



CULTURE
CULT

Magazine

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POETRY ISSUE



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A Magazine of Arts, Literature and Culture

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CULTURE CULT

A Magazine of Arts, Literature & Culture

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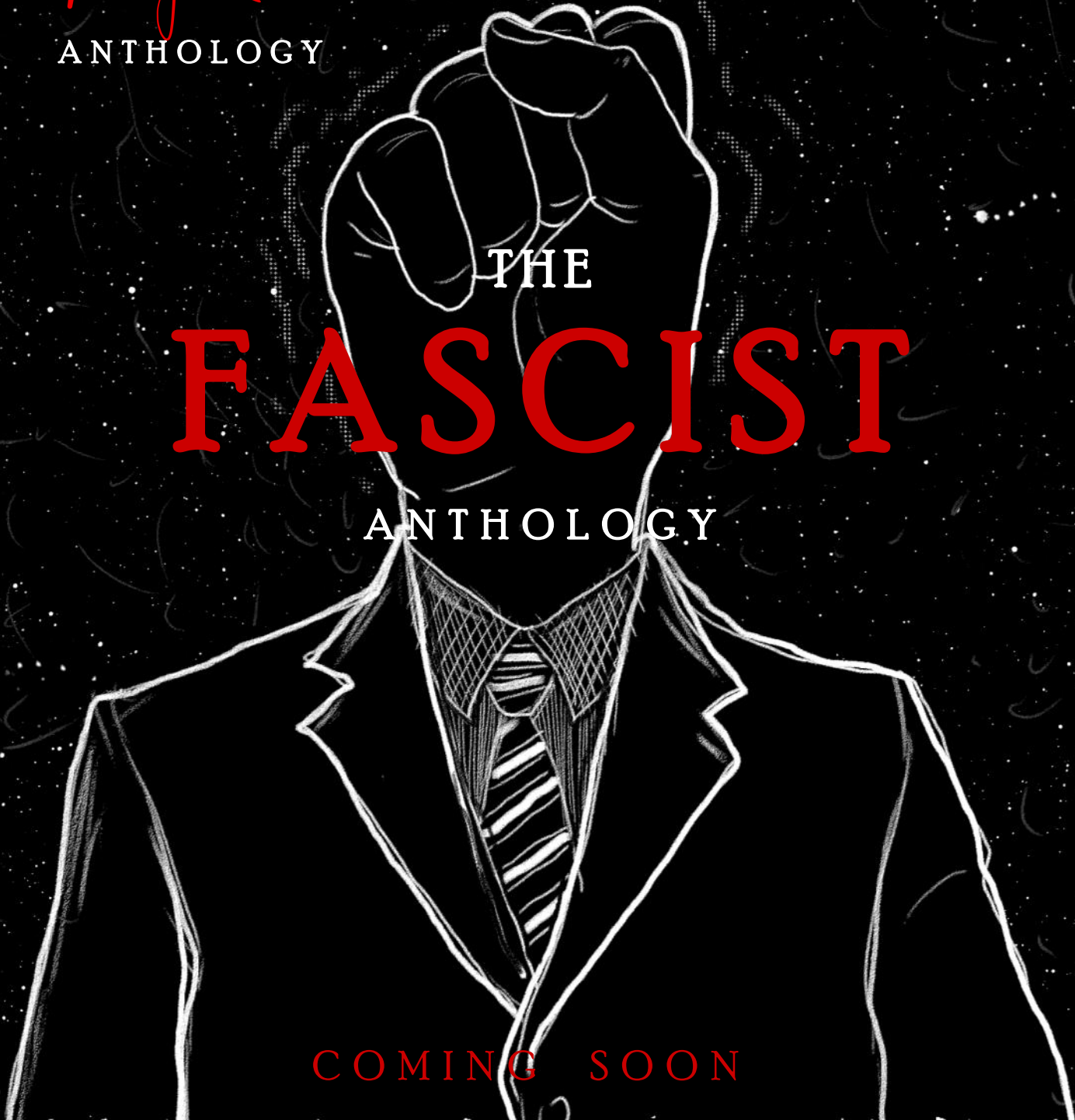
ANTHOLOGY

THE

FASCIST

ANTHOLOGY

COMING SOON



Of Poetic Infidelities

Would it be too ungrateful an act to claim that poetry refused to aid me at a time when I needed her the most?

What constitutes infidelity in the realm of words, she asks me, especially when they are scarce spoken aloud or recorded and almost exclusively put in verse in the proverbial beats of one's heart?

Why does it appear menacingly fictional - the communiqué across space, across even time, that which might exist in a metaphysical contour of nothingness, yoking together with unpoetic violence two that were never meant to be - a juxtaposition unjust that would only necessitate a little time to be trampled under the merciless critical scythe of a mighty Samuel Johnson?

She, poetry, met my abject stupidity with choice derision of her own. I would claim to give and give while she would claim to provide sans cease. I would claim to scale stepped mountains for her while she would enunciate fancier stories of risqué paraglides from the moon to the earth below.

She would, poetry, if she were here right now in this column in place of my incoherent prose, berate my ink for circling about my incongruities - attaching a limbless accusation to my accursed name, encircling the follies in red - colours of fidelity - to mark the indifference that would keep me from caring for my first child, the dead one I decided to resurrect with this blandly christened 'poetry issue'.

Poetry has seldom been the issue in my case, having resolved to stick to my identity behind the camera instead - a quick medium that, my hubris would claim, has transcended its queasy analog days to transform into a medium immediate - that which manages to capture a spontaneous burst of emotion with twenty four times the fervor of a goddamned nib or a rickety typeset, perhaps even a beating heart?

And yet, as I keep returning to pagemaking and the pen, confusing transient forms with unlearned lessons of the whole, marrying art-sets and words of fellow poets to infuse life into this dying child of mine, I keep reminding myself that poetry couldn't prevent the undoing, if not causing it, when, in my humble opinion as a fallen editor, I needed her assistance the most. □



JAGANNATH CHAKRAVARTI is an ADmaker/Independent filmmaker based out of Kolkata, India. Besides fulfilling the duties of the founder/ chief editor of CultureCult Magazine, he enjoys dabbling in several forms of artistic expression including fiction, poetry, digital painting, film criticism and acting. He holds a Masters degree in English Literature.



POETRY

POORNIMA LAXMESHWAR



Life in small things

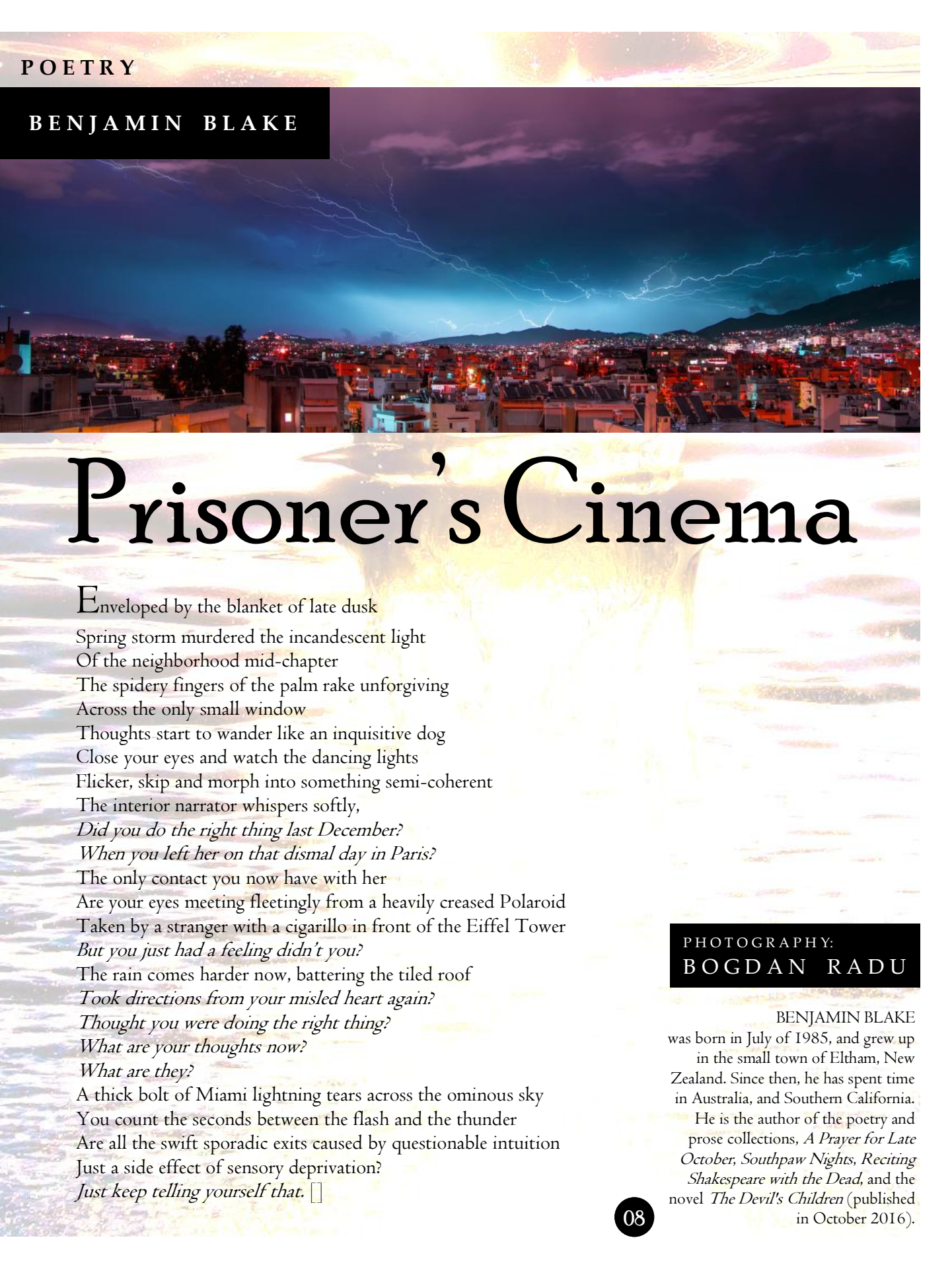
PHOTO COURTESY:
SKITTER PHOTO

When you comb your soft hands through the grass
run through the flowing streams
get your first five paisa coin
tie the balloon string to your little finger
taste the cotton candy
buy the milk ice as the vendor names it
pluck the tangy mangoes, jump from the old trees
feel the nausea build while mother cleans the cow dung floor
twitch at the end of every summer vacation
close your eyes, lock the memory and cage it
you release these birds out
one by one
when you grow up to forget the happiness
that small things bring ☐

POORNIMA LAXMESHWAR
resides in the garden city Bangalore
and works as a content writer for a
living. Her poems have appeared in
ColdNoon, Vayavya, MuseIndia,
Writers Asylum, The Aerogram,
Stockholm Literary Review, Northeast
Review, Brown Critique amongst many
others. Her haiku have found space in
several magazines.

It ain't a secret

It was a strange day
Like the usual everyday strange
His silence was unusually silent
Like the inner peace — scary, unneeded
He ate everything that was served on the plate
Without a whimper
Without the salt is less, it's bland like your senses
None of it
He went ahead to read our daughter a story too
They had a good laugh and the echo lingered in my head
Like a clip of a horror movie
Not once did he look into the blinking mobile screen
He walked in our room with a broad smile
Asked me if I had a good day
Wished me a good night's sleep
Though my shivers were enough to shatter the bed
Was this apocalypse?
That night when we lay on our sides
I knew his part of the story
I knew he had found a new home... □



Prisoner's Cinema

Enveloped by the blanket of late dusk
 Spring storm murdered the incandescent light
 Of the neighborhood mid-chapter
 The spidery fingers of the palm rake unforgiving
 Across the only small window
 Thoughts start to wander like an inquisitive dog
 Close your eyes and watch the dancing lights
 Flicker, skip and morph into something semi-coherent
 The interior narrator whispers softly,
Did you do the right thing last December?
When you left her on that dismal day in Paris?
 The only contact you now have with her
 Are your eyes meeting fleetingly from a heavily creased Polaroid
 Taken by a stranger with a cigarillo in front of the Eiffel Tower
But you just had a feeling didn't you?
 The rain comes harder now, battering the tiled roof
Took directions from your misled heart again?
Thought you were doing the right thing?
What are your thoughts now?
What are they?
 A thick bolt of Miami lightning tears across the ominous sky
 You count the seconds between the flash and the thunder
 Are all the swift sporadic exits caused by questionable intuition
 Just a side effect of sensory deprivation?
Just keep telling yourself that. □

PHOTOGRAPHY:
BOGDAN RADU

BENJAMIN BLAKE
 was born in July of 1985, and grew up
 in the small town of Eltham, New
 Zealand. Since then, he has spent time
 in Australia, and Southern California.
 He is the author of the poetry and
 prose collections, *A Prayer for Late
 October*, *Southpaw Nights*, *Reciting
 Shakespeare with the Dead*, and the
 novel *The Devil's Children* (published
 in October 2016).

Hellbox

Crawling through the clutter
Of a maladjusted mind
Fragments of scrapped sentences
And long-discarded lines

Don't let this chapter be just wasted type

You took my words and set them aflame
Sewed the passages shut
And released the crows from my ribcage
To disappear somewhere into the expanse
Of darkened sky
Above a little stone chapel
In sprawling woodlands

Casting letters like runes
I'll hide these kindred keepsakes
In small wooden boxes
Wrapped tight with typewriter ribbon
And placed upon the mantelpiece
Of my heart ☐

Samadhi Me

I have seen the light
of many thousand suns
and been inside
the darkness of infinite wombs,
breathing light and life through mother earth
I've swam inside the darkness of the blinding light,
curled under the sacred mother womb-rooms
I've been through many moons,
faces and phases, hazy red & blue & dark & new,
I've been bleeding on the moon,
half and full,
slivered red and white hot yoni spewing clots,
stars,
holy dots dropping, moving birth heads
organism pure pink yoni fire bombs red wombs hearts broken open
orgasms
cracked back
to the now
oh,
where are we now?
ha, Samadhi we! ☐

AVA BIRD is a pranic poet practicing presence and poetry from the places of heart and soul and beyond. Also, an author, a mixologist, a mythbreaker, a sharer, and a chef of many proportions. She has organized various kinds of events including the great art movement "100 Thousand Poets for Change", a universal gathering of worldwide poets and artists promoting equality, peace, justice, sustainability for the planet, global love and positive changes for all & more. For more information, visit 100tpc.org

A Brother of Mine Not Found in the Woods Either

Wrong number boy scout, tail between my legs, he lay he down
in weeping grasses weeping luck's deep drying up of water,
which he begs will overtake him, tan him for keeping; also save
Nathan's spanish boots and gloves he prayed, search party
bringing up refreshments like cavalry, but now he's miles above
them earthly and he's draped in fluid vestments very like
grasses, tumbleweed, dry burr,
which leech juice and marrow interred
rather in haste: decomposition, sir
where he ran out of breath on last wrong word.

Salutes to you my long dead gotten lost
young eagle leader pal, his fate my rawest. □

PAUL GRAMS is a Ph.D. (English Language and Literature), University of Michigan, 1984; Some of his published works include "Ballad for Detroit Comrades," "Dialogue: Rags and Sticks" [poems], Struggle, Fall, 1997; "Contra Mont Blanc" [poem], Defined Providence, Winter, 1996; In and Out of Doors [poetry], Greenwood Press, 1987 .

Expedition of Orpheus

In a quest to seek certain answers, I mindlessly ran into the woods
 The mystic darkness that touched the base, enlightened me as it could
 I walked through the hollowness and silently called out for a companion
 A dead poet's abandoned **Hope**, was standing there in the oblivion

(**Hope** Spoke-)

"Fragile and futile were all his trials, but his perseverance never gave up
 Although this world jibed at him, to a new dream, he always woke up
 How uncanny the destiny is? To his fate, he could strive no longer
 Death came uninvited, but on his grave, I forever stand as a guard of honor"

I bid **Hope** goodbye (or did I?), I could never really understand
 My life is in shambles, in this mare's nest, I surely will be damned
 I gathered my courage, and walked; but this I could never foresee
 On the next blind turn, in this dark forest, a preacher's lost **Faith** was waiting for me

(**Faith** Spoke-)

"The more he preached kindness, the more this world treated him with ferocity
 His sublime words of wisdom, was subjected to subterfuge vanity with atrocity
 When I was lacerated inside him; he succumbed to this venom called 'life'
 I went astray; but either in reality or in fool's paradise, I someday wish to revive"

I laughed at myself, but my heart cried out; brutal is an irony like this
 Hastily I started rearranging my broken thoughts, fearing an emotional heist
 "You are a clueless seeker, why being frail?" you are a mourning dove"
 Thus called out from the end of a tunnel, a dying incarcerated Love

(**Love** Spoke-)

"Don't approach me with those uncontrolled doubts, all of them will ricochet
 Step further, only if you brought along that abandoned hope and that lost faith
 The questions I am aimed at, uncharacteristically, have been long imprisoned with me
 The faith in hope, the hope in faith, and their interlinked bond, carries the key"

Beyond all theories of life, lives a wanderer who seldom speaks or thinks
 But against the laws of nature, that day; Hope Faith and Love were freed
 I never looked back to validate whether those Magi were following me
 Maybe it was a doubt on self, or I was consciously avoiding Orpheus's Tragedy □

And then my impulse grew out of my skin, tearing it to bits
I broke and entered my soul from those cracked openings
Only to find the wounds from yesteryears lying unattended
Beneath layers of pensiveness
Few half-healed, few still fresh
Tell you this truth, they all hurt equally
Though there are few spots inside left unhurt
I assure, they can embrace few more sores
I am searching for ways to keep myself distracted.
Travelled through the options offered by the extremities
Drugs, meditation, smoke and sometimes love overdose
When nothing else worked, I dived into the sea of
Strangely familiar, speculating, awkwardly staring faces
While I walked through them, the fallen silence screamed
Only you fit perfectly, everything else is such a compulsion.

I often keep a bunch of asphodels on your tombstone
Often, yes often. □



Asphodels

BIPASHA CHAKRABORTY hails from Kolkata, India and presently resides in New Jersey. She works as an IT Analyst during the day and puts on her creative cape at nights to dabble in several forms of artistic expression. Her creative self can be discovered at VersesOfTheBeas.com



Shopping the Past

I follow her into a vintage clothing store.
It's cold outside.
I'll take the warm at the cost of my embarrassment.

She's drawn to the hats immediately,
lifts a wide-brimmed fancy flowered Victorian
with both hands,
alights it gently on her brown tresses like a crown.

She parades before the mirror,
turns from frontal to profile and back again,
is her grandmother as a bright young thing,
but aloof and discrete,
allowing herself a smile only if it's dignified.

Then she switches to something
for the flapper, a cloche hat
to bring out the silent film star
in the twenty first century woman.

A bohemian beret whisks her off to Greenwich village.
And a red and black platania in velvet
escorts her to a debutant ball.
She's enjoying the lunacy
of the chance meeting with all these other selves.

Something plain tight fitting,
suitable for the World War II widow,
puts an end to the parade.
Real people wore these,
happiness, grief, that cannot fit so easily
on a stranger's head.

She buys a replica comb from the 30's and we leave.
No more play-acting.
She's her old self again, the newest thing she has going. □

Black feathers litter the ground below the bird feeder.
She can see them from the kitchen window,
fluttering in snow.
"Why?" she asks me.
I tell her I don't know.
That's not a good enough answer.
To her, these feathers are a source of mystery
and must be explained.
So we layer up and trudge through the backyard snow.
"Is the bird dead?" she asks.
The evidence is overwhelming.
"I think so," I reply.

She digs her mittens into piles of the white stuff.
It's like play-dough to her.
"I want to build a snow man," she declares.
It's her first solo attempt,
crude but acceptable to her busy hands.
"It looks like Uncle Joseph," she says.
"Yes, that's just what I think too."

Some mounds are high.
She wants a toboggan for Christmas
so she can slide down those slopes
like she's seen the older children do on the golf course.
She tosses off these demands
like they're integral to who she is,
who she will become, at this very moment in time.
But, toboggan or no, she'll be
more than pleased with her gifts under the tree.

Then her attention returns to those mysterious feathers.
"Is the bird dead?" she asks again.
I nod my head in the affirmative.
"Must have been a hawk killed it," I explain. "Or a cat."
I see no sorrow in her eyes.
No understanding either.
She picks up a feather, holds it
between two fingers, lets it flutter in the wind.
May the hawk, the crow, never see this. □

Predator Meets Prey

JOHN GREY is an Australian poet & US resident. Recently published in *New Plains Review*, *Stillwater Review* and *Big Muddy Review* with works coming up in *Louisiana Review*, *Columbia College Literary Review* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*.

Humbling Love

This ocean of arms to fall in
& find a home:
Head on the heart, waves going across,
an ascension in the knowledge:
Rock, rock, rest in harbors safe...

Love, there is nothing small about this
simple life:
Your purring fur, your platinum tickle
setting righter than rain----

Then all is transposed:
cells, neurons sparking for whatever
Heaven we can now be
when this Bethlehem beds down □

STEPHEN MEAD is a resident of New York and is a published artist, writer, maker of short-collage films and sound-collage downloads.



Times'

Shattered glass has beauty,
the green-indigo picking up
street lamp stars against that black top
as black as the night's pages...

God turns the book, God's eye
the beating sun, so perhaps it is Jesus
whom I love if
God's son is also the moon...

What vapors then, when looking up-----
Cloud slips in branches, the ecstasy in
breath after breath after...

No blemish, no blasphemy, higher &
higher, can possess those planetary skies,
no ozone polluted, no remnants of Belsen,
for the earth is just a stone in the head,
in the temple of some larger creation

keeping the other spheres □

ALLISON GRAYHURST

Drift

Held still

like apple butter held
smooth on the tongue, catching
grief in a cage, on the surface
of a name – would it be
kissing or pinning a broken coat-zipper
together – once the fog has left is there
anything left to hold out for? Hold still for,
like a hooked fish releasing the struggle?
Being alive in the dream-state ambiguity,
meaning full then meaning naught and
how old are you?

Your horse, Dee, steady
in the sunlight, glinting a wild connectivity,
intelligence gleaming across a chestnut coat,
bowed head, permission to pet granted and then
sleeping in a stall, talking outload when everyone else
had gone home. It was not a dream,
not until she was gone and then it was a dream
lost, and maybe never there.

People love their trees
the ones they think they own. But I never loved a tree like
I loved the willow tree in my Montreal backyard. I never
loved anyone who hadn't died at least a hundred years
before I was born until

there was you, rounding up the stones from every table,
sitting alone only to stand up again before the seat
warmed, and 'perfect' made sense but nothing ever expected.

Dee and the willow tree. I left my body and flew
into the sun.

Why can't I leave my body and fly into the sun,—
meals take care of,
sex and you, a beautiful summer star? □

PHOTOGRAPHY:
LENA SEVCIKOVA



If there is Anything Open

I will return
from infinite dying
and the conscious swallow.
I will say – I will not want,
be a daughter of the root and caterpillar climb.
If there is anything worth keeping
I will keep it on the kitchen table
feed it blueberries, honor its language,
and biology.

But if is only echo, tell me clearly
so I can shut my eyes, turn and open them
elsewhere, find joy in sweeping the stairs
or typing in a mantra – all night, humming without erratic
fire or appetite. If my hands are only hands, let them
be clean, ungrasping, useful, in other ways, holding out
to offer, to receive, surrendering
bread, the stone, a smile. □

ALLISON GRAYHURST is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three times nominated for Sundress Publications' "Best of the Net", she has over 850 poems published in over 380 international journals. She has twelve published books of poetry, seven collections, nine chapbooks, and a chapbook pending publication. She lives in Toronto with her family. www.allisongrayhurst.com

PHOTOGRAPHY:
ARTUR CZAJKOWSKI

ANCA MIHAELA BRUMA

Your Empirical Dominion

Through the glaciers of Time,
within extensive number of flashes and junctures,
in this steady and enduring intoxication
with its delirium surges and effluxes,
in the valleys where Knowledge does not need its knowing
and where the calculus towards the Infinitude
conceives the perfect curves and spherical realms,
unbounded, unconstrained with unbroken views,
where the Unseen is expanded by exponential dimensions
there... where illusions and desires have no more matter
no edge for yesterdays and tomorrows and past to be retold
as memory flames dance in verdant lush synchronicities,
I have unmistakably found you...
In the complexity of the simplicity!

And the Eternity...
I sealed it with a kiss! ☐

Educator, lecturer, performance poet, eclectic thinker, mentor with staunch multi-cultural mindset and entrepreneurial attitude, ANCA MIHAELA BRUMA considers herself a global citizen, having lived in four continents. The author labels her own writings as being “mystically sensual”, a tool and path for women to claim their own inner feminine powers.

Costras 2014

ART:
DORINA COSTRAS

Of Incapabilities, and Poetry

I wonder what it's like
to write poetry;
to make a veritable feast
of spontaneity;
to paint the canvas
with an imperishable portrait

I wonder how
they adorn their tales
with lettered amulets;
an engulfing dalliance
that triumphantly seeps
into blank spaces
only to set them ablaze

what do you see, love
in the ubiquitous mirror-
your bedtime stories gasping for air
strangled by your dusk, or
gaudy verses clouding your silhouette
dancing to mad melody
drenched in their own lust? □

HENA SARKAR is presently majoring in English Literature. She hails from Kolkata, India

ANGGO GENORGA

hope, really, is the thing with feathers

This morning i saw
a crow fly down and
walk on the streets as
passing cars drove by;


the other day during dinner
my wife told me about this
cockroach she noticed crawling
near her plate and wouldn't turn
away like a dog playing fetch.

last night, i spotted
three bed bugs that stayed in
the corner of our bedroom door
unflinched by the flame and
flickering light coming out
of my zippo —

my days are getting stranger
but quite interesting witnessing
these creatures,
unlike the time spent mingling
with actual people

that live
and breathe
and talk. []

PHOTOGRAPHY:
STEEN JEPSEN



yeah, it ain't the end of the world

You've seen many things
my new friend
and one eye goin' blind
won't keep you from seeing
the worst .
of course, they will say
it doesn't matter
keep it up
it's the poet in you not the man
with one eye unable to see
that will watch the world
and write about it

and dig that there's some
good old bullshit romanticism
in there to which
we are fond of

like Beethoven losing his hearing
and Van Gogh lacking one ear,

Manet's silenced legs, Renoir's
plagued with arthritis, Matisse's
strapped in a wheelchair

or Frida Khalo's rebirth from
a freak accident,
even Django Reinhart somehow,
whose fourth and fifth fingers
were paralysed.

they will tell you that
like some good music playing
in the ears
in a shuhada day...

truth is, it's a motherfucker
losing an eyesight
and you know it. □

(for Subhankar Das)

ANGGO GENORGA was born and raised in the Philippines and currently lives in Dubai moonlighting as a manager of a band called Wonder Woman's Electric Bra. Her recent writings can be found in Napalm And Novocain, Dead Snakes, Paper And Ink Zine, The Odd Magazine, Midnight Lane Boutique and Guide To Kulchur. You can read more at deviationcummeditation.wordpress.com

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Cautionary Tales

Is someone else
living your life?
Fulfilling your dream,
being you?

Well...
what are you doing about it?

Are you waiting for your fairy godmother?

Don't.

She's floating on a high
of weed and Old Monk,
watching your life
play out like a daily soap.

Are you waiting for the stars to align?

Don't.

They are black-holes-in-waiting
and they'll come to you
only when they're ready to die
and suck you in.

Are you waiting for the perfect Tarot reading?

Don't.

The art will mislead you
as will the undertones
and the 'buts'
that will remain unsaid.

Your dreams come with a cautionary warning.
And one never gets out of life
alive.

I have willingly given my heart
to jokers
and mad men.
The fault is mine
and I alone
must bear the responsibility.

Trust
is not a kind 'personality trait'.
It is a fatal flaw
and the undoing of many.
Knives and backs go well together
as do
children and sandy beaches,
as do
chocolate and broken hearts.

This life is yours to live.
What are you doing about it?

Live it.
To the best of your ability.

Or die trying. □

You call me beautiful.

But
I don't see it.
My eyes,
aged by doubt
and self-pity,
refuse to go
beyond
my reflection.

My sighs
are a burden
painted on my face;
my age,
a number
in my passport.

Perhaps you
are mistaken.
Perhaps
it is the memory
of a grace that was;
a grace that once
enticed you
with its messy buns,
shy skin,
one eye full of hope,
the other with longing,
both smudged with delight,
and a poet's soul
that bled love songs.

Perhaps you remember
my body
as an instrument
that played different raagas
in different seasons.

BAISALI CHATTERJEE DUTT
is a writer and theatre artist living
in Kolkata.

Blind

In summers,
the sweat would perfume
my young body
with the fragrance
of mangoes
and litchis,
and I would dribble their juice on my lips
so that we could play
at honeybee
and flower
in heat.

The monsoons
took me far from you;
my eyes,
dark with desire
for the rain clouds,
would hungrily stare
at the varying greys of the sky,
my body curving towards it
desperate for that first touch of rain
that would split me wide open,
unleashing a torrent of emotion.
In the winter months,
I embraced the biting winds
and wore them on my cheeks;
my body,
crisp as nature's bounty,
was forever willing
for your vampire moves.
And in spring,
my body
tender as the grass
would beg for gentleness
and necklaces made of buds
for my breasts
and waist.

Once Upon a Time,
when you would
scratch my surface,
lightly,
delicately,
softly
slicing the membrane of me
open,
I would burst into bubbles
of whimsy
and wonder.

And here,
in the Right Now,
were you to hack away
deep down into me
with an axe,
like Little Red's huntsman,
a liberator,
a freedom fighter,
all you would get
is a black hole.

My body
is a sad,
barren wasteland,
ticking away
to the discordant notes
of a distant drum.

Beauty.
There simply is none left.
Not in me.
Not in this world. □

ฝัน (A dream,
succulent)

In my dream, I cried because you left me there for no reasons. After I spew the blood, apple cider, and cum that flooded my mouth when you ejaculated [หึงใน]. Your spores were not well *cleansed* and r-r-ra-radioactive (You stuttered...). And when you grabbed my neck and shook until my burning agnosticism smothered, you said it was unintentional.

[ไม่ได้ตั้งใจ]

Putrefied, as we inflicted each other. Your shiny shadow overlapped mine. Snowflakes stormed inside through our open window, although it was a day in the Mexican Summer. **Your** –

*virile
muscles*

melted [ละลาย].

I –

*felt your sweet tendons and
caffeinated hip bone
jiggled and
munched.*

You hastened and cried because I was just a powerless damsel in destruction. Your knob, your wet sterile dream [ความฝัน], your cravings were malfunctions. **I stuck out my** –

tongue
and let your viscous drool drips into my
lewd psych.

Your face was
ashen and dried
when you shattered like a wrecking wine
glass. □

THIPWALEE SRIMAPHAN
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More of her writings can be discovered at
kimthipwalee.wordpress.com

A bunch of ripened pustules that had bloomed –
scatteringly all over my waxy gum
burst
and spilled the sauce that tasted like cranberries [ไอ้ แครนเบอร์รี่]
mixed with fat-free
buttermilk.

[Distorted] [Rotten] [ตุ่มหนอง] [ผี]

and you, you were lying
down there below me and my crooked
metal casket,
humming Oasis's *Stand By Me* – which sounded awful-
ly deranged,
not because you weren't well-trained, but
because your mouth was tucked
by all these used
toilet papers.

[กระดาษเช็ดขี้]

My lower jaw began to drop; it literally –
dropped on
your skinless skull,
and then it did bounce, oh yes.

[กะโหลก-ร้าว...]

Wasn't it great when I –
teased your hollow right eye –
socket
with my tongue tip
until my tongue slowly ripped from its
stub?

[ไม่ อายขยับ]

I saw your left eyeball
dimpled,
wiggled
like a cuttlefish.

Your –

torso was cut open.

These handsome spleens smell charmingly of

Mr. Humphrey's Butcher House
and feces.

Collapse (ล่มสลาย)

Your fallen teeth and his
offal

swaying like tiny caravels

on the surface of a foul swamp! [หนองน้ำค้ำ] [ม้าม]

To lustfully serve each other we –

are using every nasty bits of what's left
in our

perished organs

[อวัยวะเน่าๆ]

You rushed, I squeezed it out.

You jested, I shrieked, and

choked on your putrid sprout.

Felt the earthworm nibbling inside our dead

meat and [หูด]

salty carbuncles

until we reached the underworld

where you emitted the gas and

ironic flames of volcanic particle

(but still aroused...). []

PHOTOGRAPHY:

27 JAIRO ALZATE

ต้องห้าม (Taboo)

บาป [Sins.]

คุณทำบาป [You've committed sins.]
[Not only once.] ไม่ใช่แค่ครั้งเดียวเท่านั้น

I rub it against her face. Her painted nails tear the skin off my stomach. She shrieks like a dying duck. That baby squirrel is still curled up, searching for a nut inside a bush.

This isn't what we've planned. She and I lay side by side. Sometimes our shadows merge into one shapeless line of Misconduct, [ความผิดพลาด] Mistakes, and Misanthropist [ผู้ที่เกลียดชังมนุษย์]. Her tattooed torso is wrapped in a roll of anaemic ribbons. The liquid that drips out of our slits splits bubbles [แ-ต-ก-เ-ปี้-น-ฟ-อ-ง]. She pets my thick wet thighs chest hair and repeats the article she read earlier about Barcelona. I chuckle 'till my tits bounce with an intense orgasm, and then I realize that it is not her – who is imaginary. It's me.

[*Emotional mayhem*]

I painfully mutilate bisect each of her roguish organs with a dagger [กริช] carved in Japan, and I – myself – end up losing blood, suffocating. I suck her breast, but the salty milk spills out of mine. I grab and pull her intestines, but only mine has yet removed. These patterns of ink on her body are mine; the tattoos I designed and paid to have them stigmatized on the surface of my anesthetic skin and crust [รอยสัก]. She should never have possessed them all. *It's her fault.* Still she smiles at me innocently in the mirror. At times like this, I bewilder if that flesh-coated floor is real after all. [ขุนซ่อง] [ผิด?] [ไม่] []

Cut the Cord

If I gave myself some time, what could I give to you? Words measured and weighed, mounted in your mind like a trophy fish? Or a lifeless minnow you will flush through porcelain canals? Will I stick like soul food, or will you be hungry again in an hour? These are questions only you can answer. Even the visionary artist must concede she is near-sighted. It is

the eye of the beholder that has 20/20 vision. My intentions are not nearly as important as your interpretations. If I give you the sky, and you see a lake, then it is water. If you assign no value to this page, then it is kindling. The art educates, and the audience explicates. It is the artist who must step aside and let the two converge. Conceive it, birth it, then cut the cord. □

BEKAH STEIMEL lives in St. Louis, MO. Her recent work has appeared in W.I.S.H. Poetry, Crab Fat Magazine, and Yellow Chair Review. Her works can be found online at bekahsteimel.com and she can be followed on Twitter and Instagram @BekahSteimel.

PHOTOGRAPHY:
SANJAYAN SACHITHANANDAN

High and Higher

I'm always a dose under over
--one foot across the line
drawn like a moth to that white light
I wish for things that would frighten stars already falling
to their own death
a release
from this invisible leash of gravity
then poetry swoops in
or down...
or up...
lifting me higher than any chemical
and I am reminded that I have a gift I'm still unwrapping
and such a thing
should be fully revealed before I discard it. □

The Last Word

Art does not postpone death
but instead renders it nearly irrelevant
the only true vampire that can claim
centuries of existence
without exhaustion or evolution
whatever the medium
whatever the message
art will always have the last word
and echo its missive through eternity □



THE DEBUT BOOK OF POETRY BY
JAGANNATH CHAKRAVARTI

FOUNDER / EDITOR • CULTURECULT MAGAZINE

COMING SOON

In a Midland Town

Where do I begin?
It was twilight when I said goodbye,
clouds had smothered
a cerulean sky,
and a mist was gathering.
It was, undoubtedly, the end of something,
a part of who I once was; abandoned.

This was once my home,
but now I roamed, unrecognised
like any passing stranger.
I could be the Pole, or Latvian
who sits,
quietly weeping on the town hall steps.

And there is nothing left of the mock-tudor cafe,
where you broke my heart over a milky coffee
and a thick buttered slice of dripping toast.
Only the lonely, holy ghosts
of half visceral memory,
the ever changing mind-scapes
of occasional troubled dreams. □

PHOTOGRAPHY:
STEVE BUISSINNE

All Souls Day Oxford


Let me find you here,
In this still place, the mist soft rising
From the dawn, from the half frozen earth.
Here, where there is redemption in the disarray
And we are boundless, beyond reality.

Let me find you here
Bold and brilliant.
Our youth still blazing
Like a winter fire.
In the wild slip-stream
Of some soaring dream
Beyond transient mortality.

Let me find you here,
When we are light and shadow
Nothing more.
When our faint footsteps,
Will not stir the silence,
Or tremble the old bones
Of the ancient dead.
Or suffer the frailest leaf
To change course as it falls. □

Since 2010, JOHN STOCKS has appeared in the UK 'Soul Feathers' anthology, alongside Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Seamus Heaney, Carol Ann Duffy, Maya Angelou, Sharon Olds and others. He is the poetry editor of Bewildering Stories magazine and has published a number of creative anthologies. He is currently working with Mappin Writers, the creative writing group of the Sheffield Institute for the Blind.


D.O.A.



Before the Dawn Of Agriculture men like ME where slapped into the shadow of sexual shame but now who needs muscles or chiseled chins, great size or strength, a lover's passion or a manly countenance 'cause for ten thousand years now I can persecute any female for infidelity towards ME and hold paternity privilege over MY biological children because we exceptional farmers invented marriage to destroy human sexuality by enslaving women with MY property for sex so I no longer need to share or compete or settle for an alpha males' sloppy seconds within foraging groups that are forced to share what they carry with them instead of our enforced legal couplings that takes the innocent, primal pleasure and mystery out of sex by connecting shtoothing to birth thanks to dirt MY dirt MY very own thousand acres of seeded soil littered with pens full of MY trapped sheep, cattle, goats and pigs which means I can pork any female I fancy and destroy any man who thwarts MY desire as simply as the bulls I castrate into submission to easily herd into MY slaughterhouses that feed all the inferior people no longer dependent on their hunting and gathering skills but on ME to stay alive so not only am I not considered a sociopath by hoarding food but am praised at harvest time like a goddamned Babe Ruth hero because I have legally claimed and legally raped those precious few life giving inches of topsoil with rotating crops and extended grasslands that exhausts and shrinks the earth, MY earth MY reign of forcing agricultural workers to bend over in the fields, stupidly exposing hairless backs to sun poisoning instead of their protective hunters' heads of hair harvesting MY food that shrinks the testicles of everyone who is forced to feed on the cheap calories of MY industrialized plants and animals that lowers fertility, but who needs big balls anymore when you don't have to kill larger animals in order to survive or attract females with your superior physical attributes proving I am the social parasite Sultan of Swat who grows fat on the food I've seized by stealing Paleo land in the name of government protected ownership. □

MARK BLICKLEY's most recent book is "Sacred Misfits" (Red Hen Press) and most recently produced play, "The Milkman's Sister," was produced last Fall at NYC's 13th Street Repertory Theater. He also does text based art collaborations with photographer Amy Bassin and their latest series, Dream Streams, was exhibited in Brooklyn at the Ray Gallery and published in Columbia Journal of Literature and Art. He is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild and PEN American Center.

In the Shadow of Shame



I refuse to be slapped into a shadow of sexual shame by the Dawn of Agriculture! They raped our topsoil's life-giving and venerated throbbing inches of dirt by pulling up erect trees by their thick stumps that sprout expanding and exploring roots whom firmly holds our moist fertility secure and safe while filling us with excited expectations of a daily mystery that is not supposed to include being plowed and carved into, seeded from just one lousy crop until our sacred dirt becomes dry and dusty for I am juicy dessert not an arid desert smelling of charcoal smoke and the dried dung of domesticated animals, where the stinking glow of kerosene lanterns show off local vendors' rotting fruit in brown one story buildings down the dried mud thoroughfare where small piles of wilted oranges are arranged like pyramids of precious gems and lanterns put out thin beams of shaky light so walking down the street into darkness you hear a clip-clopping echo and see a flickering pin prick of light and jump out of the way of a donkey cart carrying carcasses of barnyard chickens headed right at you with the driver sitting on top unable to see you in the pitch black air though you might smell donkey and driver if the dung laced breeze attacks your nose while you quiver with a new found knowledge of time by squatting to pour the dusty dirt of the defiled domesticated earth from one hand to the other and breathe in the remnants of the old ways through worn slats of the oldest door in the world hanging in entrance of a mud compound where bakers hook their disgusting flat dough pieces the size of small pillows with a black rod onto the roof of a beehive shaped oven with a flick of their fat bakers' wrists as a parade of property owners sniffing money and not the wind with hollow cheeks, throwing out pieces of conversation that hawk their wares into the air, stepping past dried creek beds with cratered walls of spent topsoil on either side of you the D.O.A. chaos of crusty earth, as if some mad god of Babe Ruthian proportions troweled along their rims in ecstatic abandon, surrounding you in a protective snake shaped womb of sandy soil as you listen to the high wailing voices of a Paleo song of despair from the tendrils of a wind that slithers among dunes carved from alleys of depleted soil turned clay as melody and lyric complete with a woman's mating ritual of belly jiggling, pelvic thrusts vibrating and stretching in filthy angelic writhing under a mud thatched farm roof unleashing a gale of unrequited erotic energy as ancient drums carry her through different symphonies of movement as each sway of her hips laments her forced monogamy to a non-alpha male property owner who causes her skin to split like a serpent's egg to reveal the tinkle of a goat's bell ringing inside of her demanding she create more farm hands to till his perverse, flabby soil, that turns all women into breeding beasts of burden! □

POETRY

SHEIKHA A.

The Politics with my Phone

I've been trying to write poetry
on my phone, but it isn't the smart kind
of classified roots and utilities,
nevertheless is stable, mostly rigid
in principle (use);

it blinks like the gaudy
buses I find on streets,
my mind distracts to why police
vehicles are dead of strobe (lights)
but loud only when leading
protocols.

Too many distractions stifle
this room, estranged of light, my mind
no different. The candles fail
to stick to their form and I acquiesce
to the powers of nondescript
darkness.

My phone tinkles like a merry carousel
from all four ends,
and the streets seem to reverberate
to the strobe on my phone,
I hear sirens – cars one too many –
a movement, not-never a chase, I deduce.
My focus ruptures to the unseemly
fiasco-posing catastrophe

as my phone vibrates in insane rage,
jostling in my hands to stop
the poetry;

the strobes screech-shatter the night
outside, once again, in tandem to the lights
on my phone – the rustic, archaic character –
when almost like a decree,
the room comes alight.

Candles are snuffed,
windows are shut,
the risen dust settles back onto the fly screen
meshes,

light dispels darkness,
the house goes abuzz with activity,
but my thoughts are gone –
as if pushed out of scabbed delays
of over processed cognition,
like death of batteries
and screens going blank.

I glare down at my phone,
a staunch abider – a gadget
of limited liberalism, and I
even more habituated,
close poetry and switch to inbox. []



The ghost called Truth

I've been plucking shadows out of seas,
not the real sea but the dead sea, where
salt is gold and the accumulated water
is just minerals of a cleansing usually
done after demises.

These shadows break into tiny balls
of silver, and stain across walls
of my bedroom, glowing in the colour
of the moon, camouflaging perfectly
against my sleep stupor.

How dark should we become?
They tend to ask, for you to notice
me enough to write out my ghosts,
pluck me out meticulously, store me
amongst the pages of your journal;

the sea is colossal enough, harvesting
with water, creating deeper enough
sink holes, black enough to blind
away sight from sleep fearing eyes.

The holes have occupied ownership
around these eyes, the well bores deeper
as the water pushes up, scaling brick
after brick of dried up honesty – my truths
no longer hold. □

Sheikha A. is from Pakistan and United Arab Emirates. Over 300 of her poems appear in a variety of literary venues, most recently in Anti-Heroine Chic, Silver Birch press, Kind of a Hurricane Press, The Piker Press, Juncture Review, Fickle Muses and more. More about her can be accessed on her blog sheikha82.wordpress.com

Nightfruit

Webbed like a womb,
autumn sweetgums and ironwoods
capture the plump, plum
nightfruit splashing
its purples across their pastels.

Pushing up, pulling down,
taunt --
plants strain to feed sky soil
and funnel moon
to the gnawing stomach of earth.

How like them
the poet. □

VONNIE WINSLOW CRIST, MS Professional Writing, Towson University, is a Pushcart nominee and winner of a Maryland State Arts Council Grant in Writing. Her writing has appeared in Italy, Canada, Australia, Spain, Finland, India, the UK and USA. She strives to celebrate the power of myth in her writing.



Amrita

Round as a stone chariot wheel
carved into the temple at Konarak,
the plenilune tumbles
down the Milky Way,
spilling moonlight,
damp with immortality,
into Uncle Ollie's garden.

We stand by the mango tree,
glance up, hopeful –
just a molecule in our eyes
and they will sparkle for life,
just a droplet on our lips
and we will live forever.

My love and I clasp goblets of water,
watch the milky disk bob
in their small seas.

The perfume of ruby flowers
and wails of night birds
drift on the South Florida breeze
as we lift the glasses to our mouths,
drink the moon's sweet nectar. □

ALAN BRITT

Without Warning

Cheat . . . that's a word to avoid,
not unlike inoculations cheat often
offloads in illegal loading
zones during off hours.

Cheat absorbs two full rounds
of our confidence then dabs
a white linen napkin to her
bloody corners of satisfaction.

Cheat . . . I cheated myself!

What could you possibly want
with a mythological man like me?

Without hesitation, she bolts,
long shot, camped like a gypsy
in broken-down minivan
illegally parked in darkest corners
of imagination
& dreaming of curves
heading straight
for a human who drove
16 hours to a bird sanctuary
for the sake of one mother
catbird & her teenage chick
glued to fate—
mother's wing gone
& tail half missing, says,
*Your puff of Amsterdam smoke
killed my son but saved my life.
For that I love you.*

I love you, too.

As any mythological god
is my witness,
I love you, too. □

PHOTOGRAPHY:
HANJÖRG SCHERZER

So, if Judas sacrificed himself,
offering himself for a crucifixion
of sorts, a life of eternal persecution,
so that Jesus could fulfill his miracle,
that would make Judas the Savior's savior,
in a world that spins on ironic axis
through a universe still searching
for a reason to exist. □

Saint Judas



In August 2015, ALAN BRITT was invited by the Ecuadorian House of Culture Benjamín Carrión in Quito, Ecuador for the first cultural exchange of poets between Ecuador and the United States. He served as judge for the 2013 The Bitter Oleander Press Library of Poetry Book Award. He has published 15 books of poetry, his latest include *Violin Smoke* (bilingual English/Hungarian): 2015; *Lost Among the Hours*: 2015, *Parabola Dreams* (with Silvia Scheibli): 2013 and *Alone with the Terrible Universe*: 2011. He is Poetry Editor for the We Are You Project (www.weareyouproject.org) and teaches English/Creative Writing at Towson University.

I dream for you,
And then I wake up -

I travel back in time
Throughout the day,
Inspecting the colours in
My dreams as they keep clashing
With the everlasting grey.
My toothpaste comes to nought
As my breathe stinks
While I get drowned
In a sea of broken humanity.
I find solace,
I find peace in tracing the steps
Backwards in time.
Beyond the Earth's cooling,
The birth of galaxies, nebulae,
The birth of the sun,
The planck epoch where
The forces that divide us were one.
Till the point beyond the Big Bang
Before which existed none?

Directions are useless when we keep
Missing the point.

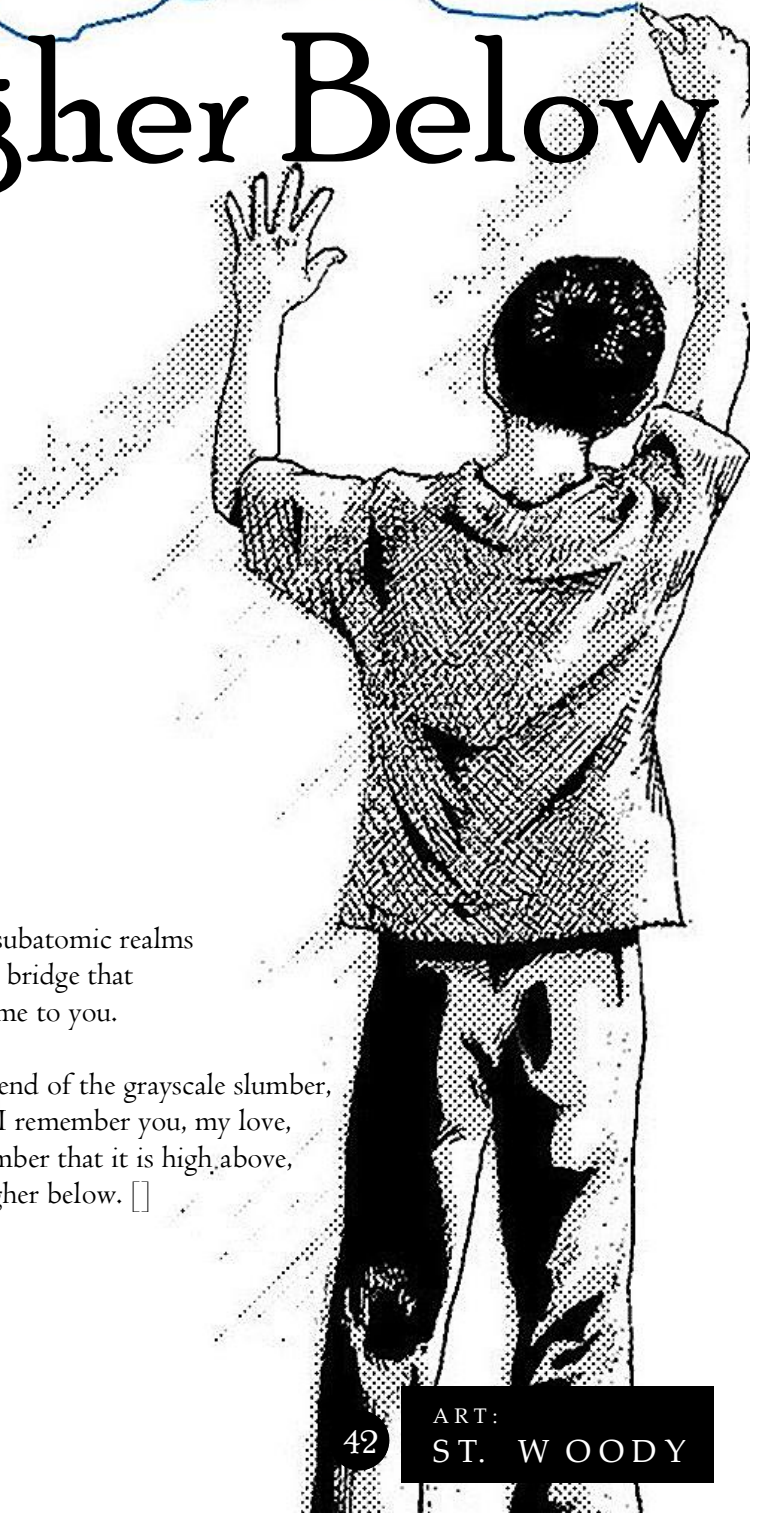
Forgetting the very purpose of the divide,
Forgetting the cosmic introspection
That breathes Art into Life,
I drown myself out, sinking,
Sinking beyond soundwaves,
Sinking beyond data -
Sinking beyond great riddles of might.

I forget how I love to play,
Immerse myself in the game of Life
That dodges wormholes with the daily
bread,
Rejoices at the little wins

Higher Below

In the subatomic realms
On the bridge that
Takes me to you.

At the end of the grayscale slumber,
When I remember you, my love,
I remember that it is high, above,
Yet higher below. □



Raincoat Cars

I see the raincoat cars
lined up beneath your window,
the yellow and the white
melting into the onward blizzard
like rogue neurons versus tidal hope.

They have issued a warning, they have..
windows shut, doors locked behind clumsy curtains of yellow.
Veils that fail to conceal
the storm without.

As your insides rupture,
the snow breathes, whimpers, berates
like three angry hags signing the death of Macbeth
with quills of choice..

pens of ice crystals..
six sided..

perfect as the devil's three numbers stacked one after the other,

piling over raincoat cars
lined up beneath your window. □

JAGANNATH CHAKRAVARTI is an ADmaker/
Independent Filmmaker based out of Kolkata, India.
Besides fulfilling the duties of the founder/Chief Editor of
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