



Let 's write like as if nothing before was been written!

P O E S I S

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Poesis is an independent, international, free-access literary journal. We are an online journal, exclusively. Whoever wishes, you can list the magazine's pdf file.

Poesis is like a desert where you can build your literary home. Because the acceptance rate for almost all literary journals is about 5%, we decide to open our house for quality work but without quantitative limitations. We are not interested in porn, racial slurs, excessive gore, or obscenity. We are dedicated to discovering and publishing the finest original poetry. We prefer expressive poems that give us a feeling and affect our soul. We publish quarterly, and we accept submissions year-round. We are looking for long and short poems, including translations. We accept texts that have already been published, but please specify where they were first published.

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Mary Shanley



Mary Shanley is a poet/storyteller living in New York City. She has had four books of poems and stories published; they are: *Hobo Code Poems*, *Vox Pop Publishing*, *Mott Street Stories* and *Las Vegas Stories*, *Things They Left Behind and Poems for Faces*, *Side Street Press*. She is a frequent contributor to online and print journals; a few examples: *Long Shot Journal*, *Mr. Beller's Neighborhood*, *StepAway Magazine*, *Anak Sastra Asian Journal*, *Hobo Camp Review*, *Shangri-la Shack*, *Flagler Review*, *Garbanzo*, *Edge*, *Tahoe Writer's Conference*, *Writing for Our Lives*, *Tell Us A Story*, *Blue Lake Journal*, *Poydras Review*, *Gloom Cupboard*, *This Zine Will Change Your Life*, *Underground Voices*, *Haunted Waters*, *Foliate Oak Literary Journal*, *Literary Heist*, *Mobius*, *Modern Literature*, *Visitant Literary Journal*, *Blaze Vox*, *Indicia Journal*, *Metaworker*, *Ginosko Literary Journal*.

For Paul Bowles
Mary Shanley

Open my hardened heart
and if I resist, place a merciful kiss
on my lips before banishing me
to the rebel compound, where I
crouch, smoking kif, staring
unflinchingly into my fate,
with a heart both fiery and fair.

(a heart broken
embraces chaos.
nothing to determine,
nothing to name.)

The countenance of kindhearted
angels follow you from behind
every face you ever haunted;
bringing skin to spirit and blood
to veins.

You never know
how great
the ordinary.

After Henry Miller
Mary Shanley

Oblivion is by far the easier,
lazier way of life, moving through
genetically predetermined activity,
automatically returning the carriage
of the typewriter.

Blame not the repetitious routine
of your circulatory system for
your failure to engage in leaps of faith.
Pretend, if you must, until the vision
comes clearer or your decide to quit
and vegetate, vaguely ruminating
on Earth's unpredictable mind-fog terrain.

The Alabaster lamplight crashes to the floor
Amidst the terrifying dream sequence.
Walking up is always the better idea.

After Brice Marden
Mary Shanley

Brice Marden's lines,
Like the uncomplicated flow
Of the invisible Tao,
Move in and out of space
With paint and a steady hand.
His soul found release from relentless
Drive to force form and now
He simply paints distilled quietude,
Fluid lines, graceful composition.
Uncomplicate the journey.

Bharati Nayak



Bharati Nayak, born in the year 1962, is a bilingual poet, critique and translator from Odisha, an Indian State lying on its eastern coast. She writes in English and Odia. Her poems have been published in many magazines, journals, anthologies and e-books of national and international repute such as *Rock Pebbles*, *Orissa Review*, *Utkal Prasang*, *Creation and Criticism*, *Circular Whispers*, *Nova Literature-Poesis*, *Poetry Against Terror*, *56 Female Voices of Poetry*, *The Four Seasons Poetry Concerto*, *Tunes From the Subcontinent*, *Amaravati Poetic Prism*. She has published three poetry books- 1-*Padma Paada* (A poetry book in Odia language) 2-*Words Are Such Perfect Traitors* 3-*A Day for Myself*.

A day has gone by
Bharati Nayak

A day has gone by
Deducting one day
From my life
I ponder
What I achieve
And what I give.

Day comes with morning newspaper
News of tension and terror
News of aversion and horror
Fill the morning editions
I flip through them
And think
How have I enriched from them.

Then comes our maid
In her torn saree and ragged blouse
With tension writ large on her face
For fear of facing wrath for coming late.

Tingling sound of utensils
Fill the kitchen air
She toils her way
Through the grime and dirt
That we have accumulated.

She leaves the house
Showing her gratitude
For the chapati and a cup of tea
Or the paltry sum
We dole out at month's end.

I cook meal,
stuff tiffin boxes
And see children off to school.

Hurrying from place to place
I see that every thing is in place
In between I munch some pieces of biscuits.
Or have a sip from my tea cup.

When every thing done
I look at my watch and wonder
Ah! I will be late again
And will face the angry boss
At the office entrance.

No, I can't go
Without checking
Lock and keys
Doors and windows
And children's meals.

Wow- it is too late
There is no time to eat
And I rush to office
With my vanity bag
Hanging from shoulder
But full with
False ego and emptiness.

Poetry
Bharati Nayak

It is that pain
Which torments you always
It is that sorrow
Which wants to come out
But alas, can not

It is that pain
Which shivers on your lips
and sits as a tear drop
In the corner of your eyes
It is that ache
That like an arrow
Pierces your heart

It is that pain
Which sometimes
Flows in torrents
Like a river
And spreads the whole world
Like water vapour
Blooms to beauty
Like a flower
It is poetry
Of life
It is
The rhythmic dance
Of sorrow and happiness
Woven into words

Parrot
Bharati Nayak

Though winged
I am caged
I flutter my wings
As if to fly
They get hurt by the ironrailings

The milked rice
And the good nuts
That I am served
Do not satisfy
As I dream
Of the open sky
Where I do belong.

You ask me
Oh Parrot! How are you?
You see my bright green feathers
And my beautiful red beak
I answer in my clatter
Which you can not understand
andthink
I belong to rich and so live in lavish

On some careless day
My owner may
Keep the cage open
I may get a chance to fly
But my wings
that have forgotten
the art of flying
may fall a prey
to some vultures
My good owner and his neighbors
Will curse me,
O.K, O.K
Let that ungratefulbird
Meet a graceless end.

Catherine Moscatt



Catherine is a 22 year old counseling and human services major. Besides poetry, she enjoys playing basketball, listening to loud music and watching terrible horror movies. Her poetry has been published in several magazines including *Sick Lit Magazine*, *Phree Write Magazine* and *Muse - An International Poetry Journal*

Emerald Tears
Catherine Moscatt

I cry
Emerald tears for you
They slip down my face
Into my lap
Hands clasped in a prayer
And I'm wishing so hard but I don't know if he'll hear me
I can barely hear myself
Over the sounds of the screams
They are your screams
As she douses you in gasoline
She kisses the match before she lights it
And sets you on fire

You know the sky's a hazy purple
And the water a murky green
And the world's doomed anyway
So should I even bother saving you?
I possess the strength of a thousand angry nights
The regrets of a thousand broken promises
I can stare at the sun for hours without going blind
Yet I steal a glimpse of you
And my vision grows blurry

It's a cruel prank
Bringing you back into my world
Then withholding you behind a
Tapestry of secrets
That I cannot penetrate
"Why do you cry, pretty lady?"
Someone asked me on the street
Just look around you
My emerald tears and I
Fit right into
This beautiful tableau of pain

Five Things I Want to Say to My Best Friend from High School
Catherine Moscott

- 1) I'm sorry I stopped talking to you
The days we didn't talk became months, months became seasons, seasons became disasters
Hospital visits
Medications
I wish I could tell you all about them
But it's too late now
Right?
- 2) I hope you aren't still having those
Heart-stopping, gut wrenching episodes
Panic attacks
I get them too now
I gasp for air, the room is spinning, I am going to die
Now I know why you cried so much at the medical office when we went to Hershey Park
I think that was the first time I held your hand
Usually it was the other way around
You've always been the stronger one
- 3) I don't drink anymore
Crazy, right?
The girl who came into school on a Thursday too hungover to look at the projector screen
The girl who broke into your mom's liquor cabinet
I don't remember much about that day
Except dropping eyeshadow on your rug
And making out with a family friend in your closet
At least I was conscious back then
It hasn't always been like that
- 4) I hope you feel the world is more
Accepting, more open, more generous
Than the confines of our high school
I hope you can hold hands with a girl and walk down the street and no one will give you shit about it
I hope you hate yourself
A little less every day
So that one day you can look in the mirror
And see something you like

5) I miss you
I know it was wrong to push you away
I know you'd never do that to me
Let me explain
I've locked myself in a dark room and
Only a few people have a key
I could give you a copy
If you want to come visit
But it's too late now
Right?

Purple Dreams
Catherine Moscatt

I'm in love with a boy
Who has purple dreams
That smell like grape, that wrap you in a haze as warm as a hug, that stick to
you so tightly you'll have to peel the purple film off your skin
Once you get home

No quiet lavender
No meek violet
His shade of purple is a loud clap of thunder
An angry response at the way his family loved him and broke him and I'm
here to fix him but sometimes I get too lost in the purple mess, a purple
maze
Dead ends mock me as I trudge through purple mud
And I still
Haven't reached the center
Or maybe there isn't one?

Purple is all he's ever known
It's ingrained, familiar, like hearing his mom cry at night
Since he met me he says he sees differently
Did you know the sky is bathed in pink and orange at sunset? The ocean an
everlasting blue?
Purple is no longer all consuming
We've made it through that maze

I'm in love with a boy
Who has dreams...purple, red, blue, green
I will do anything
To make them come true

Carolyn Devonshire



Carolyn Devonshire's interest in writing began during her childhood at the New Jersey shore and she had written several short stories before her high school years. Carolyn is a graduate of Monmouth University in West Long Branch, New Jersey, where she studied communications. Carolyn's poetry has been featured in numerous anthologies and in her own book of poetry, *Visions of Devonshire*, published in 2009. Her novel, *Colonizing Atlantis, the New Earth*, was published the same year and addresses her deep concern for the Earth's environment. After teaching creative writing to high school students, Carolyn turned to print and broadcast journalism in a career that has spanned decades. She also served as a speech writer for two Florida Cabinet officers and as editor of two trade magazines. She now resides in Ormond Beach, Florida, where she enjoys fishing and swimming.

Paul Callus



Paul Callus, married to Sheila née Ackland-Snow, was born in Hal Safi, Malta. He is a retired teacher, and has been active in the literary field for around 50 years. He writes poetry, short stories, and lyrics (for songs, hymns and oratorios). His preferred mediums are English and Maltese. His work has been published in various anthologies, magazines, newspapers, and online sites, mostly in Malta, England and America. In recent years, apart from a poetry ebook, he wrote and published both historical and children's books. He is also a proof-reader and translator. His main hobbies are reading, painting, swimming and travelling.

Senility's Tightrope
By Paul Callus and Carolyn Devonshire

She sits in silence at the end of day
Beside the fire that barely warms the air
Her mind in anguish, threads that tend to fray
Companionless, within a room austere.

*Like a carousel swirling around me
Are faces, places, traces of my life
These disjointed images confound me
Recollections sliced by a jagged knife.*

The curtains drawn; the door chains are in place
Her thoughts are roaming down the paths of night
A hint of sadness settles on her face
As shadows flicker in the waning light.

*There was a man, can't remember his name
But such fine features graced his handsome face
My wild, young heart his soothing words would tame
As I danced with him in chantilly lace.*

She can't help thinking of the years that pass
The complications of advancing age
Life hard to handle just like fragile glass
Progressive weakness in initial stage.

*How easily we swayed across the floor
Effortlessly as an orchestra played
An oceanside hall at some unknown shore
Lord knows, I felt like such a lucky maid!*

She fears the fading of a priceless stock
Each recollection slipping from her grip
Memorabilia gathered round the clock
Accumulated in her lifetime trip.

*Oh, to feel young and pain-free one more time
But this man's gone now, and with him, my hope
My mind wanders back to days of my prime
As I tread on senility's tightrope.*

John E Marks



John E Marks. born, lives and works in Manchester, UK. John is the father of five grown up children and grandfather of two; he retired from the Open University in 2017. *Sound Bites* was published by ENVOI, 1992; *Lifting the Veil* published by NHI, 1997; *Shadows and dust* published by Amazon, 2017. John enjoys reading novels and poetry, walking my 11 year old black Labrador, watching snooker and cricket, travelling, beer and good company.

Song for the old year
John E Marks

Redemption comes at such a cost
Freezing winds off the Irish sea
Blow me away from hearth and home
At such a cost - loss pressing on loss –
Yet still the winter-birds sing,
Seemingly so carelessly,
And we know it costs them their whole life
To fly this way and sing and eat and build and build
Yet still this merely human, framed of earth,
Cannot scrape away the curse of discontent:
Sitting solid as a rock, squatting squarely
On the chest where a bird would build a nest
Then fly high, high into the blue skies of summer
So far, far away from this deep and dark complacency.

Drinking where the river bed is dry
John E Marks

Charlie and I have walked our post-cancer walks
Down this narrow stretch of green in the city
For a full decade now.
We've aged together
But not like malt, we've blended into each other,
Man and Dog.
He recognizes the smells, me the sights,
And his life is shorter than mine.
That afflicts me like
A sentence.
Very few minutes pass
Without me thinking of that.
He connects me to the pack,
Little knowing that the human herd is what I find
Most offensive, most absurd.
I try to fly past those nets
Of race, nationality and religion.
A new Daedalus comes
To cry: "my medium is the heavens, my medium is the sky."
But we walk slower and slower each day,
Me clearing Up his shit, him watching the dreary Manchester sky.

Body on a beach
John E Marks

There's a body on the mid-winter beach
Bloated by sea water, battered by waves,
The skin is an indeterminate grey, but the DNA
Gives it away: stomach distended, flesh eaten away,
The soul departed, leaving a package of flesh behind
With sea weeds dancing from the open mouth
That once kissed another, a mother and a lover
Spoke words of comfort to the dying bereaved:
Religion indeterminate, nationality left behind.
Look at the legs that carried the body
Over rugged mountains, across freezing tundra,
Over deserts thirsty, prickly with heat, across borders.
Look at the eyes, which read the newspapers
And scanned the phones. Read holy books
And erotic poetry and letters from home.
While a heart that was broken by war, death and loss
Gathered the strength to begin life all over again.
That grey mush was a brain that loved to tussle,
Think and debate. Those fingers wrote elegies
That were gateways to all the planets and stars.
In classical Arabic she argued it was never too late
To begin life again, soon, in beautiful Aleppo

David Byrne



David Byrne is a 59-year-old visual artist /designer and poet who has spent most of his life in his native country Ireland and is currently residing in Japan with his wife and two daughters. Over the past four decades, he has exhibited his artwork and started writing relatively recently circa 2005.

His main themes are existential concerns and romanticism.

Delusion
David Byrne

What the mind creates
Is real; the physical is
The illusion. Art born of
Passion like a finger that
Touches a wasps nest,
Be still and no harm will
Come . Storm clouds
Gather; I smell the linseed
On the canvas. Mind that
Guides the hand that
Guides the pigment that
Calms the storm. Fingers
Touch and we can see our
Soul? A sea of faces stare
At me; I am one, are they
The delusion?

Magic
David Byrne

There's magic on the tungsten sea
That brings forth spittle in waves
Giant sheets of paper uncurling on a table.
There's magic in the carrot sunlight
That makes pale skin warm and silky
Like a peach that softly meet's the
Lips of a beauty.
Impossible is commonplace when mind
And world collide and magic conjures idle musings .
There's magic in the breeze that carries
Distant garbled voices muffled by the
Whooshing waves I hear in a giant
Sea shell.

Mist and Smoke
David Byrne

Abandon to the cosmic mind and then
Forget that you stand in place and time, for
The universe is manifest in those
Pebbles on this beach – primordial kind.
Lethargic clumps of seaweed, discarded
On the sands; like sleeping bodies dreaming.
There must be a billion stars overhead –
A trillion beaches – dreamer's contagion.
I light a cigarette and watch the smoke
Mingle with the mist. I see through you, like
The mist and the smoke – it gives no pleasure.
Dreamers drenched with regret. I suck on my
Cigarette – one last drag and walk away.

Connie Marcum Wong



Connie Marcum Wong has been the Web Mistress of a private poetry forum *Poetry for Thought* since October 1999. Her poetry has been in many publications, anthologies, magazines, and e-zines over the years. She published her first poetry chapbook, *Island Creations* in 2005. In 2007, *Heart Blossoms* was published. In January 2010, an anthology, *A Poetry Bridge to All Nations*, was published by Lulu Enterprises, Inc. Connie created the *Constanza* poetry form in 2007 and *Con-Verse* poetry form in 2010. Connie was a Stewardess (Flight Attendant) for 34 years before her retirement July 2003 and she has traveled extensively in the U.S and abroad. She became an Aura Photographer in 1997, a certified Reiki Master/Teacher in 2002 and a Karuna Reiki Master/Teacher in 2003. She has three grown daughters and one son, who gave her a grandson in 2010 and her youngest daughter gave her a granddaughter in 2012. She has resided with her husband in Hawaii since 1980.

Dreams of India
Connie Marcum Wong

Her music haunts me
in such a knowing way
it makes me weep
and causes my heart to ache.

I become homesick for her
scents, her sounds, her food,
her enchanting dance
which spawns dreams
of her romance.

I know in my heart
I have lived there,
I know, I have loved there.

Her poetry transcends
my spirit to encompass
a wholeness that is
so familiar to me.

I dream of the Ganges ,
and her gentle cleansing flow,
of reflections on its surface
when the moon is hanging low.

Of crickets singing nightly
to serenade me to sleep.
I dream of colors of the saris,
the beauty that they keep...

Of garlands placed with care,
a gajra in a maiden's hair
and the hues of floral leis.

I hold a reverence for Hindu
gods and goddesses.
I aspire to learn the sacredness
of varmala and the seeds of
past lifetimes I have shared.

A passion grows for those
whose love glows through their
auras to welcome strangers.

I'd love to share a cup of chai
to chat with friends in open air.

I long to return home, though
I have never been there.

a gajra: flowers which females use as a decoration for their hair.

Varmala: is a tradition from ancient times where a beautiful garland of flowers symbolizes a proposal of marriage. In the tradition of Swayamvar. A female would choose her life partner from a group of suitors by placing a flower garland around the neck of her chosen man. Once the girl had made her choice, a marriage ceremony would be held right away.

Adrian Flett



Adrian Flett born in Pietermaritzburg, Natal (1936) and grew up on a farm in the Richmond area. Farm schooled in early years and then Richmond School, from age 8 years then high school, Maritzburg College, 1950-1953. Self-employed Accounting and Tax Practice from 2001-2015. Now living in Howick, Natal. Studied through UNISA majoring in English. Widowed with four children and seven grandchildren. He started writing at an early age, short stories, poems and three novels to date. Now an active member of PoemHunter and poems have been published in various poetry journals including *AVBOB Poetry Project*, *Fidelities 2000-2002*, *VI-IX*, a selection of contemporary poetry from South Africa.

Where is home?
Adrian Flett

Lying at my mother's breast
to feed, to sleep to rest.
That was all I needed then
in the world back when
no other thought would intervene.
No place or person came in between
us then:

before then, in the womb, no recollection
of that time now, but on reflection
it was closer and better, safer
more focussed and secure than later.
The first home was the womb
a place of comfort, place of home.

When all else is quiet
there's a call at twilight
from a bird flying home to roost
makes me ask:

is home still buried at mother's breast
with shock I find, she's long since gone
left me searching out there, on my own.

So is home in my head
moving around as I'm led.
Sometimes slow to agree
just where in the world I should be
but at last learning to accept
covering over all else, for the best.

Muse
Adrian Flett

When I was a child I'd run down the hill
not far from the house, to play beside a stream
then work up the valley to the place
where the eye broached from under a rock.
There clear spring water seeped and oozed
dripped into a small pool; stirred the air
cool, dark and green above moss, fern
and damp pebbles, as I'd watch and listen,
when I was a child.

Watch and listen with me now. At the broach
of the eye is a slow seep, the air stirs,
a growing dampness darkens pebbles
to a cool glisten of clear, sharp movement
as droplets gather in the font.
Sip from soft, small cupped hand,
then the long wait for the font to fill
as with child's eager gratitude
I sip and savour my words,
from whence they come.

Leaf
Adrian Flett

From uppermost leaf
to root mystery beneath
we derive as four season's pass
the unnoticed unrewarded task.

Buds tightly curled in sun's rays
those swollen, bursting shoots
spread, grasp each day as they
ray by ray draw succour from the roots.

Leaf a gift freely given, beyond our choice,
we give no thought; slow to recall
how we, in spring's green, rejoice
but in autumn we let fall.

Winter leaves, they fade, fall and rot
cast aside of no further use
to be crushed under foot
each passing step an abuse.

Trees now in their nakedness,
leaves shed as their time has come.
Sun's rays filter through trees' undress
all thoughts cast aside after work is done.

So small so adept is a leaf
to be a motif beyond belief
at doing such things that man's
modern technology cannot span.

Besma Riabi Dziri



Besma Riabi Dziri is a teacher of the English language in high school in Tunis. She was born in Tunis, Tunisia on September 20th, 1966. She graduated from Manouba University of Arts. She has a great passion for creative writing. She writes short stories and fables. Poetry has gripped her very ink and captured her heart and soul. Through her poetry, Besma Riabi Dziri expresses her thoughts which include serving and enlightening Humanity, tolerance of beliefs and the importance of Love, benevolence, forgiveness in the soul's renewal and growth. She avidly believes in the ability of poetry to transcend our limitations as human beings, beautify and elevate the soul and shine Love and Light into Humanity.

She Walks In Silence

Besma Riabi Dziri

She walks in silence, like a lapping wave
drowned in chastity and flooded with rave
holding dear and tight her very beauties
denying all her gems and rubies.
Her powers disabled under the spell
the flame in wouldn't break out of its shell.

Tempted to trace a humming call of fate
allured but reluctant to take the bait.
The strings of her heart lost their pitch and tone
the clutches of mind hurting to the bone.
Untraceable are the paths to no end
unable to soul unself and ascend.

She walks in silence, like a gliding breeze
fervent rising prayers brought her to her knees
seeking the blessings of grace, peace and love
if only her pain she could rise above.
Nameless beauty would dissolve in her womb
Her wounds.. sins she would carry to her tomb.

Inspired by *She Walks In Beauty*, Lord Byron (George Gordon)

Ron Carter



Ron Carter earned an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. He has published poetry and short fiction in various literary journals including *Shenandoah*, *New Virginia Review*, *Tidings*, and others. Now retired, he taught English at Rappahannock Community College in Virginia.

To my Father: Why there are no poems for you
Ron Carter

Not even this, for poems feed on presence--
the soft splat of rain on a windshield, toads
squatting beneath a fern, a barge hauling ashes
down a dirty river. But you, Father,
are absence, something less than nothing:
a palpable emptiness, sky drained of color,
the still blank of a pond at noon. Father,
nothing is so empty as absence to a child, nothing
so quick to fill with presence: stone's splash
and glimpse of ghost. But the pond, vexed,
reclaims its void, and the ghost melts, leaving
nothing there but still air and stagnant water.

So how can I know you, old spirit, old wraith?
Try as I might, I cannot make a father of you.
The clay will not hold. The head tumbles
to the floor and rolls to rest beneath an unused chair.
The arms and legs are all askew. An uncle?
Yes. An old retainer comes to call. A father?
No. Father, there are no poems for you.

To my Sons, assisting at mass
Ron Carter

Sometimes on Sundays, when the old mysteries float like fog over the altar, I wake from dreams of tedious routine to find you changed to stone, your hands frozen fast to the tools of atonement --those bits of bread, the watered wine. (Small hands to hold such savage signs.) Like figures dredged from ancient sands, you kneel beside the priest-- a theme for some aspiring Quattrocento sculptor bent on knocking Buonarroti from his perch.

But dreams of unlocked gardens and sin revoked are grown-up gauds. For you, the only sign that signifies hangs high above--a cross of olive wood, a body broken by a father's love. Witness there the price such love exacts and know deliverance lies elsewhere, not with me. My hands are bloody with the thorns I bring, my pockets heavy with nails to pierce your flesh. Dismiss the priests, my sons. They've got it wrong.

This is no path to paradise, no righting of old wrongs. This is but the pattern of our lives in dumbshow-- a father fathering forth a love to rend and tear the hearts of those he loves, a plenitude of pain that flows in rivers like the blood of Christ but bears no balm amidst its agony of need, a dry stick, abandoned anthill, charred bone. Emptiness. My father dwelt in darkness and called it light. My love for you was born of night.

Remembering Manila
Ron Carter

Where once it lay on the horizon, promising love
and danger--all the old spine-tingling themes,
Today it lies in the wake of a life changed
like the weather: a wife and kids, a house and job.
Love? Danger? All the old stultifying themes.

The critics dislike it--my life. They say it lacks something.
Love, perhaps. Danger? Those old, enduring themes.
And yet, I have a following of sorts--friends and relations
who cheer me on because they must--or have no taste--
the sort that, in Manila, would have drunk the water.

Sometimes she catches me unawares--Manila
with her priests and whores, the flies and sweat.
"Guess who," she says. And for a while, it's old times
again: the warm beer, her fingers soft on my neck.
But then she slips away, neither taking me with her

nor giving me the chance to choose not to go.
In Manila, flesh clings closely to bone,
and the cocks still fight on Sundays.
Here, in Virginia, cocks lie spent and quiet,
and Sundays serve for sermons on old, familiar themes.

Nolo Secundo



The poet is in his 70's now and has lead a peaceful life since his marriage almost 40 years ago. But his 20's-- the time he came of age-- were more like Dickens' '...the best of times, the worst of times...'. At 20 he went to England to do his junior year abroad. A couple years after college he suffered a major clinical depression; he almost drowned in a Vermont river and had a near-death experience, one that shook his former agnosticism to the core. He was opposed to the Vietnam War yet for some reason, still rather inscrutable to him, he went to teach ESL in the war zone of Phnom-Penh, Cambodia, in '73-'74. There he developed a deep affection for the Cambodian people, and though he heard stories about the brutality of the Khmer Rouge towards their own people, he could not believe they would have been capable of the genocide of the 'killing fields'. After the war forced him to leave Cambodia, he spent over a year teaching ESL in Taipei and later Tokyo. A year after he returned, he met the woman he would married. Some of his poems are about the strange thing called aging and its paradox of wearing down the body while gradually-- or so it seems to him-- freeing the soul. The rest try to explore that inexplicable Mystery permeating each one of us and that seems to manifest Itself every so often, in ways subtle or strange. At times the poet has felt that life is just one long dream, and he has dreamt such dreams many, many times before.

The face of the Buddha
Nolo Secundo

They haunt me still.
The brown children laughing,
Always laughing.
The women voluptuous,
Languid,
Their movement an invitation.
Even the traffic policeman,
Crisp, clean in uniform,
Moving with ballerina grace
As hordes of cyclos and mopeds
And the occasional automobile
Pirouette endlessly about him,
Impatient bees made quiescent
By surreal beauty of white-gloved arms
Cutting through thick tropical air.
Everywhere was grace, gentleness—
Temples incandescent at dawn,
With ant trails of orange-robed monks
Cradling their pot-belly begging bowls.
The patient women standing by the road
To lump rice into the begging bowls,
The monks always staring blankly ahead
Until the women bowed low in reverence,
Grateful their gift of life was taken.
And how wondrous it was,
An accident in the street, yet no anger, no bile—
Forgiveness, felt before thought,
Thought before uttered.

How could such a people murder,
No not murder—slaughter!
Their mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles,
Teachers, priests, friends and children too.
Change temples of peace
Into charnel-houses?
Schools of knowledge
Into abattoirs?

They photographed every butchered lamb,
Like the devil's children on holiday,
And decorated the classroom walls,
A show-and-tell of horror and despair.

Why? Why?
Why such pain on such gentle people?
Why did God hide His face
While the world turned its back?
Forty, forty, forty years and still—
Still they haunt me.

Memories travel without the weight of time
Nolo Secundo

I'm five: lying in bed in the attic room I share
With big brother (though 4 years older, he won't
Climb the creaky stairs at night unless I go first—
His fear of the dark gives me a secret thrill).
Before leaving for sleep-land, I like to watch
The shadows flickering across the ceiling, a kind
Of magic made by the reflected headlights
Of the cars passing in the street 3 stories below.

At seventeen I'm making out with my first girl
On the plush sofa in her house while her mom
Sleeps upstairs. We are both virgins, both clothed
And naïve. Suddenly, as I lay her down, I come—
My first orgasm as, strangely, I had never jerked off
(a mystery I still cannot fathom), but oh wondrous
It was to leave my body and step briefly into heaven.

First came the girls, then the women, in droves,
For I was tall and fair and good with words, but most
Of all, I could make them laugh. And I loved them all,
in my way, and I could love none of them—for I was
afraid of the binding, the fastness that love demands.
It hollowed me out, this fear, and I could not see the
Utter blackness it led me to—and pain beyond pain.

At 24 I was reborn that moment I wept for the loves,
And love I had lost. I was not a new man, nor a good man,
But I was a beginning man, my soul taking baby steps
Towards God and the glorious love infused universe.

In my 32nd year I stood in the nave of the little Anglo-
Saxon church, waiting as my bride came down the aisle.
She began crying, I began smiling—my happiest day.
Now 35 years later, it is still my happiest day....

Childish Fears
Nolo Secundo

As a child
I was never afraid
Of the dark.
My big brother was,
And he would wait
For me to lead the way
Each night to the attic
Bedroom we shared.
(If irked by him
That day, I would linger
Downstairs, making him
Wait for his night's repose.)

And in bed I would lie awake
For a time, watching with a
Child's wonder the shadows
Flicking across the ceiling,
Made by the cars passing
In the street 3 stories below.
The way they moved so swiftly,
I thought those dark reflections
Of light might be alive, soldiers
Of the night passing over me.

I had no fear of death either, for
I knew if it came, I would go back
To a very beautiful place, feeling
Heaven I had come from, so to
Heaven I would return (but then
I was still innocent) No , I feared
Only one thing, but it was a huge,
Mighty thing: I feared eternity.

I saw, in my child's mind, a road
That went on forever, never
Ending, without an horizon
To mark the journey's end.
And I quaked at its infinity.

Now I no longer fear the endless
For my soul once told me, quickly
And quietly: I am here, without
Begin, without end, forever.
Then I understood – my soul
Reflected my mortal mind,
My brain that can't recall my
Birth and really cannot fathom
Its own death, for it exists only
And always in the moment,
The indefinable, eternal now.

Serjevah Davis



Serjevah Davis grew up in Tampa, Florida and graduated from the University of West Florida with a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre. Currently based out of Minneapolis, Minnesota, she is excitedly waiting for her first published poem to debut. She hopes that her poetry will be an encouragement and inspiration to readers the same way it has influenced her.

Knowing The Valley
Serjevah Davis

You are the stranger I once knew. I thought
Maybe you seemed familiar. From
A passing glance or gentle, "Hello," so
I gave you the reins and
Walked with you. I ran with you for
Miles and miles.

I awoke from dreams of a peculiar life.
Slideshow images of smiling faces, fingers
Interwoven, bodies embracing -
Looking like crow's carrion painted rouge to me.
I thought, how's it possible to run this long?
But my feet betrayed me.

Everything turning together in circles as we
Meander through this valley of carousels.
I imagine that my rosy, wooden horse might grow
Weary of being bound and sprout wings and fly anywhere
Away from you.

But the Earth gives up her dead and fills
With broken clocks. Hands that used to spin like Ferris wheels,
Now stalled at times of moments past or forgotten.
Galloping black beaks swarm, fill with wired flesh and
Forge through the fat of regret.

I used to fear that this would be where I'd be buried.
Along with all the other scraps of me.
And this valley would be littered with my tombstones.
Instead, I have set up altars of onyx feathers and amber bridles
To honor the day I have remembered.

