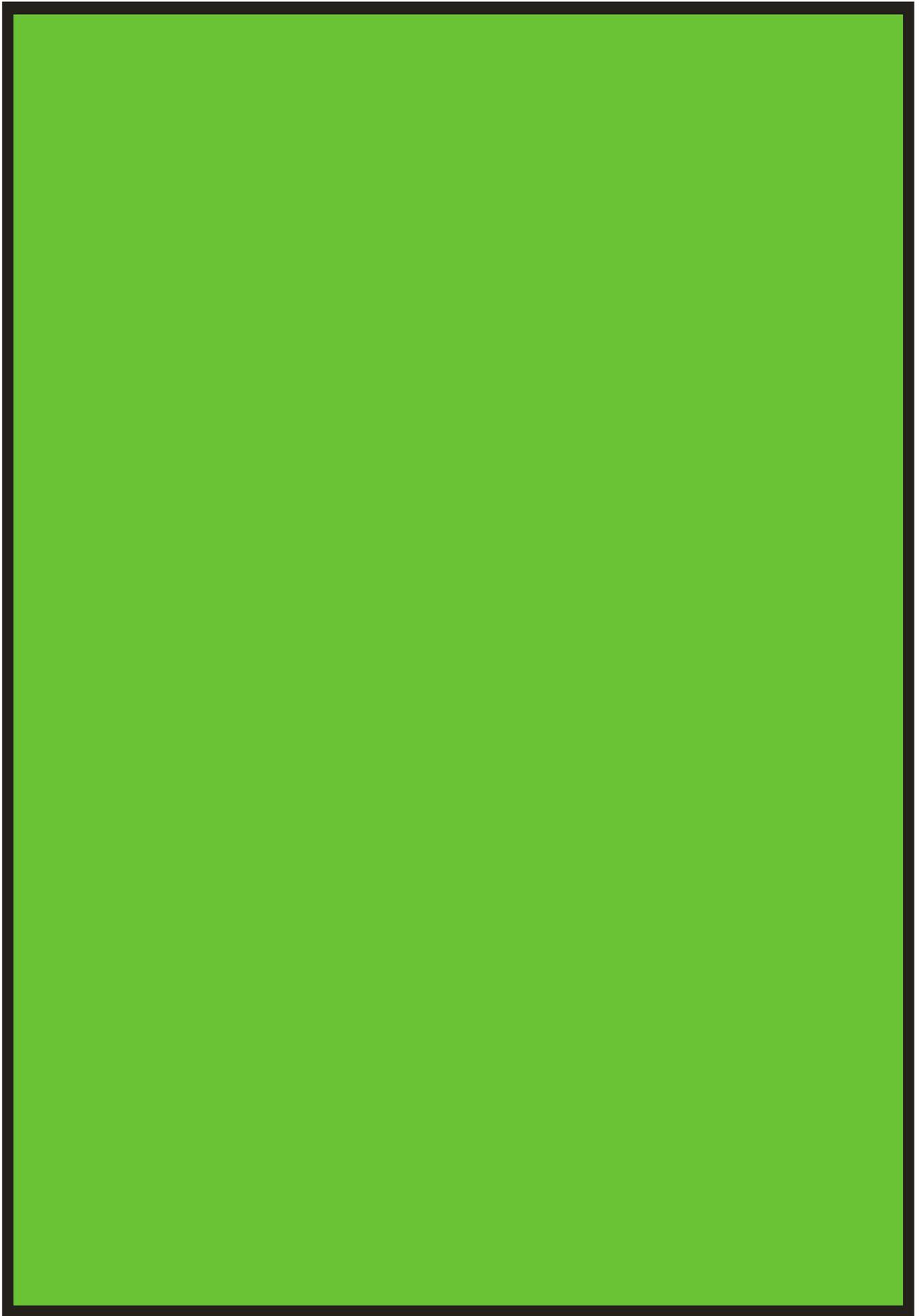




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Ijagun

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***You Live**
(for a life well spent)



(Juan Flores, 1943 - 2014)

*Live your life to its fullest
sowing a seed into every life
before it leaves you*

Juvenile at heart
Unrelenting in spirit
Able in old age
Never boring, never down

Full of wisdom
Loving and kind
Ornamented with virtues
Rendering all to all at will
Emptied, fulfilled, you left us
Surely, your absence we'd feel here

Gabriel Bamgbose

* This space shall not carry an *Editor's Note* this time, but a *Tribute* to a beloved professor, Juan Flores, who I never had the "chance" to express to him how much I deeply admire and love him before his transition on December 2. Juan Flores, a professor in the Department of Social & Cultural Analysis at New York University, continues to live on in many lives he has made his mark on.

The entire editorial team of *Ijagun Poetry Journal* uses this medium to say a special thanks to all our contributors and readers. Your unquenchable commitment to art has brought us this far and will continue to advance us on this creative platform we all share with love.

We are because you are!

Thanks again and again!

We wish you and yours a blissfully creative *New Year!*

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Joan McNerney



Joan McNerney's poetry has been included in numerous literary magazines such as *Seven Circle Press*, *Dinner with the Muse*, *Blueline*, *Spectrum*, three Bright Spring Press Anthologies, and several *Kind of A Hurricane* Publications. She has been nominated three times for Best of the Net. Four of her books have been published by fine small literary presses.

SeaScape I

Hearing waves from a distance and
feeling sea breezes brush our faces,
it seemed a century before we
came to the ocean.

So blue and bright to our eyes
its rhythm broke chains of
unremarkable days.

Over cool sand we ran and you picked
three perfect shells which fit
inside each other. Swimming away in
that moving expanse below kiss
of fine spray and splashes.

With clouds cumulus we drifted while
gulls circled the island. Together we
discovered beds of morning glories
climbing soft dunes.

SeaScape II

Let's dive in ocean hiss swish
 riding with bluewhales, bluewaves.
 Brush of foam and windy ripples
 sunbeams chasing quicksilver fish.

Floating through our shining world
 fragrant clouds, feathery clouds.
 We weave one arm after another
 wearing bracelets of salt pearl.

SeaScape III

My mind is an ocean
 where swimmers, surfers,
 sun worshippers cavort.

Long salty hair
 held between
 their teeth.
 Flourishing
 wild flowered gowns

...streams of silk
 waves of taffeta
 splashy lace.

They sail through
 my watery face
 combing my eyes
 whispering in my ears.

Alone, under a pointillist sky.
 Gulls flying around me.
 Black waters touched by
 moon of vague prophecy.

Neil Ellman



New Jersey poet, Neil Ellman, has twice been nominated for Best of the Net, the Pushcart Prize, and the Rhysling Award from the Science Fiction Poetry Association. More than 1,000 of his poems appear in print and online journals, anthologies, and chapbooks worldwide. His ekphrastic poetry includes nine chapbooks devoted individually to the works of Dalí, Miró, and other modern and contemporary artists. *Parallels: Selected Ekphrastic Poetry, 2009-2012*, is his first full-length collection.

Our World

(after the sculpture by Matt Devine)

Our world
 a ball of twine
 raveled in its intricate
 complications confounded
 by complexity
 hovers inquisitive
 without a sense of gravity
 and prays for meaning
 in the perturbations
 of its soul.

This Too

(after the lithograph by Mark Fox)

This too shall propagate
 crawl swim fly
 weave spider webs

leave tracks in mud
walk upright become
another after-thought
without a soul
alive first then stone –
without an after-life
except as bone.

The Cyclops

(after the painting by Odilon Redon)

If God had a single eye
better than the one we have
he could see as easily as a hummingbird
on unseen light-speed wings
in a clover-field of destinies

and if He had a beak
long, thin and aquiline
and an omniscient tongue
he could probe the inside of our hearts
and sip the nectar of our dreams

and if He were a hummingbird
it wouldn't be a deity
but just a one-eyed thing

Mahima Gupta



Mahima Gupta is a 17-year old poet from Kolkata, India. She is a student of Class 12. Writing has been a very important part of her life since the time she realises how wonderful it is to pen down one's thoughts; the sheer amount of happiness it gives is overwhelming.

Malady

The corpse lied untouched
In the crepuscular light,
her shadow enkindled.
Her kins stood panic-stricken.
Her fidelity was being questioned.
It was time now for the sun to set.
The birds were finding their way.
Migrating
Also, suffering.
And the darkness was about descending like everyday;
The shadows seemed to be taking over the grimaced faces
But she, however,
Was trying to resurrect her soul.
This was the epitome of her infatuation.
But she had always been an Ailurophile,
Always.

Hiatus

The words got scattered
 Like stardust
 The kites soared high up
 Reaching infinity and beyond
 The thoughts remained
 Unchanged
 The people remained
 Voracious

She read the manuscripts
 In her dreams
 There was a hiatus
 That changed the way –
 Broken paths
 And
 Shattered dramas –
 It made her think differently
 For good or for bad
 It's still something she is caught up with
 For joy or morose
 It's something
 She has to decide
 For every turning point
 In her life
 Makes her soul
 Robust
 And every ray of light
 Reinforced a new thought

Things start and come to an end
 People left and things were prioritised
 Somewhere in the middle
 Of this hiatus
 She learnt how to
 Live

Just another cryptic soul

She drowned in her past
 Because the hope of keeping up to the present
 Killed her
 And the promises which were about to
 Be proven false
 Would make people hate her
 And her expectations

Which she considered a dream

Appeared to be a major threat

For her existence

Those changes falsified her world

She smoked a joint

Looked behind

Consumed herself in the hypocrisy of today

And passed away

Lazola Pambo



Lazola Pambo is a South African poet, novelist and essayist. His works have been published locally and internationally in journals and magazines such as *The Kalahari Review*, *Black Magnolias Literary Journal* (Mississippi), *New Asian Writing* (Thailand), *2012 Short Story Day Africa*, *Poetry Potion Literary Journal*, *2012 Pendle War Collection* (United Kingdom), *Aji Magazine* (Mississippi), *Fundza Literacy Trust*, and *Joy Magazine*, amongst others. Lazola enjoys reading ancient and modern literature at his leisure.

Xenophobic Society

One of many black brothers in Africa
 Terrorised with rattling guns and petrol bombs
 He fled his country, to live in exile
 Upon foreign land with abundant treasures
 Working underground in a diamond mine
 For the sake of his two beloved children
 Wearing oily tainted grey overalls

A cold wind blows as the red sun sets
 Dragging his worn out feet on a rocky gravel road
 The way back home is agonisingly distant
 Not far in the mist, a squadron of vicious men
 Wait to pounce on him, like a hungry wolf pack
 They say, "Here he comes, that Makwere-Kwere."
 Silver knives are drawn and long iron pangas

Disorder erupts when he makes eye contact
 Falling in the trap of a xenophobic society
 He runs left then right, but there's no way out
 The dogs scatter around him, gnawing their sharp teeth

“Kill the bastard,” they jubilantly say
 My brother from another mother, burnt in flames that day
 All because he was Zimbabwean

Inequality

Lonesome echoes deserted
 Impoverished to inequality
 Between the copper shanties
 Turbulences of squatter camps

Young children, elderly folks
 Victimised from rural villages
 Eating stale bread crumbs
 Drinking filthy riverbank water

Love does not exist here
 People have forsaken their own
 While the cities are terribly rich
 People living in poor conditions
 Yell their lungs out:
 “To hell with liberation,
 When we are not liberated...”

Let Us Be Love

Let us awake and be still
 For a moment
 Avoid the past of agonising times
 Dwell in jublations at heart
 Without any obstacle that unsettles us

Not be paranoid or cynical
 Let us mingle and improvise generosity
 For any anguished soul
 Disastrous uprising, if we separate ways
 For where is the love
 If there's no relevance of love

Let us be love in our lives
 Day in and day out
 Time is too short to oblige misery
 All humankind is a jewel
 Whether he is poor or whether she is a victim
 Stand together, holding arms
 And let goodness prevail

Jasmeen Griffin



Jasmeen Griffin recently studied at Oxford University with poet Jenny Lewis. She was born in India and studied in the United States and Canada. Bridging these cultures has taught her how much is gained as well as lost in translation. This awareness informs her work.

Blue Heron

The blue heron stands
 Quiet as a stealth bomber
 His jubilant croak
 Jangles
 The ripples
 A silver wriggle
 Held fast in his beak
 Giraffe neck
 Undulates
 In supple grace
 The silver line curls into a
 Downward lump
 Into the curve of the gunmetal heron
 Wispy feathers floating
 A granite sky, clouds speckled
 By a spectral winter sun
 The somber river
 Broken
 By bugling satiation
 Of a visceral
 Need
 Blue heron
 Incarnadines
 The way

New Moon

Ivory shard forged into a curve, torn
from contours of my heart, the crescent

moon limns a cerulean dark sky. Inviolable. Like
Li Po I reach out, splash into cold,

dark water. Pale buttercream shimmer
is broken and re-broken, made

malleable by my wild threshing,
by undulations of ebb and flow that

empty into the stilled night. I
watch the canoe rock down the river into

the chasmal maw of open sea. Granite
headland, imprisoned moonlight in its flecks

of quartz, glances my way. Mantled
in cold and kelp, I turn.

Twilight

Peacock haunting dusk, single
note, high-pitched, staccato. Repeated... Plaint
rising above the souging of the dying
day, like a muezzin's call to prayer. Warms
gray twilight into iridescence: yearning
spiced with joy.

Solomon Olaniyan



Solomon O. Olaniyan is an indigene of Ipapo, Oyo State, where he grew and had his Primary and Secondary Education. Olaniyan is of the Department of English, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, where he had both his B.A and M.A degrees. He is currently a teaching assistant at the General Studies Programme Unit, University of Ibadan. His research areas include postcolonial African literature and sociology of literature. He has published articles in both local and international learned journals. Olaniyan enjoys writing poetry especially, poetry of societal relevance fraught with “lampoonish” lexical coinages.

Dear Representathieves

Dear representathieves,
Out of lovely hatred
This *e-pisto*/ I write you

For being innovathief
Always decepthief
Calling a spade a pin
With hired editor-in-thief
Mouthing the mindless mind
Of the commander-in-thief

How many souls
Beneath the earth lie ungrown?
How many minds caged?
How many dreams massacred?
Always on the motion
Like devil seeking whom to devour

Nation's street full
Of fools
Since schools'
Doors are shut

Awake to the task
Stop wasting the tax

Stealing and corruption are
Siamese twins
Dear,
Bear
Our pains
Not our gains
Be our donkey
Not a bear

Committee Country

Darkness ravages the land
Terrorists become savage
Nothing works, even government
All talk
No one listens

To search for lost safety-pin
A committee we must set-up
Though all previous committees' reports
Lie buried under *raggish* rugs
Nation of committee
Missing among comity of nations

No evidence of nationhood
In fear of stronghold
For our high priest
Cannot be touched with our infirmities
His *chickdren*, they never kidnapped
His *false-lady* secured
Himself, never visited with cold afternoon bomb
Dancing *sigidi* priest amidst pews' wailing

How can a city-sitting committee
Find Sambisa Forest
And BRING HOME OUR GIRLS?

We are a Nation

We are a nation
with zealous passion
we make mountain
but live in mole-hill
we offer others peace
but we're torn into pieces
to neighbours we give joy
but we cry for toy

We are a nation

of nice-smelling lotion
with no working notion

Ours is a country
where we try
always cry
nothing works
pot-bellied minority walks
away with our money
throwing the land into mourning

Ours is a home
that unhomes
the landlord

We are a nation
rich ridges with oils
lubricating faraway soils
while sons-of-the-soil
cry for their own oils

A nation with many professions
unresolved confessions
leaders are players
followers are prayer
warriors

Our friends' challenges
we bear
with no changes
to home-grown virus

Only the fools are full
elites lack the light
few rich reach the height
many poor pour out anguish

We make bed for distant land
but on nettled-rock
we rest our bony back
others' resources we manage
patriotically ours we damage

We are the Black race's elephant
not without elephantiasis
our resources onshore and offshore
our eyesore
lobby
our hobby
politics
our tricks

Adreyo Sen



Adreyo Sen is currently a student at Stony Brook, Southampton. He has been published in *Danse Macabre*, *Garbanzo* and *Cannon's Mouth*.

The Ghost

Some ghosts we keep
close to our hearts.
Even if our hearts beat
the frenzied beat
of raven wings
against a cage made of glass.

You're one such ghost, my love.
Sometimes I wonder if you were ever real,
if you marked your shadow on the protesting earth,
or let your sooty breath etch its name
on the grime of speeding train windows.

But perhaps you're real even now,
even if you're just sweet melancholy
foraging forth from the darker valleys of my mind.
Somewhere in my allotment of Faery, I take your hand
and if I have courage enough to close my eyes,
you'll have me sit in the little black boat that is Death.

The Lost Children

The loss of a child
is the death of a promise,
but also a still-life painting
of what could have been,

in surreal shades of yellow and red.

Children have the unfashionable ambition
of becoming firemen and policewomen,
maybe even the next US president.
Out of the bare minimum of props,
they construct their identity as angels of mercy.

This is why most police officers, in unguarded moments,
have the faces of sleeping children.
They are already in the valley of the dead,
playing hopscotch and hide-and-seek,
and plundering Death's delicious kitchen.

The Despot

In the court of my childhood, I was an Oriental despot.
My rich robes were my frog-patterned pajamas
and my scepter was my sister's ancient ruler.
My sister was my Schezerhade.
Captive to my cruel fancies till she
turned the table (or the bed)
and began to tell me stories,
stories with the grandeur of the everyday,
stories about break-ups and secret fancies
and somberly, of sudden death
and the school hockey team's last frenzied stand
in the stadium that was its Thermopylae.

And as my sister spoke and sang,
my bed became a little black boat
and her voice the still black river
ferrying me to my gleaming black palace.
And on the bank I left behind,
my sister stood, a stern, tragic figure
in her nightgown's grey.

And when they told me of my sister's death,
I didn't believe them.
For I know my sister never left.
And each night I look out my palace window
into the blackness of the night,
past the blackness of the frozen sea
with its black boat paused, adrift,
to see my sister on the other shore,
gowned in grey's most somber hue,
a raven nesting in either hand,
a half-smile on her bloodless lips.

Kevin Sampsel



Kevin Sampsel grew up writing poetry and fiction in Tennessee. He currently lives in Norfolk, Virginia, with his wife and takes advantage of any opportunity to travel or be outdoors. His work can be found in various publications. His first book of poetry, *Vibration and Swaying*, was published in 2012.

Gaps

This inconsolable silence
 And the thunderous crack,
 Crack of a whip
 Gloats of its spoils,
 Breeds ever our toils
 As we manage the ravenous gaps.

Our sweat drips in droplets;
 There is naught to stop it,
 So we surrender to chasms
 Deeper than mountains...
 And fall to the unknown abyss.
 There error, terror of emptiness will live.

Amongst the rocks and old rubble,
 We now blindly struggle
 Until nauseous and sunken forever.
 Dejected and beaten,
 We sit alone weeping
 Until this silence decides to speak up.

A smell slightly tickles –
 Who is here? What has entered?
 Does this blackness grow weaker?
 You see the faintest of sparks.
 Explosions! Flames raining!
 Change like the crack of a whip.

Smells of cinder and charcoal
 Erupt, as with violence,
 And the flames find birth,
 Find worth in your hair.
 The panic and slapping, long fuses –
 Your skin will soon turn black.

Heathen lips forming prayer
 As, layer by layer,
 Your skin does turn to ash.
 You are soot for the next one –
 Bones add to the rubble.
 One should always take heed of the gaps.

Turn Shadows Out!

Trouncing boredom about
 Inside the skin
 With a sonorous rout,
 A short-lived win,
 An ominous bent.
 Oh, empty whine –
 Melodies bounce
 And plod, with rhythm
 And a polling pounce.
 Convulse and shout
 A piercing, loud
 Unrelenting sound.
 Oh, synapse burn
 And pleasure cloud:
 Turn shadows out

The Diving Bell

The diving bell
 And ghastly pale –
 Twisted thoughts
 All torn, like hells
 Imagined well
 In ages dark

Cast arcing swells
That leave bewildered
Lies and tales
Dripping grimly
On tongue tips scared
To be, to fail

JD DeHart



JD DeHart is a writer and teacher. His work has appeared recently in *Eunoia Review*, *The Literary Yard*, *The Commonline Journal*, *Eye On Life Magazine*, among other publications.

Pointillism

By the curious arrangement of particles,
 what was disconnected is now A chair,
 A washboard, An old house, A mattress

Some flowers, A cityscape, A figure in a boat,
 A Lion, Thomas Edison, Expired insect.

Each portrait the configuration of tinier plates,
 each illustration made of multiplicity.

Death of the Jellyfish

Once upon a jelly time, this little guy
 swam through the ocean with bobs
 sending shockwaves into offending flesh
 Now, how the luminescent have fallen,
 he (she?) is a small disc, blackened at edges
 I never knew you had been stung

Beachgoers are careful where to step
navigating the wash-up gelatin rounds
afraid there might still be some electricity
A crab hides in the deep umbrella hole
must have been some spread, covering
a whole family reunion, curled up below
while smaller crabs making armor sounds
further down the stretch of licking ocean

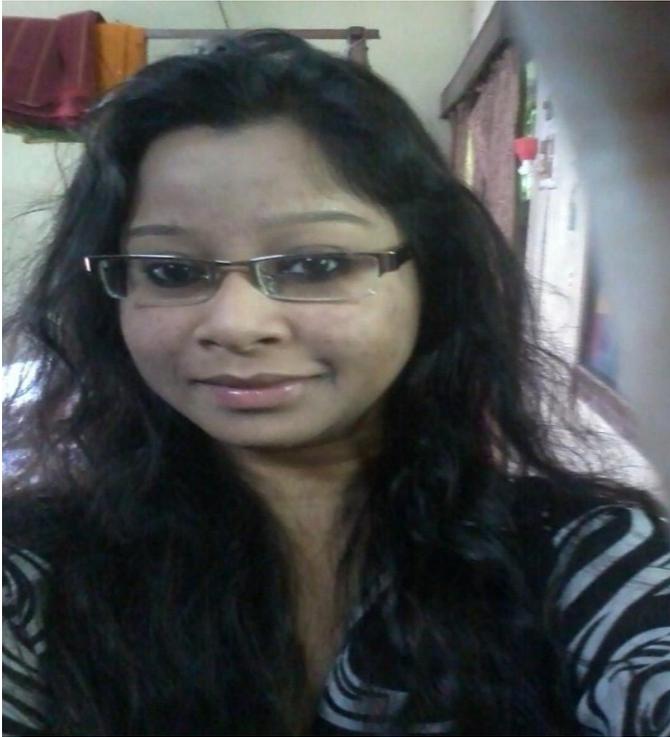
Rhino Garden

A tree, the color of ash, root system
like the humped back of a massive
slow-moving creature, decorating
a small circle of sidewalk, a space
at the bottom large enough to hide
a baby basket inside

Beyond, the truck parked, the shop
opening, a fresh layer of dogwood
blossoms and a campus bell ringing
but no one is taking notes right now

People stand idle in early morning
circles as if their bones are rustling
breaking away the ice of hibernation
many of their fellows still hidden
beneath the cloth of warm sheets

Aneesha Roy



Aneesha Roy is an avid reader and writer of poetry. Her poems have been published in *Haiku Journal*, *The Literary Yard*, *Contraposition*, and *New Asian Writing*. She has a degree in English literature. Apart from literature, she is interested in classical mythology, feminist criticism and philosophy. She resides in Kolkata, India.

The Lost Aeon

A rain-soaked afternoon in late September
 Brought back memories galore,
 Drenched to the skin, every wet pore
 Exasperates, enervates, suffusing
 A heightened sense of liquid agitation to my core.
 The tumultuous wind gnawing and ravishing
 The rabid landscape like a vile torpedo.

I walked back home,
 Walking down the very same road
 Past the blanched awnings and ragged balustrades,
 Numberless, listless houses and shopfronts
 Sizing me up with a steady, concupiscent gaze.

I walked past the forbidden hole – that small
 Crater in the ground, to the right of the road,
 Which had intrigued me endlessly
 Through the half-remembered, half-forgotten

Monsoons in the days of yore.

The responsible elders had advised me
To stay clear of that dubious, dangerous
Semi-crater, which sat perched atop the
Cracked, corrugated surface, scarred by
The Natural whims of millennia or more.

I continued my quotidian walk towards home
Diligently avoiding that dark hole,
Peering curiously at me;
I had unconsciously internalized those
Vatic instructions into my whole being.

They had sanctimoniously warned me, when
I was nine or ten, that there were insects
Inside it, or worse still, they said,
“Even a snake could rear its ugly, sable
Head from inside it, especially during
The filthy, pestilential monsoons.”

An accurate optical replica of my
Baffled ten year old self sprung up
Before my eyes, unprovoked;
A little girl, clad in a canary yellow raincoat,
Appeared visibly startled and afraid,
Her naïve inquisitiveness momentarily silenced
By this piece of unsavoury explanation.

I saw briefly that little, shaky, shuddering girl,
Told to meticulously avoid puddles and holes;
And too many candies, marshmallows
And flavoured ice-creams in winter
And to always stick to the correct side of the road.

For a moment or two, these verbal strictures
Rang stanchlessly like recurring
Ariettes of incessant dogma
In my ears.

The rain had abated mildly.
The wind had reined itself in
For the moment; though
Truculent surges blew intermittently.

I continued my walk home

Casting a sheepish half-glance backwards,
 Towards that unholy crater
 That you were always forbidden to dip your
 Feet into during the monsoons,
 For fear of scorpions and snakes
 And other assorted insects
 And reptiles.

It lay as inconspicuously as before,
 As nonchalantly as twenty monsoons ago,
 As dull, complacent, self-assured, blithe
 And morbidly grandiose as
 Perceived by that little shivering girl
 In the sunshine raincoat
 Over a decade ago.

And I allowed my misty eyes
 To rest on it, to regard the
 Swarthy aureole around its ancient head
 For a brief moment or two,
 Half-convinced that if I peeped in
 I would catch a glimpse of that
 Radiant, carefree smile, circumscribed
 By the yellow hood of the sunshine raincoat.

That haunted hole by the side of the road,
 That was once the cynosure of many a
 Childhood nightmare (brought on by the
 Mendacious accounts of sapient adults),
 That haunted hole – that lay nestled
 Surreptitiously in the coves of
 Many a feverish dream.

Into that forbidden hole
 I silently watched the warped
 Fragments of my childhood
 Assimilate and dissolve,
 Not to be raked up anymore.

Only if it were a Trifle

She was begging by the roadside...
 begging for alms... for small change,
 if you had some to spare.

A torn, ragged sari draped around her feeble,
emaciated body.

She had worn those six yards for eternity,
it was the only piece of clothing she owned,
faded and patched in several places.

She resembled a crushed fruit, her swollen,
diseased feet playing a mirthless peek-a-boo
with the clear arias of sunlight glinting
glorious allegro in the distance.

Her sunken eyes, stony, black, bottomless
pools of nothing.

They had long given up hope for a saviour or
a loved one to establish the long-lost bonds
of kinship.

Her puckered hands, tired from begging and
pleading... her sparse, white hair sticking
to her scalp, making her look like
a hideous, wanton porcupine.

The pavement was her only abode.

She slept there at night, with the
mice and fleas for company.

They don't bother her anymore.

This had been her reality
for seventeen years.

She rattled her bowl against the hard
gravel of the sidewalk.

She sits patiently, while faces
behind numberless tinted windows
peer and glare.

While some blankly stare,
some with bewilderment,
some with mild indifference,
while others with utter disdain.

She mumbled to herself sometimes
when the cold December air
became too much to bear.

She couldn't tell a daze from reality
anymore; she had been by herself
for too long,

out on the dark, deserted streets.

She was somewhat immune to the
frosty chill of the winter mornings,

but couldn't help her teeth from
rattling in the cold.

Her visage reminds one of...
...perhaps an empty wineskin...
or an extinguished candle.
The seedy-looking cobbler, the sole
occupant of the pavement besides her,
at this hour;
looks through her as though
she were an unwanted
encumbrance.

The merry crowds from the rowdy
corner cafe look at her as
though she were dust beneath their
fingernails.
Her wrinkled face resembled that
of an old, hungry pike,
but unlike the fish, she could not
close in for a kill anytime she wanted.
Her nocturnal companions were
somewhat lucky.
The mice never went hungry like her.
She bore an uncanny resemblance to...
who? You might ask...
She is no stranger,
for she is the woman, you and I cast
out of our homes to fend for herself.
She is every woman that has been
spurned by her loved ones, that has
been at the receiving end of a
barrage of expletives;
she is every woman that is driven out
to live off the scraps of society.
She is every woman that has been
mistreated, tortured, wronged and betrayed.

She is but you and me –
A faint phantasmagoria beckoning
us to an unwanted future of privation;
of neglect and endless deprivation.
For the many slots on that pavement
are ours for the taking.
And in five and twenty years perhaps,
the world too shall be looking at

Living corpses on the sidewalk,
At you and me.

Kitsch under the Marmosa

Crimson pontiff.
Inoculated grizzlies.
A charred poster
with serrated edge,
bargained for at the crossroads.
Tainted smear of gray
at the wizened temples;
Threadbare negligee
of gold and green,
gaudy like some ill-formed
daguerreotype of old.
Armorial trophies,
once brazen
now impotent,
adorn the acorn-shaped
prison cell,
encased between the
wrangling wreaths of yesterday.

Abiodun Soretire



Abiodun John Soretire has his hands deep in the sciences but his heart deeper in the arts. He is presently on the staff of Ogun State government as a Medical Laboratory Scientist with an associate membership of the MLSCN council since 2006. He had an HND in Science Laboratory Technology from Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta in 2000. Notwithstanding, he still finds the time and heart to pursue the love of his life – currently an undergraduate part-time degree student of English and Literary Studies in Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, via Ijebu-Ode. He is an upcoming writer with many unpublished works of prose and poetry in his quiver. He is happily married to Abolanle.

The Messieurs, The Masses, The Messes

In our nation, a polar coalition
 Petrodollars sprawl far from perturbation
 Our headache – spending the oil boom
 The long-capped president senses no doom

Thirty Gregorian calendars used and dumped
 The tune up the pharynx metamorphosed and changed
 Graft and his pot belly at large
 Our dwindling fortunes the charge
 Stopping the degradation has become our migraine
 For the Head with bowler hat is a greenhorn

The interspace interlaced with impunity
 Embezzlement dancing nude in profligacy
 And the masses for their loyal sweat
 Reap scathing suffering as the royal gift

Criminal self-interests
 Garbed in good angel's garments
 Alas, we're effectively cornered
 The last staple on our table effortlessly robbed

Our men of defensive arms
 With jackboots and butt of guns
 Seize the highest office for years
 And our men of flowing garbs
 Through riffles and meager baits
 Secure votes to the highest office in tons

Khaki or linen
 We wonder the difference
 As we waste away with our wealth
 And our land traded away with its resources
 Decrees and bills are busy on our theatre of troubles
 Laughing us to scorn from their nest of cozy feathers

Way's Weight

If you don't wait
 To weigh
 A way
 Prior to walking
 The way
 You're a wayfarer
 Wandering
 Away
 From The Way

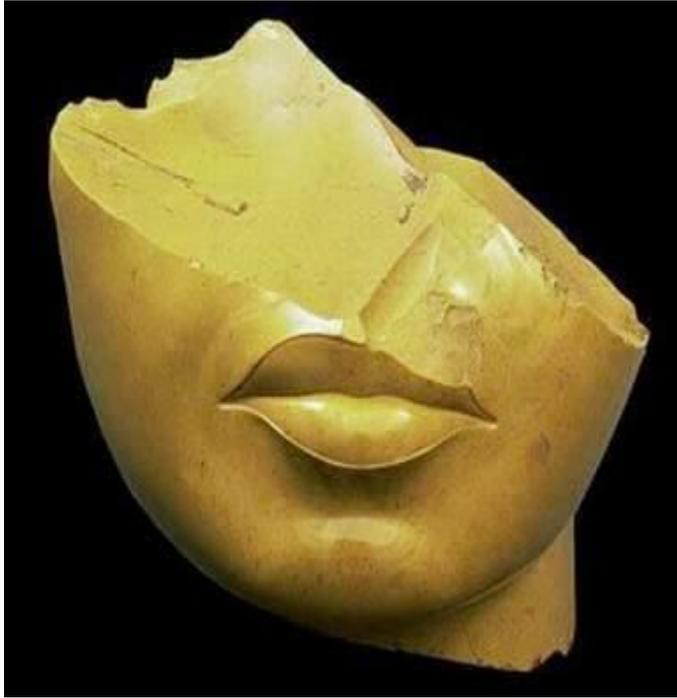
Window-Shopping

Gong, gong goes the bell
 Of the lousy, noisy town crier:
 There's going to be a fashion parade
 A beauty contest at the village square
 The qualification
 Easy to meet
 A dazzling damsel
 Tarmac-ed with wizened hide
 Pitched with gnarled vocal cord

Must be a friend of showy Hezekiah
And close associate of vaunting Xerxes
Ready to divest herself
Of her humble garment
To feed the eyes of the world
With her naked beauty
When opportunity
Comes stumble-knocking

Hers, a wavy hair
Meandering like crooked path
Beckoning fringe
Waving down her customer
And enticing face
Lighted up with heavy cosmetics
Her figure
Like eight,
Bulbous
Under sinking neckline
Voluptuous
Above skimpy denim skirt,
Like vulture
Devours the wanton
With rapture
The wanton
Looked
Until lured
And lost
No covenant with the eyes
To let lying lust lie

M. L. Emmett



M. L. Emmett is an English woman, living in Adelaide Australia. She was the convener of Friendly Street Poets Inc – the longest running poetry reading & publishing organisation in the southern hemisphere: friendlystreetpoets.org.au. She was an academic at the University of Adelaide, last working there in 2006. She is an editor of poetry manuscripts. Her favourite work is poetry mentoring and manuscript creation with poets. M. L. Emmett is currently the CEO of Poetry & Arts Oz that performs poetry in Art Galleries in relation to specific exhibitions. The organisation has done shows recently on Otto Dix; John Brack; Rupert Bunny, SA Artists from Colonialisation & Joseph M. Turner. She is a mother of two daughters, grandmother of three, and poodle tragic.

Night Shot with Light

Blood punching hard through every vein
 White thunder drums with fists of rain
 Lightning's whip cracks flashing white
 Ships heave and seem to leap in light

Sea spins and swirls staccato pace
 Engulfing waves rush strong embrace
 Blood pounds the human heart with fear
 Just spume and brine with no one near

Cold wind is whining overhead
 Its roaring sound could raise the dead
 The strafing power of Nature's might
 On this shuddering dark, bleak night



(Image: Snowstorm at Sea by J. M. Turner)

Turkish Smyrna

This carpet – a Turkish Smyrna –
is made with Gordian knots,
tied by the fine fingers of a child
tied to a loom
by a thin, pale leg.

Every centimetre – a hundred knots
This carpet – two and a half million knots
all Gordian
tied tightly
by the fine fingers of a child.

Each thread is dyed
with plants
picked by nomad hands
from shifting lands
Henna oranges and Madder reds
Saffron yellows and Indigo blues.
Colours bloom and fade
with the change of seasons.

Patterns are centuries old,
never drawn or sketched,
only sung to the young
by the old blind weavers,
who walk the workshops
and the aisles of looms.

In this shadow world
of soured and fetid air
dreamless children
live threadbare under a black sun.

Wide borders holding everything in place
no figures or stories, just a labyrinth
of abstract shape and colour
drawing you in to the treasure
at the centre of the rug.

And the knowledge of the knots
the Gordian knots
tied by the fine fingers of a child
tied to a loom
by a thin, pale leg.



Peace tattoo

Children need to breathe the air of protest
walk together, arm in arm with strangers
wear badges of hope and T-shirts with lifelines
Sing words of wisdom and history
chant choric responses of camaraderie
in a mass movement of human voices
Understand the justice of causes
and the constant need for change
The dignity of freedom
and the strength of real choices
Find courage to lead others by honourable action
spreading metaphors of compassion
over roads of pain and tears
Letting the certainty of liberty
beat with their hearts
as strong as empathy
And may peace be tattooed
on every breath
they ever breathe



(Photo by Jayel Aheram)

Oyin Oludipe



Oyin Oludipe is a copywriter. His essays and poems have been published in several online platforms including *The New Black Magazine*, *Kalahari Review*, *Herald Digest*, *The Guardian Newspaper*, *Africanwriter Litmag*, and *The Stijl*. He lives in Lagos, where he writes *Hairy Diary*, a literary blog: <oyinoludipe.blogspot.com>

The Swallows and the Gamble of Rebirth: A Review of Carl Terver's "Till the Swallows Come Home"

*"I know this place where civilisation
Runs along torn asphalts..."*

These three-month gone, I have observed that poetry can invert itself to be an emotional hallucinogen; that it can sometimes betray its very own bard as to transpose the weight of its intended meaning, and after a varied moment, create a sound, a scene or something that was not; possibly, a beatification or the signature of an expressive insurance (for the poet).

Only when the social creature begins to display an evidence of sensitivity, an image of fear and agony, only then does the instance for consolation seriously begin to surface. To that ritual is poetry sometimes inspired. The gift can make the dejection of the composer ever-timely, not seeming too proud or too irrelevant.

The contemporary Nigerian poet, full of the burden of a messy tradition, appears to have bored himself with unresolved battles. Even so, he still contests the impulses of dubbing his tempered vision to the background. In this, is the solemn action taken to

secure a moral standpoint and build an artistic consciousness around it. In such cases only are lamentations amply justified.

Encountering Carl Terver's "Till the Swallows Come Home," one comes to term with a fervent irreverence, a kind of foreknowing tumult which grows into an omen of regret, of suspicion, which works through the dominant act of dialogue. The long poem says so much about the Nigerian darkness, about the "notes that sound like stridulations to our eardrums." Halfway down the missive that sounds like Wole Soyinka's *Elegy for a Nation*, the critic will ask, why has this poet not written a conventional facile tragedy? That a monologue could be so single-mindedly drawn into a realism discourse is applause for the poet. It is easy enough to spot the grime on the wall but Terver expresses strong views about himself and the country in a critical period in Nigerian history and the Nigerian present.

*Halcyon days were my thoughts
But the heights are now devolved*

The dividend of an upright democracy constitutes perhaps the most restless hope of his race, but like the illustrious Frantz Fanon rightly believed, "the artist who has decided to illustrate the truths of the nation turns paradoxically towards the past and away from actual events... the native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of the nation are in the first place its realities." In the course of dramatizing the condition of pain and nostalgia, the poet indicts the sadistic worldviews against the establishments of memory, which were "those days when patriarchs composed notes," days which are or were, of course, responsible for his erstwhile joys: "On her fifty-third, the country was stolid / With no music of culture / My hubris receded to salty waters." It is his first ritual that defines the very depth to which his nation has sunk, "wander aimlessly in the mire."

Two kinds of voices can be heard in this poem: the questioning and the aloof. It is questioning when the poet inquires into the legacy of compromised followership. It is aloof when he denounces the central leadership as absentminded, hypocritical and insensate. In both, there is a nervous passion partly because of a vigorous individual attachment to a political resolution as shown in "Is the world not in dire need of extremist?" and the stealth row about the "cactus-infected land."

*I hate to tell the tales of the end of the world
But until trees walk on naked limbs, I shall
Dream not of heysomeness.*

Spoken like someone who has witnessed the landscape of death and, yet, refuse to be soiled by submission, by acceptance of the status-quo; Terver aims not only at socio-political criticism but also at the imminent – a rhetoric, as a driver of that worry, to

determine what seems to be the lot of the constant deprivations of self and society. The poet's cross-questioning should not be seen as the rigidities of a mourner; rather it is a tactic through which he inspires other hidden questions vital to the future of his particular experience, and that of his generation.

The clause "till the swallows come home" is an embodiment of the finite doubt, the poet's positive disposition, displayed pessimistically. As privy to the realizations of the identity of the swallows are and where home is, it appears that some portions of the poem might have been inspired by conversations of the poet with comrades, some of whom he briefly addressed in scattered parts. "Dairo, the days are yellow," "Oladele / May you...Become associate professor of creative writing / Or African Studies...Ha! Viking? / Break free from tradition," "Was there ever a path, Oyin?" Some of it draws from the concerns of "a rumpled culture" and history being a "sonorous fable knitted by clichés". All of these are emblematic of the extinction of civilization to mass illiteracy, religious fanaticism, intellectual absolutism, a bungling educational system, irresolution of the government in power, and most troubling, the relegation of history, of 1966, "the harbingers' days". It's vivid like how the pensive Teju Cole writes in his memoir, *Every Day Is For The Thief*: why is history uncontested here? The consequence thereof is what Terver describes as "rehearsed folly."

However, before the poet brings the swallows to bear, he does not ignore the intense primacy of the "story [he] never wanted to tell." His clamour reveals home. His "clamour is: where is the nation?"

*The nation is not the white-faced chieftains...
Crafting another Bill of Mockery, not a putrid carcass...
The nation is the wailing dream whose ribs
Are poked by the ineptitude of pharaohs...
The nation is the [pedlars] who eke from
Hold-ups, the Nafisats who hawk kuka
At ten pms; The nation is the dream that
Has no wings while time flies;
The broken calabash and all that inspires
Wisdom, scattered and desecrated at the
Crossroads; the crawling casement that
Breeds educated puppets...*

The poet uses many poetic devices to his advantage, a fusion of self-dramatizing metaphors and interesting intertextuality which prove the presence of maturity and self-control. It is cathartic to find Bulawayo in "We might continue / To bear new names," Achebe in "We are mothers, refugee camps, and tiny graves," Yeats in "The falcon did hear the falconer," Soyinka in "Our day twisted like a shuttle in the / Crypt," and Langston in "a dream that / Has no wings while time flies."

While it is apparent, the acute pessimism of its message, the latter part of the poem draws attention to the earlier “Last sentinels of Salvations / Battered by weeds.” Activists? The brave literati? Our last resolve for national re-affirmation? Though it is the poet who says “The harmattan has cracked his soles for too long,” the poignant question hangs, obdurate in the head: when will the country be revived, or perchance, born again? And though we die in the attempt (as Soyinka testifies), will the patriot remain a subject of gamble to that promise?

As a note to its pathos, I say Terver’s work is grim and harsh and well-written.

[Carl Terver is a contemporary Nigerian poet and blogger. Read long poem here: Afapinen –Afapinen.wordpress.com/till-the-swallows-come-home]

G. Michael Vasey



With 12 books in print, G. Michael Vasey is an established author with notable contributions in poetry, metaphysics, and business. His first novel – *The Last Observer* (Roundfire 2013) – was published last year and is a thrilling cornucopia of mayhem, magic and murder. A Yorkshireman who has spent most of his adult life exiled to Texas and now the Czech republic, G. Michael Vasey writes for a living as a leading analyst in the commodity trading and risk management industry. On the side, he writes poems, blogs, books on metaphysics and novels all with a theme of life and the nature of reality. Much of his inspiration comes from meditation and music. He is currently working on *The Lord of the Elements* – the prequel to *The Last Observer* – and another on the concept of the Fool in magic.

Big Man

Clouds collide
 The Big Man
 Upstairs is moving again
 Packing his bags
 And stomping his feet
 Thunder rolls across the land
 Rain falls in sheer sheets
 Hanging heavy
 Pregnant steam
 Electricity in motion
 Sparking an arc
 Lightening issues forth

Flashing an angry stab
Vicious energetic force
The Big Man is angry
In fury, he spits
The elements
Fire and water
Sound and fury
Thundering flashes
Of Godlike rage
The fire of His anger
Soon subsides
Water falls more gently
Washes away the ire
And soon peace returns
Radiant warmth in azure sky
Free of all concerns

Summer is Here

Two days ago it was winter
Chilly winds blew in the freezing rain
Clouds hung leaden as if to fall
Clinging to the ground in deep disdain
Today, the Sun shines brightly and
The sky is a deep azure blue
Its now summer apparently
Flowers have sprung as if on cue
Mother nature is keeping us guessing
And with our heads she is a messing
Give the Goddess our silent blessing
Unpredictably wild is she
Constantly beguiling me
Reveling in her deity

Basit Olatunji



Basit A. Olatunji was born in Ifon-osun, Osun State, Nigeria. He is a poet, an editor and an essayist. His first poetry collection, *Thoughtful Reflections*, was published in 2011. He is also working on his first play. He currently teaches English at State Senior High School, Agege, Lagos. His poetry collection, *Rainbow in my Heart*, is forthcoming from Partridge Africa. He believes poetry is a freer of the mind and healer of the soul.

I Have Encountered in Books

I have encountered in books
the thoughts I desire and brook
like a silent night dream
the ideas course like a running stream

I have encountered in books
the wits of the written words

I have encountered in books
the words mightier than our worlds

I have read about so many things
things that have shaped my mind and beings
now I am a compendium
of things useful for a new millennium

I have learned to read and read
as I have read to learn and re-learn

Books have done to me more
than I have done to books

Duality

Death is the witty essence of birth
without the nocturnal breeze of the night,
what would cool off the heat of the burning day?
the flame of light is measurement
for the gloom of eerie darkness
as sunshine queries rains
for the season of downpours
Man is the breath of woman;
woman is the essence of man
bind him; you see a husband
woo her; you see a wife
Life is a pair
we live to die; we die to live
we live for others; others live for us
everything is the essence of something

Yuan Changming



Yuan Changming, 8-time Pushcart nominee and probably the world's most widely published poetry author who speaks Mandarin but writes English, grew up in a remote village, began to learn English at 19, and published several monographs before leaving China. With a PhD in English, Yuan co-edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver, and has poetry appearing in 919 literary publications across 30 countries, including *Best Canadian Poetry* (2009,12,14), *Best New Poems Online* and *Threepenny Review*.

[the meditation master takes a nap]

As he began to cross his legs on each other, his mind
 Was wandering nowhere between here and there; he
 Withdrew his vision from the skyline of the city
 To the cool fire burning in his belly; listening
 To the whistling and whishing of traffic, he heard only
 His own pulse. With the breeze came the odor of garlic
 But he held his breath, while leaving all his inner doors
 And windows ajar, letting his sensations travel freely
 He believed in Qi, which was circulating with his blood
 And his feeling and his thought. The light dimmed
 A baby crow was flapping by. He found himself totally
 Lost in a temple among puti trees within his yellowish
 Skin. That was all the harmony of yin and yang he knows.

[your cup]

Whatever contains h₂O, the origin of life, could
Be contained in it, always ready for another fill

Whether it is bubbling with heat, or
Chilled with sandy juice, it can hold

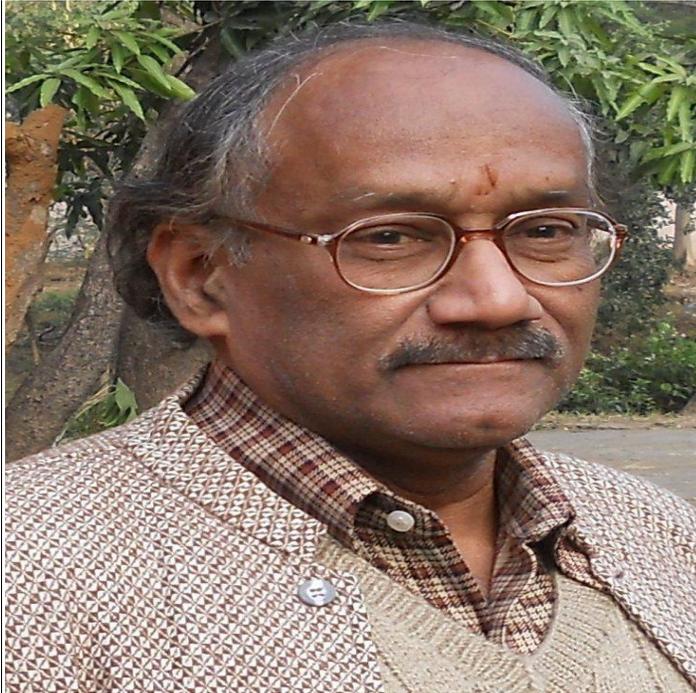
Any fluid with all the calmness that will push down
Impurities into the bottom as unwanted sediments

Most tolerant, and most receptive: green tea
Black coffee, red wine, fresh blood, sour milk

You are jealous of it, a container ready to hold even
The heaviest water, and would love to be more like it

In spirit, as you take it to your lips, closer to your heart
Like these words that are trying to contain your spirit

Ram Krishna Singh



Ram Krishna Singh, born, brought up and educated in Varanasi, India, is a university professor with active interest in poetry and English language teaching. He has authored more than 160 research articles, 170 book reviews and 39 books. Many of his poems have been translated into Italian, Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish, Greek, Crimean Tatar, German, Portuguese, Bangla, Hindi, Punjabi etc. His latest collection, *I am No Jesus and Other Selected Poems*, Tanka and Haiku, recently appeared from Romania. Dr Singh is currently a Professor of English at a technical university in Dhanbad, India.
 URL: <<http://rksinghpoet.blogspot.in>>
 Email: <profkrksingh@gmail.com>

Quakes in Elements

She trusts her reading of my horoscope
and predicts a comfortable future

even as I know my toothache
now means the fall of my teeth
and anal bleeding means sure surgery

my dying libido is as uncomfortable
as the dream of humans sleeping on the ceiling:

their flattened naked back amuses me
who knows who'll fall first?

before I wake up I try to gauge the selvage
of restless lines, moon, saturn and venus
conspiring new challenges
for the quakes in my elements

it's already May-end
and the bouts of bronchial allergy

tell of the cycle of incarceration:
her moving lips are no soporific

Nude Delight

The coiled divine
renews eternity
in the body's cells
fed on sensuous sweetness
and moment's littleness

for years fleshly reign
seemed spirit's radiance
in the deep pit
now suddenly sparks the itch
for heaven's nude delight

Gail Wolper



Gail Wolper is an American who lives in Miami. She has been published in dozens of anthologies and magazines, with her new book in waiting. A world traveler, she has learned as much from every country visited as she ever did in University.

Searching for Answers in Brazil

the sound of waves matches wind
 the sound of seal reminds me of eagles collided
 how does the blind man know where he is?
 how does he smell when the cupcakes are done?
 i feel like a walk

today i got lost in the pouring rain
 while you were locked inside a random building
 watching the world cup, watching one man
 make one of those kicks where you
 see him take over the world

relaxing in the pool on a gorgeous day
 the woman who approached me was demented
 and she talked and she talked and i couldn't escape
 looking for the failure in the fireworks

In Brazil the dancing men are definitely the sons of Yorubamen
 swirling over and under each other's legs uninjured

there is reversal in this but i don't know where
no harm done to any and that's what matters

along the river one hears steel guitar
and flamenco plus traditional drums
he wants to recreate Roosevelt's journey
ignoring of the danger of malaria even today
Henry Ford tried to create utopia here
no wonder country people look frightened of the plane
the fish and fruit are endless-whole thing a mystery
my question would be why on earth
would anyone ever want to change it

"We can see, said the scientist, that
the needs of all living creatures,
have been provided for in space and time."
not quite sure if what he said made any
sense, but it sounded good and indeed
everyone accepted it without question

as indeed we seem to accept without question
a need to throw away hundreds of thousands;
of people, the families out of buildings in order
to provide us with a better soccer field

The Prince Says I Write It All In Moments

and he is correct
as i only see in moments
it was always difficult to write the ending
there are so many possibilities
but the sections of say five minutes
now in that i can form a masterpiece
am not able to understand how
to write all those infernal
endings nor why

Ken Trimble



Ken Trimble is a 60 year old poet living in the bush in South Eastern Australia. He is a story teller poet, not an academic. His work has been previously published by *Ijagun Poetry Journal* and elsewhere across the world. Sometimes he veers off course, lived in rooming houses and at one time involved with a Benedictine Community. Sometimes called a mystic and sometimes wild boy, he is influenced by the Beats and Thomas Merton {monk}. His work is published by www.littlefoxpublishing.com. He loves jazz, Bob Dylan and red wine....

Agape

Sweet Agape came; I standing on a rise,
 On my first new day of my 36th year,
 Visions from GOD, spirit of the Source,
 Without and within, no hell or heaven,
 The glass I held fell shattering to infinitudes
 Of GODS, gracious
 Bliss, lover of compassion without end
 When time is not, came in my dark, dark

Night to awaken the dead song inside
 My lost abandoned Estate, my Soul
 Bird awake to my industrial heartland,
 For a moment, I realised what the mystics
 Wrote, that Time is a construct of Fear,
 And Fear is a construct of Thought,
 And in the gap between lies eternity's
 Gaze, allowed by the death of mind,
 And all around was endless light,
 I had become a fountain of water,
 My skull an exploding Cosmos,
 My body no longer separate,
 Now one part of another part,
 Interdependent, each crying
 Out in joy,
 My Soul a choir of every
 Living thing free from its chains,
 There was no you or other
 Everything rang with Thou,
 Church bells of bliss, I stood
 On the shore of endless time
 And at its core Love in its purest
 Form, unconditional, without
 Even a glimmer of guilt,
 Sinless and naked in the garden,
 I became a whisper of God.

Speak

(for Reza Berati)

*Being born moon
 Unable to see shadow
 I stood at the gates
 Of opposites unaware
 Of what was to follow –*

Beginning I
 Beginning thought
 Beginning action
 Beginning love
 Beginning seed
 Beginning birth

I am no name

I am blood
 I am appendages
 I am orifices
 I am child

I'm a vision of my father man
 I'm a Christ on the cross man
 I'm a Devil incarnate man
 I'm a dangerous out of control man

I'm the Buddha of the Bodhi tree man
 I'm a Bashō of narrow roads man
 I'm a vindictive killer man
 I'm a mean-assed manipulator man
 I'm the predator watch out for your daughter man
 I'm a crazy Sun of a bitch man

The one who dies daily
 Who cries nightly
 The one who sleeps
 Lightly
 A Sicilian Mafiosi
 Man

Wild animal
 Chasing full moons
 Howling
 Rabid dog man

I'm the fruit of jazz man
 I'm a sex and rock n roll man
 I'm a Muddy Waters
 Hoochie Coochie
 MAN

I'm a Cuban Revolution
 I'm Trotsky getting blown
 By Frida
 I'm the ice-pick from hell
 MAN

I'm the psalm 139

*Make sure that I am not on my way
 To ruin, and guide me on the road
 To eternity*

I'm a poem for my
FATHER

I am tears for my
MOTHER

I'm a babbling brook man

I'm the bitter and twisted
A sad and lonely man

I am Orpheus
And his tree
I am Orpheus
Dismembered
I am Orpheus
Re-invented

I'm a babbling brook man

Constantly changing
A changeling
A troll of my nightmare
An alien seeking

I'm a child lost man
I'm the never was a boy man
I'm a sweet gone of youth man
I'm a missing my boat man
I'm the savage beast
Of time man

Truths not realised
Stories not told
A burning my bridges man

I am my mother's child
Her sweet do nothing wrong
Boy/man

I'm a missile in Kansas
I'm a soldier facing east
A Hiroshima denotation
I'm a Peacemaker
A Gandhi faker

See...

I'm a cruel bastard man
I'm a rip the wings of flies man
I'm the enjoyer of someone

Else's pain

MAN

Compassionately
Disfigured

I'm a babbling brook man

Down, down, down
I go

A lost in paradise

MAN

A country untamed
A sea in tempest
A sky set in blood
An earth crying in travail

Footprints breathe
Its emphysema soul
Trees whimper sorry
Crows blacken this land

90% of burned flesh
He's only a boat-person
A statistic with barely
A name –

Sew your goddamned lips
Says the Judge
The razor wire
Speaks a multitude
Of voices

Afghan, Irani, Sri
Lankan, Syrian

A few drops of water
On our desert land

Lampedusa doesn't sound

So bad compared to

Our Christ Island

Perhaps we always need
War to feel compassion
Not this Peace of
Suicides

That feeds our inert souls
As life eats life

This necklace of words
Strangles my soul
For I am uttering

Language like nebulae
Across an ocean of space
Unable to define who

This I SPEAK –

For this I cry:

Drunken man
Decadent man
Violent man
Shadow man
Shallow man
Scared man
Angry man
Ant man
Monk man
Atheist man

Four winds man
Seven seas man
Cosmos being born man
Cosmos no longer man

Because I have been a light in a body's soul
Because I have been a painter's black square
Because I have been a stain on the face of history
Because I have been an opera of birds
On the road to Assisi

I speak –

Rage against the shadow of our racist heart
Rage against the ghost of this country's democracy
Rage against the false prophets of our fourth estate
Rage against the corporation's greed of the machine
Rage against our continual schizophrenic night
Rage against the unexplained death
Of Reza Berati

Rage, Rage, Rage

Australia

Fuck this SILENT land!

Abioye James



Abioye James Femi is a poet. He is a native of Isanlu-Isin, Kwara State, Nigeria. He attended Government Secondary School, Omu-Aran, Kwara State. He is currently a 300-level student of English language at Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria, where he develops his creative ability.

Transformation

He has done it
 He is doing it
 If we don't stop him
 He will do more of it

He began with fuel increase
 Citizens are killed daily like chicken
 If we don't stop him
 He will do more of it

When he had no shoe
 Our votes gave him shoes
 If we don't stop him
 He shall turn our schools to zoos
 The nation has seen unrest
 Children are kept in the forest
 Yes, he claims to be dearest
 He reduces the population by killing our brethren

Boko Haram becomes the ruling party
 Yet the Zuma-Man cries "transformation!"
 Tell him to stop doing it
 Lest we all die cheap, explosive death!

Haram

When I held her hand
She said, "Haram! Don't touch"
When I held her shoulder
She shrugged and screamed, "Haram!"
When I held her feet
She knocked my head and ran away
But in the night after the rain
She went hooded to Saka
Then I followed to peep
I was there when the drama began
I was there when he removed the hood
I thought she would shout "Haram!"
Behold, she held her peace
When he held her waist
She pretended not to know
And lastly when the dance began
I helped her shout...Haram!
Haram! Haram!! Haram!!!

Sreyash Sarkar



Sreyash Sarkar is a poet, a qualified painter, a practising Hindustani Classical musician, and an aspiring electrical engineer. Educated in Kolkata and Bangalore, he has been a student correspondent at *The Statesman*, Kolkata, from his school, South Point. In 2012, in an international poetry competition organized in memory of Yeats, his poem was shortlisted among 40 other poets from all over the world. His interview was published in the *The Arty Legume*, where he was asked to speak on cubism, existentialism in art and intrusion in painting. He has been extensively featured in *The Gooseberry Bushes*, *Muses*, *The Literary Jewels*, *Tagore for us*, *The Country Cake-Stall*, *The Orange Orchard*, etc. Besides, being a freelance writer for several magazines, he is the editor-in-chief of *Kalomer Kalomishak*, a bilingual magazine, which he founded in 2013.

The Optical Symphony

I heard the light in all its jubilation:
 The tunes, like recuerdos of a passing feast,
 The notes, that lingered in the stairs
 Encrusted in uncouth undulation,
 Lay words deceived and afflicted.
 Rhapsodic moments crossed woods
 Left their ethereal motion
 Under shadowed trees,
 Bitten words afloat in the air
 Disappeared in the land of magpies;
 And cotton trees made their roots
 Through untrodden paths.
 My audibility looked upon in solitude –
 An illuminated world waited in distress
 An extracted existence amidst grandiosity.
 An incised tongue, I shall affix
 Under the stairs,
 Away from the sun,

To arouse extinct desires
 To arouse forgotten words
 To arouse a deluge...
 With fingers on the flute,
 The cowherd shall play on,
 And I shall see how...
 Avian words can etherize trees...

The Cage

It was the day that
 The bird flew away to a horizon
 Unknown, beyond reach
 Incapable of childish marriages and fluid births,
 Setting out a cry, distinct in its screech, the retaining tone
 It scratched the earth, until colourless blood oozed out of it
 Drop, by drop, and then a flood...

I did not remember anything
 I was still taking the fragrance of the smothered rice bowl
 Empty of its contents
 And stripped of its identity
 But I did ask, and further asked myself in the dark,
 About the shiver down my spine

The shiver had turned into a
 Stirring
 Something was being churned in the granary
 A small grain, a jinx
 Wafted about in the sick air

I did not remember anything
 I was still taking the fragrance
 Of the smothered rice, bowl
 Empty of its contents
 Stripped of its identity

Something was being cooked
 Inside me
 Persistently in frivolous extents
 That ensnared my instincts
 Cooked and cooked
 Till scarlet,
 Fresh from my blood

Enyinda Okey



Enyinda Nathaniel Okey is an engineer, poet, management consultant, and educator. He attended institutions in India, Italy, UK, France, and Switzerland, including Ball State University, USA, and the University of New Brunswick, Canada. He spends much of his time now on solar energy research, installations, and training. He is presently writing a book on solar energy. He manages his firm of Brianok Engineering Nigeria Limited which focuses on solar energy, technical training, seminars and workshops. He spends his spare time writing poems. He has over 1000 unpublished poems. He can be reached at <enyindaoykey@gmail.com>

Symbiosis Sustains Friendship

Friends

Two people

May be more

Maybe same sex

Maybe opposite sexes

Friends all the same!

Symbiosis

Each contributes

Maybe by way of laughter

Maybe by way of quality time

Maybe by way of quality advice

Maybe by way of encouragement

Something must be in existence

Something the other gains from

Something so desirable about the other

We can't be friends

At least not sustainable friends:

If there's nothing I do for you

If there's nothing you do for me
 If my presence is not desirable
 If your presence is not desirable
 There must be something unique
 So unique the friend supplies it
 That sustains the bond!

Friendship:
 It's about symbiosis
 Some part of me that you want
 Some part of you that I want
 What are friends for!

Reasons I cannot Boast

To boast is to blow the trumpet
 Blowing one's own trumpet
 Pointing out to others about one
 Concerning achievements
 Concerning attainments...

I am but an ordinary man
 There are billions of other men
 Whatever my height is
 There are people taller or shorter
 Whatever my frame is
 There are people weaker or stronger
 What reason is there for me to boast?

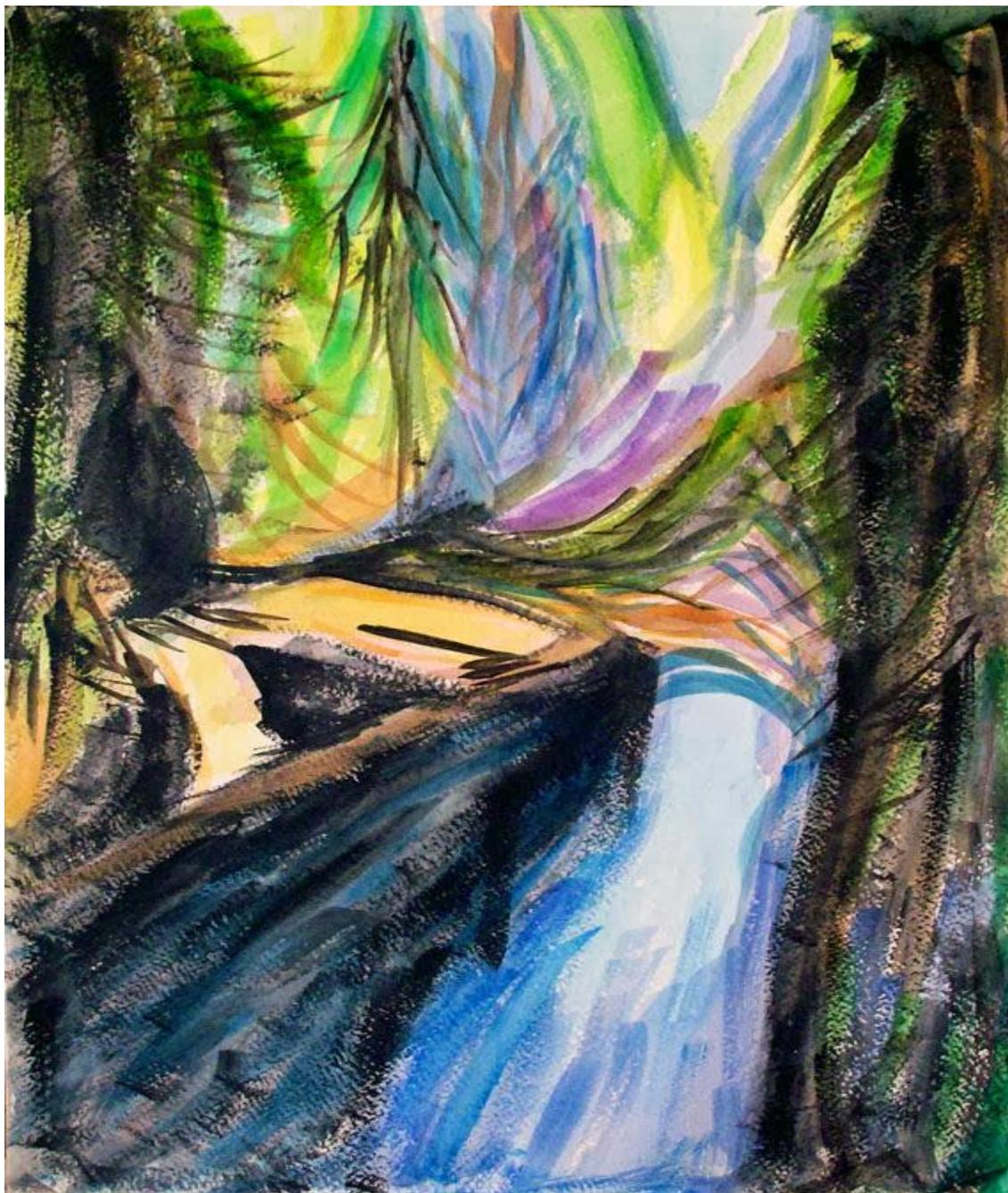
Of course I went to various schools
 Many others have gone to such schools
 Some went before or after I had gone
 Human beings were my professors
 Whatever grades I earned at schools
 Some had scored much higher or lower
 What reason is there for me to boast?

I am married with children
 Billions of men are married with children
 I run my family according to my ability
 Every other husband and father does theirs
 Looking at each of these qualities
 I find nothing special about me as a person
 What reason is there for me to boast?

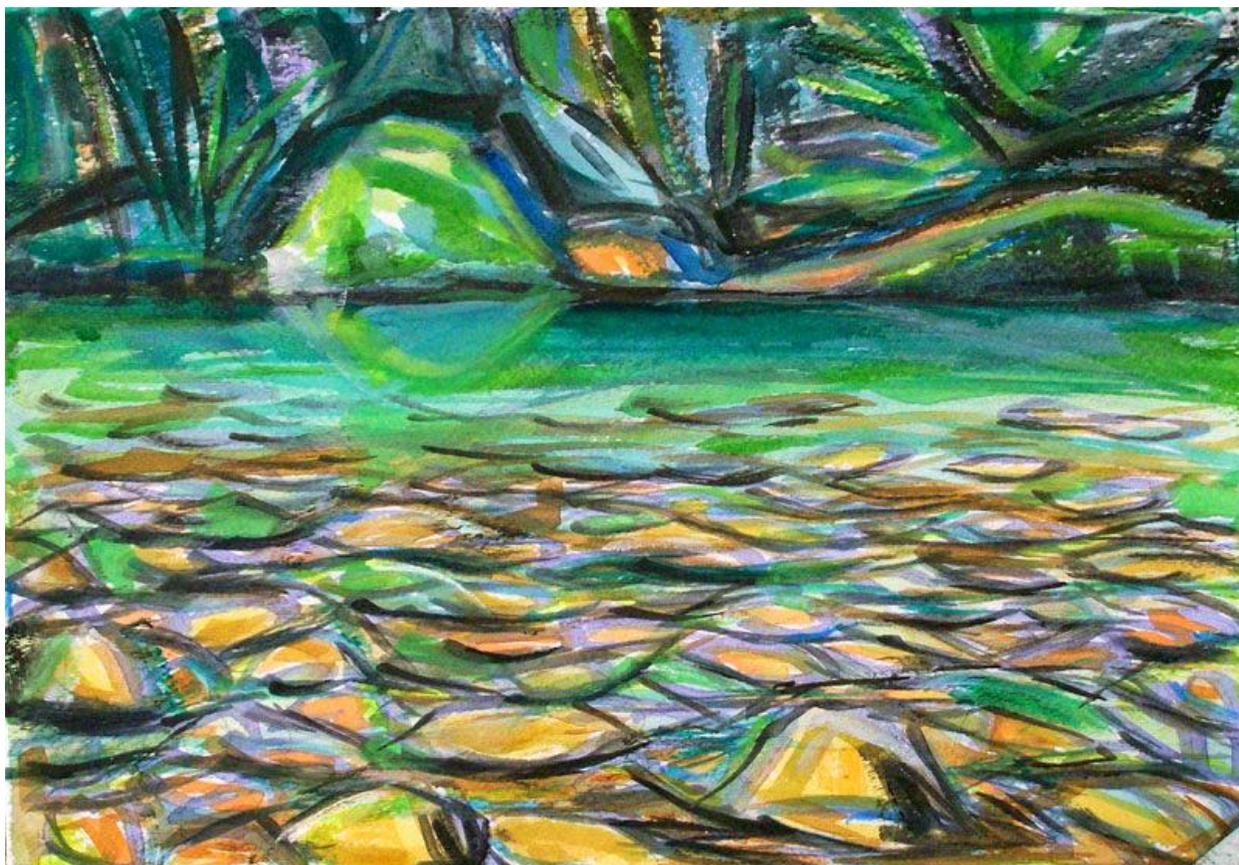
I have seen the vagaries of life
Millions of people went through same
That is hardly any reason to boast of

Oh, now I remember why I boast
I discovered the strength of why I am
I discovered the latent energy behind me
Sure, I can now shout a topmost halleluiah!
Jesus is the one in whom I boast!

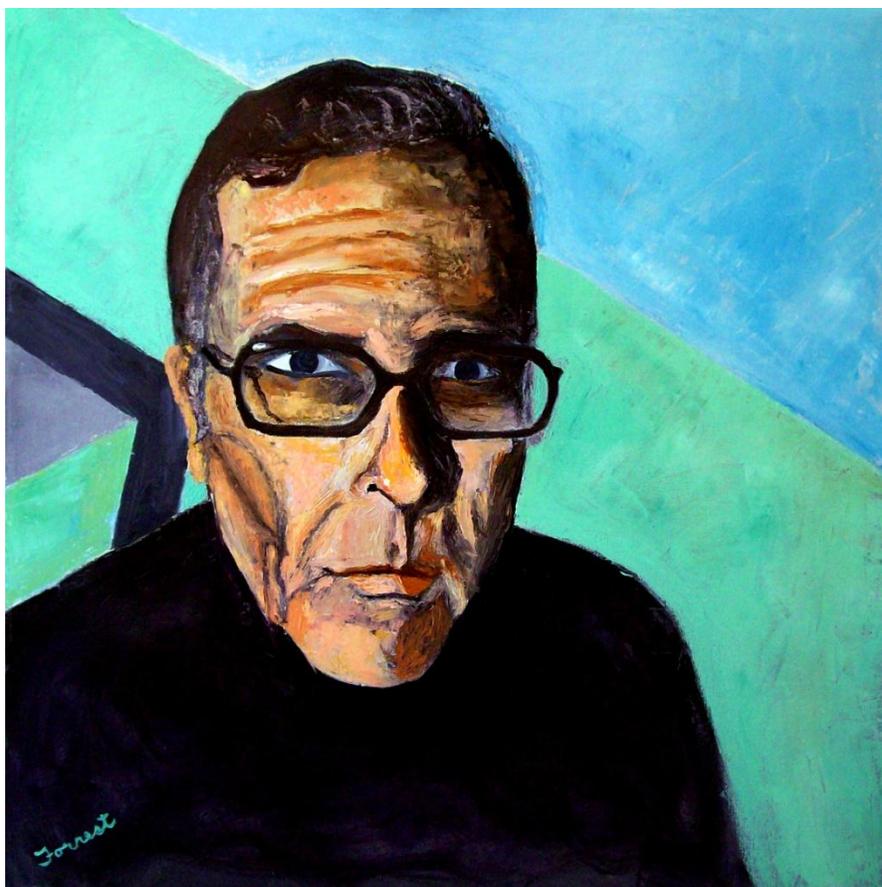
The Capilano River



Artist: Allen Forrest
Year: 2012
Title: The Capilano Canyon River 6
Medium: Watercolor
Size: 17 x 12



Artist: Allen Forrest
Year: 2012
Title: The Capilano Canyon River 8
Medium: Watercolor
Size: 15 x 11



Artist Bio

Born in Canada and bred in the U.S., Allen Forrest works in many mediums: oil painting, computer graphics, theater, digital music, film, and video. Allen studied acting at Columbia Pictures in Los Angeles, digital media in art and design at Bellevue College, receiving degrees in Web Multimedia Authoring and Digital Video Production. Forrest has created cover art and illustrations for literary publications: *New Plains Review*, *Pilgrimage Press*, *The MacGuffin*, *Blotterature*, *Gargoyle Magazine*. His paintings have been commissioned and are on display in the Bellevue College Foundation's permanent art collection. Forrest's expressive drawing and painting style is a mix of avant-garde expressionism and post-Impressionist elements reminiscent of van Gogh creating emotion on canvas.

Artist Statement

Painting is a cross between a crap shoot, finding your way out of the woods, and performing a magic act. Each time I begin to paint I feel like I am walking a tightrope –sometimes scary, sometimes exciting, sometimes very quiet, and always, always surprising; go. Doing art makes me lose all sense of time and place and go inside one long moment of creating. Whenever I feel a painting in my gut, I know this is why I paint. The colors are the messages; I feel them before my mind has a chance to get involved. Color is the most agile and dynamic medium to create joy. And if you can find joy in your art, then you've found something worth holding on to.

Website: <<http://allen-forrest.fineartamerica.com/>>

Goodness Olanrewaju



Goodness Lanre Ayoola (b. 1989) hails from Osun State, Nigeria and lives in Abeokuta, Ogun State. He is a teacher of English language. He had an NCE in English and Yoruba languages from the Federal College of Education in Osiele, Abeokuta, in 2009 and currently in his final year of his degree programme in English Education at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. His poems are published and reviewed on poetry sites. He loves to work with great minds.

Adjectives

Angry, a passion hot and burning
Beautiful, always a damsel yearning

Callous, the ungodly wicked act
Doting, such a kind of love can so much impart

Energetic, big and strong pocket Hercules
Foolish, an unwise approach to my exercises

Greedy, synonymous to a glutton
Hot temper, a destroyer of virtues achieved

Impetuous, the risk of irrationality
Joyous, delighted soul's nationality

Kind, rewarding act of helping
Loving, found a synonym for doting

Meek, angelic attribute non-devilish
New, the same for the word 'novel'

Ossified, father's rules, rigid and fixed
Peaceful, the calm feeling when kissed

Queer, strange like the itch from a peppermint balm
Reliable, God's attribute in every Psalm

Soft, the touch of a mother
Tedious, boring, pants for another

United, one mind, a great entry
Vociferous, my sister's repeated loud complaints to a tree

Willing, not compelled like the call of saints
Xenophobic, the fear of strangers' pants

Youthful, prepared to take on life's dangers
Zealous, the weapon of the power rangers

So much fun learning adjectives!
...now I *know* how we describe one another

Anthony Ward

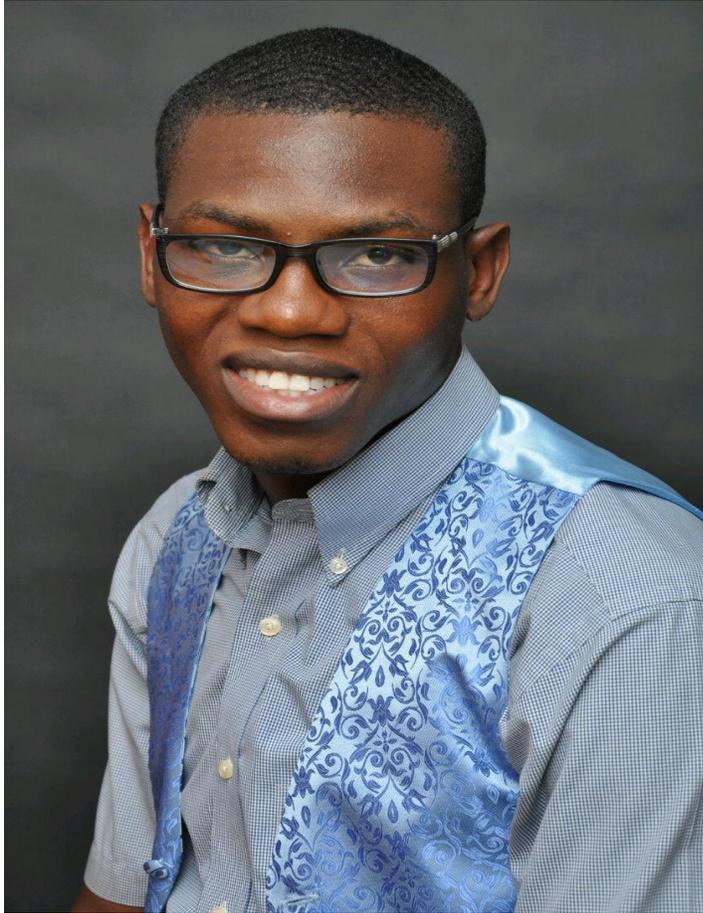


Anthony Ward tends to fidget with his thoughts in the hope of laying them to rest. He has managed to lay them in a number of literary magazines including *The Faircloth Review*, *Ijagun Poetry Journal*, *Shot Glass Journal*, *Turbulence*, *The Autumn Sound Review*, *Torrid Literature Journal* and *Crack the Spine*, amongst others.

Tied up

People punctuate my free flow,
 Interrupt me,
 Make me stammer instead of strut,
 Having to resort to exclamations
 While they accentuate my path
 Until I can no longer speak,
 And I'm dragging my thoughts
 All laced up in myself –
 Tied up in *nots*.
 Afraid of being loose
 In case they use me as a skipping rope
 To work out
 I'm ailing –
 While they make themselves fit.

Israel Odun



Famoroti Odunayo Israel is a native of Ikere Ekiti in Ekiti State, Nigeria. He graduated from the College of Education, Demonstration Secondary School, Ikere Ekiti. He bagged his Bachelor of Arts in English and Literary Studies from Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. Israel is an educationist. He is currently pursuing a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education at the National Teachers' Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria. He is a published poet and a tutor of English Language and Literature. He currently works as an Assistant Tutor of English and Literature at the College of Education, Demonstration Secondary School, Ikere Ekiti.

Africanesse Not Darknesse

I

Shut your white mouth please!
 Don't insult my colour
 Or God may hear this

You say:
 I crossed seven seas to lighten the dark coast
 Purifying their souls hitherto
 Dare me; if you boast further
 God may hear this

Or my ancestors may visit you in your dreams
 Or Africans may fight a salient war of collars

Dare me; if you boast further
God may hear this

I inherited the *Orisa* from my father's father
My mother's mother made my pot of charms
Without sentiment of civility
My black pottage was happy

God may hear this; dare me

You brought confusion like green grass snake
Yet, you boast your paths on my coast

God may hear this; dare me

More of your dresses drove my sisters naked
More of your convicts saw my brothers' scrotums below their buttocks

Believe me; God may hear this

II

Africans, my siblings
Not your faults

Africans, my siblings
Blame the white *esu*

Africans, my siblings
Don't forget, we used to be Africans
Before the white *esu* came like a dove
You knew what she did –
Slept with our fathers
Made our mothers second-class
Bore children like sea-sand

Africans, my siblings
Not your faults

Africans, my siblings
We are black not dark
It's time we re-view the revealed
The clarion songs
The song of pride, of dignity
The song – Our EMBLEM

We are Africa
Where darkness runs errands
To light and peace
We are Africa
Where seasons change their garments
With comfort sigh
We are Africans
Leveraged with pure souls
Clothed on a black hue

Wilson Hill



E Wilson Hill is an artist living in New York City with his wife, Helen. He has always been fascinated with word structure from Kabala to etymology and then placing words together to form sound, colour, rhythm and content. Poetry remains his central focus of this interest.

44

Born
 But hell
 My father decides I'm not his
 Since I'm not here yet
 Having not even been conceived
 I can only go by hear say
 My father screwed my mother on leave no doubt
 Then shortly thereafter or before
 Contracted
 A skin disease that is treated by radiation making him sterile for ten years
 Well him, and his Army buddies, were convinced I could not be his
 So came the rage
 At my mother
 Then me
 The fights were terrible
 I, one, two, three, and four
 Am made to feel insecure
 To say the least
 For many years I felt worthless
 But look this could be a good thing
 For feeling imperfect I

Strove for perfection
To utilize buried pain
The irritating sand that makes the pearl
Now
I am hard and round
I am smooth as silk
I have become that pearl
Of great price
You can laugh at my past follies
And there have been many
I could have grabbed the reins of many an advantage
However
What you hold, holds you
I let it all go
And held fast
To
Nothing

Binas Non Sunt = 418

Tairu Abiodun



Tairu Abiodun Olukayode is a seasoned poet. He is fascinated with the composition of political satire. He is currently a student of English at the Department of English and Literary Studies, Tai Solarin University Of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu Ode.

Lest the neonates are famished

Oh Mother!
 You birth these gluttonous grafters
 Who through their avarice
 Suck dry your milk

In no time
 You'll retire
 With your flappy breast
 When you are tired
 Having nothing to feed
 The neonates with

Who will nourish you
 That your breast may be full
 And round as it were
 Lest the neonates are famished

Ambrose Thompson



Ambrose Thompson was born on Vancouver Island in Canada, but spent the majority of his youth in the U.S.A. The stark variance between his first years and later ones gave him an early education in how differences of experience affect perspective and expectations. Books more than anything became a refuge for him to see farther than daily life allowed and drew him to the profession of librarianship. He is now an academic librarian trying to foster a love of reading and learning for people of all ages and past life choices.

Wither

greying out
 awash and fading
 eye lashes
 wither
 pink smeared cement
 under foot
 cauterizing
 tides of stemming fancy
 black hole empty

Sasha Alahm



Sasha Alahm, born 1994, is from New Delhi. He is pursuing a degree in English. He has been writing for quite some time now. He likes to keep his work as honest as possible and his sole motive is to make his readers understand and feel what he attempts and intends to express through his piece of work. He sees poetry as an art best understood with a naked mind, so he always aims at maintaining the transparency that could reflect the aimed scenario. His interests include reading, writing, music, sports, and politics.

I'm a Prostitute

In actions I believe
 though it's a forceful belief
 In love, I go mute
 'cause I'm a prostitute

Parents left when I was twelve
 not a penny in our shelve
 Family lent some hands
 But only to remove my pants

Resided all alone in an old hut
 Had been raped several times, no slut
 Then reality of life, harsh and naked
 Profession by mind, became a part of racket

I was in a dilemma
 Was pleading for death
 'cause an escape by heart

Wish I'd skipped a breath

Not all young beauties
suffer the same
If they were in my place
Hell would be no name

I wish I were never born
Or just wouldn't have grown
I wish I had known
My life would turn this way

He has showered enough love
Now, don't need any gratitude
I've acknowledged the fact
That I'm a Prostitute

Under his grace, how could one be disgrace?
Heartless creatures or Satan's children?
I often doubt the human race!

Does he exist or just a name?
'cause only crimes lead to fame

Had he been a being
He would have felt the pain
I may do infinite good deeds
But I'll have nothing ever to gain

Arindam Banerjee



Arindam Banerjee is currently pursuing his M.A in Linguistics from the University of Calcutta. He is passionate about music and poetry. His poems and micro fictions have appeared in *The Poetic Bliss*, *Full of Crow*, *Taj Mahal Reviews*, *Spark*, *Blink Ink*, *The Traveling Poet*, *Mountain Parable*, *Galaxy International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, *Treehouse*, and elsewhere. He writes for the bugs keep biting him from within. Here you can find his music: <<http://www.reverbnation.com/arindambanerjee>>

Lost in time

Now his foes
yawn throughout the day
and their table
craves for a flower vase and a drop box.

They have killed the unicorn!
But their hands are stainless but their
eyes are daisy.

Grace Orebiyi



Orebiyi Grace is an aspiring writer and poet. She hails from Iyewa region of Ogun State, Nigeria. She is currently a 300-level student of English Language at Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria.

I am only I

You are Attired and Arrayed and Assured in your conspicuous excellence,
And I am only I

Think, imagine, picture yourself as a tree of great shade
See in your mind its immensity
Its mighty boughs and the birds among them.
The lush foliage
The sunlight on it
The coolness it casts;
Upon a neighbourhood
Upon a house
Upon a family
Upon the girl and boy who were;
My brother and myself
I am only I

What is the difference between
Our "inferior" then
And your superior now

Is it in writing?

In our writing, images spoke
Seasons sang or wept
They were many
They were necessary
Rivers, the footpath to it
The tree ACACIA its stature
Camwood, the beauty it gives
The rain-forests, its lush green!

I am only I!
We are who we are!!
We are AFRICA!!!

Jay Duret



Jay Duret is a San Francisco based writer and illustrator who blogs at www.jayduret.com. More than two dozen of Jay's stories and other pieces have been published or are forthcoming in online and print journals, including *Narrative Magazine*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *Gargoyle*, and *December Magazine*. Second Wind Publishing will publish Jay's first novel, *Nine Digits*, this year.

Holding Almost

As one gets older
 Getting older seems to change.
 Time no longer passes
 The way a car passes,
 Getting smaller in the distance,
 Concentrating,
 Consolidating; the thing
 That passed a moment ago
 And the spot that dots the road's end
 And disappears.

Time fades.

Getting older is a hopeless charge -
 Holding the door
 Against the flow
 Of waters arising against the house
 With lock not set
 Or once set and now broken
 And no one to call
 For help
 And no one to wait for
 Alone with the rising waters
 And the waning strength

Every moment
A moment lost
And the door,
Cracked by the weight,
Every leaking drop a wedge
Driven into the yaw
By the beating rain
The falling sky.

Beyond the pale of the face
That strains against the rising waters
That holds
Almost holds
Almost
Against the tide
And the time that is the worst of it.
Holding almost against the waters,
Marking time until
The time that was
Is gone
And every dripping instant
Is.

Rushing waters bear
Away resistance.

New Faces, New Voices, and New Tradition...