



Yearnings

Collected Poetry
By Ayo Gutierrez

Editor: Bryan Oliphint
Cover and Layout Artist: Emily St. Marie
Artwork: Anab Roa

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To my family, for always supporting and understanding me. With all the books ever written, there isn't a single book that can prepare you for my eccentricity.

I'd like to thank my varied and mixed group of online friends: brilliant, cantankerous, snarky, gnarly, funny, scopophobic, BOMBastic, opinionated, intuitive, spiritual, hysterical, homicidal, pyromaniacal, brainiacical, scriptical, WEIRD. (To my friends: Oh well, I'll let each of you decide which one's which.)

To my mentors and tormentors alike, thank you for bringing out the best in me.

To my Heavenly Father from whom all blessings and wisdom flow.

Reviews

Prose is the elegant recording of words to create stories that convey setting, characters, plot and climax. Poetry, especially in the case of **Yearnings**, is the translation of emotion into words. This collection is unyielding in its examination of the emotions in people, often from the perspective of modern women. Ayo Gutierrez is an expert of poetic irony, meaning we are able to read about things that are seldom spoken. Her subjects range from religion to child birth to inter- and extra-personal relationships. Gutierrez's attention to detail in her writings enables us, the readers, to develop a greater understanding of the issues she captures.

As she writes in one piece entitled Secret Lover:

*"I embrace tight these ominous shadows and willingly
I disappear with them at sunrise."*

She brings us into the midst of a subject and wraps our minds in the comfort of her words, allowing us to steep in her perspective, disappearing with our evolution. Gutierrez does not offer up traditional formats in her poetry. You will not find sonnets nor iambic pentameter; rather, you will find heightened, sometimes disjointed, free-form poetry that bites and caresses. Instead of works about the beauty of rainbows, you will read about the intense, complex molecules inside that rainbow.

You will read about power, not about pretty.

Gutierrez and her fellow contributors have created something special.

Josh Jones
Introvert Press

Powerful, deeply moving, and surprising, this collection rises to that magical state between allegorical and rooted-to-everyday--beautiful.

M.T. Finnberg
Author of Wing Walker (The Swooning Moon Saga)

Ayo Gutierrez delivers an exceptional poetic journey in this work, for her readers to partake. Using gorgeous poetic diction, Ayo's writing significantly, meaningfully appeals to all senses -- triggering great thought, emotions, and opportunity to ponder issues, conflicts, beauty, the greater good.

She employs a wide range of classical and modern styles, to satisfy diverse tastes of the most discriminating reader. With an expanse of topics, themes, and scenarios, Ayo uses her pen as deftly as photographers use their lenses: Ayo crops and magnifies so inherent details are far from overlooked. Yet, she stands at enough distance to zoom out, blur, crystallize what she hopes we find in the "big picture" of her literary design. And as Ayo does all this, she remains brave, fearless, undaunted while addressing ideas and topics some others may choose to skip, overlook, disregard.

Ayo delivers on her promise to bring her readers a "yearning" for more pages, more poetry, more of her gift to share the world in ways we need to, should, must consider freshly, differently, than before. For Everyman to read, Ayo's work is far from ordinary, sparking desire to explore the everyday without sing-songy, tedious, or intangible literature. Prepare to immerse, sink into her words, and find yourself in a place you've found only by power of her gift to take you there with her ink.

Dr. Maribeth Parot Juraska

Ayo Gutierrez delivers on her promise of fantastic, yet accessible poetry. She deftly combines classical elements all poetry readers will instantly recognize with the modern concerns nearly everyone can identify with. She is unafraid to explore the boundaries—to push her readers into the challenging, and often, uncomfortable topics we don't admit to wanting to discuss, yet will do just that—in the still and quiet recesses of darkened rooms. Ayo takes her readers on that sometimes uncomfortable journey of self- discovery and invites her readers to explore a deeper perspective on common, everyday life.

Eric Keizer **Author of Ambrosia & Vignettes**

This is powerful stuff, you need to read it! From the start, this collection seized me. Taken individually, each poem pulled at a different heart string. Sometimes bringing a subtle melancholy, others a sudden wrench of emotion.

Taken as a whole, this collection conjures yearning in every sense of the word. Yearning for what we cannot have, yearning for a return to innocence, yearning to be free if only from ourselves.

Not many books--poetry or otherwise--have moved me like this collection. Provocative, at times sensual and with deft sensitivity, 'Yearnings' will remind you why Poetry is essential to us as human beings. Ayo Gutierrez is one to watch, a poet with insight like few others.

Luke E.T. Hindmarsh
Author of Mercury's Son

The topics Ayo addresses in this piece are raw, real, and powerful. I found myself smirking several times throughout the read as I stumbled upon lines where she rips the gloves off to get to the unabridged, candid truth. Her writing is a reality check, which is something this world can benefit from.

A strong motif of empowering women exists throughout the work, which resonates in today's sociopolitical climate. The raw approach I mentioned above as applied to this gives the reader insight into a perspective that they may not have considered before, which is where I think Ayo's writing succeeds best. All in all, this is a wonderful read which will get a lot of wheels turning upstairs.

Matt Shao
Author of Continuity series

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Foreword

As I read through Ayo Gutierrez's *Yearnings*, my mind was encouraged to leap into the future where there is a next book by the author. This may seem disrespectful of the words then in front of me. But, no, the effect is more of faith that there will be a next book ... and joy that there will be such a future book.

For the book now existing—and for which I have the pleasure of writing this Foreword—reveals qualities that will birth more poems that give delight as well as being written by a more practiced hand, the wisdom of a widened perspective. This is Ayo's first collection but in it are qualities that will serve future poems well.

We see the necessary willingness to be subversive. Subversiveness implies a willingness to go beyond convention, and poetry is often served well when the poet tries to avoid the usual and conventional. We see this trait in Ayo's poetry through a title like "Puke Reverence" that questions organized religion, as well as in a line like "I am the new God." The latter is not a matter of lacking humility so much as revealing the courage (to make such a statement) and ambition often necessary for creating effective art.

We see the political sensibility and analysis that serves poets well in "Fields Avenue" (re. the sexualizing of poverty) and "V Monologue" (re. the plight of working women). These poems—and others—reveal an admirable interest in the world beyond the personal, despite how the book opens with poems relating to romance.

We see an interest in experimental forms—for example, "(SCENT)iment: A Triptych" whose form freshens up the trope of disillusion—which is particularly important for weathering the long voyage of exploring poetry's many (textual and other) ways of unfolding. It's thus, not surprising, that the poems don't just rely on verse but travel in the realm of "visual poetry," for instance "Warriors."

We see elements that reveal a habit of reading much and widely—always critical for a writer. A poet who doesn't read is not likely to contribute much to the art.

Interestingly, the poet's discernible wide reading habit might contribute to the usage of non-contemporary English—words like “methought.” When I came across such words, I usually paused to consider the significance of such archaic words in a 21st century poem.

For me, reading “methought” evokes two (English) canonical authors: William Shakespeare (“Methoughts I was enamored of an ass” by Titiana in “A Midsummer's Night Dream”) and John Milton's Sonnet XXII (which begins with “Methought I Saw my Late Espoused Saint”). The effect of seeing these words in Ayo's poems is not necessarily positive for me (even as it may not be bothersome to others): for me, it reminds how English spread throughout the Philippines—through colonialism—and is not native such that its use can seem dissonant. Having said that, that “dissonance” also may be an effect created by me being steeped in U.S.-American English.

All of this—the surfacing of Old English in a Philippine English-language poem read by a U.S.-American reader—nonetheless increases my appetite for seeing the poet's future works where Ayo's English most assuredly would be even more hers.

We are pleased to see a sense of humor—evident in the title “My Brain Needs a Kitkat” (and guess what I just added to the day's shopping list). Humor is an underrated asset in poetry, and I'm pleased this poet has the wisdom to traffic in it.

We see self-awareness—and it is, frankly, appalling how so many artists, so many people—lack this trait which is such an asset in art-making. We see self-awareness through the poet's ability to write lines like (from “Miniscule”) “the burdens / I carry are / infinitesimally small / and irrelevant / in the grand scheme of things.”

When such self-awareness is combined with an interest in the larger world—and the latter is also exemplified by the presence of guest poets (particularly rare in a poet's first poetry collection but certainly praiseworthy evidence of *kapwa*)—we see in the poet a heart and eyes open to others and other elements, which is to say, the multiplicity of the universe beyond the limits of the personal story and ego.

Thus, it is impossible for me to enjoy this book without anticipating the next. I look forward to more—a *yearning* created by Ayo's poems which have been a pleasure to read.

—Eileen R. Tabios



Warring Storms



Pensive

I have emptied my bag of tricks,
listless
for I know not when I would be filled again
after

I exhaled an exuberant air
of my arrogance
a Devil's breath
which angered even the holiest angels
in the firmament

suffering the
immediate consequences—
it's the old familiar and peculiar
aching for obscurity
the floors, walls, ceilings...
stubbornly shrinking, confining me
in a space where I could possibly die
from my own stinking breath

perhaps I have been unwise
or I keep falling into compromise
I pull and push
my troubles speak volumes of
the schools of thoughts
and innumerable hosts
of beings
their voices too loud
they drown my muffled screams
holding me captive in my dreams

perhaps I have long fooled myself
into believing that I possess magic
so the one who bestowed upon my hands
the vilest gift
of a wand
must be punished...

perhaps I have strayed long enough
from the road
my old familiar road...

today
I will pour from my decanter
and stain a crystal glass into amber
allow a stranger in
someone who is and who isn't
but whose deep-set eyes reflect
all the sure and the sublime
perhaps he will tell me or not
magnify my flaws or suggest a course

still I prefer he be still
and get lost in the swirling sands of time
with me

Synapse

we rummage through
the cavernous pits in our minds
words, images, and melodies
abstract in nature
undeterred, unfettered
these hungry beasts
wanting to break free
will we demonstrate
an unspeakable gift
of depth and profundity
or just ramble
another bout
of emotional upheavals?
how do we sort
the assortments
and sift through the funnels
until we arrive at
the purest substance of
human and divine
expression?
notes to music
words to poetry
images to art
plain and simple things
and matters that make sense
must manifest
artists born of necessity
whose abilities are enhanced
by despair and chaos
finding symphony
amid warring storms
there's a thin line between
garbage and treasure
the space wherein our perceptions lie

some call our works
class and perfection
the rest thinks
we're attention whores

...our mind is one
intricate laboratory

Vacuum

It's that...

kiss you most desire
thrown in the air
floating
tantalizing

a coin spiraling down
the ocean
waiting for eternity
to reach the

.
. .
. . .

bottom

It's that split second
when lovers catch
each other's foreboding eyes
cold as ice
filling them with dread

between here and now

is where I am

somewhere.

...lost

unsure

the moment of nothingness

.... nowhere from both ends of spectrum...

the Pendulum

swings swings
swings swings
swings swings
swings swings
...
swings swings
swings swings
swings swings
swings swings

Rubicon

one by one, the lights popped,
and went out with a soft hum...
is it a mirage
or slivers of memories?

heavy footsteps
discordant guitar strums
flagons of wine emptied

lousy ministers to his troubled mind

obnoxious seeds of contempt
bunch of hemlocks strewn
along the furrows of his
mutilated dreams
seeing only precipices of darkness
and its ferocious monsters

he fought them
but they ate him
whole-

one by one, the lights popped,
and went out with a soft hum

only the heavens wept
and bore record of his travails

in the end,
a broken man
his damned soul
wandering these vast
oceans of desolation

a point of no return.

Ad Libitum

i.

forgive me
I didn't look away
I met your stare,
and in one full sway
I brought you to my lair

ii.

you returned my kiss
told you not to desist
just this once
give me the reins
my only chance
to turn the tides...

iii.

forgive me
I snatched your photograph
from my best friend's inbox
now my heart is in breathless throes,
with or without a sin

Phantasmagoria

I was running wild
towards an abandoned mall
under the scorching heat--
barefooted
beads of sweats on my forehead
unalloyed trepidation
accompanied my every stride

It wasn't a voice
playing tricks in my head
these slender legs of mine
racing against time
missed a few flights of stairs
to reach floor number eight
I needed to find that cubicle
yellow paint plastered all over

Past the dimmed corridors
sprung the thing I sought
a timid girl asked me to wait
on a tile marked X
that's where I stood

Every passing minute
wore me down
clawing, gnawing impatience
quickly disappeared
when my escorts arrived

They brought me before you
a phantom I couldn't figure
thrice you rolled on the floor
first a vampire
the next moment a monster
finally a fair damsel

"It's me."
your voice reassuring

"I know."

my chest heaving

We clasped our hands
interlocking our fingers
and
our souls danced

You invaded my dreams
unrelenting
hours later
I bolted to
my grand awakening

This time around
no more running away
I have all the reasons
to stay
glowing at my fingertips

The Intruders

I know their voices
Skulking about the labyrinth.
Convoluted lies
whispering the cursed death wish:
A better choice than anguish
They're ubiquitous.
Ravenous. Unforgiving.
Their sharp fangs seething
into my being. Marring,
reeking of moral decay.
In my solitude
they clamor for Obeisance.
These heartless masters
have long fortified their walls
from foreboding invasion
of a castle
that's rightfully mine;
nevertheless, they managed
to take full control...
Savage, vicious puppeteers
Strings coiled around my vessel
My voice, an outcast;
left to its own devices.
Doomed to meander
aimlessly for days, seeking
refuge in these hostile worlds.
Consigned to endless
lambasting, denigration!
Where is my sanctum?
It is weakening, wilting.
Draining to the very dregs
It is waiting for
Redemption. Restoration.
This voice to ascent.
Free me from the wrath of the
Monsters roaming in my head.

Sillage

empty halls
plastered doors
stinking walls
eerie nagging
of Void
silent
Aeolian vent
perplexed
a familiar scent
a memory
of Somebody
flashback
wanting you bad
ceaseless
helpless
to feel your
influence
but
then
I recognized
you're
non-existent
a memory in a plane
of the subconscious
into the ether...
I need to tell myself
no matter
how we circumvent
our fantasy
we are haunted
by Reality
inescapable doom
we can't fathom
our souls
disentangled
jaded
thrown into the depths
of abysmal Unrest

To the pseudo God of this fallen world:

I want you to suffer
the most insufferable death
slow...
torturous
ignominious
until
every
bit
of
your
flesh
is flayed

in my heart
I already killed you
a thousand times
my mind
is a proscenium
of your bloody demise

but I am a Saint
I abide by a sacrilegious code
more noble than your
thwarted conundrums
and false worshippers

someday....

when the time is ripe...

I will have my revenge.

Puke Reverence

Holy Bible
Hundred Hedonists
High heels

You summon the windows of heaven;
for its drops to fall on hungry lips
Those nymphs of wealth
in their white robes and lofty heels;
Their purse and wallets
open like green smiles,
And they shout Amen to enslave simplicity!
They part their legs, as they draw you
into the orifice of their carnal cries
to receive your good omen
and their old folks
filling your stomach
with the finest fattening

A fitting arrangement
you told me
for them
to gain salvation

I never questioned a man of God.
You are one nebulous spectre
of a charismatic leader,
circling like a circus
in a meaningless void
and gaining momentum in
this rollicking ride
of madness contagion--
a beast put in a leash
under the cloak of modesty
And I've seen this beast
freed
a hundred times
its insatiable appetite
salivating
feeding

on youthfulness
and innocence...

But I would never question a man of God.

Tonight

we say our prayers together
and I drink in your sermon
in my white robes and high heels
your simple fetishes:
this Holy Bible
hundred-dollar bills
and high heels
I say in one breath
in an upbeat march
as I cut you in three pieces
for desecrating
Cristina, Olivia, and Sarah
our dearest daughters

No need for a tomb and a grave;
The slain don't smile, speak or seek,
these effigies will burn
with you
the smoke and the fire
very much alive
celebrating your demise
while I break free
from your grasp
no longer the
spiritless slave to your caprice

I am the new God.

...Or, the creator of design.

Fields Avenue

welcome to the Pearl of the Orient Seas
we take pride in our sea, sun, and sand
for centuries...

the Spaniards
the Japanese
the Americans
came and conquered us
exploited our
men
women
children

we drove them away
or at least we thought
for a sense of redemption
after our lands were converted into
a romping ground of restless tourists
on periodic trips to the archipelago
to eat, drink, and be merry

but we missed those days
of PX goods, yen and dollars
and deliverance from hell
they wanted to come back
and relive the glory days
on our free accord

when night falls
our gloomy masquerade of the shanties
fade into the rambunctious party
pulsating--
balding men with bulging bellies
cavorting
in a model's runway
gone berserk:
gigolos and geishas
young girls scantily clad in bikini
stilettos clanking
pole dancing

pushing fragile bodies at perverse angles
wearing garish make-up
to conceal their dread
for another taste of Sodom and Gomorrah

and

we offer our girls to these predators
seeking sex for the price of McDonald's burger and fries
or \$10 to make them do anything
for pseudo marriage proposals
arrests are seldom made
of the offenders
because our tourism must thrive
despite economic turmoil
because when you have nothing to feed your children
going back to the brothels
is the most scintillating offer

everyday

we weep for the daughters of Eve
and sons of Adam
who meandered aimlessly
in the Garden of Eden

met the serpent

bit the apple

and drank the bitter waters of Marrah

when you come to the Pearl of the Orient Seas
bask in the goodness of our sea, sun, and sand
but we do not have all the goodies you crave
no, we do not have new prostitutes in the land
we have already prostituted our people anew

The Gospel of the Poor

I was a wee lass when I first heard
a sermon preached by a Dominican priest
in a parish adorned with
candelabras casting shadows
of the most elaborate graven images
while we town folks clothed in muddy slippers,
our backs scorched in the fields
waited fervently for our turn at communion
for the remission of our sins

"Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven", said Father
if we expect a year of harvest and bounty
Father must keep us in the flock
Father needs our tithes and offerings
we must not hold back a single penny
even from a Widow's Mite

Beatus es pauperis
the ground is cursed for our sakes
we learned one Sunday School afternoon
so we are left to pick our poison
from our proportions
partakers of misery and woes
vessels agog with false hopes
predisposed to follow our well-greased politicians
and salivate after their pork barrels
who buy our votes for a bag of rice and sardines
they toss our squatters here and there
and we bear our children everywhere
Father taught us to multiply and replenish the Earth
and take no thought of the morrow.

Bienaventurados los pobres
when we peruse the front pages of our newspapers
thousands of jobs await us,
a greener pasture in the land of the voyeurs
let us send our women to be housemaids and prostitutes
forget about the verdure of our lands
soon, the capitalists will come
for the plunder of our resources
the government will take care of us
so why bother

Beati I poveri
the corruption of the doctrines
the proliferation of dogmas
the debauchery of the Heaven-seekers
we know so much - and yet,
we also know so little.
the plight of the hungry and the homeless
we have become fools
to romanticize our debacles

Blessed are the poor
for when our last morsel of food
drops on the ground
and heaven's doors swing open to receive
its faithful acolytes
we have a long tale to tell
an eternal confession
of our sufferings in the flesh

because we listened to Father

V Monologue

The things you expect of us
are not your humdrum task
when you ask for a dozen children
you simply don't chide
consider our yearly wear and tear
when you ask for an Alistair
surely you don't mistake us for a concessionaire?
or a factory filled with assembly lines
of body parts to stitch on a daily grind
we are not created from rubber
a tear so deep and wide is a nightmare
those weeks of leaks are morbid
oft times my plea is for this pee to flee
a day this scourge will set me free
could we cope with a wound infection
brought about by a C-section?
could we not cope with fecal malady
from a bad vaginal delivery?
in the tangled web of Roman justice
on to centuries of hapless guesses
evidence is mounting fast
of mothers and fetal deaths
the dangers of childbirth
is a Pandora's box

working women must resume work
after a few months of pseudo rest
we are like Atlas who carries the world
be a super mom and do our best
why, the dog has more time to heal
for years our offspring rely on us for meal
they mumble and they cripple
little vampires sucking our nipple
whilst our wound below is bloody and fresh
you make your nightly advances

to you whose ignorance we must endure
we recite our litany of woes
we take our dose
of Aspirin and Heparin
Pytocin and Oxytocin
trust us when we claim
we have learned the art of inflicting pain
when we are taken to the delivery room
after hours of laborious labor
it doesn't matter if our legs are parted wide
hoisted in cold metallic apparatus
how many times have we farted loud
in the course of transvaginal ambush

if you see our child misbehaving
never throw us your killer glance
you know nothing about our suffering
please spare us of your askance
mind the things you expect of us!

Hemorrhage

I fear the day
when I am no longer jealous
of the people I adore
for their ardent passion
whose divergent beliefs
make me fall in love
with chaos
repeatedly
until I am restored
to the true essence of order

I fear the day
when the thorns and thistles
of procrastination
would impair my ability to express
leaving my soul bereft
of anything creative
engulfed in the flames of
everlasting ennui--
my wakefulness
drifting into oblivion
festering in circuitous motion
always wishing but not really wanting
the ignominy of surrender

I fear the day
when words will vanish
and that my bosom
shall no longer burn within me
for I see no reason drowning
in a midsummer night's kiss
unless I can aptly describe
the taste of my lover's bliss...

I am jealous--
extremely jealous
of them who
bleed on paper

and if you run out
of this crimson ink
know that I have spared
a gallon to trade
for just another poem

Clueless

how soon
did our passion wither--
reduced to no more than
a perfunctory kiss?
didn't we share
the same laughter
while our breaths travelled
to the shores of heaven?
who made what
that our affection
was attenuated
we hardly could feel
the heat in our fingertips?
you surmised that
my solitary confinement
would break
my inner core
as you began to fortify
these walls
so high!
ever a great divide
pestering what's inside
of me...
screaming
reaching...

well, for once you are right.

...this paradise we
decorated, adorned
is now chocking
in a rambling of thorns

tell me love
when did we lose it all?
I pray that time
will come quickly
when I am pained no more

Ellipsis

Your questions are
complex and contentious:

"Mom, why do you talk to yourself?"

"Mom are you going crazy?"

Because you're too fragile

I spare you my alibi

Why don't we talk
about this bonsai?

I think it's an evil act
to curtail the growth
of a tree

They think it's pretty
...I think this is utmost cruelty

Oh, look!

the crumbling of this sidewalk
is certainly irreversible

Was it in December
when we first noticed the cracks?

Here is Summer months dragged

the roots are wanton and greedy

You know there are chasms
deep beneath our

Core, too

It's just a matter of time
of season

when they go
unchecked...

Uhhh, that's for another telling

But for now my child
don't you think it's time
for your favorite churros
and my exquisite craving
for a lemonade juice?

Know that our small talks
are steady drips of water
seeping through the cracks

of my beleaguered Soul
They seem insignificant
yet they nourish my soul
and each time
I lock my eyes with yours
I wrestle with Sadness
not to manifest

Just this moment my child
let's see things through your
unsuspecting lens
of innocence

Just this moment
let me pretend
that nothing matters...

You know they call me
an actress
for a reason
because once this palette
of multifarious colors
work its magic on my face
you will see a fresh canvass
not a tabula rasa
but cliched new beginnings
no scars, no marks
though rotting inside

...

Hey sweetie, let's eat some desserts!
Take these raisins and muffins
chocolates and truffles!

Soon there will be no Sunbeam
Nothing matters at all, it seems...

We trudge along and speak in volume
The show must go on!

shady thoughts enter
as he ogles at those curves
imp of seduction

Secret Lover

moonlit visages
bore through
my emptiness
I embrace
tight these
ominous shadows
and willingly
I disappear
with them
at sunrise

(SCENT)iment: A Triptych

stark	naked bodies	glowing
reminiscing	swooning	fresh and light
of perfumed lies--	riveting	masked in flattery
stench	revealing	your promises
of doom;	intimacy	turned repulsive

Branwen Speaks

your breath...
shall learn to dissipate the mist

that is my wardrobe
by warming its way to my nape:
my first moan
your hands...
trailing down my waist;

irresolute and rabid
will steady this quivering body
of pleasure!
your eyes
shooting fires, gossamer and still, evaporating
interlocked with mine
as we bathe
in the waters of Shangri la
over and over again.

you...
will worship me
die for me
even kill for me

then

your soul...
I will trade with the Furies

for a leprechaun's gold
and when the final slivers

of your ecstasy is extinguished
you will find yourself deep
in a state of lethargy and languor

YOU...
in a paradoxical limbo
sharing the indignation of them Celtic gods
freezing and burning

soaring and drowning
in your carnal desires
of me
but alone

peradventure you importune
the heathen to get you out of this
quagmire
I shall be waiting for you, yet again,
in the flesh
to devour my body
whereupon I am entitled
to inflict the same poison--
a lipsticked scar

for I live in the starling, the raven,
the cauldron, and the cup
long ago...
my life was wretched in pieces
and I died of a broken heart
in this era
the pendulum swings to my favor
I rise from my grave
to consign my oppressors to a final closure
for every male species is a Matholwch.
and I demand his blood.

memories spilling
remnants from scrapbook pages
jaded yesteryears

Anagapesis

This I know...

you will move on without an iota of affection
all my traces erased without hesitation
what we both possess is a gift and a curse
we have become jesters in our own tangled verse
our silhouette is now fading in the shadows
these burnt hands will remind me
you have no more place but in the hollows
built around your feigned apathy
yes, I have destroyed the very thing I created
you, my angel, have flown away-- emancipated
and never, ever coming back...

but I have reasons to wake up in my dream
for outside these glass doors
the sea is calling me
I allow myself not to wallow in remorse
but to ride the waves of freedom
I have loved you from the very depths of my soul
in myriad ways, I made myself vulnerable
but I have reasons to wake up in my dream
for outside these glass doors
the sun is about to set
I'm breaking free from your grasp of insanity
to myself, I pledge my full loyalty.

Of Bickering Bitches and Whining Witches

I was born in Paradise
where I was taught never to compromise
my parents taught me a hundred Bible verses
had me master the allegory of the olive tree
they placed me on a pedestal
adorned with an exquisite finial
in no time, I became the Queen of Hearts
I showered people with praises
but the hearts I gave away
were devoured in pieces
I drank from a well of adulation
poisoned from a moral conundrum
you see, I yearned to be a Mary Lennox
with her secret garden; well-manicured and posh
but simple things offended me
when the gardeners uprooted my delicate Dandy--
I couldn't let go of my baby
an affliction that worsened to a malady
so, I ventured away from this haven
I run across the prairie
I sprinted my way across the moors
...retreated into the woods
I found the robin and the door
abandoned for years
the key rusting beneath the earth

when I was about to take the handle
poof! you appeared out of nowhere
the most exquisite Witch ever
you took me in this coven
an uncharted terrain
I spent a year in the torrential rains
an outré-- sorority of bitches and witches
I was offered a choice: to be one or be both
to holler or to prepare a broth
the Wiccan religion appealed to me
the Bitching Society was a liability
that's how I deciphered between

between royalty and tyranny
you gave me lessons and recipes
I grew lesions, scales and abrasions
I thought I was a despicable creature
but you led me to a lake
I stoop down to see my reflection
in the waters, I saw visions
of predators and preys
one ate, the other eaten
the bite a necessity for fighting and display
here was never fairytale
everyday was my worst nightmare
but I learned the art of camouflage
I trained my mind
to be a shape shifting dancer

and our souls melded

I shed skins of remorse
allowed my emerald green eyes to glow
along with my majestic robes
--wings I'd use to probe

I felt rage
I felt power
I left this wilting planet
and soared high above the jungles
my penultimate ascent

Ready for my first kill.

In ancient Sparta and Barcelona
even the great Andalusia
slaughter was a common thing
to claim a beautiful queen

let both of you be warned
I am who you don't think I am
bleed to death, roll your heads
this is your verdict:

fight for me or go back to your beds!

Bloated

I once thought
constipation was
the only thing
that has gotten me
distraught
until

I met people
with bloated egos

they are in a warp
the cantankerous lot
seeking attention
they seek Altercation
a primordial demon

watch out
before
it explodes...

for
both constipation
and bloated egos
manifest

in leaks
and flushed
in the pit

Tour

A delicate whisper moaned by your lips

"A road we will tread
onto the sharp curve ahead
muster the courage
I will take you to the edge..."

blindly, I trudged along
with a throbbing heart in my head
looming from afar
was this carnival
stark naked
an air of dread
I knew in an instant
we crossed a forbidden lair
you bought two passes
and held my hand
I felt the grip
I could not resist
down the alleyway
I finally met
the shadows
of your sock puppets
they stood tall
at daytime, proudly
they nudged us to partake
the fluffy cotton candy treat
I blinked once
I blinked twice
the carnival had come alive
we heard the cheers
the jeers
the screams
emanating from a roller coaster ride

I wanted a roller coaster ride!
but your sock puppets protested
and blocked our path
instead they pointed out
two choices we could take
the long walk to a dark labyrinth
or the exit sign glaring in red

you blinked once
you blinked twice
we turned our back from this exit sign
you let go of my hand
my throbbing heart
no longer in my head

I followed your sock puppets
and moved
deeper into the labyrinth...

Minuscule

in many ways
the burdens
I carry are
infinitesimally small
and irrelevant
in the grand scheme of things

who cares really
in effect --
when my babies defecate
their colors I enumerate
because it isn't cool
if I mention stool
is the culprit
for taking my little rascal
to Dr. Carl

what has that got to do
with economics
religion
and politics?

expect some snarky snide
even if my worlds collide
for agonizing daily
over humdrum things
such as --
taking out the trash,
fixing kids potato mash,
tackling all the errands
while fulfilling hectic demands

motherhood is guilt-laden
oh, boy at times is nerve-wracking!
not because I'm attention-deficit
advice I do not solicit
but occasionally

in melancholy
I tend to envy

the life I had
before they came...

then
feeling all snot
I take a break to untangle the knot
that twisted my sanity
and clarity

you see
my writing
and mothering
are two ends
that hold the equilibrium
sans drama

or perception of doom

in many ways
the burdens
I carry are
Infinitesimally small
and irrelevant
in the grand scheme of things

or maybe not.

Social Ills

ten packs of cigar
you puff smoke like a vicar
while sickly children
fill their bellies with sardines
that's scantily proportioned

foamy bubbles that
form on the sides of your mouth
a total disgust:
a lifetime of regretting
booze reveals the genuine you

**

jeers not cheer erupt
causing midget to fidget
carnival display--
cruel years spent in metal cage
they wonder why he's in bad shape

Supplication



Warriors

Day
and Night
we show up at
the arena to fight
scars of mortal combat-
the only badge we collect as
trophies, for we have nothing to
trade with the Fates to retain this gift
of summoning the mighty Muses of Olympus

May
this stand
the test of time
as an ensign, a token
that you're never forgotten
my twin soul--the Gods foretold
our solid triangle of friendship forged
intricate patterns of new verses we weave
in this unwinding tapestry required at our hands

Hear!
the clarion
call, put on our
armor and together
we brave the seven seas
we dance as we ride the storms
our stories written with blood and tears
but first we fight, get wounded and scarred
the only rightful sacrifice, our penultimate price

Art Thou a King?

who can defy a king
when his word sits at the pinnacle of all command
his glory taunts the defiant
rage an all-consuming tyrant
an ensign of all comeuppance

once, there was a Babylon king
whose demeanor was as foolish as his name
Belshazzar, the King of Arrogance
removed from the charts in just a few hours
God's wrath meted out for him

Meneme Teken Upharsin

Belshazzar's words were heard no more
after Darius demanded for his blood to flow

...it was written so it had to be done
sayest thou art the king then?
beware, your word is not the law
for there is a King above us all
who rules the earth and the heavens

the One who pronounces the true call

Cupid's Curse

One day this child-God was stung by bees
after he stole honey from their hives,
taking umbrage from these tiny creatures,
he resented them for inflicting such painful wounds
the love goddess, Venus his mother
(feeling all the love in this world)
turned down an appointment with Athena
that late afternoon
she groped for a good advice
but as always, her brain wouldn't suffice
instead she declared a poetic justice:

 "You were too small and yet could deliver the sting of love."
emblazoned with fire
he made a laconic cry:
I want all to be desired!
eyes bewildered
his reason tempered
a sore pestered-

and just like that!
Cupid became capricious
he fashioned his own bows and arrows
his KPIs, ostentatious
hit and never miss
this for him was a total bliss
why endow him with complex allegorical meanings?
he is even messing up with the contemporary pop culture
you see he was also the son of Mars
well, he loved Wars-

don't get entangled in this mania
or you will meet a plethora
of equally deranged Gods in December
Aphroditus, Artemis, Hera and Rhea--
the prime movers of fertility fever

Cupid's curse is wanton
and we never learn our lesson
once he meddles in the affairs of your heart
the adventure entails also the dark
in myths, he played the minor role
of plotting things in motion
but you see
a desire so strong
is enough to annihilate an entire throne

My Brain Needs a KitKat

thoughts are running wild
rampaging like an avalanche
sleep is cumbersome
as it impedes the flow of lucidity
you kick me hard in the butt
and do some somersault
when I give heed to your demands
you set me free
are you a friend who pervades my private space?
do you intend to even dominate?
you seem to enjoy
dancing in my head
the intensity of ten thousand horses
thumping
whining
but when I finally entertain you
you begin to fall into a cadence
of rhythmic marching
you dwell in my vessel:
I am the host and I make it clear
you cannot abuse your
privileges and zealous advances.
I implore
never bore me
with your jejune inhibitions
I really feel you when you chortle
eloquence I truly adore
though sometimes you need
to speak the language of silence
fluently...
I mean seriously
enervate and commiserate
with my afflictions
many a night I have
cheated sleep just to
serve your caprice
be an obedient child at once
I demand your utter surrender

hear the gentle passing of the dewdrops
quiet and yet palpable
this I don't ignore
I'm not asking too much
give me rest
and in a few hours
we shall reunite
to create perhaps
our magnum opus.

Poignant

She made a choice.
She took the first move.
She waited.

She took the risk
of going against her nature.

She took the risk.
Violated her code
for a lofty ode.

She took the risk
drank from an ancient goblet
whose cracked rims left an indelible scar
..an insignia of effusive devotion

She was torn apart
when Fate forced her to

Disavow.
Repudiate.
Belie.

The pain was
Exquisite.
Harrowing.
Unbearable.

Today, even her shadow is Irreparable
like shards of a broken mirror

Now she cannot love...
Perhaps never again
In this epic battle
of sapphic lines and verses
LOVE is a fragile concept
No Saint is spared
From angst, cruelty
Enmity

Love is always
A sad reality

No more fantasies.
Only a sick medley.
A cacophony
of mockery.

Today, she lit the forlorn dimness of her pained heart by leaving
behind

... this poem.

An Hour to Close

Soon the bells
Will ring out wild
The time won't be bribed
What's done is done
And everybody
renders an account

Soon
The state of the mind
Reels with the Facts
Confronts the Faces
And see the Facets
Whether draconian
Or lilliputian
None is infallible
Nor impeccable

Soon
Nothing escapes
The surge of retribution:
Frantic
For stripping the world
Of kindness
and instilling madness
Apathetic
To the sufferers
Of isolation
And a modicum of recognition

Soon
From another place
Foul mouths will blabber
A sacrilegious language
To play the blame game
Of having
squandered opportunities
Still, others hunger
For a moment of silence
To revere their deities

And thank them for
Overflowing bounty

Soon
A book closes
A friend departs
A stranger comes
A new day awaits
Billowing in the breeze
Of fresh beginnings
This is what my soul yearns for
To close what I must
And open what I can...

Plimsoll Mark

here comes
the storm
I'm not prepared for

this vessel
on a steady keel
now drifting
in the midst
of uncertainty

here comes
the line
flashing signals
overload
going overboard

I might snap
I need a strap
spare me
the mishap

in an old-fashioned way
I shall remove
the extra baggage
and travel light

To the Child with a Child

as we sit here sweating
under a century-old shelter
I'm baffled they have the guts
to call it a health center
we inhale the odors
of a downtrodden society
the stench of poverty
seeping through the cracks
in a masquerade
of gloomy countenances
old familiar stories
spanning generations
victims of circumstance
they claim to be

your figure stands out forlornly
among the crowd
such pity I feel
that you're now a bona fide worker
In this baby factory

as we begin to engage
in an ebullient chat
I feel the angst
stifled by your quiet reproach
bruise on your slender arms
revealed

as you hoist your baby
on the wooden hammock
for weighing protocols

the nurse announces
he is underweight
then I look at you
and see no difference
your sunken eyes
and hollow cheekbone
convince me
that your man steals from you
many decent meals
for a pack of cigarettes
and a case of beer
for his comrades

when I was your age
my worries were far less
complicated
I'd dream of getting
my bouquet of roses
and the taste
of a torrid first kiss
today, you have to endure
a mouth firing like an armalite
flying curses instead of sympathy--
she is your lover's mother
the monster you have to battle
who nurtures by way of torture

to you my child with a child
you got yourself in a mess
for which you're not ready
you should have known
two queens in a castle
is an absolute disaster
get ready for a hell ride
an endless rollercoaster
of embracing
the perfidy of your fate

you fall into the cracks
wary and weary
your eyes teary and bloody
soul shattered a million times
but it's not all gray skies
If you won't fall
for another compromise

here is where you are
a painful reminder
that you once erred
in your choices

I hope not to see you next year
or the next
under the same repugnant
condition
with another

...offspring

Musings of a Canvas

I watch your dishevelled stance
glazed eyes burning—
lost in raging vagaries
of cataclysmic wars
shadows eclipse your eyes
as your visions swirl—
ever-changing like the seasons
anticipation ...
trepidation ...
how I ache for your release
not once
have you touched me
yet completely
you consume me
In a frenzied
loving flash—
your brush
meets my nakedness
suddenly I swim
awash in a roiling sea
of breathless turbulent colors
but joyously I now suffocate
in the winds of your tempest

till naked no longer
in stillness
at last
I revel
under the scrutinous gaze
of raging fans and critics
yet their opinions matter not—
before you
I was void
but you find beauty lurking
where others fail to find it
and though I may gather dust ...
from time to lonely time
your soul and touch transformed me
and I am yours to paint
again and again—
and again

Farewell for Now

I stand here
at the queue
stripped of fear
with clarity Imbued
the last bastions
of resistance eschewed
hundreds of questions
pray I could
find their way
to final closure

I won't sway
I won't stay
I won't tear

above the clouds
all worries float
if in doubt
then I don't

my inner compass
prompts me so
this shall pass
qualms I stow
quest not game
this I see
behind yellow lane
waiting for me

the true debacle
lies in heaps
my heart unsettled
I sink deep

and pretty soon
the engine roars
my battle's won
all systems restored
the solid core

...until then my friends.

An Ode to my Muse

I long for your words to burn within me
a searing pain I would gladly endure
where others cry of torture
and being thrust into a mire
I call it my refiner's fire

one moment
you are this devastating storm
of undiluted wrath
constantly churning
berating
decimating
then you gradually decrease to
no more than a wind
that barely moves a leaf
my zephyr
in love with chaos

Forsaken Ritual

It seemed ages ago
when I basked in the goodness
of luxurious showers,
baths
carefree.
unhurried.
the loofas slathered with
foam of potpourri gels
lighted candles exhibiting
myriad of Scent:
lavender
chamomile
shea butter with honey
or the sweet-tart pomegranate
permeated the air
along with some hazy, steamy music
wafting...

Oh! how the tepid water deeply penetrated
my entire being
and brought me to my favorite lair
where I reigned
as a Goddess
made to partake the elixir
flowing from the Eternal Fountain of Youth

try as I may
to beguile the Time
governing the humdrum of
daily chores and
commitments
the supreme art of taking a bath
is now relegated
to a mere
one-minute ordeal
that while contemplating
on my throne
I would jolt in the earth-shattering

pounding on the door
outside
a wailing toddler -
the center of my universe
commands full attention

no therapeutic oils
no scent diffused
no soft music
no warm water...

All buried in the waning pages
of a book called

"Memoirs of a Spoiled Maiden"

The Handsome Boy

I wish to write the most beautiful poem;
About the handsome boy I have at home.
I tried and failed to conjure the magic;
By stirring concoction of words, I'm derelict.

But try and fail if I really must;
Until I exhaust my strength, this my thrust.
The world will know of this particular boy;
Who loves his life equally with his toys.

He greets with tender kisses in the morning;
And a limitless supply of hugs before leaving.
His sweet returns I await with much anticipation;
To receive his affection in a bounteous ration.

His mind swims in a sea of imagination;
Unperturbed by a crowd of hopeless abandon.
Throughout the day and all through the night;
It spills off vivid fantasies, heavy and light.

Once he spoke of building his own abode;
Where dinosaurs are guarding in full alert mode.
But having wrestled with thoughts of sheer security;
He settled for a shack with his family.

Oh! How I treasure the lazy, surreal afternoons;
We plan his birthdays with balloons to festoon.
But end up every year for a cake;
To hoard up savings for his education sake.

His unspeakable kindness has the capacity to heal;
My tattered soul; vanquishing my ire and ill.
One reassuring smile emanating from a pure soul;
You have given me the sky to soar.

Someday when my body is laid to rest;
I hope this boy will face his test.
To dream, to think, to act, to fight;
A beautiful life, he must make it right

Alfredo

Nine years ago
You finally met your Waterloo
Five strokes, your heart broke
While I got pregnant
With my first child
They laid you down
Beneath this pound of mud
It took me years
To visit your grave
I wish I had written
Your epitaph
Instead
I kept your photographs
Along with your mementos
Letters, and trophies, too
An ex-army
In the Infirmary
Sent to battle
Among
the wounded mortals
Dear Papa
Today
I stand before your tombstone
My heart bleeds
I have enemies to defeat
Sadly
They are all
reincarnated demons
of oppressors
You told me
As a young girl
The conquistadors
And power-tripping fools
We devoured on history books
They came with
An arduous zeal to maim
Thirsty for bloodshed
Souls dismembered

Unlike you
They bombinate
With bloated egos
Whisper to me
What I will do
Your legacy
Of bravery
Is mine to carry
You taught me once
My heart always stands a chance
Before you I bow
Dear heart, don't fail me...

Retrowaille



Lair

a flight of stairs
to the rooftop
is all I take to receive
my balm of Gilead

a flight of stairs...
to the rooftop
where my staunch army
of twinkling lights
are eager to buoy me up

here
my pain
ebbs away
tears unrestrained
gently coalescing
with morning dewdrops

....
I often bask in the light--
in the effervescent rays
of the Sun
when darkness
is sometimes too stubborn
to tame my demons

....
but nights have been
my haven, too

I envisage them--
my old bud, Starsky
leading a chariot of canine pride
whose mortal wounds I mended
from a near miraculous escape...
loose chains around the body
his eyes foreboding, mine entreating
on my lap, the longest night I held on tight
before he gave up his last breath...

...he is waiting,
tail wagging
just as I recall
at the front porch daily
coming home from school

....
there's also my father
waltzing through celestial gates
donning his robes and slippers
...this earth was both his garden
and burial ground

the final hours he fought alone
that night in the hospital bed
while I struggled to keep my firstborn...
one had to go, another had to be born
Such is the Creator's grand design

we all signed up for this:
having booked
our non-refundable tickets
at the death toll

one day I shall leave my own note
on the kitchen table...
BUT for now,
I am here--
back to making my own heaven

my own key
my own lock
my own door

life is good this way.

The Bird Watcher

Once in a while
I meet people like you
who fascinate me
with such reverence
and audacity for life
thousands of hours
going the extra miles
you wait patiently for them to arrive...

these travelers
who cross entire oceans
and continents
migrating over great distance
to escape harsh winters
a motley of almost every color
and a dazzling array of patterns
masters of aerial maneuvers
swooping!
hovering!
soaring!

you know them well
the fine tune they carry
how no two birds
sing the same song

in my mind
I envision
how you move stealthily
prostrated on the ground
to obtain your find
then immortalize the moment
through the lens of your camera

absolute silence
undying fondness
...hours

...days

...weeks

of no luck

but you persist
this calling you cannot resist

I watch you watching them
I wait for you waiting for them
I marvel at you marveling at them

dear bird watcher,

I am simply in awe.

The Sculptor

his mighty hands
 with chisel and hammer
 splitting the old tree asunder

etch, grave
 incise, inscribe
 effigies in stone
 and alabaster

metalwork
 jeweled and enameled
 mythological figures
 in pottery or wood

--portraits

arabesque decorations
 masks of naturalistic depictions.

these mighty hands
 of a sculptor

they bring life
 to a

R
 E
 H
 G
 I
 H

new dimension.

Perspective

repetitive motions
dulling sickness
sleight of magic
bunch of skeptics
dwindling breaths
muted passion

everything around you
is but an
assortment of
soulless atoms
awaiting dissolution
...decomposition

you know the price
of everything
yet you value nothing

"Is this all there is?"

out there
something else speaks
even that which is dead can be redeemed
when you find
your sacred meaning

any good or bad
goes back to
the state of your mind

so, get out of your head
get into your heart

Bedtime Story

my mind is drifting...
retreating...
succumbing...

to the call of
abysmal sleep
fatigue will soon
overtake
this f r a g i l e body

BUT

I can't
close my eyes
until your last adventure
with Peter Pan
and his cohorts

will end

we haven't reached The End.

I don't have the heart
to abandon you my Storyteller
when you have cheerfully endured
listening to my lame bedtime stories

of

S I N B A D

and

CONAN THE BARBARIAN

your animated narration is lulling me
deeper into your stories
and deeper into slumber

.....

S I L E N C E

This is my favorite part
of our evening ritual:
when finally, I gaze upon
your face
of sheer innocence;
pull up the blanket
and kiss you on the forehead

Shhhhhhh...

My Master Storyteller is parrying the blows of Captain Hook now for
all we know.

The END.

June Rain

yesterday--
the first drops hurtled
down from angry skies
a hubristic outpouring
of repressed tears
prisoners of love
finally set free

today--
we surrender
to each other's embrace
fresh from our ceremonial vows
your sapphire eyes
lusting after this matrimonial bed
a heavenly scent
of sandalwood and jasmine
diffused in the air
our deep moans
drowning in thunderstorms
and lightnings

tomorrow--
the petrichor lingers
you will find me
roaming wild in the prairie
dancing merrily
barefooted
grounded

I take an amorphous lump of clay
and build my castle amid rain
for I am a princess,
an elf queen, a Bohemian goddess
... and a child.

...in my life
I know of nothing certain
except when June rains pour,
I come out fully alive.

The Blue Moon

there was once a peculiar tale
of two creatures who were doomed to fail
each mighty in its own lore
each with a major character flaw
a dragon--
who prided itself as a pachyderm
resented the humans who have never learned
its pyro skill was lambasted by critics
who were so adamant with semantics
 "Hic sunt dracones!" cried the petrified villagers
as the dragon flapped its gargantuan flappers
when it was time to torch the tyrants
it hiccupped and failed to deliver its stunt
news quickly got out, its name was compromised
now, people screamed of its capture, they surmised-
if they slew the dragon and partook of its blood
it would mean invincibility; it would render immortality
fearing for its life, the dragon had flown
for years, it became a vagabond...

in another flexuous region
there was a winsome unicorn
its beauty, exquisite
Its charm, exotic
unblemished, impeccable
its diaphanous hair was adorable
was placed on a pedestal of celibacy
preserved to fulfill its rightful destiny
such a perfect vessel to imbue posterity
were it not for a hapless malady
you see, some dark magic had shut its womb
and that in itself was a verdict to be ousted from home
many a times there were rumors of allusion
that the unicorn was marked an abomination
 "Spare us of your curse," the blessing rehearsed
so the unicorn took off its purity robes,
and galloped away in haste

deep into the woods
there was a benevolent wolf
wanting so much to be a demagogue
but ended up being branded a misanthrope
it got hold of an encyclical
bearing all things magical...

there was this story of a certain moon
whose light is an inestimable boon
curing all ills
of those who would kneel
in bad faith, the wolf proliferated the news
to win the trust, a strategy must work, he perused
the news reached the dragon
the news reached the unicorn
altogether
they set afoot on a mission
they traversed
ten seas
ten mountain ranges
ten waterfalls
seeking for this panacea to end their troubles
until they reached the astrodome
gingerly, they spoke in low tones
at once, they beheld a quaint luminescence
as if their worries were mere obsolescence
the dragon felt a burning sensation in its body
the unicorn's belly swelled immaculately
dropping on bended knees, the creatures genuflected before the moon
and offered a gratuity
but the moon just smiled and bowed
opened a dusty book of spells and riddles
"I have been alone for a long time. Will all of you tarry?"
so, the moon talked of majestic ruins and temples
of a particular stone fortress
sanctimonious rituals
alchemical and astrological symbols
how it witnessed the rise and fall
of philanderers and voyeurs

tyrants and traitors
spanning several civilizations

the wolf thought it was a waste of time, he murmured
for it felt nothing, its heart was still not right
the dragon and the unicorn pleaded for more, they lingered
"You came here not to be cured," the Blue Moon addressed the wolf

the wolf howled for the last time
and dropped dead on its knees

from afar, Earth's inhabitants witnessed
the intricate display of lights on the horizons
red, yellow, orange, white, and blue- the entire spectrum
and they continued to glow until the end of Days.

On the Road

engines roar to life
I buckle up for another ride
no makeup
just a dab of powder
a drive-thru breakfast
to give me power
was it only yesterday
I went out with my kids
for a lego play?
today
I'm wearing a different hat
from a hundred choices I have
it's a never-ending cycle
life summons us for various calls
ready or not--
when the bell tolls
we always show up
that's all

Uninhibited

I stepped out
of these shadowed cloisters
into the great expanse
breaking free
but wanting to belong

an abode
a haven
the cradle of solace

I found the topiary
and well-manicured gardens
but I sprinted past
their blinding perfection

for the splendor
has shrunken my stature
into bits of worthlessness
diminishing my existence
to the dregs

farther I ran...

until I stumbled upon
a fork that led
to a canopy
of eucalyptus trees

a sense of relief
washed over me
whilst stroking
the coarseness
of their bodies

one tree stood out
thick and hard
the dead bark still

clinging on
from deep furrowing

such peculiar adornment
magnified
the beauty of its age
and experience

I hugged this tree
for the longest time
and for once
I cried
a thousand tear

In this unlikely bond
I found

an abode
a haven
the cradle of solace

The storm inside abated.

Bitter-Sweet

the leaves fell unsteadily
had their landing on dampened soil
nobody shook the tree
it's time for them to go

so, I asked:

"Maker, what else could they do
they grew and waxed
side by side a towering foe."

methought it's unredeemed
they lay in idle, lifeless mold
then I pleaded:

" Maker, make them useful once more."

I sat on the wooden bench for hours
watched a butterfly
hopped from one flower to another
I embraced the warmth of summer
in solitude, I discovered things that matter...

this patch of earth you see
was a great blessing
did it not give birth to this tree
and others creeping?

because the leaves fell
and they nourished the earth below
Oh, till it swelled
the leaves weren't dead you know

Sonnet 1

branching bolts creep along the cloud expanse
soon, thunderstorm will take us by surprise
some people mark us with their deadly fangs
we compensate with love in large supplies

with your mighty hands on the steering wheel
what banquet of stark sensations they bring!
you've shown me mountains, valleys and hills
we inhaled the burning hay, smoke that stings

all this time that I was your passenger
I've been weaving art on our tapestries
they'd keep us enthralled, locked in forever
so we dance, and sing safeguarded in bliss

under black skies, moon and stars all aglow
steal my heart, give me all you will bestow

Refraction

this body I possess
has all the tendency to regress
pay its homage

to the God of Menace
sticks and bones
rotting to the core
my Spirit though
is beyond the claim
of any false and arrogant Deity

once it passes through the veil
separating the mortal
from the immortal
nothing can stop me
from eternally progressing

Queendom

In a faraway land
Where September rain pours down in torrents, unflinching
A castle manned by sylphs, guarding
The heart of its queen
Enclosed in a glass of sparkling diamond -
A curious workmanship
Entombed in the amber of legend-
A breathing artifice
Hard as stone, black as coal
Time its ultimate enemy as foretold
A year and a fortnight
Someone right
Ripe
To make it alive
A restoration of its full ardor
Where once a cheery, jovial countenance
Is extinguished by a tragic romance
Each night ever since
Hunted by dreams
A leitmotif of riddles
The Sun and Moon revel
Together they deliver
Secrets to unravel
Desperate for interpreters
Cumbersome
The queen abandons royal duties
To pursue some belligerent tactics
Each month, hordes of wooers are summoned
To tackle a bacchanalian feast
Magic of all kinds on board
They assemble before an ornate hall
Adorned the miser with flowers
And sesquipedalian love spells
Each month just the same
Not a beat
The heart grows blacker and harder

The queen grows paler, radiance diminished
Until a knight made an entrance
"A sorcerer!," they hiss.
Makes a curtsy, advances to the queen
" I hereby bequeath to you my rarest possession."
"Eat of this artichoke."
The queen thought it was a joke
At first glance, it appears unappetizing
Even forbidding to partake
A flesh of weakness to exploit
However
Devouring it leaf by leaf
The leaves slowly become
Desirable
Until the queen arrives at the succulent heart
A beat!
And another
Then it bleeds
A crimson red
On a swift behest
All are dismissed
The knight and the queen remained
The legend has it
They are no more separated...

In the ancient Court of Aberdeen
With eyes saturnine,
Lives a queen named Carolyn
High above the fray
On a mountaintop
Overlooking a rocky bay
The Sun and the Moon
Together
They swoon

Sonnet 2

Love Scrabble

we start with clean slates, and draw our first tiles
as we look at each other 'cross the board
I wonder how long we can stretch for miles
you give it a thought then make your first score

I get warped out of the frame over this

newfangled collection, hard-luck letters
the words I need to express here go amiss
Cupid's arrow I desire not scimitars

you know that I'm messed up, knee-deep stuck
my loss imminent, my fears compounded
is there a formula, or is it luck?
you utter, "Today, your heart's sore I mend."

in Scrabble, Q and X yield the high scores
in love—be open, never close your doors

intricate patterns
woven in this tapestry
my soul linked to yours
many will weave their fine silk thread
you are to knit the loose ends

Solitude

outside my window, the elementals bow
to the sweet reverie of a habitation,
where time dissolves the needless urgency
of conflicting priorities,
surrendering my knees for supplication.
even the loud crowing of a rooster
is as pleasing as the susurrus of a nearby brook.
herewith, I have the liberty to
rise above the dense foliage
bloom as wildly as the rarest orchid
to forget, at once,
that snakes hiss and bite on the ground
whereas rain and sunshine
reign in the heavens

I can choose to stand tall
amid the towering pine trees
or cower in shame
for my dwarfish self- esteem
perhaps the gray skies are not forlorn;
a heart that bleeds
sown in tears
the smoke and strawberries
we think dull or interesting
find their meaning in
the inner sanctum of the soul

Tanka 1

It is for certain:
essence of man's agency
is to liberate
him from the wiles and snares of
the doomed Miserable One.

Tanka 2

the immensity
of the Great Unknown denotes
the presence of God.
Omnipotent. Omniscient
you and I the testators.

Tanka 3

death is the passage
to Immortality. It
should assuage the
festering of the pained heart-
the soul brought to home at last.

Tanka 4

a child's hearty laugh
dissipates the air of ills
the spring, sunshine warm
innocence has a fair price;
commensurate with thy care

Tanka 5

flawed judgement impairs;
is flummoxed by ineptness
to tackle what's right.
matriculates to degrees
of the highest idiocy.

Rusmongchi 1

a lonely business
bereft of crowd's attention
though lives are at stake--
mothers are needed at home
no substitute, that's for sure
this noblest calling
cannot be abdicated
for ersatz honor

Korka 1

out of the furnace we rise
bold these wounds will testify:
whilst beaten and marred
two souls have exacted to
Life's Expectations.
we beat our Herculean foes;
Olympus hails us victors!

Purple Luggage

the heaviness of hearts
from never-ending goodbyes
how a summer solstice
can drag on for weeks
hungry for that sweet,
lingering terminal kiss
promises unkept
mournful tears pierced
by pangs of abandonment
I knew then the taste of death

your secrets safely locked
in the same manner
I lay still in the closet
until your next ticket of adventure
oft times I throw myself
down a gauntlet
how far I can go
without breaking my core
through these endless cycles
of times and seasons
thrust to the naked truths
of human foibles
and grandest quirkiness
in my servitude- steadfast
albeit my wretched state...

remember
I was taken afar
to strange lands
but I found my way back
to you

with you my mistress
I remain.

Exodus

how often do we stop and greet
some passing strangers
drawing figures on the ground
counting sands
boring through the passage of time
spanning the immensity of the expanse
dipping their feet
before treading these unfamiliar waters
reciting rhapsodies of fettered hopes
and bruised egos
an ugliness emanating from
their sunken countenance
shedding blood and tears
testament to endless debacles
in this ill-fated pass
I see no reason
for unkindness to reign
we're all fellow travelers
seeking refuge from the storms
composing lullabies as we go
it doesn't take too much
to see the value of a soul

...even one soul being brought home.

Boundless

I cross the borders daily
and step into the unknown
I always pursue
what my heart tells me
and though I trade comfort
for a bag of adventure
I won't settle in the valley
when I can have the mountains
to explore
and conquer

the meaning I give
to every whit and tittle
in my highest altitudes
or lowest vicissitudes
becomes me
and my reality

under the faint glow
of the moon
or the embers of
a receding star
I won't ever dim my lights

for those who see my spark
will illuminate with me

in the end
the worst disservice
of humanity
isn't cowardice
but conformity
many have faltered
when stricken with doubt
a baleful traitor
the mighty conspirator
of dream stealers
and naysayers

.....

I cross the borders daily
and step into the unknown
I strive to break free
from these flaxen cords
of false security
before they become
a stronghold
and spiral out of control
for it's better to lose
the assurance of
everyone I love
than to have
my own shadows
abandon me

I AM BOUNDLESS.

Animal Tanka

hummingbirds gather
to harvest a moist flower
they are too many
like moths to the killing flame
the beauty bigger than life.

drunken on spring air
birds leave their warm sand havens
and cross the ocean
just so their children can be born
smelling the wet rotten hay.

a lone wolf will starve
even though loved by poets
alone means weaker
when cold seasons come around
only your pack keeps you warm.

turtles on islands
still wear the names of men
who died long ago
those sailors who carved them up
left their own walking tombstones.

elephants are smart
whales could be even smarter
brains will not help you
when you are desirable
and too easy to notice.

Oriental Beauty

She
walks into
the room- hush falls
as her long, thick, raven hair
fragrant of dried Osmanthus flower
rests merrily on a cashmere ensemble
her figure erect, thoughts unadulterated
a potpourri of beauty polished to perfection
one should not probe her unfathomable spirit
an abysmal deep, a state of quiet repose
her heart lies the convergence where
torrents of mysteries unfurled
she dances in the rain
embraces the sun
knows no
limit

Tran(QUILL)

....

petroleum jelly waxing the floors
crayons painted on the walls

...

Ah, kids don't mind the rubbish
leaves and sticks make for a great dish

....

back resting-- seat reclined
mind waltzing-- heart aligned

...

my legs splayed
an iconic display (whatchya say?)

...

for once
don't look askance

...

I don't care; I dare
to idle away:

...

break free from my humdrum routine
eat pork rinds, liver spread, and sardines

...

for it ain't a slough
when a queen stays in a burrow

The Emcee

...
glittery gown in deep navy blue
silver sequins complement the hue
....
heels on carpeted floor, pacing to and fro
no dull moment, ever a gung-ho
...
her perfectly-arched eyebrows
sent me snatching for a mirror...
...
countdown to ten
is something forgotten?
...
her fingers frantically fumble for script
worst case scenario-- come up with an ad lib!
...
eyes darting back, not so convivial
greet the crowd with a toothy smile
...
"good evening!" voice sultry and sure
here I am, a squiggly worm, keeping score
...
relax, I coaxed myself
she'll do fine, you taught her best

sigh

Wings

mile-after-canopied-mile
in this fabled primeval forest
only one known bird
managed to charter this sacred place

he arrived on random occasions
mocking my inglorious presence
parading sartorial elegance
feathers bursting with vibrant colors --
pampered by Nature's gifts
free to taste the sweetest nectar

while I, who'd experienced nothing ...
torn by forlorn thoughts ...
perched confined by iron bars
condemned to the east wing
of this remote forgotten tower

all day, from afar I'd watch
until his shadows at night did fade --
when somber bells would toll
drowning all other cries ...
and from the forest he would fly

but he came with purpose one morning
without any air of arrogance
this time bearing gifts --
the finest bread I ever tasted,
he bore beneath one wing
in his bill a fresh-plucked flower,
from which I wondrously sipped ...

he told me a million stories
about his night-time castle
how he'd been forced to swear an oath
to never abandon the family
that had once nursed him back to health

at his mistress' command --
each night he did surrender
the key to his own freedom
which he bore around his neck
as again and again she tethered him
inside his cold, metallic cage

sleep at most times eluded him ...
as he pined for another day
and the promise of fresh freedom
he knew that day would bring

any time without his presence
suddenly churned insufferable
our intersecting lives revolving
around our captors' selfish whims

autumn's glory faded ...
and at dawn of the winter solstice
he pecked and yanked the lock
around the door that bound me
till with a groan the gate surrendered!

we soared above the canopy
the sun in all its splendor
rising to greet our eyes
and filled with newfound glee --

he boldly dropped his key ...
both of us caged no more.

Mileage

at the crack of dawn
I fumble through my driver keys
as life takes on a center stage
with its regular cast of
wannabes, doers, idlers,
and street urchins
while no singular experience
is shared by generational beggars:
graffiti, debris
of fractured societies;
scores, throngs
of greedy monsters
feasting on the bountiful harvest
throwing crumbs left for others to scavenge

.....
we are literary toilers
who seek to decipher
what is beyond the veil;
past these curtains of
absurd reality
enthused at the prospect of
disarming the most potent killer
that is apathy
saving the world from catapulting
to its fatal demise
refusing to swallow the lies
inventing antidotes to crimes
we dissect
investigate
collaborate

.....
another face in the casket
is brought to my remembrance
what kind of life he lived?

what legacy of faith he floundered?
how many heartbeats were
wasted on useless fears?

EVERYDAY
a maelstrom of fools
close calls
we pass the ball
life is a proscenium
and I choose to be
my own director
I drive to places
where I can be heard
my influence felt
and make my own
worthwhile dent

that's how I fill my mileage.

Symphonies



Anamnesis

By Luigi Albu

In tender silence of mystery
murmuring whispers, I hear
thoughts and words that fly
I catch them with no fear.

In my mind's palm gathered
I look at them with heed,
and, as they are too twisted,
I disentangle them a bit.

Such astonishing views
kaleidoscopically open,
shrouding into old tales
my flight almost utopian.

My flight is mild among tales,
closed eyes see all clear,
nostalgia winking bleak eyes
confides in me plenary.

Peace is my sacrament
for my tales to atone,
first to accept my past,
then to leave it alone.

In verses strewn by themselves
thoughts that seemed dormant,
exhuming in rhymes foretimes,
of oblivion antiquated shrines.

Revived, they gently repose
in lines, metaphors and strophes,
unraveling my anamnesis,
with thrills, nymphs and unicorns.

eared willow backing steps
forward
sprouts of steel huff and puff

sweeping stars fill in:

“Hey u, u were that human’s universe.”

“Sonny, why twinkle her
obvious?”

“Obviously, I forgot the human’s name.”

“Leave his star alone, she is
longing.”

[deleted scene]

peanut gallery:	starry
watch, sinful.”	“Mankind’s stop
watches? stop..	“Haha, stop
aging.”	“Healing is their
race cut short,	
Sonny.”	
throw know-it-all	“Idea, starz!
earth’s atmosphere	through
? “	

Shift

By Tony Cavanagh

moves
of thought
on lumbered path
inter stardust
and the skin
karma's tit
for tenet tat
are palindromes
within

horizon flares
the curving sky

forget
forget
forget

knowing lost
inside of wait

regret
regret
regret

at depths
declined in
sodden hopes
I wished
upon a dream

that moves
as flesh
on open bones
core crawling
spirit gleans

I lose myself
in hallowed ground
spit spat
to leave a mark
this place I rive
not yet to see
breathes life
to suck the dark

nearer still
the set of sun
glows red
in hue to mask
distance spans
to nowhere spent
in the clocking
of the task

Last Breath

By Madilyn de Leon

(Doha)

On the grayest day when only one leaf is clinging,
with the grass still wet on a sun kissed morning.

I'll escape the silence filled emptiness of this room,
four walls of sadness in every corner loom.

The leaf falls to the music of the whispering wind,
I let breath go and my heart did not rescind.

(Sortha)

With the grass still wet on a sun kissed morning,
On the grayest day when only one leaf is clinging.

Four walls of sadness in every corner loom,
I'll escape the silence filled emptiness of this room.

I let breath go and my heart did not rescind,
the leaf falls to the music of the whispering wind.

let it fall

with a soft cradling breeze
I watched as a single leaf
swayed from tree to tree
tossed from branches
that worked like paddles
back and forth
to and from it went

the leaf falls
a little lower each time
but the branches are alert
to catch it again

and hurl it again
to the other waiting tree
while the breeze
in connivance
propels it upwards again

the poor leaf is tired
it's body bruised
thinning from every toss
it does not want
to sway
nor to play

it has already fallen
snapped from its bough
but the breeze
and the branches
would not let go

I Wish to Write

I wish I could write about pink and lavender skies
but my mind only clings to the grey clouds
that hovers constantly above my head.

I wish I could write about spring meadows,
green grass and fragrant blooms
but all I have in my hands are wilted flowers,
ashen petals, that crumble to dust when touched.

I wish I could write about calm and cool turquoise waters
but all around me are strong underwater currents
muddying the waves as they crash the rocks on the shore.

I wish I could write about moonlight
and how it casts a magical silvery sheen over freshly fallen snow
but all I see is darkness shadowing the face of the friendly moon.

I wish I could write about that familiar face so full of love I adore
but all I see in front of me is an unrecognizable stranger,
buried in the passing seasons of yesteryear.

I wish.

Battle**By TM DiSarro**

Into twilight's sacred fortress
Captured shadows now must wait
Darkness leaves them quite defenseless
As the hour is getting late
Stars align but cannot save them
Fearsome lines of battle drawn
Walls of sleep prove no resistance
Breached by soldiers of the dawn
The Queen of Darkness on offensive
In this timeless war of night
She will satisfy the senses
As she suffocates the light
Safe inside her midnight castle
She will reign with blinded eyes
Ruling over stars and moonbeams
Shooting them across the skies
Raging with her soldiers cheering
Thinking they have slaughtered light
But their time of wrath is nearing
As they glorify her night
The King prepares his breakfast table
For the armies of the Sun
Bringing havoc with his dawning
In this battle never won
The Queen of night has no idea
All her efforts are in vain
A battle of a billion years
Overpowered once again
As the Sun King cracks the sky
With his beams of light will slay
But some darkness will remain
A hidden stain upon the day
For now, she slowly bows her head
Defeated by the King of Light
Her army scattered with the dead
Until when next she rules the night

A Wistful Ache

By Kelly Glover

The itch found deep in the gut
An ache that can't be ignored
It leaves the soul thirsty
If it is not quenched

This includes the most sinister yearnings
The geeked up drug addict seeking a fix
Priests that covet a child's innocence
The bloodlust of a murderer

The ache of the good
Rivals the ache of the bad
Deep caverns of dependency
Fill the spaces left empty by denial

To accept what is uniquely yours
Does not diminish the want
There is no detox
From an embedded affliction

How do you excavate the longing?
For love, pain, or abuse
The inherent burning that festers
Remains permanent if left unscratched

It Could be You**By Dale Brendan Hyde**

They say you are what you eat
Yet I'm starving hard in the street
Does this mean I'm nothing
A piece of only dirt
Does it mean I'm fresh air
A stray dogs old scrap of meat
For my dry crusty lips
A sip out of the rain filled gutter grates
Just for me

They say that I'm yearning
For something much more
A little something to nourish my soul
But there's nothing inside me
Not of solid food intake

They say that I'm yearning
It's gotten bleak out on this street
I picked it, not random
It's where the business people meet

They say that I'm yearning
To catch your pity
Frame your eye
Kind souls even blinkered
I'm invisible to their vibe

It's certainly not my silver spoon
Like there's on repeat
No, more a grubby street urchin need

They say that I'm yearning
With my cardboard sign
Written sincere
It's spelled out in permanent black marker
For all to read of my despairs

Yet the shoes highly polished
They just walk on by
Quickening their strides
Pretending to look to the skies

They say that I'm yearning
And they come, not often, but out
of the blue
A sensitive soul
Who peers down into my gloom

A rattle hits my begging tin
As a few token coins fit in
I know I will now feed tonight
I will even share it with my friend

There's a yearning to get up
To dress again in a suit
Yet on most days, hours, minutes, years
A realisation I'm totally destitute
Alone
I could be you

Animal Farm

By Jesse James Kennedy

It's animal farm 2018
Everywhere
Weasels in suits and ties
Swine in squad cars
Vultures circling the vulnerable
And everywhere
The herds of sheep
Need to pack up my van
Find my wolf pack
My tribe of freaks
Need to sleep under stars
Sit comfortably
By a bonfire
Need to see men who juggle fire
And women who dance in the rain
Need live music
That applies a healing balm
To my soul
And lets me know
It's ok
You're home now.

The howl of a wolf at night
The grace of an eagle in flight
Women who dance in the rain
Loyal friends who ease the pain
The company of a dog
Watching the moon through the fog
These are the things that I need
That on which my soul must feed
These sweet treasures that are free
All put here for you and me

Strange Weather

By M Lynn

A myriad of notes and chords
Battles and treaties of surrender
Downpours and deluges deliver

Lightning crashes through earth
Thunder rumbles to the core
Ready to knock down Heaven's door

Hail pounds like an attacking heart
Ice pelts against hot skin
Rattles bars of ribcage within

Wind gusts lift and swirl
Tugging of war to and fro
Tumbling, spinning out of control

Rub and strike like a flint
Sparks of friction ignites a blaze
Impassing vision inflicted by the haze

Orchestrated tones derived from the unknown
Conducted by a much higher being
Unevaded by the All Seeing

Red-eyed Tired, Awake**By Bryan Oliphint**

Oak carved well is holding us
Swinging here to there
Rocking forth and back
In our rocking chair

Be still my child, but not too soon
Now fades the sun and comes the moon
I hold my child within my arms
And wonder

Will I sleep first or he?
This child I hold or me
Will destiny or fate decide?
Who dreams first and who resides
Awake

Sleep jumps forward, back, and here and there
And lands atop my rocking chair
Dancing not through time in fair progression

We'll doze together, the child and I
Beneath the summer, winter sky
But not too soon and not just yet
Remember once and then forget
That we were ever here

Red-eyed tired
Sleep deprived
Awake

Red-eyed tired
But much alive
Awake

Inner Voice

By Edentu D. Oroso

Shut is the outside world.

A paling darkness the eyes see,
And only a stuffed hum the ears hear
In the inward grope to the other realm.

Then a brightening dawn.

The gift of an eye,
There's a subtle lift from the shroud.
A voice is restored,
So tinged in celestial echoes.

That new form with the intrinsic gait
Listens to the blissful harmony of self:

Rhythms of an unknown lyre.

To and fro the inner voice guides,
Excited form drifts to view the sphere,
And spies the trail of the damp shroud.

There's another radiant hedge;

A finer lift,
The shuttle continues.

Form is no longer the shroud's captive,
That redefinition of being,
A contact with the source.

Then the dreariness of the shroud returns;

The voice is drowned,
In the discordant echoes of living.

Immortal

By Firdaus Parvez

When a poet dies
Cover her with ashes of her burnt poems
Pages that lay crumpled in the bin
Let them float in the breeze like whispers
Talking to unseeing eyes
Making them bleed the unshed

When a poet dies
Lay her gently, bury her
In the soft soil with her words
Sealed casket of her chest
And when they sprout in spring
Gather those flowers and press them in your books
Bruising the pages red and blue

When a poet dies
Underline the words she left unsaid
Read them carefully
They were the ones she held close
Learn them by heart
And you will be able to sing along with birds

When a poet dies
She does not

Yearnings

By Mick Rose

rain-whipped petals bow
Heaven seeks a sacrifice
perfume fills the air

Like your moth I fly
searing pain reveals your lies
her taste on your lips

dull gold tiara
cruel stranger in her mirror--
memories burn bright ...

sorting lights and darks
even Clorox can not bleach
your lipstick-scarred shirt

dreams torn-n-tattered-
hot tears bathe a bleeding soul
silver hopes linger

green eyes splay rogue
deep tidal pools ensnare him
oyster hugs its pearl

Conquer

By Tissy Taylor

Softly she gathers you to her breast
Silent words. Broken love. False regrets
Promises made were unrealized
Brilliantly captured in the dark of her mind

False the Gods thunderous pulpits absorb
Spewing venom victim to their hope
Keening she yields to unkempt sorrow
Stained prayers breaking bread for her tomorrow

Lift your arms wide to welcome the rain
Embrace your demons for want of pain
Still the rushing waters make your peace
Rise daughter, rise-up from your knees. Simply breathe.

Urchin seedling begins to take root
Tenacious heart, labor born your fruits
With winged joy let your spirit rejoice
Triumphantly shine as you reclaim your voice

No More**By Jai Thoolen**

My heart aches for you
What else can it do?
Like fingers outstretched
Too far out of reach
Your memory etched
For me to beseech
And call your heart back
To those days of care
We long left that track
When we were a pair
So full of the hurt
The hole that is you
You cruel little flirt
We should have been two
You won't let me in
I cannot know why
Love doesn't begin
With glints in one's eye
I hope and I pray
You'll love me for me
And cometh the day
Your lock takes my key
The tick of the clock
It slows to a crawl
I'm lost in the flock
You won't heed my call
The distance it grows
And feelings they flee
A love no one knows
That never will be
The yearning may fade
The pain less severe
I'm lost and afraid

Though now it's so clear
You'll never return
I'm living a lie
No more shall I yearn
And...
No more will I cry

Empty

By Ndotono Waweru

I live in teardrops.
Rivulets,
Into miniature puddles of
Assorted sorrows.
Yearnings,
That lazily float
On the morning dew like
Tiny origami boats on a hexed lagoon.
Illicit wishes wallowing in
The promising helm of dawn.

I hung my hopes on a clothesline
So I can watch them dry to the acrid
Stench of reality.
My blood slowly steeping memories
Into madness.
The incessant tick of time
Is a strange lullaby to my earthly
Afflictions.

I die in coffee cups.
Strange beans that calm
The scars I hung on my walls.
Wakens the desire to cloak my demons
In platitudes and skinny smiles.
Empty;
The cup that swirls
Eddies of lunacy further from my
Shores.

Never (ever yearning)

By Johnny Francis Wolf

— — —
He dwelt upon
how good it felt,

to stretch his legs and thrash
about, alone once more,
how sweet the night

in bed.

Whilst new again, this
limb and longing liberation,

college was not far behind,
with futon splayed and never sheets
and under blanket stinky warm

he spread.

— — —
There's that word
again, he thought,

'longing' had no place in life
when now, he gloated,
feeling free

as he.

Here again, a single man
doing no one's honey do,

beholden no one's open mouth that
spoke in tongue and kept him up,
ever loving, ever losing

sleep.

And hardly would he think of her,
her endless stare and fingered hair

and way she'd stop
his breath with just
(yet twice today he did recall)

her grin.

Seldom did occur to him
that never would he cry again,

allowed to weep with
kleenex box, her folded lap and
side by side, would watch a

Hallmark film.

Except whenever thoughts of what
he can't forget would ooze

from neath unruly eyes,
remembering the way she said,
the last she said

good-bye.

And ever when that memory
comes flooding into yielding heart,

never will admit it true, for
blood and tears would ever bleed,
since 21st of June, the day

she died.

Tomorrow's Moon

By Alexander Wolff

I am awaiting
Tomorrow's moon
To dry the tears brought on
By today's sunlight

Soft luminescence soothes
The sunbeam's scorn

Life: A synthesis of
Muffled noise and
static hums of
shrieking silence

Days coming and going
Degrees of scorch and pining
A seasonal stifling

Let the winter come
And cool the fires that burn
Let the summer pass
For scorched lands be cooled

Hang in the ether
Orb of luminescence

I am looking for
The waxing of the moon
For the waning of my heart

Farewell to an Angel

By Chris Young

Met in a place I never should have been.
Not with this finger adorned with a ring.
A shoe hanging from the tip of her toe
When it hit the floor, I just had to stop.
I wait now in silence, should have said no.
It did not take long for the next one to drop.
A simple affair, that's what it seemed like.
No harm no foul, that's what I thought.
Fell like a fool on loves golden spike.
Reckless, foolish, will surely get caught.
Started with sweat and sweet fantasy.
Turns now to love and pain in my heart.
Cut it off cold, there can be no her and me.
But it's my soul on fire now, tried to depart.
There is no more us, no sweet meeting plan.
I broke it off, but she is the one gone.
Our place we once had now gathers dust.
I thought I could leave, just move along.
I walk through our rooms; my pain is so just.
Hear laughter, her tears and her moans.
They echo down these hallways, along with my ghost.
I called her my angel, I love her as she roams.
I wait here in tails, a sad guestless host.

About the Author



Ayo Gutierrez is a six-time Amazon bestselling, multi-awarded author and international book coach. She authored and co-authored of several poetry Amazon bestselling books including the titles, *Yearnings: Collected Poetry*; *Evocare: A Collection of Tanka*, *Chasing Zephyrs and Scentsibility*. She also co-authored other bestselling motivational titles such as *Almost is the Same as Never*, *Chooseday: Life is a Matter of Choice*, and *Are You Ready: Timeless Principles and Proven Habits for Self-transformation*.

Ayo's poetry is inspired by life that surrounds her and the everyday human trials and tribulations that she comes across. She believes that she must give back to life what she has been taking all these years—and to do so, she has chosen poetry. Her poetry has appeared in various international anthologies, ezines, and literary journals.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication from the De La Salle University-Dasmaringas.

She has successfully launched more than 300 authors worldwide and continues to help others write and publish their books through her Ink Your Legacy Writing Courses and her online publishing platform called GMGA Publishing.

Website: www.inkyourlegacy.com

Email: gmgapublishing@gmail.com

About the Guest Poets

Luigi Albu is a Romanian bilingual journalist and writer. He writes in Romanian and English and lives in Cyprus since 2006. He is an anthropologist and holistic therapist trained in Chinese Traditional Medicine (Tui Na, Chi Nei Tsang), chiropractic, osteopathy, reflexology and nutrition.

Corey Brockington of New York began telling lyrical stories as a songwriter. He is a survivor of tragedies, a lover of change, and a writer of poetic stories. While he was still in college, searching for his writing voice, The Walt Whitman Birthplace Association and HSBC awarded his poetry anthology. At twenty-eight years old, Corey's poetic storytelling transcends his lyrical rhythms into words painted.

Tony Cavanagh is an Australian writer, a reluctant human, and a traveler.

Madilyn De Leon started writing by penning three lines with a restricted word count per line. She writes mostly micro-poetry on love, pain, nature, and emotions that touch the human spirit. Her poetry and photography are part of the published anthologies *Light Lines*, *Into the Void Arts and Literature Issue 2* and *Luminous Echoes*.

TM Di Sarro is a writer living in Sarasota, Florida. You may view his writings on Instagram@tmdisarro, Mirakee@tmdisarro, www.spillwords.com, and Facebook.

Kelly Glover is a thirty something year old single mother from Greensboro, NC. She is the fearless leader of three kids, two cats, and one failed marriage. She is author of *The Light of my Dark: A Poetry Collection*.

Dale Brendan Hyde was born in Salford Manchester in 1974 but has lived most of his life in the city of Wakefield West Yorkshire. A troubled life throughout his teens climaxed into a lengthy prison sentence for robbery. Upon release, a mixture of attending college to retake failed schooling and continuous trouble with the police and high courts seemed to be his course in life—until a university placement seemingly became the catalyst to a more determined path of making his career that of a writer.

He published his first poetry book by ROUTE at the Yorkshire Art Circus for the TS Elliot prize. He is also the author of the crime fiction novel, *The Ink Run* and soon-to-be-released, *The Death Row Thrift Shop*. He has a poetry book released on Amazon entitled, *The Gods R Watching*.

Jesse James Kennedy is an American novelist and poet born in St. Louis Missouri. After a brief stint in the Army, he spent a good decade running wild, reading and sharpening his writing skills. His first novel, *Missouri Homegrown*, was published by Perfect Crime Books to strong national reviews from Publishers Weekly and Booklist. His second novel, *Tijuana Mean*, has been accepted by the same publisher and is due to be released in late 2018. These days he can usually be found somewhere in the rural Midwest writing and consuming copious amounts of bottom shelf whiskey.

M Lynn was born in Paulding, Ohio. She left for the Air Force right after high school for five years. Melissa has been writing since age 14 and it has been her mentally therapeutic release for many years.

Bryan Oliphint lives and works in Southeast Texas. In his spare time, he relishes coffee, hopes for nightmares, and enjoys writing psych horror and poetry.

Edentu Oroso is an author, public speaker, biographer, ghostwriter, poet, and magazine columnist. He likes to read and write on multiple genres: poetry, critical essays, sci-fi/fantasy, inspirational paranormal, spiritual, etc. He is the author of *Tears from a Rose; The Alfa Sky*, the

biography of Air Marshal alfa- Nigeria/s longest serving Chief of air Staff; *Wings of Freedom*, and *Songs of the Gilded Pen* under the pen name Dean Max.

Firdaus Parvez, an avid reader and book hoarder, also enjoys tinkering with words. She has co-edited an anthology of short stories and is working on editing a collection of poems. Her prose and poetry have been published both online and in print. You can find her on Instagram: @fridauswrites Twitter: @fridaus and [https://allpoetry.com/Firdaus Parvez](https://allpoetry.com/Firdaus_Parvez)

Mick Rose While wandering the United States in a quest for the Perfect Pizza, photographer Mick Rose pens haiku and prose. Though his crime fiction can prove dark, and not for the faint-of-heart, he typically tells tall tales involving sexual humor (which sometimes prove explicit).

Mick's stories have appeared in half-a-dozen online mags—and his 5,000-word suspense story, "The Friend Request" is forthcoming this December in *The Anthology of Human Thought*. If you wish to say, "Hello," you can visit him on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mickrosefictionandhaiku/>

Tissy Taylor began writing as soon as she could hold a crayon. From Ontario, Canada she found her writing voice early on, serving two community newspapers for several years. She currently works as a Senior Business Analyst/Communications Manager for GM and recently released her first poetry collection entitled, *Madness, Chaos Unravelled*.

Jai Thoolen is a diverse author from Australia. Children's books are the main focus of his work including, *My Beard*. He has a need to get words out at all times and does so in many forms of poetry and short stories (or 'yarns' as they're known in Oz). Oftentimes, there is a cheeky or fun streak in his writing though he does have a serious and maybe even sinister side.

Ndotono Waweru is a published poet from Kenya with a love for imagery and the talent to make them visible. He treasures simplicity and fluidity in abstract poetry. He is a believer in the mobility of words.

Johnny Francis Wolf is a former actor and model. He currently lives in the high desert, three hours north of Los Angeles. He writes daily poems on his Facebook author page 'Daily Poem'. His most cherished work is his script entitled *Jelly Donuts*, which he hopes to land on a movie contract soon.

Alexander Wolff is completing his B.S. in Psychology. In addition to poetics, he is also a classical clarinetist. His main inspirations for poetry come from the unity of human suffering, the mundanity of everyday life, and the wide range of emotions human's experience.

Chris Young was born in Springfield, Illinois and grew up with a traveling bug that led him all over the world. He spent seven years in the Navy. Chris earned a degree in English.

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

I Have A Name: A Collection of Prose on Mental Disorders by Creative Talents Unleashed August 12, 2017

Bards from the Far East: Anthology of Haiku and Kindred Verses (With Felix Fojas, Danny Gallardo, Ligaw Makata, and Jose Rizal Reyes), January 17, 2018

Madness: Chaos Unravelling By Tissy Taylor. Wrote its Foreword, June 9, 2018

Haynaku 15 by Eileen R. Tabios September 1, 2018

A Promise of Doves by David Wagoner “Mileage”, November 18, 2018

Yearnings: Collected Poetry by GMGA Entertainment Productions, November 22, 2018

Transcendence: Anthology of Human Thought by Trode Publications. “Downward Spiral,” Puke Reverence”, February 26, 2019

In the Crosshairs: An Anthology of Protest Poems by GMGA Entertainment Productions, March 4, 2019

Used Wings by Tissy Taylor. “Wings”, April 3, 2019

A Vow by Aurelien Thomas. Wrote its Foreword, June 14, 2019

Evocare: A Collection of Tanka with Eileen R. Tabios and Brian Cain Aene by GMGA Entertainment Productions, August 8, 2019

Amalgam by Poetry Cartel, August 31, 2019

INVITATION

If you enjoyed this book or if it has somehow impacted your life, we would love to hear from you.

Telephone Number: 09989602961

E-mail Address: gmgapublishing@gmail.com

Website: www.inkyourlegacy.com

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Amazon Reviews

Tanya Rakh

5.0 out of 5 stars [A Heartfelt and Intricate Collection of Verse](#)

Reviewed in the United States on February 8, 2019

Format: Paperback Verified Purchase

Ayo Gutierrez is a graceful archaeologist of the human heart. In this collection, she and her guest contributors expose parts of the psyche that are so often left unexplored, too often kept at a distance from us. With her precise, intricately balanced, flowing poetry, Gutierrez bridges this distance—the strange pathways between the mind and the heart. Sometimes lyrical, sometimes stark and violent, these poems speak to the very nature of yearning; the undercurrent primal self which longs to be sated, to be free. Sometimes yearning comes in a whisper, sometimes in a song, sometimes in a scream. This collection encompasses the entire range.

Hersey Bartschi

5.0 out of 5 stars [Beautiful writings](#)

Reviewed in the United States on December 17, 2018

Format: Paperback Verified Purchase

After I received this book last week i started to read it. I could not stop reading. Also, the cover is matte and clean. I absolutely adore this book. There are so many beautiful writings in here. It is beautiful, deep and raw in all brilliant ways. This is a book that captures emotion we can't always put into words. I must say I am glad I ordered this book.

Jay

5.0 out of 5 stars [This is a poet whose time has come.](#)

Reviewed in the United States on December 15, 2018

Format: Paperback Verified Purchase

If you buy one poetry book this year, buy this one. Fearless and deep style. Her poem Hemorrhage is a shameless and unfiltered look at what

goes on in the heart and soul of a writer. Impressive, international cast of guest poets as well. Bravo.

Author of *The Devil's Bonfire*

5.0 out of 5 stars [A Powerful Voice in Poetry, Speaks in this Book](#)

Reviewed in the United States on November 27, 2018

Format: Kindle Edition

You will travel down many roads of the mind with this poet, as she shares her poetic abilities with you. If you just want a great poetic read, buy this book. If you want to give the right gift to a poetry loving friend, buy this book. If you want to try poetry, buy this book.

Amazon Customer

5.0 out of 5 stars [Great book](#)

Reviewed in the United States on February 2, 2019

Format: Paperback

Wonderful book of poetry. They were all just so beautiful. I was going to read a few pages as I waited to go to an appointment I had. I couldn't wait to get back to it. Loved it.

Top international reviews

Aurelien Thomas

5.0 out of 5 stars [Verses like diamonds](#)

Reviewed in the United Kingdom on December 22, 2018

Format: Kindle Edition Verified Purchase

'Yearnings' is a beautiful collection of poems spanning a wide range of topics, from the sweet and personal to the more socially conscious and engaged. Narrative poetry, cheeky sense of humour, beautiful and very sensual love poems all having a fleeting touch of dreaminess about them, touching portraits, adorable and lovely verses about parenthood but, also, raw poems exposing brutally revolting issues like the fate of sex workers and/or poor working women (the author lives in the Philippines)... Ayo Gutierrez's talent speaks in a welcome variety of forms and tones!

The minimal (bare?) punctuation, and at times pedantic choice of words, might not be to everyone's taste but, nevertheless, here's a brilliant collection. Ayo Gutierrez's verses indeed are like diamonds: at times chiselled to perfection, at times left unearthed raw and brut but, always, refracting a sparkling and dazzling luminosity.

Last but not least, the last chapter is a gathering of guest poets each bringing their own contribution and, none fails to deliver when it comes to quality!

Wouldntyouliketoknow

5.0 out of 5 stars More than lovely

Reviewed in the United States on April 15, 2019

Format: Paperback Verified Purchase

Such a beautiful collection

The Unraveling Itch

indefatigable fingers
a heap of crumpled papers
and scattered brain
chaos and order juxtaposed
nary in parallel realms

like the path of a poem,
I turn my face
away from yours
but you notice my eyes
as I peek furtively at your lips
I imagine the kisses
that are rightfully mine
oh yes, they are mine
because I say so—

in the end:
we obtain what we want

diminished.

...and wanting MORE.

-ayo