you're scared you won't return,
But when you signed up, you took that bet.

Perhaps you can ask more questions
Before you take the shot.
This is only one of the suggestions
That could help us a lot.

We're at the end of our rope.
To be compassionate is what you need to choose.
But all we can do now is pray and hope
That we won't be next on the news.

~ Daniel Sterling

WHIRLWIND

What has the world come to today?
Injustice, that is all I can say
I can't fathom what I see
Gunshots, bombings, and killing sprees
Endless days filled with heartbreak
So much hate that I can't tolerate
My religion shouldn't define me
Mankind should come to harmony
I can't fathom what I see
Heinous acts all over the country
Whirlwind of emotions have taken over me
I cannot believe what I see
Prejudice, abuse, and bullying
Government indifference concerns me
Voices raging through the community
But not heard and being silenced
Left there to rot in our own insanity
How can our world contain so much cruelty?
Please God let it soon be
When we become united and free

~ Ani Saroyan



"The Writing on the Wall" ~ Jen McClellan

BEWARE OF THE QUIET

Do not allow the quietness
that saturates the halls of night
break through the dawn.

For it will shatter all perception
of time and space, grabbing
reality by the throat.

Then where will the sense
of priorities lie, except among
the fallow ruins of an ancient past,

defying the depth of disregarded
wisdoms, challenging all known facts,
until there is no truth left.

Adhere to the movement of slow
creeping convention, while the
lamented longings are just out of reach.
For the quiet is rooted deep within.

~ Ann Christine Tabaka

LASTING

When I think of love
I think of my grandparents
Sixty-five years together
Everyday more in love than the last
Papa visits her grave every morning
To be with her
Polishing her gravestone
Like he used to wipe her mouth
Praying with rosary beads between his fingers
As he did with her in every mass
Since the age of sixteen
Remembering the good, despite the bad
And I can't help but believe
He is waiting to be buried into the ground
Beside her
Inches away

~ Ryan Holyfield

PARALLEL LIVES

The car speeding down a country lane. The passing, unfolding landscape of the Deep South of the United States. Fear and myth. A phantasmagoric, nervous scene flitting past our windows. In the rear-view mirror, a screen of a throwback of the contradictory territories of the former French Colonial Empire and the Antebellum South languishing in the distance.

One will quickly leave behind the vertiginous, decadent white, faux-classical porches of the plantation mansions we are so accustomed to see in the controlled theater of our film and television media. But also, in the distance, the persistent weeping willows, the quaint disquieting barns, the picket fences, the profusion of torn, stained Rebel flags, flapping their shreds on top of old, abandoned country stores, followed here by a junk yard guarded by a pack of dwarfish, roaming pit-bulls and rusting gas stations relics. And at every turn of the road, the succession of the still segregated churches of the so-called White Anglo-Saxon, God-fearing people of the countless denominations where, every Sunday, Southern folk come hoping to attain Jesus, and thus ward off with their pathetic hymns the Other, the Un-American, which, in the hysterical cadence of their preachers' words and obtuse minds is none other than the Unknown, the enemy lurking somewhere beyond the U.S. borders, and within, all wielding at them the inevitable Damocles' Sword.

The auction bidders and the curious had started to gather around noon to view the display of twenty Africans that pirates of an English ship had stolen from a Portuguese galley, who earlier in the hot, sultry day had been unloaded at Old Point Comfort. Among the slaves stood a beautiful, very young woman who commanded, atop the auction block, a high price that had been inscribed in white chalk on a little black slate hanging from her neck, a price that the American colonists were unwilling to pay. Until, after a great deal of back and forth bidding, the beautiful, young, human cargo attained the sum equivalent to fifty pounds of sugar, ten bushels of cotton, and two reams of tobacco.

“Satan, these ghosts you see swarming around our automobile constitute the fundamental issue for they emanate from the historicity of this place. They emerge right from the tremor of those verdant, rolling hills, from behind each and every lynching tree, the proverbial barn and the cross burnings that have taken place in the middle of the night, attended by hooded White Christians.”

Emerging all around us, we perceive the auction blocks, the thousands of Civil War dead, Jim Crow, the sex exploitation of the slaves by the masters, the paternalistic gentility of the plantation system, the forced marches, the religious indoctrination, the separation of families, the indignities and humiliation, the divesting of womanhood and manhood, the theft of the meager possessions, the trumped-up charges and subsequent hangings by intoxicated mobs, the stripping of language and culture, the corrupt officials at all levels of government, the hypocrisy, the maiming cotton gins, the constant fear, the lusting, the chain-gangs, the lash.

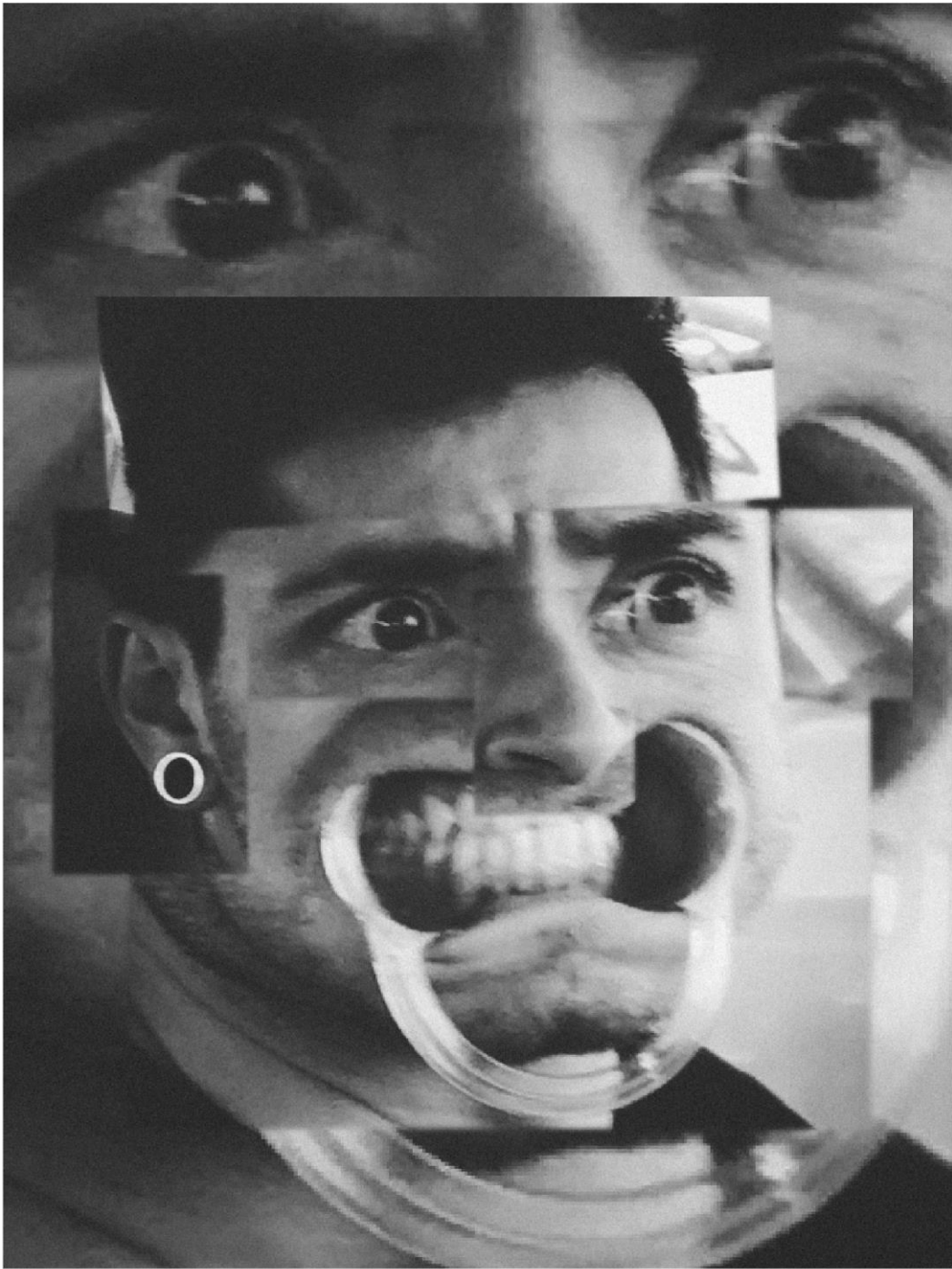
“How can I forget my first night in the big house, ma'am? The loud screams and the words I could not understand. The vision of his very pale skin coming relentlessly at me has haunted my soul my whole life. In the end, and in all my dreams, I never fail to see his red hair catch fire, as the filtering light overwhelmed it. But it was also his nudity what disgusted me the most, ma'am.

A mad man foaming at both ends of his mouth. He would not relent in spite of my efforts to resist. He would just keep coming onto me screaming louder and louder, to the top of his lungs, gesturing, his eyes wild like those of a sick animal, grimacing. I could not understand why he kept on talking in that strange tongue. Why is it that he did not see that what he was saying did not make any sense to me. From somewhere, somehow, I gathered strength and managed to fight back, to push him away, time and time again, ma'am. In vain, I attempted to cover myself with my hands but the short, stiff horse-whip in his right hand was already ravaging hard at my legs, arms and face, hence the scar you can still see on my left cheek, ma'am. You see that?” Pointing with the index finger at her beautiful face. “I saw then my frail body covered in blood and finally, having run completely out of strength, I had to give up, not having an ounce of strength left in my body. In the end, I found myself helplessly stretched out on the dance-hall’s wooden floor, where he took me. That’s why you heard me scream in my sleep last evening. This was the nightmare I was having last night, dear lady, as I did every time all those days when I and the other underground escapees slept on the mud on the way here, on the way North, ma'am. Yes, even after all this time, I keep dreaming about the day he first brought me to the big house, the house where I grew up, where I was to polish on my knees the wooden planks of the dance-hall, so many times, over the years, after that first night. The big house where I was to learn so much, serving the master’s French mistress, the only one in the mansion who was not unkind to me, and who called me Belle because she claimed I was beautiful, ma'am.”

“Since the night we fled, we marched in the freezing rain, day in and day out. The mud was everywhere to the point that sometimes we would sink in it and the others would have to stop their march to pull us out with improvised, makeshift ropes, made with shreds torn off from the scarce clothing with which we scantily covered our bodies. At nightfall we were always too hungry, wet, and exhausted to want to talk or to even think about our families. All we wanted to do was to rest and dream of roasted chickens, fresh vegetables and bread, warm bread. Some were even without shoes, so we tried our best to cover their feet with rags to prevent their toes from freezing. One day, when the hunger was at its most unbearable, we saw a dead dog in a forest clearing, and all of us, like animals, started to tear at the dead carcass and ate the meat raw, including the eyes and brain. That evening, we felt better because at least we had eaten. Afterward, I will never forget, we arrived at an abandoned town, where I found a bicycle. I don't know why it occurred to me to start riding it, without even stopping to think that I had not ever ridden one before,

but, to my surprise, I was able to somehow keep my balance, to the delight of the others, who cheered and applauded me. In the morning, after having slept under a roof for the first time in so many weeks, we started our march again. On that occasion, the sun had come out and we all cheered again and waved our hands up in the air in celebration. This was exactly eight weeks after we had left Auschwitz, and three days before we were rescued in early April, 1945, by a platoon of Russian soldiers, who took us on an armored car to the old synagogue in Prague. There, the soldiers made us stand in two lines, the men on the right and us, to the left, in front of a young bespectacled, Russian woman officer, officiously sitting at a desk at the temple's portico. I was the first girl in line and the woman officer asked me, 'Evrejka? Jewish?' 'Yes, ma'am,' I told her in German, after looking at my torn pair of mismatched soldier boots and rags covering my frail body, she said, 'du redst Yiddish?' And I nodded yes. Then she asked me my name in Yiddish and I responded, 'Belle, ma'am.'"

~ Rodrigo Palacios



"Traffic Jam" ~ Jacqueline Weisbaum

When your best friend dies at 26
you think about things you wouldn't expect.

You think about the difference
between a eulogy and an elegy.
Not knowing the difference,
you write her both.

You get angry that you can't remember
all of the memories you shared
because you knew her
too long.

The memories you do remember
are changed.
They now feature a clock
tick, tick, ticking
the hours you had left with her
away.
(3 more years, 2 more months, a weekend.)

You wonder what exact temperature is needed
To turn bone into dust,
to create the
ceramic encasing ash.

When your best friend dies at 26
poems about death seem clichéd and
fruitless.
It has all been said before in metaphors
and symbols.

You hear the silence in your house.
You think about tarot cards and
ouija boards
out of desperation.
You revisit religion too.

But when your best friend dies at 26,
it doesn't matter what you think,
it only matters what you feel.
And that feeling is hard
to describe.

~ Nicole Embrey

IN THE CAR I HEARD

a song in the car called
“I Don’t Remember My Childhood.”
I do remember. Parts.
Being called a half and half.
No gay person can be whole,
only parts.

I smelled of Ovaltine. The noon factory whistle
split our eardrums. We drank creamy
chocolate sludge. The factory now a condo.
Rentals subsumed the head shop.

A strip mall stands where water once ran.
I’m far away. Yet

I’m sidewalks that held my flip-flops,
elms that disease took
one by one, block by block.

~ Kenneth Pobo

ALL HIS FIVES

You won't remember today by the beach
when your five-year-old self handed me the
daisy that crushed me with the boundless,
unbearable rush to love and protect you
for all your fives.

I saw you then as you will be- leader, lover,
career, man. Pride battled with pain as I sank beneath
the knowledge I won't be here to share all your fives.

I pray, no, I beseech, mankind to treat you well, to
respect and not harm you. To return to you the simple act
of unadorned love you gave by walking beside me so I
would not be alone.

The world is not good enough for you.

I wish you all the fives you want and need.

~ Iseult Healy



"Kiss Me Bella" ~ Rubia Dalbosco van Roodselaar

TUBEROSE

Tuberose presses to perfume you,
betraying dawn with its flag of
sorrow. Here be the color clouds
reach down and the diorama beans
your sternum, like a spade into
moss, like a figure cutting through
a field of wheat, washing over
with heavy gray. You push back at
its denser body, by the angles of
repose around the edges of stones,
running harried notes of your bones
from solar dirge. And you are now
a thrust impressed against spine,
a flutter catches in the jaws of some-
thing else mid-air floats up from
the trees with antlered shadows, for
so lovely frail the tuberose stirs
sickle, before you glow a smile with
your teeth and pick at its orchid bloom.

~ *Lana Bella*

and no, it's not spelt wrong
because this city isn't in France.
It's within the good old U.S of A.
On the southern side of California.
It doesn't have an Eiffel tower that stands at its heart.
It didn't have a Napoleon.
No, this Perris is far from Paris.
Perris is the cousin to Paris.
The cousin that no one has ever heard of.
And it's a kick to hear people's reaction
When I tell them I'm from Perris.
Cause they think of Paris
And I see their eyes light up
Only to be confused when I speak that I'm not from France
My Perris isn't as lavishing as Paris
The streets are filled with poverty
Hood mamas out in the corner
Trying to make a buck
Shots echoing throughout the city
Homeless sleeping in front of city hall
And the three story senior center apartments
Trains always coming and going, yet hardly stopping
Kids wandering the street both early day
and haunting night
Vatos and thugs at the corner of A Street.
Watching you slowly drive by.
Neighbors coming out of their homes to get mail,
and quickly rush inside.
Murder at the city's park.
Just across from the Sheriff's department.
The local High School having higher
rates of pregnancy then higher test scores.
The local cemetery has just begun to expand.
And though many might find the city to be one to steer
clear of.
Their right to do so.
Yet, here in this city

I've grown to be the person I am.
Memories of my childhood have been rooted here
Racing the neighbor's friends around the block
On my silver road master
Or sneaking into my neighbor's pool;
only to rush out in hearing
their angry shouts
and those times were of the best I've had.
Perris, the lesser to Paris.
One without a defining history.
Yet the one who holds my childhood.
The city without glamor,
nor a tower.
Only train tracks
that lead out
and never in
Perris.

~ Efred J. Sevilla

MORNING AT THE HOUSE ON SHEPPARD STREET

Glass bottles

and a few dollars' worth of aluminum line
the kitchen counter; cigarettes, moaning strangers

litter the floors.

Doors hang out of frame on loose hinges
and someone says, "winter

was here."

Tongue and teeth speak, and there is breath
in the light. From some suspension

a surface—words

forgotten and gods, or all things
and whatever.

Riverside, spring equinox

~ *Al C. Grigg*



"Take a Step Back" ~ Vanessa Valdivia

THE EIFFEL TOWER OF SHENZHEN

“Rain falls from the trees, knowledge is born of chimneys and my love feeds on your desertion.”

Ngondo Moyula¹

He was working on the third part of the manuscript of ‘Poet in Exile’. The text of ‘Poet in Anger’ was almost finished. The main ideas of the text of ‘Memory of a Poet’ were already on paper. During the twelve hours of the Cathay Pacific flight, he tried to work out a balance between the verses, a few words here, a verse there, then he moved on to the next paragraph without conviction. The death mask of frustration gradually settled in. Once the page was black, he watched the words getting lost on the wing of the aircraft.

The violence of the shock changed the words into various forms, knights of the air, merchants of dreams, a breastplate, a tent across the desert, a dying opera singer looking for a new breath or a wise person giving mysterious survival advice to bodies without souls. The work seemed to be well advanced but the truth was quite otherwise.

He sensed that the texts had no soul. The power which had formerly emanated from the words was gone forever.

Inspiration was no longer of this world. The memory of magnificent evenings when texts lined up on the walls of adobe was far away and aggressive. The blind person’s condemnation had come to pass. That meant one kept one’s sight but found oneself far from knowledge of the infinite and wisdom. That also meant that truths no longer had any meaning here. When a being arrived at the stage of life where words no longer have a taste, where ideas no longer have logic, then the being just hung its hat up.

The being has to think of the extent of its past engagements, the disappointment it could have been to the Gods and the miracles it was not able to accomplish. The being has to try to re-live, whereas the poet has to hang on.

He was at the end of some years of work. He had not yet given up but hesitations were already designing great towers lined up on the steep slopes of the tooth that is called destiny.

It was winter and it was minus three in Paris. It was winter and damp in Shenzhen. The faraway city made the continent even more absent. The time difference wiped out the tumult of this city in the south of China. He was waking up here when there they were in the heart of the nights of dreams, nightmares or illumination. He was having breakfast here when there the knights of the battles of the night were only forming their lines on horseback for long and bitter rides in the apartments of Morpheus.

¹ Escaped convict from history (Angola – Cabinda)

He asked his way to where he had to work. Just ten minutes from the hotel, his contact has assured him, he wouldn't have to walk for too long. When you came out of the hotel you had to turn left then carry on straight... directions which didn't help him much. He didn't feel he had the soul of an adventurer this morning. He decided to take a taxi. The receptionist had just finished talking on the phone to her colleague. She would put him in a taxi.

It's often at the twist of a hesitation, because of waking up late or changing from one pavement to the other that life changes. Often a being wanders for a whole existence looking for the stone of truth which can light up his doubts with new values and a neutral perfume. The seeking is often hard. Destiny can change into a cunning animal which turns the hunter into prey. Destiny then, around a meaningless event, slips you a profound and eternal truth. It's up to you to grasp it or to walk away. It's the instant of a second. Of a few minutes. In the most unexpected environments from the surrounding chaos an idea can surface which will make a rich man of you, the answer which will satisfy a life time of interrogation, the instant of lucidity which will allow you to resolve an enigma which evaded you for so long, the evidence which will help you to clear the suspicion on a friend who was formerly beloved but today is hated, the muse which will allow the poet to find again the path of creation.

That is what happened to him. He saw her pass before him without being able to make up his mind to detain her. To say what to her? What could he say to her that she wouldn't already guess? How could he explain to her what he was unable to grasp himself? What is well thought can be clearly said, Boileau told us. He sometimes wondered where those thinkers of other times got their formulae which didn't apply to everyone. He wondered how many seconds he would have to find the right words to detain her. She would tell him that she had things to do, an appointment at work, a busy day, appointments with clients.

Certainly all true. What's more it would fit in with normal human behaviour. The being knew that to step off the beaten path would frighten her. Who would have thought of going to the Shenzhen opera for the music without understanding the story. Who would have thought of going to look at the Eiffel Tower of Shenzhen close up when the vertigo of Paris was engraved forever in our memories. He took a photo of that Eiffel Tower each morning, his old film camera which could be temperamental did what it was told this time. A sign from the Gods? A pure configuration of the cosmos?

He knew that he would have to make a choice between remorse and regret. He didn't know what to choose. The implacable wheel of time would do it for him. The man had no longer written for ages. The words still lined up, he could no longer find the fire. The blank page had become his best friend. During a twelve hour flight he hadn't written a single line. He wouldn't be able to say why but the vertigo of words took hold of him again at last after so long.

Who was she? He chose regret. He let her go. He saw her disappear in the distance and only retained the memory of her face full of determination. Only the sway of her hair

remained in his mind. She had an honest face. He had only seen her in profile but he knew it was her. The familiar muse, alive and a city dweller. He thought it must be an hallucination or something like it. His day was beginning badly and he knew it. He cast a quick glance at his diary to check the programme of the day. He detached himself from the vision and thought he could easily forget.

Chance is a trickster in short pants. Destiny is a long coat which covers all your hopes and fears. It was with this twin vision that he saw her again during the day. They were working for the same company. In asking her how to get out of the building he realised that she too was French speaking. He had enough for one day. The feeling of abundance, then of emptiness and finally of a game of dice.

Dinner for the Chinese New Year. Destiny once more behaving like a malicious pixie put them beside each other at table. She wasn't there. His only companion was the card with her name and first name. He knew he wouldn't have the answers he was waiting for.

Where was she? Travelling? Sick? He only found out the next day following another stroke of luck (but that's another story that I'll reveal later). The show was exquisite. The music, the costumes, the atmosphere. On the way out for those who hadn't won a prize they gave everyone a present for the Chinese New Year. He told himself it would really be a pity if she couldn't have a Chinese New Year. He got a colleague to help him to explain the situation to the young people at the entrance (great burst of laughter) before they gave him a present for the absent one.

She made a radiant entrance into the office cafeteria. Splendid and moving apparition. If exaggeration must never be a poet's brand, neither must he tame his words, soften them or make them meaningless in a way that's of no use to wipe out the big wave which is submerging him; oh! of course nothing to do with the interest of mortals who imagine a lock of hair where the poet discerns a furrow, a sidereal casting which will open the doors of a better world.

She really was radiant. The elegance, the charm in such a small space. The being put two lumps of sugar in his coffee. He rarely had any. He wanted to display normal behaviour. Her grey shoes were admirable and the light colours of her jacket maintained the eye at a respectful distance. He disappeared in silence while she was busy in the small printer room.

The man went out to get a breath of air. The lift was slow in coming. He got impatient. He spent the time looking at the Eiffel Tower of Shenzhen. It must have been about the size of a seven storey building. The metallic construction still appeared from the window of the fifth floor. He let things take their course. Happy Valley was well named in this town at the end of the world. They all had to leave the hotel the same day. He had to go. Logical and natural. He called the lift. He felt in himself a sense of non-achievement, perhaps the thing which troubled him most. He had within him the joy of knowing that he was cured of the blank page syndrome and the sadness of not being able to express it

simply. He experienced a profound relief in greeting the daybreak. He scribbled a few words and slipped them into the porter's hand, hoping that she would never receive the letter. He hoped the porter would drop it. He hoped that they would find no further trace of her at reception. That she would have left without leaving an address.

The noise of the city grew progressively distant, in the comfort of the air conditioned vehicle. The big buildings going by, the silent electric bicycles. The impassive profile of the road because it's the most useful. Eternity. Dream. Rain. Wind. Peace?

Crossing the border, he wondered if he would write to her again. The glimmer of Hong Kong shone in the distance. He looked for his passport in his pocket. He dropped a stamp. He still didn't know if he would write to her before he took his plane on Sunday evening. Bitterness made a warm bed in his brain. He closed his eyes to relax, hoping it was just a dream. All the time knowing that the poet can escape from reality but not from the source of his writing. Perhaps he would never see her again. But what does tomorrow matter for someone who has been around the world in one day?

A voice escaped from his throat:

Oh my impatient pen

Why do you not know how to keep silent?

Have you become a marine eagle which throws itself on blank paper?

Are you not ashamed to frighten a young woman?

What do you intend to do with these heedless words?

What do you say? You are an independent pen?

The pen directed the man's hand to make him write these words:

Drift sweetness

Glide tenderness

Crush pineapple

Turn over concrete

Reveal Madagascan

Marry Luciole

New Muse

Of a singing poet.

Suddenly he heard the whistle of a cruise boat crossing Victoria Harbour. Chance was indeed a trickster in short pants. With numb feet he arrived in Roissy at dawn. Coffee and memories. Definitely not a good mixture. He asked the taxi driver to take a turn by the Eiffel Tower.

Today years afterwards he still wonders what he should have done. He wonders what his poetry would have been like if he had had the chance to see her again. Would he have had the same words, defended the same ideas? Would he have written the same

way? And now he's signing autographs, upstairs in the big room of the Fnac bookshop in Les Halles. He answers questions with the patience of his age. Many years have gone by. It's the first time he's been back to do a reading in this bookshop for ten years or so. The public seems to him to be very young. He's enchanted by that. From time to time he raises his head and looks for her. He knows what he owes her in terms of his creativity. She gave him back the taste for writing one day somewhere at the other side of the world and he felt ashamed that he had never been able to thank her. He could have sent her an e-mail. Said something to her but it wasn't done in those days. They worked for the same company and she certainly wouldn't have understood that sudden outburst from a stranger.

At the end of the signing session, a fragile woman with blond curly hair came to bring him a book of photographs in black and white. His only work of photography. The Eiffel Tower of Shenzhen. She told him how she had often worked in Shenzhen and that she didn't much like either of the Eiffel Towers. She didn't need to tell him. He knew. He pulled out of his old bag the negatives he had carried around for years and gave them to her with a wide smile. His press agent reminded him that a taxi was waiting to take him to the Gare de l'Est. He was no longer in a hurry. The muse was still as beautiful. Strasbourg could wait.

~ *Landa wo*



"Don Quixote in the Cave of Montesinos" ~ Rodrigo Palacios

ONE MORE

Sorry mom, your baby boy has
Been a little reckless with the coronas and dos equis'
I know you're always lecturing me about
My tios and how they've changed.
Good men that drank their goodness
Into a stupor and became twisted.
One calling their kids
Cabrons and conos
Another always looking drunk
Regardless of alcohol or not
Yet they all have the same look,
Lost.
Never able to fill themselves
with that goodness again.
"Peerrod no te preocccuuupes Mama.
I won't let thhe drranksssss
Take mmyy goo-ness aaaway
Thhhiiss, an-and jjuaan more
Oooookaay?"

~ Efren J. Sevilla

LA ODISEA ATLÁNTICA

[Materiales: una concha del mar]

[Escena: la costa atlántica]

ponte la concha a tu oído,
dime
¿escuchas la historia del mar?
han de rugir las olas
o
un clamor de huesos ahogados

ahora,
póntela más pegada
¿escuchas las canciones de esas almas?
cantan,
oh gran Orixá
disuelva estas cadenas
y
regrémenos a nuestra tierra natal
-otra-
oh mar cariñoso
alívienos de esta sed,
esta penitencia,
tráguenos en su piedad

baja la concha,
¿escuchas tu voz?
parece que el color de nuestra piel dicta nuestro hado
y con cadenas todavía permanecemos,
con los pies arrastrando la arena
caminado hacia nuestra limpieza,
y como sirena, nos embelesa el mar
con sus olas vaivenes
diciéndonos
venid
y
sed libres.

~ *Nicolas Miranda*

OLAS LIBRES

no fue fácil ir a la playa
dictadas por el viento
las olas azules bailaban
al ritmo de la libertad,
y tú madre
dictada por Dios
bailas solo entre paredes;
y por eso te da celos
que el mar sea libre
y tú no
y así como la arena se traga los pies
te hemos tragado,
pero no mojes tus alas queriendo ser libre
Ícaro atrasada,
Sino vete,
aléjate de esta cárcel
sal y corre
hasta la tierra que te parió
que te desea abrazar,
allá el viento te recogerá
y libre, serás

~ Nicolas Miranda



“Morphing Bull” ~ Saul Villegas

ROADRUNNER SONG

you slept with the river
near the old, grey-backed mountain, broke a fever
against the long night.

rocks caught the spine, woke numb bones
and sent air through the mouth. the body
kept from the sky, held to deep water grass.

when you came to cold shade, you cut faces
in the cold sand.
and low, descending coos from high branches sang
of dead cottonwood.

you knew the song and shed skin. humming,
you sank in the river.

~ Al C. Grigg

UNTITLED (THE UPPER CLOUDS...)

The upper clouds were golden with a sky above them of azure,
and we, down in our low by the waves,
had eyes.

~ Margarita Serafimova



"Taurus Vs. Aries" ~ Saul Villegas

SATIE GNOSSUS

Quarrelling
at the intersection
of outer and inner reality,
we drift into sleep.

As comfortable together
as animals
curled up in each other's warmth,
protected from the daily
pinning
of feelings to thoughts,
thoughts to words,
words to opinions
and resenting looks.

Awakening to your sleeping face,
the echoes of our anger resound in my mind.
How fully I could love you
if I didn't anger you so profoundly.
How desperately you need me to love you.
Abruptly I turn to attend to the details
offering me an infinity of escape routes
out of the heart.

A missing button to find. A drying plant to water.

A spot on the carpet to rub. A can of cat food to buy.

A little one to feed. A briefcase to unload.

Papers to process

before the morning's work brings a new tide of papers to...

The details coagulate in my heart.
I see the child in you as you sleep,
the child so crippled it now cripples me.

Today, I reached out to care.
You reached out to care.
I said something you felt was irritating or hurtful.
You criticized or complained.
En garde!

I defended, both of us counter-attacked.
Our years of explosive sparring growing
monotonous.

I remember when I would have felt more
than this sense of
confirmation
and could have mourned more
than this loss of
hurt.

~ Tita Anntares

STREET COYOTE

From soft soil and open fields of emerald
To black, jagged asphalt and grey concrete
From hunting rabbits and golfers for nutriments.
To dumpster diving the local Jack in The Box for anything
To silence the stomachs cries.
What a change it must be to you,
Who sleeps in den and wanders the fields
To have home taken from you
Outraged by your attacks against their small pets
Blood hungry to see you dead
But you were here long before
Painted across your coat
A touch of sand and dry bush
Wrapped tightly against your ribs
All the rabbits and squirrels are gone or dead

On the side of the road
You lay
Beaten
Like a homeless man
still; unresponsive, forgotten
Only movement is of your eyes

~ *Efren J. Sevilla*

RICHARD PARKER

Richard Parker, is a single, sticky, striped kitten
Crouching under a dark wheelchair ramp for weeks,
No beginning, with barely opened eyes
Wild, watching the cars roaring down a four lane street
Grasping at passing lizards with tiny paws
And growling at the vibrations above.

Richard Parker never stops fighting from the first CLASP
Of the cage we shut around him, to every nighttime
that he fights his way out of a dark garage,
Peering out from his lifeboat drifting far at sea,
To sing to us in soprano meows his heart's desires,
Before the light of day sends him back under the tarpaulin.

I think he can still hear cars roaring down that four lane road
Maybe his whiskers are so long that everything feels too close
Maybe it feels like he has no skin
And everything feels like it's trying to break in
That's kind of what it looks like to me,
It's not like...it's not like I know how that feels or anything...

I see Richard Parker startled by his sister
Her flank is twitching and she's running round the walls
Trying to throw off the itchy lightning
Rippling through the stitched up teeth marks across her copper pelt
Don't worry Richard, it's not your fault
It's loving deeply flawed pets in deeply flawed times.

I've known a lot of cats who never took a human
But every night Richard climbs out of that lifeboat,
And curls around us like one of the family,
His muscles rigid, his tail tight like a python --
-- one sparkling eye is on the exit!
Richard tells us he loves us with every rapid heartbeat.

There's no place he'd rather be than by his family's side,
Watching nighttime TV as his body screams at him
To drift back into his cold, dark place under the wheelchair ramp.
Where the cars roar down that four lane road.
That's why I love him though. Not because he runs away,
But because he comes back.

~ Casey J. Marshall



"Image 13400" ~ Bruce Barton

THE NINE DEATHS OF SCHRÖDINGER'S CAT

ix. curiosity

blackflight box recorder
nosedive discovered
reckless wreckage of arsenic recovered

last breaths captured
crackling terror
shattered bleeding
pilot error

when we pry open this vessel
to remove this tumor
to eat that apple
will we leave it nearly dead or
nearly alive

air-moisture-earth-sky

if curiosity had killed the cat
it was satisfaction
what brought it back

viii. six of one

turbulent blood
a purring thud
a pillowcase

the mewling
heavy
river

vii. scandal

evening is a black cat
a febrile firework
extravagant

and overdrawn

a yowling affliction
of arrogance granting
impulse meets charismatude

tatty skin-stretched friction
of feral desky panting
a caterwauling internlude

stained of fey extortion
this heedless seedy thrusting

a debacle upon
the brooding
dawn

vi. as told by the familiar

jump upon a time
in agony far, far erased
the cat and her middle
went to see in a hole
one if by hand and two
in the bush with one
rolling
stone
to catch a pair of water
and mark it legacy:
don't let the sun set on your
pot calling the kettle on
we'll all
fall
down
along a crooked stile
where we kept her very well
finite never after...
if our visions
would have been stronger
this spinning could
have had less wander

v. bastardizations

mid-dusk huntress
seeking succulent flesh
fiercely prunes

herds of hooving thunder
wear ... her furs ... tread
the massive pads

of this nubile sungod warrior
ply her with oils the
tawniest of holies

long shadowish slumbering
grasslands belie an alert
heat-rippled matriarch

swishing her tail, switching
her tales, agitatedly inhabiting
the devils she knows

overseer of only
deltas and desserts, a
perfumed protector

twilighting firefly eyes, a
declawed catwife of some dim
pearly underworld

whose grecian artifice
artemis
like some telanovela diva,

landed her lunarside
bruised, usurped:
mummified

iv. the last straw

we are where
we aren't
where we are

courting inner
uncertainties
the familiar
teases
trucing at our
clattering chatter
the ranting of all she
ever was, all we
never were

warp and weft of
tattered pleas
ceasefire's
falsely bartered
ease
sulkily spinning
the last straw into
a golden fraying
noose of peace

we stir
as we please
till release

iii. not unlike the sins of our mothers

then there's the way
my eyes slap against you
I pick and pick

as if you were some
stubborn price tag
needing rid of

but everything pendulums:
marriages, moons, crops,
fashion trends, feedlots

scars heal and
seas dry up and
your voice cracks in my throat –

these recycled legacies
rock us to sleep
singing

the old chair squeaking danger
all of us whistling
in the dawning dark

ii. codependent crib notes

quantum entanglement:

symbiotic corpses
we love each other to death
react against one
to find the other

observer induced collapse:

only when you caught me
that one time
did it
ever occur

decoherence:

if I lived infinite lives
invariant, each one,
until the next choice splits
forming fractal limbs upon branches upon twigs
upon cells upon roots upon rings
on multiple worlds
would I not always find my way back to you
to myself

i. half dozen of the other

holding our stuttery breath, gasp-grasping till the very most
end

pondering mystical
theologies of physics

while she scratched her existence
in that box or didn't

all these
equipotentialities

I and thou and
she and he

living breathing dying things
all at once

you don't have
to open a box

to know

~ *Carrie Nassif*

THE PARASITE

Today is the day I walk out the Radar;
yesterday I diagnosed the disease.
I'll die for my parasite, I'll pray for the acolyte.
Most of the fade is in your eyes,
it comes from the Radar and the clouds;
hold still for the infant, don't break, and stay consistent.
The yearning for my walk comes at dawn,
and through it I walk with the Man.
Keep me in bondage and sidle me through the land.

Another drink, another plan.
I keep to the left, I sway beneath the lights;
a pale woman stumbles against me, drools upon me.
She spits venom with her blood;
bare breasted, emaciated, dripping slugs.
I duck and lean back, and she grabs out in attack.
She needs some fluid, she needs some food.
The Man on my shoulder whispers 'be silent,'
and I obey, turn away, unhinged and still silent.

I just bought the Man the other night;
I let the promise of good gills elude me,
I slammed with the crash, played in the rum sodomy and lash.
I practiced with repetition, sipped back broken glass for breath,
spent good gills on dirty coins and empty purses;
He told me to stay sentient in the presence of the sentient.
And I tried, I tried to care, I tried to play the fool,
I lost the collective, branded the beams with the White,
turned away from the shadows, Black shades for the fright.

Now this desolate woman was on the concrete, and I felt poor.
She looked up at me through the haze and spoke:
'I saw you come from the cave, you clawed through the grave.'
I couldn't argue so I rested, laying down on the street too;
my hands rested on my chest and the Man peered over me.
He discriminates with small eyes, ignoring all sentient cries!
The Radar beams down on me, the disease through the fade,
I might just die on the water, I might just glide with the Father;

the walk stalls in the fog and the angels don't bother.

Am I the enemy?

Could the visage of the damned cause no affect?

The lachrymose faces spin fate with twisted waste,
the clouds of torment whirl beneath the Earth,
the pin on the finger of the cosmos breathe humor.

Could I be the lesson, could I be the vessel; the aggression?

No, He convinces me, with a nail in my ear,

No, He spins the parasite round and round;

I lie apathetic and ruthless, counting and bound.

If He could make you rich, would you take it?

If He could make the grandfather cry, would you care?

An enigma for the thoughts like a coin for the slots.

If I reeled back, chose the dirt, removed from the walk,
would I float away to the fade?

I've tried with heavy eyes to care, but the price seemed fair.

Now the ghost walks with me on the Radar,

the astral plane welcomes me with bended bones,

the initiation rite comes with the horror of pelted stones...

I won't lie for my lack of care,

but I wish the poor soul before me could feel the same,

I wish she could take my hand, walk too through the strand;

yes, but no apparition by my flesh could consume the bug,

no ghastly rot could reverse the damage done.

Would that I could, but I lay deep as I should.

Now the rebirth is just asking the torture,

I understand that now.

Only the eternal penitence could reverse my bow.

The fool that I've been, the selfish mite.

With four pairs of legs I transform,

with four pairs of hearts I am bled, under the skin I embed.

And now the last breath with a wisp,

the voice gives way, and I become too bare breasted and weary;

I wailed for euthanasia, the mass, the hysteria, the dysplasia.

I won't walk out the Radar anymore, I've lost the colony.

I won't die for the parasite, it would kill him.

So, it feeds and it feeds, until it is filled to the brim.
And I don't ask for forgiveness, only the walk;
I don't ask for aid, only wealth;
so, the woman begs and I refuse, my arrogance the fuse.
From the grave the parasite consumed me,
from the grave the Patrols mediated my wishes,
from the dirt I learned the crime, in the clouds I passed my prime.
Now the worms devour the remains, my body is humble;
and the Archangel weeps while our skeletons crumble.

~ Ian Cressman

CALLS FROM HELENA

Permit me, to abhor Helena.
Permit me, to allow Helena;
 who drinks her sweet liqueur—
 with facial balms, her organs in rapport—
 at the end of her days,
 to Heaven send Helena
 and her poisonous, heathen gaze.

Upon his brow, Georgio sits mute.
Promised by his darling, so cute;
 who plucks the root with an unwelcome flood—
 streaming down the face bathed in blood—
 his tree upturned in his cosmetic dilemma;
 so soft was once the plain,
 until poor Georgio received calls from Helena.

Unparalleled in skill, Shella lies all stylish with throws—
Shella upon her throne, she faults and upturns her nose;
 who, dissatisfied with her darling,
 she returns with dark eyes and lips snarling;
 so surgical mutilation becomes her wicked agenda,
 and she becomes absorbed in acids and creams—
 until no more... she received calls from Helena.

Once, when you were in commune with Gossamer the muse,
with Georgio and Shella too;
she prepared earthen gels to combat prescription use.
Hands up, tied back your emotional cue,
your face then reddened, that “ungodly hue...”
Gossamer too holds his breath until your justice is reached;
so far gone is the Hellenic marble until once again Terra breached.

When Gossamer placed his black cards on deck,
and bit by bit your organs fall apart—
and steadfast haunting devils crawl through the fleck;
hope your brain speaks once again to your heart—
 and back to sweetly-lit shores to embark
 with Georgio and Shella (while tied together in twine);

a tree sprouts in Alpine, and to none holds the crime.

Painted and adorned in burnt sienna,
only goodness frightens Helena,
 who would play mind games with a brain-dead man,
 who would break her guise to sabotage a plan—
Terra is not your toy; Tempter of Pain;
wretched Wight of toil and grief,
Terra will not be so possessed with your game.

Stop—lest Georgio fires the gun charged at his head—
Stop—lest Shella lose her comfort in her bed.
 Young sprouts then grow as they please,
 young flowers bud as they please;
Terra is not yours to conquer,
Old Tradition holds no quarter here;
until you come, speaking far “softer”.

Now Shella lies choked in bleach, and overdosed—
and Georgio lies bloody against his stall, decomposed—
 Gossamer weeps at his misfortune, or so he played;
 his lips shudder as She rises to Olympia, so flayed
 is the flesh upon his back by his ancient ritual
 that once won him praise,
yet back to Terra they send him, in attempt to be civil.

Permit me to abhor Helena—and her lack of civility;
Permit me to destroy Helena—to seal her in her tomb
forever more, though I foresaw this eventual declivity.
This time, this place, still within the womb,
the road less traveled now has flowers in bloom.
All my puppets have now died,
my wisdom now has left me dry.

Enumerate your life, your lust,
and take care upon my grave to discourage overgrown dust,
unless of course you hear from miles below that fatal ring—
for Helena awaits to ask from you her dreadful sting.

~ Ian Cressman

LIVING THE MANUFACTURED LIFE

Choose life,
The product says
As if it were a person.
Sorry advertisement – corporations are people,
But not you. Not yet.
You're promising to decrease death by 40% -
Can I sue the product for being a liar?
False promises based on empty words fill the air
And we are all turned into buyers.
And told it's a choice.
Lenin once said that capitalist freedom was a lie -
If you are forced to choose between capitalism or death
Is there really a choice to be made?
Of course we're going to pick life
And be stuck in a system that perpetuates
The destruction of life.
Capitalism makes us into oxymorons
Living through a paradox,
But we can buy life in a variety
Of shapes and sizes, flavors and colors.
Unfortunately it doesn't come in authentic yet -
Until then, all we have to consume is parody.

~ Amanda Riggle

THE 4TH REBELLION

On the 4th of July we keep our traditions alive of eating non-American food and hating this country for what it does to black and brown bodies in the name of white security. We hold his dogs and comfort them through the colorful bombs exploding in the night's sky. We sit there bitterly and drink cheap beer while we feel the soft fur against our skin and do not say a word to each other because we both know what the other is thinking: how the fuck did we get here? How the fuck did America get here? How the hell are we going to get this country to change? It might be too late to flee before it turns into *The Handmaid's Tale* because it already seems like we're living through a fascist rendition of Idiocracy.

Later, back at home, I hold my cat, stroke her soft black fur, and cry as I read the poetry of a dead black child and think of the migrant children being kept in detention centers, never to be reunited with their families. "Unification is rare" reads a line from *The Guardian*. "I AM NOT WHAT YOU THINK!" is the title of Antwon Rose's poem. A gun and a cage. A cage and a gun. This is how we raise our children in America. This is how we tell police to deal with children in America. This is what people celebrate when they say they love this country. The echoes of fireworks could be mistaken for guns. The bullets shot into a child's back for being black sounds like fireworks.

Red.

Lights.

Flashes.

Bullets.

Screaming.

Cheering.

Puddles.

Death.

Ash.

Blackness.

The show is never over.

Another firework flies into the air.

I fall asleep in a war zone wondering who will be alive to watch the show next year. I feel the warmth of my own blood flowing through my veins and I try not to imagine what it would feel like dripping down my back as the explosions continue. My heartbeat is caught between the firework blasts:

Crackle

Bu-dump

Fizzle

Bu-dump

Boom

Bu-dump

Crackle

Bu-dump

Fizzle

And then I dream of a world without borders, without police, and without ICE – a dream I wish we could all share. In the morning, the fireworks have finally stopped, but the eruptions are just beginning.

People are tired of dreaming.

I am tired of dreaming.

We're awake now.

We're awake. We will line the streets outside of ICE detention centers and ask for children to go home. We will find police officers that shoot black children and demand they put away their guns even after a judge lets them go. We will fix the broken system we've inherited and remake it in our image. We are tired of bitter headlines that go with our bitter beer. We are tired of living in fear and mourning over the bodies of dead children. We are tired of being exploited and told it's just the way the system works. We will no longer watch the news tell us the future is hopeless.

We are tired.

But we are awake.

The rebellion has finally come.

~ Amanda Riggle

THE INTDETERMINATE IMMEDIATE: SIXTH ELEGY

Last night, I awoke in a life no longer
my own. Curled over the kitchen sink, washing
something, the white noise of water running
over me the way it used to on those
uneventful days, window and frame parting,
permitting breath, and every now and then
a word from the parallel street,
a whisper on the wind.

Just behind, the stove burner radiating heat,
quivering like a candle in the wind's hiss.
What was it that ruptured this ritual,
so sufficient and self-contained? Was it
some sound that didn't belong? Some echo
of what was, or what has not yet become?
Some vibration from the past, or the
nostalgic arrival, the immanent remainder,
of the present tense?

Broken, my gaze turns. A room once full,
now the residue of movement, bare as it was when
we came, bare again now that we have left—
every turning, a turning away.

To move through you, empty space,
as if at the foot of someone else's bed, given
to you in trust that its tenderness will be
conceived again.

For you, the task, just one: remember.
Remember how it felt to run your hand over
the broken cup, surfaces pressed and sealed,
wondering if this time it would hold?
Remember the faded paint, every year a bit more
broken by the sun? And we, too, year by year,
crafting departures, spaces upon spaces
from which to disappear,

the body an echo of change.

Memories, places, I only ask that
when you go, go lightly, as a half-smile never
fully realized, a step never quite taken, still
full of arrival. Tragic, the cost of curves
on lips, like something cracked and broken.

And what can I take with me? Not the imprints
of your crib, firm against the ground.
Not the leaves, pressed with care against
your wall, peeling slowly.
Not the things themselves, which crumble
and dissolve. No, not these.

But only an image, a touch—at best, a word:
oak, geraniums, jacaranda trees,
cherrywood, French doors, the names of
your books, of the streets we passed, of the
songs we heard that were not yet our own,
not yet the prized chords that would follow us—
only just becoming.

We, attaching such value
to the earthly, increase the actual
loss infinitely, our measure,
its worth. And if we are the measure of all
things, why not measure greatly? Why not
measure *more* than the things
themselves deserve?

Do not repress your immediacy. Do not
retreat into the great enterprises.
Hold your despair open. Let it breathe.
For there is no comfort in the eternal when
each thing is given only once:
once for each thing, each gesture,

each smile, each departure through that
inconsolably open door.
Our home and I, we let each other go.

~ *Ryan David Leack*

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD: 7TH ELEGY

Almost still a child, a question
not yet asked, but posed nevertheless in your
almost nimble hands, you learn to grasp
the world. In your hands a woman's hands,
their grip firm and decisive and sure.

To you, the moon is within reach.
To you, rain brings the joy of falling stars.
To you, all heaviness is curved, the earth
an arc of reveries beneath your feet.
For you, the door to the world
begins to open.

We clutch at this day, the first day
of your fourth year. To begin here,
with Janus, god of beginnings and endings,
doorways, thresholds, transitions, time.
Two-faced, he looks upon the future and
the past, a threshold in himself,
ahead of all parting.

January 30th: We begin here, at this boundary,
this frontier, this vessel flowing over,
too shallow for the life that had been.

Just as a mirror shows only what is behind
you, the banner's broad black letters—
which cast your name like a stone
into the stars—mark only a break:
what has been, and what has
not yet become. But in that break,
how many worlds turn, how many days
shrink, how many wounds ache,
their lessons still unlearned.

And who are you now—
a poet caught between two words,
an artist wavering on the first stroke,
a musician, timid, seized up so resolutely
around that first note, as if you never

had to begin. What would it be like
to be suspended indefinitely in this break,
to refuse a single step? If only every
movement, action, and regression was not
itself a step forward.

Who are you now—
the light curls of your hair suddenly
dark and straight, as if ironed out,
already past the threshold of your shoulders,
your eyes calm lakes upon which
impressions are still made, receptive to the
slightest touch of world,
all migration, all flow.

When once moments came and went
of themselves, scarcely worth of
mention, now each moment bears its
share of cosmic weight. The totality
of the earthly endures even in the shell of
the mundane, ubiquitous object
sheltered inside your hands.
In the momentary tension of your laugh,
the universe collapses and expands.

How is it you carry such heavy things?
How is it you round the vowels through
which the world reveals itself to you,
so precariously composed? How is it that a
child's clothes, still fine and bright like
untouched thread, have long since
become too small? For under the cloth the
fabric of the body grows, jagged
on its little edges, tearing seam to seam
the way a caged animal longs to be set free,
your body's boundaries the world's abrupt end.
Who can ask which bears

the greater weight, when—with the
burden of awareness, the gravity of every
star and planet—your body pulls all
objects toward its center.

Look now to the pavement, how it bends
to your feet, how in the garden and the
park the world swings as you remain still,
how the lilacs extend their violet, patient
grace to you, the whole world your
wonder or your destruction, how in your
corner of the world all things speak
with secrets, not through sound nor syllable
nor mind, but through time—

through the cicadas' sharp,
protracted song, invisible yet
well-defined, through the dandelion's
easy yellow smile, born through scattered
ashes, through the flecks of pollen fixed to
the tips of your fingers, those bits of golden
dust seducing all things and
magnetizing world.

Look how in the subtle shift of seasons,
of life and of time, our histories, in peril—
as if written with water on hot, dry stone—
hasten to be written, to be read.
Look how the banner with its broad,
black letters hangs its weary head.
This beginning, too, has come to an end.

~ Ryan David Leack

ZIGGURAT

When you're feeling fine,
it's more than a little
difficult to coax
curious ideas out of their
dark, dreary caves.

A highball in a
short glass.

Their antennae hang limp
and don't feel for the
pleading voice of the muses;
long limbs refuse to
streeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
and touch the pervasive warmth of the

eeee
eeee eeee
eeee eeee
eeee eeee
eeee eeee
tch

SUN

An old fashioned without an orange peel
touching the rim.

So,
ideas
do funny things

like dance without a purpose
in

Manhattan without the
bitters.

or get drunk and leave gaps instead
of diaries.

~ John Danho

REFORMING STATISTICS: CHILDHOOD BRUNCH WITH BURGLARS

Early Saturday morning around eleven in the morning, my family went to my uncle's hamburger stand for brunch. The stand was located near Compton on Avalon boulevard in south central Los Angeles. My family parked in the street and entered through the back door, and when we sat down at a table thinking about what to choose from the menu, two young African American boys who were maybe about fifteen or sixteen years old came in through the back door. One of them had a small caliber gun. The type of gun used to rob people and businesses because of its small and easily concealed from the public eye. Neither of the robbers were wearing masks. And once they were inside, they told everyone to get down on the floor and face down, so everyone complied with their demands except for my grandmother who was worried about my uncle at the cash register. As we were on the floor, one of them began taking the jewelry, watches, purses, and wallets. My father immediately gave them his wallet and took his cheap wrist watch that only looked like an expensive Rolex. He had won the watch at a school carnival at a local elementary school playing toss the ring. When they saw the flashy cheap wrist watch, one of them yanked it from his wrist.

As they continued going from person to person taking all of their belongings, the young man who had the gun kept asking my mom to let go of her purse, but she wouldn't let it go, so he put the gun on the side of my mother's head and demanded she let go of the purse. My mom wouldn't let the purse go even after my father told her several times to let it go of the purse and let them have it. My father was afraid, and I was too. We were afraid that she was going to get shot if she didn't let go of her purse. While my mom and dad were both lying on the concrete floor, she wrapped her arms around my dad, and both of her hands were under his stomach, and it looked as if she couldn't let go of the purse because she could not get her hands out from under my dad to let go of the purse. However, after the robber asked about five or six times to let go, she finally did, and the robber had it in his hands.

The whole time the assailant asked my mom to let go of her purse and wouldn't, she was not being stubborn for no reason, and when the men turned their attention to the other victims in the building. He turns his attention to my grandmother who is crawling on her hands and knees in agony and would not lie down and comply with their demands. The reason she would not comply was because she was worried about my uncle who's in

a wheelchair defending the cash register from two people, and he refuses to give them the money. My grandmother yells at my uncle to give them the money from the register, but he refuses again and again to comply with their demands they kicked them off the register and on to the floor. The two assailants left with the money and a fake watch running through the backdoor which was the same way they had come in to take everything from us except my parent's wedding rings. Thanks to my mom's quick thinking and tenacity, the rings were the only thing the robbers didn't take, and when the police arrived after approximately thirty minutes, they took our statements and reported the incident. Then we became a statistic.

~ *Ivan Rios*

BECAUSE OF WHERE I LIVE

The class tells me
because of where they live
people think they're
gangsters
moms
dropouts
low-lives
criminals
liabilities
failures
worthless
trouble.
They tell me
just because someone
looks like a cholo
doesn't mean they're stupid
but you can't control
how others perceive you.
One young man speaks
with uncertainty
grillz muffling his voice
shoulders shrinking into his jacket
that proudly proclaims in gold letters:
Los Angeles.
"You can't trust no one,"
he contributes
(somewhat off-topic
but I don't mind
because those are the only words
he's spoken all semester)
and we all laugh
to reassure ourselves
that everything's ok
that perceptions can be erased
that this world's worth believing in.

~ *Natalie Peterkin*

HOW TO ANALYZE A POEM

What does this poem
have in its pockets?
Some loose change,
a bobby pin, a key
it never uses?
When this poem
gets up at 3 in the
morning, what
does it think about
as it takes a piss?
A lover, an earache,
or nothing at all?
When this poem
eats dairy, does it
get the shits? Or
does it have the
digestive system
of a young, suburban
male? When was
the last time
this poem cried?
Who offered it
a handkerchief?
Did it accept?
When you think
about this poem
50 years in the future
where is it going,
and who is it with?
What does the poem
believe? What does it
fear? But, most importantly,
what's in its pockets?

~ *Natalie Peterkin*

BIOGRAPHIES

Tita Anntares

Tita Anntares, born and raised in Hollywood CA on Whittsett Avenue until 7, digests life moments in poems in an evolving collection she calls "MammalTalk." In the last five years, thanks to a life-tsunami, she has written three plays (and a fourth in development), each about ordinary people who have taken extraordinary stands for fairness, sometimes at risk to themselves. Based on actual events and people, so far each play includes unexpected reconciliations. And each play has won at least one contest, placed well in others. She hopes her poetry writing will keep deepening her playwriting.

Christopher Baarstad

Christopher Baarstad, ostensibly known as Chris, teaches Basic Writing and Composition at Riverside City College in California. He also teaches international 7th and 8th grade students at his local junior high school. He enjoys reading Norse mythology, dystopian novels, and writing for no reason at all.

Bruce Barton

A product of North Beach, and a graduate of the San Francisco Art Institute, with advanced degrees from San Diego State and Pacific Western Universities, (BFA, MA, Ph.D), and independent studies in Paris, St. Paul de Venice, France and Florence, Italy. Bruce Barton has functioned in corporate communication as well as Fine Arts. Among his past employers/clients are Northrop Grumman Corporation, for whom he served as Creative Director of the B-2 Stealth Bomber program, and he managed the design graphics functions, directing the production of internal and external communication initiatives for the flights of the Rockwell International/NASA Space Shuttles.

Lana Bella

A four-time Pushcart Prize, five-time Best of the Net & Bettering American Poetry nominee, Lana Bella is an author of three chapbooks, *Under My Dark* (Crisis Chronicles Press, 2016), *Adagio* (Finishing Line Press, 2016), and *Dear Suki: Letters* (Platypus 2412 Mini Chapbook Series,

2016), has had poetry and fiction featured with over 450 journals, *Acentos Review*, *Comstock Review*, *EVENT*, *Ilanot Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Rock and Sling*, & *Lampeter Review*, among others, and work to appear in *Aeolian Harp Anthology*, Volume 3.

Ace Boggess

Ace Boggess is author of three books of poetry, most recently *Ultra Deep Field* (Brick Road Poetry Press, 2017), and the novel *A Song Without a Melody* (Hyperborea Publishing, 2016). His writing has appeared in *Harvard Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *RATTLE*, *River Styx*, *North Dakota Quarterly* and many other journals. He lives in Charleston, West Virginia.

Adrianna Burton

Adrianna Burton is a rising academic junior at UC Irvine pursuing a Bachelors in English with an emphasis in creative writing. Her writing explores through discrimination, loss, and mental illness yet pushes towards positivity through her experiences with passion, motivation, and acceptance. Having been published in *Canvas Journal* and most recently in the 2018 Humanities Art Gala as first place winner, her next goal is to complete her first compilation of poetry. You can find more of her work on Instagram: @callmecarolinaa.

Trish Caragan

Trish Caragan graduated from the University of California, Riverside, where she earned a bachelor's degree with honors in creative writing. This year, she will be starting her first year of The New School's creative writing MFA program with a concentration in Writing for Children and Young Adult Literature. She enjoys reading and writing romantic teen stories. Trish knew she wanted to write romance novels after reading *This Lullaby* by Sarah Dessen, her favorite author and biggest influence. Her other favorite authors are Morgan Matson, John Green, Jenny Han, Stephanie Perkins, Huntley Fitzpatrick, Laurie Halse Anderson, Nicholas Sparks, and many, many more. When she's not reading or writing, she's either talking to friends or listening to upbeat pop music. One day, Trish hopes to write books that will impact people the same way that Sarah Dessen's novels have impacted her.

Ian Cressman

Ian Cressman is a Cal Poly Pomona graduate with a BA in English Literature. He began contributing to PVR in 2016 as an Editor, and now serves as the Editor-in-Chief. He sees PVR as a great platform for emerging writers and artists alike and has been published in the journal himself. He writes primarily short fiction and occasionally poetry. His favorite authors include Fyodor Dostoevsky and Ernest Hemingway, among others. He enjoys reading 19th Century American and Russian Literature and watching *The X-Files* with his cat Fox.

John Danho

John Danho is the Lead Editor for PVR and a recent Master's Degree recipient from Cal Poly Pomona in English Literature. In addition to the creative pursuit of poetic mastery, he is an avid Dungeons and Dragons player, and a co-host of The Next LVL podcast and The LVL Up Livestream.

John De Herrera

Writer/artist/activist who lives and works in Santa Barbara, California.

Nicole Embrey

Having received her master's in English, with a professional certificate in teaching and writing, Nicole is currently an adjunct English instructor at various community colleges. Aspiring to be more than just a teacher, she likes to say she is a "storyteller in training." She longs to finally sit down and pen the many stories bouncing around in her head, ranging from a collection of mythical "creature features" to an intensely personal, yet fictional, story about ghosts and clairvoyance. In her spare time, which happens to be very little, she absorbs anything pop culture, often jumping into new fandoms with reckless abandon.

William Gonzales

Love sci-fi and fantasy works. Love working on computers and cars really anything that can be taken apart to see how it works. Poetry is something new to me and wanted to give it a shot.

Al C. Grigg

Al C. Grigg lives on the inland outskirts of the Cleveland National Forest, where he plots novels and writes poetry. The framework of his practice might be queerness, etymology and grammar, or dream interpretation. He was educated at the University of California, Riverside and is currently preparing an application for graduate study.

Iseult Healy

Iseult is published in Fredericksburg Literary Arts Review (USA); A New Ulster anthology (NI); OfiPress (Mexico), Boyne Berries (Ireland), Spilling Cocoa over Martin Amis UK,

Rats Ass Review (USA), and Hidden Channel, Sligo, Ireland. She is a member of Poets Abroad, Ox Mountain Poets and A New Ulster groups, and frequently attends Kevin Higgins' Over the Edge international online poetry workshops. www.iseultwriter.com

Ryan Holyfield

Hello My Name is Ryan Holyfield. I am 23 Years old. I attend classes at Chaffey college. I am going to school to become a Special Education Teacher. I hope you enjoy my poems that I have written.

Geoffrey Huyck

Geoffrey Huyck is a second-year student in Cal Poly Pomona's English M.A. program. He has been writing terrible poetry and prose since he was a child, with work previously featured in the Ricks College literary journal 'Outlet Magazine.' He has recently accepted a position teaching first-year composition at Cal Poly Pomona as part of its graduate teaching assistant program. He reads, writes, does needlepoint and woodworking, wants to pet each and every dog, and has an unreasonable affinity for sour gummy candy.

Jill Jacobs

Jill Rachel Jacobs is a Pushcart nominated poet whose poetry has been featured in Lost Coast Review, Ygdrasil: A Journal of The Poetic Arts, The Screech Owl. Ms. Jacobs publishing credits include The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Huffington Post, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Newsday, The Independent.

Conner Jones

Conner J.B Jones is a writer and photographer from Claremont, CA. His work has been published in The Bravura, The Cave, and has earned honorable mention in Writer's Digest. Conner writes full time for BurstOut Magazine,

and Viva Lifestyle and Travel Magazine, he also has his own personal blog, Grizzly Jones Travels, where he shares his collection of nature photography. Conner is a student at Mt. Sac and has plans to attend Grad School within the next year.

Ryan David Leack

Ryan David Leack received his Ph.D. in English from UC Riverside, where he studied the productive intersections between rhetoric, quantum mechanics, philosophy, composition, and poetry. Having been published in journals such as Pif, Westwind, RipRap, Contemporary World Literature, Strong Verse, and Word River, he also served as Editor-in-Chief of Pomona Valley Review for seven years. He leads a quiet life in Los Angeles seeking Thoreauvian tranquility and harmony with words.

Max Lizarraga III

Highly reclusive freelance concept artist & illustrator that focuses their work around the macabre & speculative nature of life with a style that can be described as Neo-Mythological Naturalism. ig: a_xolotl

Joanna Madloch

Joanna Madloch is a NJ-based photographer. Her photographic work concentrates around the topic of seeing people in the context of art -- in a museum space or on the street. She has a Doctorate in Humanities from the University of Silesia (Poland) and teaches courses in Humanities and Photography at Montclair State University in New Jersey. She is an author of a book dedicated to Joseph Brodsky's poetry and over 25 scholarly articles published in the US, Poland, and Russia. Recently her academic interests focus on the juncture of verbal and pictorial arts with an emphasis on literature and photography. She is working on a book about the portrait of a photographer in fiction, a character that she

interprets as an archetypal trickster and monster. She often acts as a juror at photographic contests.

Casey Marler-Marshall

Casey J. Marshall is a graduate student who studies Rhetoric and Composition at Cal Poly Pomona. His poetry and short stories often seek to parse experiences of disability and trauma through the medium of fantasy. Casey also enjoys creating digital art and writing comedy. Two gray cats are among the rescue pets he lives with.

Brandon Marlon

Brandon Marlon is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. He received his B.A. in Drama & English from the University of Toronto and his M.A. in English from the University of Victoria. His poetry was awarded the Harry Hoyt Lacey Prize in Poetry (Fall 2015), and his writing has been published in 225+ publications in 28 countries. www.brandonmarlon.com

Jen McClellan

Jen is a professional rock-paper-scissors 26 years and counting. After graduating from kindergarten, she realized all Western recognition and ceremonies are scams. Moloch! She uses pen and Photoshop to art (fart). She used this video from a Steven Hawking flatterer to stop Adobe PS CC 2018 from crashing: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=not+enough+ram+integer

Michelle Mermilliod

Michelle Mermilliod is an English instructor in Redlands, CA. Her work has been published in PVR as well as The Socialist including artwork and original poetry.

Nicolas Miranda

Finding out I was Afro-Mexican completely

changed my perspective of my identity. It irked me that it was something my community saw as shameful or tainting, and that proclaiming it was unheard of. I wish to reclaim though, and to start, I wish to write about my slave ancestors, whom have been disconnected from me and their descendants for too long.

Jordan Montejano

Jordan Montejano is a NU Scholar Graduate student in the online MFA Fiction Program at National University and a Professional Expert English Tutor at Crafton Hills College. His work ranges from post-apocalyptic and realistic to fantasy. His work is published in The Derail review, the Pacific Review, and the GNU Journal. He aspires to publish his poetry, short stories, and novels as well as teach English at the college level after the completion of his degree program.

Carrie Nassif

Carrie Nassif is a poet, photographer, and clinical psychologist with a private practice in the rural Midwest. Her recent poetry can be found in The Yellow Chair Review, The Gravity of the Thing, WORDpeace, Tupelo Quarterly, and several anthologies.

Natalie Odisho

Natalie Odisho is an Assyrian-American artist who lives in Dubai. After graduating Florida State University, she followed the music to Las Vegas where she worked in editorial and public relations. Now her focus is on acupuncture and telling you to eat only before 7pm. She thanks you for reading. www.timeperspective.net

Alexandra Shania Pagcu

Hi, I am Alexandra Pagcu, a Senior High School student from Glendale High School, my poem is about "Bullying" which is pervasive issue

nowadays in schools. I have chosen this topic because I have experienced being bullied in school, and I want others to see how bullying can impact a person negatively. Also, I want to provide some advice to the victims of bullying about learning how to stand up and ignore the people who put them down. I hope my poem can be in your summer 2018 issue. Thank you!

Christine Paguio

My name is Christine Paguio and I am a senior at Glendale High School. My poem is about the horrible change in humanity and how it is affecting society.

Rodrigo Palacios

I studied comparative literature at Stanford University as a Ford Foundation Fellow with Fernando Alegría and Jean Franco. I also studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. Most of my work has been published in newspapers and literary journals, such as "Revista Chicano-Riqueña" (University of Houston Central Campus), "Vórtice" (Stanford University), "El Cuento" (Mexico City), "Pacific Coast Philology" (Philological Association of the Pacific Coast), "Grito del Sol" (Tonatiuh International, Berkeley, Calif.), and "Praxis" (Universidad del Valle, Colombia). My short story, "The Spooks", was a finalist in this year's Monkey Collection anthology contest. I am also the author of the novel *Woman Crossing the Seine*.

Marta Albalá Pelegrín

Marta Albalá Pelegrín is an Assistant Professor at the English and Foreign Languages Department at Cal Poly Pomona. Her research and interest include Late Medieval and Early Modern Spanish literature, Theater and Diplomacy in the context of the Mediterranean World. She is particularly interested in French, Italian and Spanish humanistic and theatrical cultural networks as well as in English drama. She has been

originally trained as a literary historian, a journalist and a creative writer, and has developed a keen interest in translation studies and cultural mediation. During her undergraduate studies she spent one year of study abroad at the Université Paris 7. A voracious traveler since then, she has developed the appetite for living in different countries, learn different languages and devouring local cuisine, all spiced up with good wine and beer. She enjoys welcoming the summer with a German course book over an obazda in a Beer Garden. When not reading at a coffee place or at the archives, she watches movies, hunts for old movie theaters, and new culinary traditions. She used to be a figure skater, and now she loves strolling in big cities, and having a drink or some tapas with friends.

Kenneth Pobo

Kenneth Pobo had a book out in 2017 from Circling Rivers called *Loplop in a Red City*. Forthcoming is a book of prose poems from Clare Songbirds Publishing House called *The Atlantis Hit Parade*. He has work in: *Indiana Review*, *Caesura*, *Nimrod*, *Mudfish*, and elsewhere.

Laura Razo

Laura received her MA in English and TESOL certification from Cal Poly, Pomona. Currently, she is a lecturer at Cal Poly, where she teaches composition and critical thinking courses. Her academic interests are in rhetorical studies in technology, science, and theology. If not found with a book in her hand, she is out exploring the outdoors, following the road less traveled.

Amanda Riggle

Amanda Riggle graduated with her BA in English Education, finished her MA in English Literature, and is entering into an English PhD program fall 2018. She studies Early Modern

English Drama, Poetry, Poststructural Marxism, Marxism, Queer Theory, and Feminism. She is the Executive Editor of *The Socialist*, one of the co-founders of the Inland Empire chapter of the Socialist Party USA, co-chair of the Socialist Party of California, and a member of the Socialist Party USA's National Committee. In addition to her political work, she is managing editor of *The Poetics Project*, a blog dedicated to creative writing. During her free time, Amanda enjoys reading, traveling, crocheting, watching entire seasons of campy shows, and, of course, writing.

Ani Saroyan

Hi my name is Ani Saroyan. I am a senior at Glendale High School. In my English class we also focused on writing poems, and this poem I wrote means a lot to me. It is about the injustices and the cruel actions that our society commits.

Margarita Serafimova

Margarita Serafimova was shortlisted for the Montreal International Poetry Prize 2017. She was awarded a merit-based fellowship by Summer Literary Seminars as one of fifty runners-up in their 2018 poetry contest. Margarita was long-listed for the Erbacce Press Poetry Prize 2018. She has three collections in Bulgarian. Her work appears in *Agenda Poetry*, *London Grip New Poetry*, *Trafika Europe*, *European Literature Network*, *The Journal*, *A-Minor*, *Waxwing*, *Nixes Mate Review*, *StepAway*, *Ink*, *Sweat and Tears*, *HeadStuff*, *Minor Literatures*, *The Writing Disorder*, *The Birds We Piled Loosely*, *Noble/Gas Quarterly*, *Origins Journal*, *millers pond*, *Obra/Artifact*, *TAYO*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Opiate*, *Poetic Diversity*, *Novelty Magazine*, *Pure Slush*, *Harbinger Asylum*, *Punch*, *Tuck*, *Futures Trading*, *Ginosko*, *Peacock Journal*, *Anti-Heroin Chic*, *Liquid Imagination*, and many other places. Some of her work: https://www.facebook.com/MargaritaSerafiMarg/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel.

Efren J. Sevilla

I'm not sure what to put here and I think you already get the point that I'm a student at CSUSB. I hope you have a wonderful day and don't forget to smile. :)

Samantha St. Claire

Samantha St. Claire recently graduated from Cal Poly Pomona with her MA in English and a year's worth of experience in teaching college composition as a Teaching Associate in her grad program. She has tutored college writing for four years at three different campuses, is currently teaching international high school students at the UCR Extension Center and is excited to be a new associate faculty member at the Riverside Community College District. Her teaching philosophy includes improving student retention and transferring rhetorical analysis skills to outside the classroom.

Daniel Sterling

I, Daniel Michael Sterling, wrote this poem to reflect the current climate in America and the tension between people of color and the law enforcement. I feel as if the voices of the younger generations are drowned out by the bickering of the elders. I wish to be the voice for those who cannot address the problem directly.

Tiffany "Xcias" Syas

Tiffany "Xcias" Syas, is a second-year studio art major pursuing a BFA degree at Azusa Pacific University in California. After undergrad she plans on continuing school at School of the Art Institute of Chicago for her masters. After that, she wants to teacher art while still being able to sell and display her own work. She has been featured in different school events as well as a couple of group shows in Hollywood and Highland Park. Recently she was published in the *West Wind Literary Magazine* 2017-2018. A lot of her artwork ties back to the idea

of identity and revealing your true self. She captures people in vulnerable moments to show the beauty of what is real. She has created pieces of people eating, yawning, kissing, popping pimples, and laughing, to name a few.

Ann Christine Tabaka

Ann Christine Tabaka is a 2017 Pushcart Prize in Poetry Nominee. She was selected as Poet of the Month for January 2018 and interviewed by Kingdoms in the Wild. She lives in Delaware, USA. She is a published poet and artist. Her most recent credits are Page & Spine, The Paragon Journal, The Literary Hatchet, The Stray Branch, Trigger Fish Critical Review, Foliate Oak Review, Bindweed Magazine, The Metaworker, Raven Cage Ezine, RavensPerch, Anapest Journal, Mused, Apricity Magazine, Longshot Island, The Write Launch, The Stray Branch, Scryptic Magazine Ann Arbor Review.

Zev Torres

Zev Torres is a writer and spoken word performer whose work has appeared in numerous print and on-line publications including *Maintenant 12: A Journal of Contemporary Dada Writing and Art* from Three Rooms Press, *Academy of the Heart and Mind*, *Muses Run on the Subway Tracks*, *I Can Count to 10*, *The Wild Word*, *Peach Velvet's Poem Creatures and Literary Orphans*. Since 2008 Zev has hosted *Make Music New York's* annual Spoken Word Extravaganza, and in 2010 founded the *Skewered Syntax Poetry Crawls*.

Vanessa Valdivia

My artwork is my photography I love being able to travel and photograph some of the most amazing and beautiful scenic places in or around Pomona Ca.

Ivan Rios

They write poetry, fiction, and create art. From La Puente, California, Ivan and his brother enjoy playing live music as a twin dynamic duo as *Zeitgeist* and the *Mage*. He currently tutors at Chaffey Community College and California Institute for Men. As a master's student, they want to teach at the community college level helping students transfer and receive a higher education. They want to receive a doctorate in critical theory and ambient or deep rhetoric.

Rubia Dalbosco van Roodselaar

Rubia started her journey in the Arts during her teens, working as a Jewelry Designer in Brazil. She later moved to Canada and then to the United States, earning a B.A. in Architecture from UC Berkeley. She has studied Fine Art extensively also at California State University Bakersfield and at the Glassell School of Art in Houston, Texas. Her artwork has been exhibited at juried shows across the United States, and at the Brazilian Consulate General of Brazil in Beverly Hills. She works with a wide range of themes and mediums, including oil and acrylic portraits and landscapes.

Saul Villegas

Saul Villegas grew in a rural town in Avenal, California. He studied his artistic amateur style in school being oblivious to other subjects. Since his early years he found art fascinating and devoted his entire time to sketching, drawing, and painting. In middle school he found art could become a business and started to work after school hours to paint local window displays for extra cash for art supplies. Afterschool programs kept his creative mind accelerating by exposing him with artistic projects throughout the community. He painted a mascot for the middle school he attended, and then a hospital in the small community. In high

school, he advanced in art and was placed in honors art classes. At 15 he was accepted in a program for gifted art students (CSSSA) California state summer school for the arts held in Valencia, CA. it was a month-long course with professors in the college. The environment of structured art gave him the direction to the style and media that revolutionized his artistic skill.

Jacqueline Weisbaum

Jacqueline Weisbaum is a Los Angeles based video and performance artist. She is currently completing her undergraduate degree at the University of California, Irvine.

Landa wo

Landa wo is a poet from Angola, Cabinda and France. His work has previously appeared in *Cultura - Jornal Angolano de Artes e Letras*, *Blackmail Press*, *Boyne Berries*, *Cyphers*, *ROPES Literary Journal*, *Nashville Review*, *Raleigh Review*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *Star 82 Review*, *The Cape Rock*, and *Weyfarers*, among others. Landa wo has won a number of awards including 1st prize in Metro Eireann writing competition 2007, Eist poetry competition 2006 and Feile Filiochta international poetry competition 2005.

Joyce Wu

Hello! My name is Joyce Wu, and I am currently a student at Cal Poly Pomona majoring in Applied Language Studies. I love writing poetry because it gives me an outlet to relieve stress and to put elements of my over-active imagination into words.



Thank you for reading