The Mystic Blue Review is an online literary magazine.

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Cover Art by Thomas Gillaspy.
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FICTION READER:
Cheyenne Current is a fourth year creative writing major at UCR. She has been writing ever since she can remember. She’s written everything from poetry and short stories to novels and screenplays. She’s a script reader in her spare time as well as practiced literary critique. She is a fiction and nonfiction reader here at The Mystic Blue Review.

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Tanya Talwar is doing her graduation in english literature. She is a focused and diligent person. She aspires to make her mark in the field of journalism. She has worked as a student editor for her college magazine with zeal. A voracious reader by nature and loves to try out various genres. She has proved her
academic excellence by being a topper in 10th and 12th boards in her school. Along with academic excellence she has proved her mettle in extracurriculars at school and college level. She is a debater, orator and writer. She clinched the title of best debater at school level. She won a second place in a Youth Fest. She won a gold medal in The English Olympiad and crossed the first level of N.T.S.E. exam. Her holistic development has helped her to excel at every stage in life. As her mother, who has seen her through all the stages of her life, she has no doubt that she would work with zeal and see the project assigned to her till the very end and ensure its successful completion.

ARTWORK AND PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR:

Margareta Syuillin is a second year Creative Writing major at UCR. In the future she hopes to have published works and be an expert in the field of mental health. Her favorite past time is learning to play the ukulele. She loves Christmas decorations and airplane tickets.
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THE YEW TREE

There comes a time in the river of life
as you turn that last bend and you see a greeter
chin to the sky, arms outstretched like wings,
feet rooted firmly in the riverbank,
and you meet yourself at last.
Sing from your heart.
It is time.

-Robin Throne
SAY HER NAME

she bears many names: Hades is she and Might imperishable, And raving Madness, and untamed Desire ~Sophocles
She who has many names says you only need utter one
Just once
To save yourself.
Yes, just the one singular name that calls her out of you
To help, not to hinder
Then another
Till you reach deep into your gut, that place you know too well
And wrench that solid anchor of cold, hard iron
You know it lives there still, grip it now
Say her name
Oh, say it twice if you must
A third time, only this time—different—in fluid form like air, like water
Like the unstable moonlight across a pond of crud—uneven as your disgrace
And wrench that rusted iron with a clutch of anxiety as tight as it grabbed you that first time
Yes, clench it now with the full torque of your jaw enough to sever limb
Not your limb of course, you have hurt enough
Yes, say her name aloud this third time
And bite down so hard you can hear it outside yourself, reverberate outside your ears
Screaming, knocking, like the sordid mammal who lives in the wall
Living inside your space, trapping you in your own custodial care
Homely creatures comforted by their own waste, inmates of eternal perdition
For there is no end to this masquerade when self-induced
Get them out of you
Say her name right now, aloud - Louder
And let it ring in your head
Then Louder, till it booms outside of yourself
Louder than the creepy comfort of coffee-smoke-breath snuggling your ear
That old math teacher again, coming down your row, who laughed: stupid, stupid, stupid
Evict these words now, forever, whatever they may be
Whatever they may singe and sear, enough burn
She who has many names says say another, Louder
Till it rings outside your head and stills a lifetime of deceptive clamoring
Drown out that Corona-lime-vomit-breath memory of one dark night turned too many
Unfasten what sucks at your skin in murky waters of your own miserable memory
She who has many names says you only need utter one
Louder than all the repetition, faux transgressions, the exclusions
For once, save yourself with one solitary word
Do it now; say her name.

-Robin Throne
santa found it was you
that hacked naughty and nice list
laptop turns to coal

-Denny E. Marshall
christmas invasion
aliens transform into
holiday presents

-Denny E: Marshall
NEW HOME


-Denny E. Marshall
SEPULCHRE

The remains of Winter look set to die in March.  
Trees, leaves, undergrowth, tangle and twist  
Together, obsessed lovers

Dry as bones in the wind.  
The glow and shadows on her face,  
In memory, make me dream

She’s home

Until I remember  
This house is death’s  
Eminent domain.

Scarlet leaves spin like carousels  
To feather her resting place,  
Sumacs sucking at my blood

Until I lose all colour,  
Her whisper and phantom limb  
Feasting in the sun.

-Natalie Crick
RENFIELD’S DREAM

By Steve Wechsblatt

Large and luscious, flies, crickets and bugs gather in cloudy herds. Spiders as big as your head spin magnificent thirty-foot webs to catch them for me. As I reach up my hand and pull them from the sticky gray strands, I thank the spiders for their assiduous labor. Saliva flows between my teeth as I anticipate the fat, wriggling insect bodies to be crushed between my teeth.

Beneath the light-gray sky the hills are drawn with charcoal in sharp, zigzagging lines, lightly smudged by fingertips. The bugs are as black as my eye sockets. My hands, which lift to the web, are like two white goats that have been sacrificed for a guarantee that I will abide in this triumphant, colorless space, where desire is higher than reason and all the constellations.
“Don’t answer that,” I told my wife, when the house phone rang for the fifth time early that morning. When she had answered the first four times, whoever was at the other end waited long enough for her to know someone was on the line, then disconnected. This had been going on for several weeks and had become a growing irritation. Caller I.D. had been blocked, so we couldn’t tell who was harassing us.

“We may as well let the answering machine pick up,” Madeline suggested. “This way we can screen the calls and only answer those we want to.”

It was a sensible, practical solution to the problem and I tried to suppress my anger at this persistent phone intruder. It took another two weeks for the frequency of the calls to diminish, then they became sporadic and we thought the situation was resolved. We started answering the phone again, but a few days later the anonymous calls resumed. We had to be at the office by 8:30 a.m., so we didn’t have much time for our daily routine to be distracted by annoying phone calls.

We both worked at the Outreach Center. Madeline was the executive director and I was the program officer. The Center provided social services to homeless families with children who were placed in temporary shelters, without services. We provided referrals for housing, medical and dental treatment and other needs. Somehow we began giving meals and life skills workshops to several of the family’s children and we needed a social worker to deal with a case load that kept growing.

Madeline and I met at Gotham University, in New York City. We were very different people. She was a dedicated jock who believed in liberal causes. I was a computer and gamer type who believed that child molesters should get the death penalty. My sister had been molested when she was seven years old and it took her a long time to get over it. Madeline was opposed to the death penalty and we argued about it often, never reaching a compromise.

But we found many things in common. She loved poetry and got me to read her favorites, Blake, Emily Dickenson, Whitman, Rimbaud, Rilke and others. I liked them. I introduced her to the world of gaming and she actually got involved in a series of women’s war games and was a fierce competitor. One big quality we had in common was we both wanted to serve the needy.

In our junior year, a close friend, Warren, inherited a huge amount of money from a trust fund when he turned 21. He half jokingly asked our opinion what he should do with his new fortune and Maddie instantly replied:

“When we graduate, fund a program to help the homeless. Charlie and I will run it.”
‘Wait a second! What do you think you’re doing, committing me to some kind of project?’ But I didn’t say it. I only thought it. From that moment on she took charge of our lives, which now included romance and marriage. Warren didn’t know how tenacious Maddie could be. After graduation and our wedding, where he was our best man, she persuaded him to put up $150,000 a year for five years to start a not-for-profit organization to serve homeless families with children. After that we would be on our own. We rented an office and workshop space in the East 30’s, in an old commercial loft building. Then we reluctantly gave up our dorm rooms that had been so comfortable for the last four years, rented an apartment in an old walk-up tenement building off Third Avenue in the twenties, and began a new life. We quickly got more and more involved with the homeless children, many of whom we discovered were gifted and talented. So we started a computer learning center and more and more kids came to us. A lot of them weren’t in school, so one of our goals was to get them all into classrooms. The problem was we didn’t have enough time or personnel to deal with all the needs and services the kids required. If we wanted to continue working with the kids, we needed someone capable to help with them. That’s when the complications grew. $150,000 a year may seem like a lot to some people, but after rent, $2,600 per month, Madeline’s executive director salary, $30,000, my $28,000, we’d have to hire a social worker, at $35,000. All the other expenses, insurance, electricity, the list went on and on. This meant we didn’t have much money for a project coordinator. After some quick grant writing and Mad’s funding efforts we raised $15,000, so we could pay someone $24,000, which would mean our stretching every dollar for the rest of our expenses. But we started interviewing candidates.

The kids were mostly black or hispanic, so we wanted to hire someone who could relate to them. However, the only qualified applicants wouldn’t work for that low salary. And I couldn’t blame them. We finally hired a bright young black woman, a recent college graduate, on a two week trial basis. She seemed to be afraid of the kids and quit after the first week, without explanation. Then we hired a young latino man, but we found out he was bribing the kids to participate in life skills workshops, with trips to McDonalds and promises of new sneakers. Mad fired him. We were getting desperate. I was leading most of the life skills workshops, which I enjoyed immensely, even though I didn’t always know what I was doing. Yet I didn’t have time to do program development, grant writing and outreach to all the agencies and services we needed. Then Michael Donnigan applied for the job.

Michael was in his 40’s, with a history of working for not-for-profit public service organizations. He had a great resume, outstanding references that Mad called and he made a very positive impression. So we hired him. He started his two week trial period on a Monday and spent the first few days going through our records and program guidelines, which seemed to take a lot of time away from the kids. Then somehow he always had a conflict when it was time to do something with the kids. This was disturbing, but I talked to him and he seemed to understand what was required. On Thursday he took the kids to Madison Square Park, then he didn’t come in on Friday. We only found out later that day that while they were in the park he yelled at the kids for making too much noise. Some local parents tried to calm him, but he cursed them and stormed off abandoning the kids. Of course we decided to fire him.

He didn’t come in Monday. I phoned him, but only got voice mail and left a message asking him to call me. He didn’t. When he didn’t call or show on Tuesday, I phoned him and left a message firing him. I would have preferred to do it face to face, but he didn’t give me any choice. Our good judgment
was confirmed when some of the kids told us he ordered them around nastily and treated them disrespectfully. He finally came to the office on Friday and wanted two weeks pay, as well as severance. I told him we’d pay him for the first week, even though he walked off the job on Thursday, but there was no severance, since he wasn’t a regular employee, but was hired on a trial basis. He took his check, told me he’d sue us for wrongful termination and stormed out. We were relieved to see him go.

We hired a young black man who wanted to get children’s services experience and he fit right in from the first day. He liked and respected the kids and they really took to him. We forgot about our previous employee, until we got a subpoena to appear in court. This was a new experience for us. I had never been to court and Mad’s vast experience had been when she paid a traffic ticket once. We did some quick research on the internet, learned we needed a lawyer and Mad contacted a legal referral agency. They told her to ask large law firms for a pro bono attorney who would handle our case. Mad called several firms and one responded, assigning a young associate to meet with us. After a mutually satisfactory meeting, Mary Takagawa took our case.

Mary, a recent Columbia Law School graduate, was barely 5 feet tall, but full of energy and resolve. She had played the cello since childhood, the instrument almost bigger than she, and was sensitive to the plight of her clients. She admitted she knew nothing about labor or wrongful termination law, but researched enthusiastically online. The first hearing was to determine if the plaintiff’s case had sufficient merit to proceed. The judge, actually a lawyer doing court service, an older white woman with an abrupt, almost nasty manner, terrified Mary, who was almost tongue tied. We had hoped for a dismissal, but this was not to be.

The judge scheduled a hearing in a month and Donnigan cordially said goodbye to us, as if this was nothing personal. Mary apologized for her inadequacy, admitting she never appeared in front of a judge before, and vowed to do better next time. Mary was more confident at the next hearing, which had a new judge, a very pleasant, reasonable woman, who stated that not-for-profit public services groups deserved a fair chance to be heard. Mary presented a basic case, outlining the terms of employment and the circumstances that led to termination. Donnigan contradicted those facts, raved about how he was injured on the job and exploited. He presented an alternate scenario and claimed there was no two week trial period. It was our word against his. The judge scheduled a hearing in a month, at which time we could present evidence proving our claims. After abusing us verbally in front of the judge, he bid us a courteous farewell, assuming a lawyer’s persona, which Mary thought was crazy.

At the next hearing we brought letters from former applicants and our current employee, attesting they were told of a two week trial period. Donnigan, citing case law, insisted that the letters didn’t allow cross examination, accused us of forgery, and insisted we were colluding against him. He accused us of nepotism, husband and wife getting government money and exploiting the children. He called us dirty names and when Mary objected to his tirade he told the judge he was being persecuted by a big firm lawyer. Mary’s heartfelt declaration:

“Your honor. This man has more experience then I do,” gave us a laugh, but another hearing was scheduled.
Now that Mary was in an actual courtroom fight, her samurai spirit emerged and she was determined to prevail. She persuaded her supervising attorney at her firm to give her the services of an investigator. The investigator discovered that Donnigan’s employment history and references were false. He had a pattern of either being fired or quitting previous jobs, then suing for wrongful termination. He had worked for the Department of Sanitation, was constantly late, out sick, or walked off the job after disputes with his supervisor. In one ugly incident, he dumped a load of garbage on a supervisor’s lawn and porch. He was dismissed and filed a wrongful termination suit that was still going on. The judge learned these facts, dismissed the case, Donnigan thanked her politely, then said goodbye to us politely, as if this was just a lawyer’s lost battle, not an involved individual.

We promptly forgot about him and went on with our lives and work. Until Mad told me she thought she saw him following her when she left the office to go to a meeting. We talked about it and finally shrugged it off, until she saw him again. And we started getting phone calls at night, just like the earlier ones. Mad started to see him every time she left the office and I knew she wasn’t imagining it. We were playing Pokemon-Go one afternoon in front of Macy’s, at 34th Street and Herald Square, and we both saw him. I decided to confront him and went towards him, but he disappeared into the crowd of shoppers and ‘pokies’.

We decided that this was becoming a problem and went to our local precinct to file a complaint. The sympathetic desk Sergeant informed us that since Donnigan had made no overt threats and we had no evidence that he was making the phone calls, there was nothing the police could do.

“You should file an official complaint, so if he ever crosses the line in any way, we’ll have a record that can be used against him.”

“Thanks, Sergeant Paxton,” Mad said. “Any suggestions how we should deal with this?”

“Yeah. Don’t go anywhere alone for a while. Be more aware of your surroundings and monitor things more carefully. If there’s any kind of incident call 911.”

“Thanks, Sergeant Paxton,” we both said.

This was a new experience for us and we had a long talk about whether or not Donnigen was dangerous. I dismissed him as a nut job, with nothing better to do at the moment.

“As soon as he gets a job and gets on with his life we’ll have seen the last of him.”

“I hope you’re right,” Mad replied. “But there’s something wrong with him. I think he’s mentally disturbed and we should take the cop’s suggestions seriously.”

“Agreed.”
We kept seeing him at a distance, but as soon as he saw that we noticed him, he quickly departed. The phone calls continued at night, sometimes going on for hours. We talked about the problem, but couldn’t figure out what to do. When Mad suggested we get a gun I couldn’t tell if she was kidding, or not. We were playing Pokemon-Go one evening and we went to the subway station at Park Avenue and 23rd Street. We were on the platform and Mad suddenly poked me.

“Look. It’s him.”

I made eye contact with Donnigan and he grinned…. No. He smirked at me, letting me know he was getting to us and it would continue. I started towards him, anger changing to rage, just as the train came in. He waved at me dismissively, turned to melt into the crowd and I don’t know if he tripped, or was jostled, but he fell on the tracks. People started screaming and the train came to a stop. A lot of the crowd left the station realizing the tie up could be for hours. I stood there stunned, then turned to Mad, who didn’t know what happened.

“Donnigan fell in front of the train.”

She was shocked, but said: “Is he dead?”

“I don’t know. Should we stay and find out?”

“No. Let’s go.”

“We could tell the cops who he is.”

“Did you push him?”

“Of course not,” I replied indignantly.

“Then let’s get out of here.”

We left as the cops and emergency personnel came thundering down the stairs.

That night there was a short article on the internet about the man who fell on the subway tracks and was killed, but nothing after that. Someone had been devoured by the ravenous city, quickly forgotten in the throb and pulse of continuity. There were no phone calls that day and none after that, a definite indication that Donnigan was the culprit and could no longer call out from wherever he was. A few days later we got a call from Sergeant Paxton from the local precinct. He spoke to Mad and I listened in.

“Did you folks know the guy you complained about was killed in the subway?”

“No. When did it happen?”
“A few days ago. He fell on the tracks at the 23rd Street station. Some eyewitnesses said he tripped and no one pushed him. I guess he won’t be bothering you anymore.”

“Those phone calls stopped.”

“Then your complaint will just be filed away somewhere. Funny how things work out sometimes.”

“Isn’t it. Thanks for calling, Sergeant Paxton.”

“You take care,” and he disconnected.

We looked at each other for a few moments, then I said:

“I almost feel sorry for the guy, dying like that.”

“Well I don’t,” Mad responded. “I’m glad he’s gone, before he did anything worse to us.”

“That’s a bit harsh.”

“What if he got crazier and violent and hurt us? How would you feel then?”

I thought about it, then answered:

“I’d never forgive myself if he hurt you.”

“Then forget him. It’s time to get on with our lives.”

“ Weird how things work out sometimes,” I mused.

“Yeah. Now come to bed. I want to celebrate being alive.”

“Is that an order or request?”

“Whatever brings you to my arms.”
A FLY IN YOUR DRINK

“Careful! There’s a fly in your drink,” she asserted
As I raised my hand to take a summertime sip
From a large glass of beer in this horrific
Outdoor gathering in a cordoned off area
Of our local park. It started as one of those
Tiny flies measured in minimal millimetres.

I stuck my middle finger in and followed the fly,
Guiding it towards the side of the glass
To make it easy to slide the fly upwards and flick,
Flick onto the hardened, yellowing grass in which
A group of us friends and strangers sat and chatted.
She was chatting with someone – I was still in pursuit,

Pursuit of a fly now grown to a centimetre.
It had become spider-like, feeding off something
Deeper down in the depths of the beer which still
Fed my thirst under this summertime sunshine.
I tipped my glass, poured out some liquid to get
A better look. Fly was feeding off small, beige-coloured

Beetles. Three at first appeared, then several,
Still speedily swimming, scurried in this pond-like
Substance. Not to make a scene I stood and departed
The company of our group to pour out the liquid
Over the shadier area of the grass. As I poured,
The liquid congealed – at the bottom of the glass

Grew mushroom-like stalks – my stomach wrenched
As a warning sign and I threw the glass against
The fence – it did not break – “What’s his problem?”
I heard a female voice echo from my group – I turned
To re-join them and explain. The field was empty,
The grass overgrown, the park closed until further notice.

-Mark Burrow
MAUDLIN MERMAID

Pacific princess pouts behind a fin.
Charcoal, her scales, sequined sunlight on waves.
A raven head on rocks, she must pretend
to persecute the sailors that she craves.

Her sisters swim to join with rainbow tails
and tresses tinged in pink and honeydew
with smiles that spread the closer ships do sail.
They celebrate the evil that they do.

Their circle, song she's not invited in.
Secluded to the side, a sable spy.
Distrust a dimpled face too dour to grin.
As ships to sediment descend, she'll cry.

Dark iris rimmed with red unlike her peers.
Inside the tide, you cannot see her tears.

-Kristin Garth
THE SLAVE

Midnight moonlight suppresses fears so clear
at noon. Ignorant of cockroaches, the slimy trails
of grotesque provenance that glisten sheer
against the sunlight made matte by the pale
illumination of a slivered moon,
my filthy sleepwalk through an alley to
that bridge. Summoned to my torture so soon
again, to knees as dirty as that lewd
secret you brandish to open up my
imprudent lips while vile vagrants view.
A truth to terrify me to comply,
a penance I can't pay only accrue.
Two eyes I never noticed but did see
the sin that made a slave, for you, of me.

-Kristin Garth
POSTCARD TO NO SON OF MINE

I would have given you the name of "Timothy"
As in timothy grass
So I could have pictured a meadow

Or "Jeremy" like the bird on my CD
For meditative rest, which chirps "Jeremy Fletcher"
In a series of cheerful repeats.

You would have scampered ahead of me
In the mowed part of that meadow,
Eager for rabbits.

-Jonathan Bracker
IN AN UNFASHIONABLE APARTMENT HOUSE

Yesterday, some resident brought up
A small heavy United Parcels package
From this apartment house lobby
To place outside one old man's door.

This morning it continued to lean,
Blocking egress. I, another old
Third-floor renter, who noticed it last night,
Considered: Matt who has been looking far from well

May no longer be alive. Late this afternoon,
Seeing the door at last with nothing against it,
I am quite relieved, and saddened that when
Opportunity presented itself I did not knock.

I could have offered his burden to my flustered grateful
Neighbor, saying, “If you need anything, just
Let me know,” trusting Matt would not. And have him
Recede into the dimness behind his shutting door.

-Jonathan Bracker
JUST SEEING THE NAMES ON THE COVER

Franceso Molinari-Pradelli,
Flaviano Labó,
Renata Tebaldi – and away
I go, exulting

Over mellifluous Italian names,
Icing on the cake, of persons
Who sang extraordinarily well
Or conducted with great brio.

This boxed CD set, a used one
In perfectly acceptable condition,
Cost me $2.00 less senior discount
At my favorite thrift store six blocks away,

A walk I like to take.
Now there is good reason
To enjoy the rest of this morning
And maybe on into the afternoon.

-Jonathan Bracker
LEGEND: AFTER WALKING AT NIGHT THROUGH CITY STREETS

The caryatids
  supported the frieze
  of the Parthenon
and of other temples
  for centuries,
  staring out stoically.

For thousands of years
  they did not complain,
  applied no palms
  to aching backs.

    But with the Middle Ages
    headaches came:
    migraines;
    under drapings
      sagging bodies stirred,
heroically numb limbs
    were flexed,
    and hair the silt of years
  had coated grey
    by lifted heads
      was shaken out.

And then
  in Modern Times
    one noiseless Grecian night
these ladies
  not daintily
    stepped down
and over moonlit wine-dark seas
  flapped,
      enormously clumsy
at first
  (of course they had aged)
    then freer as they flew.

Throughout the night
  those women ranged,
  each separate,
  disconsolate,
for their revenge
at last hugely athirst.

Dawn approaching,
they found
what each searched for:
throughout the world
in metropolises
lightening in sun
each found
her sidewalk grave,
her living grave.

And greyly
they exist today
who now are floored,
sideline,
supported,
wedged tight against the base
of temples
bankers raise
against our fall.

Whose job
is being
out of work.

Huddled,
protected from your gaze
by passing legs, fallen
into themselves,
ar寰-wrapped,
their bodies slapped
with papers
the scouring winds disturb,
encased in news –

as hags, arrived:
the poor,
the classic poor.

-Jonathan Bracker
THE ART OF SURPRISE

By Simon Read

Miles Davis probably. Or something of that kind. More cold than cool. The aching sadness of the trumpet notes runs down the walls and collects in slimy puddles. He would rather be somewhere else. Any place any time other than this moment, sitting in the café strapped to a chair with the Honesty Machine snatching and whirring two inches from his face.

Most people are sipping their coffees and looking into their phones. Distracted, half-smiling faces bathed in screen-light. Fingers occasionally twitching in a spasm of activity on the keypads. Now and then they look at him, with muted expectation. They’ve seen it many times before; the preliminaries no longer hold them in thrall. But they’re not prepared to miss the outcome. Blood on the walls is still a good show, even if it’s not a novelty anymore.

And everybody wants the big surprise. The mysterious process leading inexorably to the unexpected result. The magic that’s been honed down to a fine art.

The Machine has him by the eyes now and he’s unable to look away. He can feel it rifling through his active thoughts and the unmapped recesses of his subconscious. A title page is projected onto the Wall of Shame – his name in big, bold lettering, followed by the date, and the words, "Summary of Unregulated Behaviours." The customers are interested now – he almost has their full attention. The Wall goes blank for a few seconds and then the slide show begins. A montage of memories he’d rather not share with anyone. A pseudo-random mixture of events acted out in real life, and things imagined in the cobwebby comfort of his own private mind. Some of these he’d forgotten or suppressed. Unhidden now, and public. As the scenes flash up on the Wall, the audience voices its dissent and some of the punters shout out, “Shame on you!”

As the last image fades out, the first chant is building – slowly becoming more co-ordinated, and louder: "Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame!" The Machine emits a high-pitched tone and the Wall is illuminated with text that reads: “Lifetime actions processed and judged. Punishment begin determined.”

The tone shifts to a lower frequency and becomes rhythmic. The spectators are rapt, all nerves and hard angles. The energy in the room rises palpably and a new chant starts, in time with the Machine’s pulsing: "Blood! Blood! Blood! Blood!". Then the Wall goes blank and the sentence appears: "Removal of left leg. With immediate effect". The crowd cheers hysterically and the Machine begins to visibly vibrate and emit loud clunking noises. The final chant takes to the air: "Blade! Blade! Blade! Blade!" and is followed by the loudest cheer of the evening. Some people look away or cover their eyes, but most are mesmerised. They’ll leave satisfied tonight. The surprise has been a good one. Another success.
By Alexa Findlay
CALANDO

When the bird falls into sleep
His dream is the color of old medallions,
Axinite meadows where evening throws
Its fables over the grass.
Seeing that place in a small glint
Between trees
I listen closely for the way
The worlds touch.
Wherever the bird originates from
Its song belongs equally to both.
We don’t know what is real.

-Seth Jani
NIGHT FABLE

Nothing’s changed, other than the night
Cool as someone’s desperation,
As the land of absolutes
Transmogrifying shapes,
Breaking open like
A ruptured skull.
Where the village recedes
On the shadowed hill
A mare walks enamored.
Each step causes blossoms
To spiral from the earth,
Puncturing the sky with constellations.
To be here is to witness the way
The night creates enigmas.
Where something solid, defined
By sunlight, stood in opposition,
There is now only the milk-white mare
Fading into dark. It is said that someone
Once followed her, and that the memory
Of that moment became the source
Of all goodbyes.

-Seth Jani
THE SLEEPWALKER

He was always a morbid convalescent
Who couldn’t tell dreams
From the economies of daylight.
He was always recovering
From this or that fantasy,
Charting diagrams of made-up cities,
Mixing colors in hopes of remembering
Shades he invented in his sleep.
Sometimes he believed somambulance
Would lead him to invisible doorways.
Though he always returned soaked
In rivers, nearly frostbit by the winter moon.
Whenever he wrote, his poems were
Indecipherable, slim trees crooning
Against the darkness, language extracted
From the night bird’s nest.
One night he even found an egg
Bright as raw pearls. He lifted it
From the tree and consumed it whole.
He floated everywhere.
It turns out it was a balloon
Drifting in from someone else’s
Celebration.

-Seth Jani
PASSAGES

He died in his sleep,
And between the glints of nothing
A familiar blue world skirted by.
He became a mandala of lake stones,
A centripetal hole in the water’s
Presence. The birds flew down
And peered into the center.
It shined like pupils,
Like sun on a winter surface.
When he awoke, everything was different.
The stars burned new patterns
In the amniotic night.

-Seth Jani
MANNA

The jar fills with light
Where it’s rested for seven days
On the lacquered table.
No one’s moved it,
And it just keeps
Receiving the radiance,
The gold of late autumn.
Through the window
It looks like a child
Caught a handful of fireflies
Or a single fallen star,
Or maybe pricked an angel
For its glowing blood.
It won’t cure cancer
Or ease an ounce of suffering.
But it will shine all day
And illuminate the dark.
It will be mistaken for honey,
Filling the dullard’s mouth
With a rush of sweetness.
It will confound the neighbors
Who will see it late at night,
A pint-sized galaxy
In the house next door.

-Seth Jani
By Thomas Gillaspy
PARABLE

Between planets
there is no blackness,
just a red remembering
and a blue anticipation.

A ship flies silently,
the eyes of its crew
on dreams and bits of worlds
left to them by memory.
Ancient voices drone like
slowly accelerating engines.

Between one world
(was there such a world?)
and another, if it exists,
there is no passion,
no loyalty, and
no friendship to
shifting alliances.

There is indifferent loneliness.
There is desperate sleep.

A ship moves as if
inertia were purpose,
as if purpose began it all,
as if purpose leads to worlds.

There is only the long
sailing from red to blue,
tales and words,
dreams and bits of worlds.
And those who understand.

-David Anthony Sam (davidanthonyssam@gmail.com)
NOH

A stump shaped like a pillow.  
A seat that seems a stone.  

Offstage, the sound of one wood flute.  

Three pine branches with the scent  
of a cold mountain.  
A gravel path that turns back  
on itself and becomes a gray snake.  

An arbor where actors change clothes  
like trees in autumn.  

A gate with no frame  
and a door with no house.  

I kneel my forehead to the clay  
and submit myself to  
what is nothing but a woman’s voice  
returning from a century of singing.  

-David Anthony Sam (davidanthonysam@gmail.com)
FULL FATHOMS DARK

Here is the true naming of false things:
The clouds are not souls seeking to land from winds
that have blown them off course.
The swallows ride currents of air not for the joy of it
but to feed on invisible life that also
rides currents of air seeking sustenance.
The lightning is not rich in meaning
as it steams a trough in the blinded soil.
The storm drain channels waters just as directly to an unseen ocean
as do the cascades in the Blue Ridge.

This is the false naming of uncertain terms:
The solid is composed of the emptiness
of a universe of dark matter and darker energy.
Standing under a sky unblinded in dark country,
we see for the last first time a panoply
of the incomprehensible
sifted by eons and light years
to pin pricks of flickering light in the darkness.
Open the pages of the sci fi novel to any number
and it remains ink on a mortal page.

There is the certainty of the indefinable:
The horseshoe crab is as old as the dinosaurs
but refuses to speak as it lumbers up on shore
not far from Apalachicola to trust the moving sand with its future.
The loon is a descendent of dinosaurs
and nearly as ancient but dives rather
than give up its secrets of the eons it has existed.
The mountains have layers of wisdom encoded into striates
but cannot be read under any light
and their slow melting over millennia makes bright white sands.

That is the unfinality of the finality of all things:
Washed by the same always different waters
the lichen live intimate with the face of stone.
The streets are paved in the broken remnants
of uncounted sea creatures buried under old oceans
crushed by the weight of more millennia
forged by the cement factories that stink the air brown.
The feet that carry me might have run in herds
or gripped tree limbs and my arms might have become
wings to soul clouds with hungry flight after all the darkness of stars.

Then is the darkness of all knowing:
Time knows clocks and the ticking of hearts and movement
of computers synced to eternal atoms.
Walking is one sure way to find Einstein around a bent corner
of sun curved light full of his gravitas.
Here is the sanctuary of headstones
carved from the rock that the mountains raised up
by their own uplifting as continents collided and uncollided.
Know that we are played by the language we muster
into the truest falseness of things and of moments.

Know that this is as honest as I never was able to be.

-David Anthony Sam (davidanthonySam@gmail.com)
THE ANDROID

They built me unsouled,
molded in steelblue magnetic
and fit to metal microscopic
patterns, the set signs of my eyes.

Adam-manned like a white and
castaway ship, scouring a world
for the final byproduct of
my making, i deem it
a helpless thing to be—me.

Automon-man, stuck like
a failed machine, delivered
into the universe by a bent
and almost finished being,
i search for him who hides
my soul from soul-less flesh.

Clanking away in electric
fumbling, meeting others,
but fellowless in concept;
they built me too soon.

-David Anthony Sam (davidanthonyssam@gmail.com)
ROBOTMAKER’S ANSWER

Be reached thru the body
or lose the intensity.
There we lost the semiconsciousness
we called our life.
There we lost our being.
There we became you.

Please read in the lost sands
and the broken pages of our buildings
and the still fragments of our walls
which act as our spokesmen,
the tones of our being,
the choirs of our powers,
the discords of defeat.

Reach us with the distortions
of a lost cell, a flesh
gone mad with brain
and turned to stone's disciple, metal.
Reach us with a catalytic memory,
and understand our need in cataclysm
for an heir to pass beyond.

Though we could not build a soul,
please read us to relife.

-David Anthony Sam (davidanthonysam@gmail.com)
MY GREEK NEIGHBOURS

I never could manage
To get out of this swamp-
The magnetic bog won’t let me leave.
I seem to slump
Down an inch each breath,
I’m in the underworld, I believe.

I believe I’m in the underworld-
Scratch that- I’m fairly sure,
I see Hades strolling the streets.
He is jaded, drooped and quiet
Like I, who cannot bear
The endless gab of these parakeets.

I think I said ‘parakeets’;
To be clear, I meant men,
And women and their inbred miniatures.
Oft I see Cora put on a face
As brave as her father Zeus
To deal with this class of creatures.

I said ‘class of creatures’,
Just be sure, I meant men,
And women and their breed, my being included.
Though at times, I discern myself from those
Who fancy their place in lieu of the Sun;
Too unwise to know and realise, too deluded.

When I said ‘deluded’,
I meant blanketed by delusion
Layer over layer, sheet upon sheet.
Hades yet again hands Cora a pomegranate,
Not to eat, but to hurl at and hit
And silence for good, ‘least one parakeet!

-Lucy Dee
RAPUNZEL’S LOVER

A smile Elysian played on his lips,
As he touched her locks with his finger tips.
And ran them 'long those gentle curls,
Commencing in waves, ceasing in whirls.

“Herein lies my heart,” he said,
Gazing at her half-trussed braid,
“Such a benevolence,” he endured,
“Embellished with grace throughout perdured.”

“Been kind to me have the heavens above,
For they enrich my being, O love!
Their very existence your lover blesses,
For never were there more beautiful tresses.”

“'tis a beauty divine,” appended he,
“My heartbeat gallops when 'tis let free.
For the way you flick it o’er your shoulder,
Flowers envy, buds do smoulder.”

“For 'tis where my sanctum I espy,
This truth my deity can not deny.”
With this, his face turned grim,
‘Why’, his lady inquired of him.

“These ringlets my soul’s affixed to,
Let ‘em be touched by none but few.
For alteration when they gain,
Would my life flee and my mortals remain.”

-Lucy Dee
PHANTOM SELF

All dried up,  
My mind's eye sere  
Where once it rained  
From nebulous swarms  
Of pensive pixies,  
Showering, down-pouring  
A sudden deluge of fair dreams.

Time often passes me by  
Never failing to give me a kiss,  
Right on the nape of my stiff neck,  
And moving up to my swollen head.  
It gives its hungry mouth a smack,  
As it comes 'round eye to eye,  
Pressing against my frame,  
And leans in to touch our lips-  
Its tongue sweet like pepper.  
It whispers in my affrighted ears,  
Words I do not comprehend -  
With a voice as mellifluous as the cry of a dying child.

It moves on  
Only to glance back once,  
Grinning from ear to ear,  
For me to see the truth in its empty eyes,  
And to know it is the demise of another dream.

My knees all molten,  
I crumple.

-Lucy Dee
Like the old, haggard man behind the ticket counter
Of a mouldy and decrepit station,
I am not anxious at the comings and goings
Of unfamiliar trains.
I acknowledge them;
I see them pass.
I don’t get on any of them.
I sit tight, hold on to my worn-out seat.

Others come and take a ride,
Uninvited.
I sit still, unmoved.

Patience never pays.

-Lucy Dee
By Alexa Findlay
AGE OF INTENSITY

We warned everyone through the past history steeped in the diplomacy of bloodlust, that once fading ideology was only a man standing on the tip of a mountain. We know it’s still lingering as we see him from far away but prefer not to listen to the echoes that have become more recently large ripples bursting into town and city;

The man that once stood on the tip of a mountain is now shouting in local squares and halls, his once vile bloodthirst and opinion have suddenly become popular once again, like the opening of that old bolted door that we were never supposed to ever open,

the gates may well be painted white a sky a storage of blue stars, clouds shaped like sleeping Kimono Dragon’s where only a faint whisper can be heard, as history puts back on the same uniform.

-Matt Dugan
SPRING

It is only when the orange feeds the field
in soft auburn patterns
when the breeze rests in-between the sunlight;
that spring presents herself.
She is swirling behind me like a ghost in daylight
throwing handfuls of leaves in the air
circling the horns of two red oaks,
where the glimmer of lights
have dimmed the shortened breath;
When squashed conker shells
resemble a bronze two pence piece;
it is then that I follow Spring in all her delicate moods.

-Matt Dugan
FRESH BREAD

We don’t smell the fresh bread anymore
the bakery that once stood close to the school is now a bistro.
They serve chorizo and onion on sticks
a cheap glass of Prosecco - silver bowl of Wasabi nuts;

Our corner shop at the end of the street
a 24 hrs gastro-doughnut takeaway
where the group of people that I once knew
have all been moved out of the neighbourhood;

Determined by the size of their pay-packet
placed like livestock into their ordered and classified zones,
monitored by camera, volunteers, and patrolling drones;
where we don’t smell the fresh bread anymore.

-Matt Dugan
WHEN THE WINDOWS SPEAK THROUGH THE MILDEW

Sparks in a night sky
a leading path to the shore
where an ocean surface is coloured like black oil,
when wolves and cats hunt along sand shaped bays

above ripples in white,
golden curls of acorns bouncing
in between the silence of a midsummer’s night.
When windows speak through the mildew

four beating hearts once replaced;
Each vision showed their visual beauty
that once enthused an untamed boy of youth,
how a man forgives the boy of such tenderness in his mercy.

-Matt Dugan
MODERN HAPPINESS WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO BE AN ALGORITHM

Under the mask lamp posts in black
camera stands eyes powering you to believe in everything
they never planned.

Similarity makes a city EASY to ply,
sugar laced exterior
it’s guts and voice a textual clone;

When culture saturates repeating
stars on a moving racetrack - we are transfixed by our handheld squares
a prisoner to our own made – up popularity.

Eventually you’ll see
the full print of the human condition
where happiness has always been kept as a flux of oxygen;

A ceramic sky of blue with a vista of two million tears
falling beside the whispering moths of wild and dangerous nature,
we know now that modern happiness was never supposed to be an algorithm.

-Matt Dugan
EUPHONY

Throw orchids over your shoulder
brush the dust collecting on the ground
hold the broken split soil in one hand
take the root of life in the other;
reveal the huntsman
as a dark secret entombed in yellow bricks of power

where a fox with an electronic voice
talks to us through an electric fence.
This bloodied festival a killing month
that holds only the sinew of summer.
Where coloured berries
sampled coils of black chalk;

the moon played poker with the psyche
an unattended piano played
a symphony of marching boots
where a dead radio tuned to an empty studio
switching itself off from the same
voice of news and repetition.

Listen to the dead voices spinning reams
unmasking reality as a lie peddled to us.
What they reside is the greater good;
Burning the print that can seduce
the euphonies of human logical harmony,
the sweeter the soundbite is the bitter the lie.

Mask that hides our black economy
…… when feeding the sugar only pour used water.

-Matt Dugan
I am a king dethroned,
with achy joints and a plodding gait.
I narrow my bleary eyes,
fighting to keep the Pleiades in sight.
Those Seven Sisters,
born and raised in a stellar nursery,
are today maidens
draped in alabaster dresses. They are
furnaces of desire
set upon the night sky with lithe bodies
and swift feet. For eons
I was a powerful man giving chase,
following their laughter
as they flitted just beyond reach.
I squandered my prime
with outstretched hands, a singular goal.
I adored them all
but would settle for one. Now they race
toward the hunter
Orion. I trail them, tethered by a chain
even as distance
reduces them to luminous slivers.

-M. Stone
lichen fingerprints
bloom on weathered stones

-M. Stone
Leaving/Arriving
(For Tierney)

Letters, smoke signals, the strands
We stand upon overlooking hilltop teepees…
O.K. Umbrella in hand, straddling this wing,
What is it you glimpse?

Edges melting, chains
Of land, lake-linked, city?
Friend, to survey such lengths,
places nostalgia in the eye.
Here even the pupils widen,
absorbing a room, those specific walls
called home, book-lined & clothes-cluttered,
some paint-able smorgasbord flooding back whole.
Below, between clouds, a balanced sea of beach
glass hieroglyphics. Suddenly
front yard blossoms wash in:
our picnic season beneath the Catalpa,
the quilt-spread lawn, the cheese & crackers,
the Blue Nun. Even nearing these cliffs,
in juxtaposition,
I picture the other scene, hear our fond talk,
A tape player wailing Rickie Lee.
What’s she singing?
“Darling, you just…”
My Walkman, turbulence...
“…hang on…”
the runway, landing...
“…to my rainbow sleeves.”

By Stephen Mead
WHEN WE WENT DANCING

When we went dancing – what a time
Your shoes were black, my dress was lime,
Or emerald - some kind of green,
That night you called me your sweet queen,
Though we were without a car, without a dime.

It was when the bells had started to chime
And the moon had started to climb
We both slipped out because we knew we’d be late
And my heart started to beat at such an unsteady rate
When we went dancing.

I found that night something sublime
Somewhere against the smut and grime,
Something electric passed between,
It came, wondrous and unseen.
I’ve known it was love since that time
When we went dancing.

-Freya Jackson
BASIC FAIRY TALE PLOT

One upon a time,
Woman is: beautiful
Woman is suffering and disdained
Woman has magic
Woman goes to the dance
Man meets Woman
Woman three times
Man finds Woman[1]
Man marries Woman

And they lived happily ever after.

[1]because of the clothes she was wearing (because he does not recognize her face [because all women look the same])

-Freya Jackson
THIS IS NOT A FAIRYTALE

here if your fingertips bleed blue, the whispers sound closer to *ink poisoning* than *royal lineage* but you
do not stop writing / you do not stop dreaming

your mother says *this is not a fairy tale* but you already know & there is nothing to stop you from making
it one

in every world, there are dragons to slay & here they are as formless & untouchable as the clouds they
might wing through somewhere else / in every world, there are corrupted rulers to overthrow & here they
puff faint remnants of fire from their cigarettes because in this world, humanity has not transcended its
bounds.

ask this: what is the texture of a sword hilt / how does it change in your grip when tightness turns it
sweat-slicked / where in your spindle arms can you find the strength to draw back a bow / whether magic
is a blazing shock in your limbs or a cooling, soothing thing / answer with: the weapon that will save you
is your words / the only weapon you have is your words

your proud white stallion is a secondhand car & late summer finds you pulled over on the side of the road,
breath coming too fast in too-short gulps, hands fixed too hard on the steering wheel for you to tell if they
should be shaking / you are no brave knight or clever rogue, but you have a princess, still — if only she
knew it / her voice light in your ears when she tells you her dreams from her locked tower / from her first-
floor bedroom too far from the city lights

long ago you already knew you would have no prince waiting, that you were no princess, nor any prince
for that matter / you do not have a knife-edged wit, a nightingale voice, a healer's hands / you have
nothing to offer but your words

they will have to be enough, in this fairy tale you've crafted for your own.

-Quinn Lui
THE LADY DISCORD

i. exposition:
this is how you start a war –

ii. initiation:
from the first it is no question that you will grow up lonely. your instinct is to trick / to destroy / to send order spiraling into confusion, and you play at choice but it has ever been a blink too fast for your fingertips. the world holds its breath, caught in time’s hurricane threads, and this you knew all along: you just have to be born, and fate will take you the rest of the way.

ii. rising:
walk the edge of a sundial and fall in love with a gilded goddess. pick one, any one. it doesn’t matter, because maybe it isn’t love, not really / maybe it’s merely the scalding hands of jealousy around your throat / maybe it’s the knowledge that you will never be equal to any of them.

iii. point of no return:
maybe, maybe those two are the same.

iv. climax:
you know this will backfire, you just don’t yet know how. you are chaos and you are strife and so you will never be allowed to be happy / never be allowed to win / never be allowed to tie the loose ends of a marred universe pooling around you.

v. falling:
this is the last step in cementing your legacy, the last step on a cliff’s edge. play games with the humans your brethren overlook, because their battlefields are already awash with bloodshed in your names, and what does life mean to one whose own will never be taken? breathe fury into mortal hearts, and as ships sail / as horses charge / as a city locks down under siege, drink in the chaos and laugh.

vi. denouement:
when it’s pitch-black outside and the whole world is asleep, you can test the shape of new words on your lips; you can whisper that this was never what you wanted. no one will listen / no one will hear you / no one is meant to.

vii. conclusion:
– and this is how it ends.

-Quinn Lui
DIG Globally: Electronic Dance Music – Experiences from Decadence NYE

By Oyinda Salako

I was due for a new adventure and it led me to Denver, Colorado for New Years. My friend called me up and said, "Come here for NYE, there's going to be this music thing called Decadence." And I replied, "Okay, why not." I looked at the lineup, saw Flume on the list, called her back and said, "I bought my ticket. LEGGO." But I had no idea what I was in for. Decadence was a journey with an aspect of a music culture that I never knew much about. So it was time to go digging. I went with an open mind, full of excitement, and it was entirely worth it.

Music is the passion that plays, rages, and lives on. The music of many young people today consists of a fine-tuned rhythm and the thump of a bass – the dip of the beat and deep rumble of the speaker. As if they are the new hippies of today, the freedoms of a solid head bang, a finger jabbing the smoky-filled air, or the allowance of your own forms of expression create the makeup of this age's culture.

This world, full of invitation, welcomes you to jump, thrust, and groove with them – in a multitude of various aspects that come together to make a meaningful environment. From casual to leotard to bikini and boas, your clothing represents something. The colors of the strobe lights holding you in its trance provide a vibrant expression of a certain connection. The moves of every body jamming to this music means I understand. You give this acknowledgement of what the music means to you, the beat, the bass, and the drop. And that relationship between you and the music expands to become you and the artist, which expands more to become you and the crowd. And with this tech-savvy generation, there's a mass of phones out to capture the moment, to live this life, and remember its soundtrack.

So I went to Decadence, attended a rave, and I can't lie, I'm going to have to be one of those people; everything REALLY did make sense in there. You might ask, "What made sense?" And I would have to respond with, "Life." You'll furrow your brows then ask, "How did it make sense?" And I'd say, without hesitation, "Music."

And in light of that mood, I had officially entered this sphere. We made our way through the crowd to get towards the front stage and people were all too helpful to give us room to glide on by. When others became too much for themselves, those surrounding helped pick them up – checking to see if they were okay. From what I experienced, the attitude of this celebration was the definition of chill. All of us relaxed and looking forward to that drop. Each of us taking care of one another whether we were familiar or not.
So here we all are, celebrating the turn of a new year and beginning it with this rave. A New Year has long been the celebration of a fresh start - *New Year, new me*. It could be a time to do or be something entirely different than before. Electronic music has this ability to make you feel like you have that fresh start every time you listen to a track. The grooves of each sound chip away at you and melt you until you're the just freest form of yourself. There's nothing but you and the music. And when it's over, the only thing that can come back is what you decide. A celebratory end of the year coupled with electronic music makes the house go crazy.

On night 1, December 30th, Marshmello played. And that crowd was awesome. The top songs were “Keep It Mello” and “Alone”. During “Alone”, the crowd slowed down, sang in amazing unison, and a cohesive blanket of emotions nestled everyone. It was like watching an indie movie's plot and resolution at the same time. Maybe that reference doesn't make sense but that is literally the point. At its core, at these raves and concerts where it's not about the popularity contest and who attended, you can almost see the music in a physical form – each person and their reaction to it depicting little facets of the electric melody. And then of course, the beat drops and we're all just like *ohhhhh yeaahhhh*, and each differing facet comes together to make sense.

Embracing the feels of EDM was simple – no doubt because of the elements of it that I was already in love with. My favorite electronic artist is Flume. It's that quiet sophistication in the way he lays down his sounds and beats to create magic. His tracks have a mixture of elements from hip pop, R&B, pop, trance, film score compositions, and
so much more. It's absolutely genius. And I rang in my New Year to that brilliance. I embraced it tenfold with the crowd. We're screaming the countdown then yelling "Happy New Year!" – feeling only chill vibes and an energetic atmosphere. The promises of a New Year seeming destined to start off on pure good intentions.

As an abstract art, music is a staple in a global environment. EDM has such creativity in it that has been far removed from melodies of the older generations. These sounds are brand new and unique. And many of these artists come from across the ocean – bringing with them their own personal connections to music using electronic instruments, sharing a new way to feel music. The art culture of this facet in society, from a new generation or across the pond, is a passion completely worth digging for. It's a global dig all on its own. An absolute gem, electronic dance music is without doubt, music that plays, rages, and lives on – deepening your being and your understanding of world art.
ADVICE TO LINK ON (RE)ENTERING THE LOST WOODS

Name the first creature you see
the first name
that comes to your tongue

its name the same as it is now, pronounced
as though forgotten, as if the syllables
are unfamiliar yet known

the imagination’s work is erasing
whole thickets
so that each new step brings regrowth
things already called

foreign to the ear though the sound
takes you back to the river

a fairy, perhaps, singing

to chase that echo into the heart of it
become lost among roots
you know so well

reacquainted w/ bramble & branch
leave then & know nothing
will surprise you—she has sung of this

& your throat evolves the trunk’s
previous rungs.

-Jerrod E. Bohn
QUIRKY

I danced the mambo
So happy for my honey
That... I learned the moves

-Breslin White- the author of a book of poetry called *Lily Thrust*
I was buried, here I am.

-Breslin White- the author of a book of poetry called *Lily Thrust*
FREE IN THE SKY

Freedom in the sky beyond all borders. Anyone might fly above blue skies.

Free above borders souls look to the light. Far above blue skies in everlasting flight.

Souls go to the light where we can fly. Above the last flight that frees in the sky.

Experimental pantoum on photo in digital blue filter, Santubong Suites, Sarawak, Colin W. Campbell.

By Colin W. Campbell
Graveyard
Underwater

All the dead
Drowned

-Elizabeth Moura
Autumnal spillage over mist clad tombstones.

-Sneha S.
Ghosts don't
lie quietly -
graveyard parties.

- Elisabeth Horan
IT WAS THE SMELL

After The Scream by Edvard Munch

Maybe it was the sound of snapping bones that woke me up inside my pyre, the orange-yellow of the sandal inferno reminding me of the taste of soft skin and heated lips, that evening when the setting sky filled every falling drop and we climbed up rainbows, until you fell, until you slid into the searing swirl of ink, floating away like an unspoken word that choked my throat, how did we let those bridges burn, how did the past become this funeral bier? It is the smell, though, that gags my throat, the stench of a life gone bad, the whiff of darkness yet to come, of ashes that will befoul a reluctant river, why does no one complain about the smell, why do you drift away holding your nose, who, just who is screaming here love, look at me, look at the way the hellish sun keeps on sinking as if it cannot hear.

-Rajani Radhakrishnan
BEHIND THE CHURCH AT AUVERS

Hours are measured
only by bottles of wine.
The seconds are clocked
by the batting
of your thick, dark lashes
against my cheek.

It is late afternoon
and we are sitting
behind the church at Auvers
on a red and white checkerboard blanket.
If there were such a thing as contentment,
we would know it.

But there is a kind of sadness
in alcohol and intimacy
that is lurking murky,
undeniable in the onset of dusk
and as your mother weaves
her way up the dirt path weighted
down by the laundry of the years,
I touch your unclenched jaw
with a tenderness
I do not really understand.

-Kristin Fullerton
POSSIBLY LOVE

I could name a million reasons
About why I should no longer love you
Yet only two reasons allow me to stay.

It was never your smile, your hair.
Your eyes were just like the others.

Maybe it was your body, no.

It was always much more than that.
The words that flowed out of your mouth
Allowed my eyes and ears to watch your
Lips move as I listened to each word
As though my life had almost depended on it.

With each accidental touch of the skin
My spine shivered and my heart almost collapsed
As I did my best to collect myself despite
My wish to embrace you within my own arms.
But even I knew that was too much to ask.

It’s been months and I’ve never said
A word; Too afraid to admit that I
Have lost myself to you.

And yet I feel that you may know.
That you are aware of my heart’s own feelings
That I’ll never reveal to you.

But that is too much to ask,
I’ll spend my days avoiding your
Face and your smile.
And hope that one day, you’ll
Figure it out on your own.

-Sydney Blas
LOVE IS MAGIC

we suffered from a lack of common reference points. 
i mean, her mother was a witch. mine 
sold cosmetics to her friends, carved 
sandwiches into perfect tiny triangles. 
no one wanted to burn her at the stake. 
but who wouldn’t love a witch in the 
house, especially if hollywood’s 
been telling us the truth. failing 
grades mysteriously born again 
as a-pluses, club feet and sour 
milk for everyone who looks 
at you funny, the chest-swelling 
pride that comes with the secret 
knowledge. Maybe when you 
get to the end you start fresh 
with a new baton, new maps, 
new paintings on the walls 
of the motel six. or maybe 
just an inkling, a lottario 
ticket and the sound of your 
own echo as you sing your 
way out of the hall of mirrors. 
hello walls. i wish you were a door. 
watch me now: i’ve been practicing.

-Darrell Epp
My body's a graveyard, you created.

-Catherine Clare
ROBIN THRONE

Robin Throne was a 2016 writer-in-residence at Wolff Cottage and recipient of the fourth David R. Collins literary achievement award from the Midwest Writing Center, the third fiction chapbook prize from Gambling the Aisle, and a literary fiction award from the Writer's Well for her debut novel, *Her Kind*. Her work has appeared in *The New Poet Journal, Tipton Poetry Journal, Trampset, Split Lip Magazine* and *Crab Fat Literary Magazine*, among others.

DENNY E. MARHSALL

Denny E. Marshall has had art, poetry, and fiction published. One recent interior art credit is *Scifaikuest* August 2017. One recent poetry credit is *Emanations* June 2017. See more at [www.dennymarshall.com](http://www.dennymarshall.com).

THOMAS GILLASPY

Thomas Gillaspy is a northern California photographer. His photography has been featured in numerous magazines including the literary journals: Compose, Portland Review and Brooklyn Review. Further information and additional examples of his work are available at: [http://www.thomasgillaspy.com](http://www.thomasgillaspy.com) [http://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasmichaelart/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasmichaelart/)

NATALIE CRICK

Natalie Crick, from the UK, has poetry published or forthcoming in a range of journals and magazines including *Rust and Moth, The Chiron Review, Ink in Thirds, Interpreters House and The Penwood Review*. This year her poem, 'Sunday School' was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her first chapbook will be released by Bitterzoet Press this year.
STEVE WECHSELBLATT

After a career in public relations, Steve Wechselblatt moved to Asheville, North Carolina, and started writing fiction. He understood that the past was merely a time of exile from his true self, when no offerings could be made to God or man; but now he saw he could turn his thoughts into words and his words into chariots that might carry meaning and magic. His stories have been published in Modern Poetry in Translation, Circa, the Journal of Historical Fiction, the Smoky Blue Literary and Arts Magazine, Flash Fiction, and other online publications. He has just finished his first short story collection, Diamonds and Moths, in which he explores the lyrical boundaries of flash fiction.

GARY BECK

Gary Beck has spent most of his adult life as a theater director, and as an art dealer when he couldn’t make a living in theater. He has 11 published chapbooks and 2 more accepted for publication. His poetry collections include: Days of Destruction (Skive Press), Expectations (Rogue Scholars Press). Dawn in Cities, Assault on Nature, Songs of a Clerk, Civilized Ways, Displays, Perceptions, Fault Lines & Tremors (Winter Goose Publishing). Perturbations, Rude Awakenings and The Remission of Order will be published by Winter Goose Publishing. Conditioned Response (Nazar Look). Resonance (Dreaming Big Publications). Virtual Living (Thurston Howl Publications). Blossoms of Decay, Blunt Force and Expectations will be published by Wordcatcher Publishing. His novels include: Extreme Change (Cogwheel Press), Flawed Connections (Black Rose Writing), Call to Valor (Gnome on Pigs Productions) and Sudden Conflicts (Lillicat Publishers). State of Rage will be published by Rainy Day Reads Publishing, Crumbling Ramparts by Gnome on Pigs Productions and Flare Up by Michael Terrence Publishing (MTP). His short story collection, A Glimpse of Youth (Sweatshoppe Publications) and Now I Accuse and other stories will be published by Winter Goose Publishing. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes and Sophocles have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry, fiction and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines. He currently lives in New York City.
MARK BURROW

Mark Burrow possess a portable edge of seat; he has taken it across the US and Europe. Born in the green fields of Yorkshire, England, he has performed in various festivals in the UK and in Ireland. His work has featured in eclectic journals and more frequently in the French-Riviera based Côte Poets magazine.

KRISTIN GARTH

Kristin Garth is a poet from Pensacola. Her sonnets and other poetry have been featured in Anti-Heroin Chic, Quail Bell Magazine, Occulum, Digging Through the Fat, Mookychick, Moonchild Magazine, The Society for Classical Poets and more. She’s currently constructing a poetry dollhouse chapbook entitled Pink Plastic House: Three Stories of Sonnets. Follow her on Twitter: @Iolaandjolie.

JONATHAN BRACKER


SIMON READ

Simon Read is a writer, living and working in the UK. His work includes short fiction, poetry, lyrics, songs, and word-based artworks. You can find out more about Simon's work at: https://ashadowfalling.wordpress.com/
**SETH JANI**


**DAVID ANTHONY SAM**

Born in Pennsylvania, David Anthony Sam has written poetry for over 40 years. He now lives in Virginia with his wife and life partner, Linda. Sam has four collections and was the featured poet in the Spring 2016 issue of The Hurricane Review and his poetry has appeared in over 70 journals and publications. His chapbook Finite to Fail: Poems after Dickinson was the 2016 Grand Prize winner of GFT Press Chapbook Contest and his collection All Night over Bones received an Honorable Mention for the 2016 Homebound Poetry Prize.

**LUCY DEE**

Lucy Dee has been a 'poet' (more or less) since she was 9. Endlessly confused by what exactly constitutes good or bad poetry, she has decided to stick with **authentic**. For good. Lucy lives in Bombay, India.

**MATT DUGAN**

M. STONE

M. Stone is a bookworm, birdwatcher, and stargazer who writes poetry while living in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *San Pedro River Review, SOFTBLOW, Calamus Journal*, and numerous other print and online journals. She can be reached at writermstone.wordpress.com.

STEPHEN MEAD

A resident of NY, Stephen Mead is a published Outsider artist, writer, maker of short-collage films and soundscape downloads. If you are at all interested and get the time, feel free to place his name in any search engine in conjunction with one or more of these genres for links to his work and merchandise. In 2014 he began a webpage to gather links of his poetry being published in such zines as Great Works, Unlikely Stories, Quill & Parchment, etc., in one place: Poetry on the Line, Stephen Mead

FREYA JACKSON

Freya Jackson has previously been published in places including Arc Magazine, Magma and Ink, Sweat and Tears. Her long hyperlink poem The Regan Project can be found at www.pothook.co.uk

QUINN LUI

Quinn Lui is a student from southern Ontario who wishes they could live far closer to a big city's heart. They have always been in love with words, stories, and the sky. You can find more of their poetry at abstractedfocus.tumblr.com.
OYINDA SALAKO

As a senior attending California State University Long Beach majoring in Economics and minoring in Management Information Systems, Oyinda Salako loves exploring an array of diverse opportunities and academic accomplishments. From a background in business, much of her previous experience has stemmed from working with professionals ranging from talent management in West Hollywood to non-profits about education in the South Bay to supervising volunteers at a local retirement home. But in the off-hours, sharing what she has learned and loved has become more and more of a new passion. Oyinda has written for both her university's newspaper and magazine, creating columns called the tvtb and DIG Globally, respectively, in which she discusses television shows from the late 90s and explores travel in an abstract light. Now she is writing for the Mystic Blue Review - expressing her views on travel, the places she has visited, and the community and intellect that it spurs. With so much to explore, Oyinda is excited at the prospect of sharing her new passions.

JERROD E. BOHN

Jerrod E. Bohn finished his MFA in poetry at Colorado State University. His work has appeared or is soon forthcoming in Phoebe, The Montreal Review, alice blue, Calamus Journal, Jazz Cigarette, Spry, Word For/Word, Smoking Glue Gun, Watershed Review and elsewhere. A full-length book of poetry, Animal Histories, was released in 2017 and is available through Unsolicited Press and other booksellers. He currently lives in Seattle where he teaches yoga and community college writing courses and enjoys cooking and getting outdoors.

BRESLIN WHITE

Breslin White is a New Jersey poet who published a poetry book called Lily Thrust. When he's not writing, he's mailing letters to family in Ireland and Japan, and rereading his weathered copy of The Complete Works Of Nathaniel Hawthorne.
COLIN W. CAMPBELL

Colin escaped from the day job in Scotland and now writes very short fiction and poetry in Sarawak on the lovely green island of Borneo and faraway in Yunnan in southwest China. www.campbell.my

ELIZABETH MOURA

Elizabeth Moura has had poetry and fiction published in online and print publications. She lives in a converted factory in a small New England city and works with elders.

SNEHA S.

Sneha Subramanian Kanta is a GREAT scholarship awardee, with a second postgraduate degree in literature from England. Her poem 'At Dusk With the Gods' won the Alfaaz (Kalaage) prize. She is co-founder of Parentheses Journal, a venture that straddles hybrid genres across coasts and climes. Her work is forthcoming in VIATOR project, former cactus, Verdancies and elsewhere. Letters on s.sneha01@yahoo.in

ELISABETH HORAN

Elisabeth Horan is a poet mother and teacher living in Vermont. Her work has recently been featured at Dying Dahlia Review and Quail Bell Magazine. She has work upcoming at Algebra of Owls and Midnight Lane Boutique. She spends time with her three beautiful horses, Deuce, Flynn and Copper for therapy. Follow @ehoranpoet and ejfhoran@weebly.com

RAJANI RADHAKRISHNAN

Rajani Radhakrishnan is from Bangalore, India. Finding time and renewed enthusiasm for poetry after a long career in Financial Applications, she blogs
at [thotpurge.wordpress.com](http://thotpurge.wordpress.com). Her poems have recently appeared in The Ekphrastic Review, The Lake, Under the Basho and The Cherita.

**AUSTIN MURATORI**

Austin Muratori is a Writer, Filmmaker, Photographer, Musician and cancer survivor from a small town in Michigan. He is an avid reader who also happens to have an addiction to movies, Coca-Cola, the macabre, stories, art and all things dark. In 2015 he graduated valedictorian from Full Sail University a film school, receiving the Advanced Achievers Award. He is hard at work on multiple cool projects that includes short stories, screenplays, a novel, a photography collection and a new exciting podcast called, Malignant Tales.

**KRISTIN FULLERTON**

Kristin Fullerton currently resides in upstate New York. She is a proud alumna of both Elmira College and the University at Albany. Her poems have recently appeared in Panoply, a Literary Zine, The Maine Review and Up the River. She haphazardly documents her creative life on Instagram @kristinfullerton.

**SYDNEY BLAS**

As a high school student with the dreams of becoming a creative writer, Sydney Blas spends most of her time writing about her experiences. Throughout her life, she has used literature as a way to express herself as she feels that words too embarrassing or strong to say verbally are best written down on a page. Having moved from Guam to California, she has spent most of her time sharing her story of her big transition and found her love for writing. Whether it is Fictional stories about unique and ambitious characters or poetry used to express ones hidden feelings, in her eyes literature speaks when the author chooses not to.

**DARRELL EPP**

Darrell Epp's poetry has appeared in 100 magazines on 5 continents. His third collection, Sinners Dance, will be published in the spring of 2018.
Catherine is an 18-year-old aspiring poet and writer. She often spends her days dreaming of writing beloved poetry and living in the mountains with her friends and family close by. Though most of her work goes unpublished now, she hopes to have a book of her own poetry in the hands of readers by next year. Twitter: rhymesofblue
THANK YOU FOR READING