

The background is a dark green, textured surface. Overlaid on this are numerous bright blue, glowing, and somewhat irregular shapes that resemble cracks or veins. These shapes are filled with a bright orange or yellow light, creating a high-contrast, energetic effect. The overall texture is grainy and organic.

Blue Angel Landing

Volume III

Editors' notes

The Blue Angel started as an event at the Phoenix Spa back in 2005 but it wasn't until 2006 that it had its own dedicated space where there were beer stains on the floor and posters peeling off the wall.

For twenty years we have been proud to showcase and encourage and develop the writing of so many talented SL residents and visitors. Some were published elsewhere in many different and surprising ways: volumes of erotic literature, sermons, recipes books and memoirs as well as poetry. The co-editor for BAL Volumes I and II had even written an episode of Star Trek the Next Generation!*

We have produced RL/hybrid events in Brooklyn/Second Life, San Francisco/Second Life and Harlem/ Second Life or rather been part of the team that put these events together. Two featured popup galleries and shared the theme between poetry and artwork. Pushcart Poetry Winner BJ Ward was a featured reader at one of these alongside our own Second Life poets.

Over these 20 years we have had three hosts and four bouncer/sidekicks including me, Grail, Merry, Devon, Mariner, Phaecops and Shadow. I'd like to express deep gratitude to these people for carrying the torch. Also thanks to Second Life which funded the land for the first Blue Angel, to Kolorfall who hosted the BA in its second build and to the Chelsea Hotel for hosting us to this day.

Most of all I'd like to thank the poets of the Blue Angel and other writers and artists here in second life who contribute to the artistic and emotional growth and well-being of our community.

Now off to the dive bar to host another Sunday at the Blue Angel Poets' Dive.

Yours with deepest gratitude,
Persephone Phoenix also known as Debra Rymer

* Hypatia Pickens invented the character of Reginald Barclay, who was the first flawed Star Trek crew member who was troubled by a holodeck addiction. This is Huck's favorite character of all time, it turns out.

BLUE ANGEL LANDING VOLUME III

It was an honour and a privilege to be asked to co-edit Volume III of Blue Angel Landing, sixteen years after the publication of Volume I. BAL does not publish often, but each time we put our minds to this, a thing of beauty emerges.

We need to be reminded of angels right now. Angels are often portrayed as guardians, as protectors, and when we experience some form of narrow escape we offer silent thanks to our guardian angel, wanting to believe that we were special enough to warrant saving in some way. I don't believe that's how the universe works.

I once came extremely close to death. A freak accident sent a sickle circling through the air at speed towards my head. The blade nicked the bottom of my chin and, for a moment, I thought a fly had hit me. Then I saw the white face of the over-enthusiastic grass cutter whose hand it had just left, and I realised what had happened. But I don't believe a guardian angel stepped in to save me. Why would a universe with purpose offer special favours to some but not to others? I just got lucky that day.

But angels are also portrayed as guides, and guides are plentiful. Guides think about things. Guides have studied. Guides have insight from the experiences they've had and the reflection they've invested in those experiences. Guides teach. Guides express their understanding, and in a multitude of ways. Guides are kind (even the harsh ones). Guides try to help.

Of course, I'm still talking about people here, and one could argue that there are plenty of people who fulfil the guardian function of angels. I agree. But, whilst we see and give thanks to our protectors (and rightly so) it's the guides who get ignored. We live in a time in which the guides are scorned, targeted, demonised. Because guides are a threat to the enemies of truth.

But the guides are still here: still working; still thinking; still expressing, where they're able to. We are still surrounded by angels. These angels don't need your thanks; they just need to be learned from.

I hope you enjoy this third volume from The Blue Angel: Second Life's longest established poetry event, 20 years old in 2026. Perhaps you will find a new guide within it.

Huckleberry Hax

Mariner's welcome

Welcome to those who want it.
welcome to those who need it.
Welcome to those who can't live without it.
Welcome to those who can take it or leave it.
Welcome to those who catch and release it.
Welcome to those who catch, cook and eat it.
Welcome to those who nurture and feed it.
Welcome to those who pulled out a chair to seat it.
Welcome to those with open arms to greet it.
Welcome to those who tried to defeat it.
Welcome to those who now truly believe it.
Welcome

Welcome to those who hesitated,
the recently recapitated,
the spiritually ill fated,
the culturally out dated,
the heavily armor plated,
the cynically jaded,
the randomly mated,
the financially rated
the heavily sedated,
the nationally syndicated.
Welcome to all those who waited.
Welcome.

Welcome to those who eat beets, post tweets, arrange seats, foil cheats, massage
teets, wear cleats, press pleats, escape defeats and bake treats.
Welcome

Welcome to those who wrestle alligators,
the country folk who bake those taters.
Welcome to the online navigators,
the charitable perpetuators,
the unionized electro-platers,

(continued from page 3)

the unemployed bistro waiters,
the vacuum hose evacuators,
the publishing syndicators,
the puzzled spectators,
the mildew eliminators,
the statistical deviators,
the reformed dictators,
the horny speed daters,
the incarcerated traitors,
the artistic instigators,
the rotational rotators
and the soda pop carbonators.
Welcome

Welcome to the invisible people.
Welcome to the invisible people that aren't real
as well as the real people that are invisible.
Welcome to the real people that are not invisible but only think they are.
People of all levels of invisibility can relax here.
Even if we do see you, we'll pretend we don't so, "Welcome."

Welcome to those of you who taste like chicken
(not that I would know.)
Welcome

Welcome to the people of the distant future,
the people of the distant future will find a way to detect and read the electromagnetic
traces
Left behind by our activities here
So welcome to the people of the distant future
unless of course they're sitting there in their posh self righteous future looking back at
us laughing at how primitive and backward we are..
if that's the case, the people of the distant future can suck it.

Welcome to those of you who feel the suffering of the world
those who battle the suffering of the world
those who dream of ending the suffering of the world
those who are burdened by the suffering of the world

Set down your burdens and join us tonight
take heart in the beauty of the world
and see that your battle to make the world a better place is a worthy cause.
welcome..

welcome to those of you who have faced a world showing hate
A world casting doubt
A world causing fear
a world telling you that you will fail
Their attacks have made you strong and made them weak
we honor your strength and talent
and welcome you here

Welcome to those of you here seeking shelter
shelter from the turmoils of life
shelter from artistic persecution
shelter from the upcoming apocalypse
shelter from golf ball sized hail
shelter from the cosmic rays beamed at us from the mothership
shelter from personal judgments about your sick fucked up lifestyle
shelter from the haters and their hate
shelter from the attack robots
Shelter from the organ harvesters
Yes, there is shelter here
welcome

Welcome to those of you who have faced battles on the inside
battles that challenged you in ways the outside world never could,
battles against our appetites,
battles against our desires,
battles against our fears,
battles against our self-doubt,
battles against hopelessness
Battles against loneliness,
battles against pain we carried for years,
battles against bats
Battle on bat battlers
battling bats in belfrys
bats under bridges
bats in your mind

(continued from page 5)

beat the bats by becoming a bat, be the bat
breath bat air
brush your bat hair
feel the bat guano moving through your bat bowels
My friends, while the war rages on, this battle has been won,
so relax in smiling, reclining, repose,
you are welcome.

Welcome to those of you who have lost loved ones
but turned that loss into triumph with the understanding
that we must treasure every moment
that we must experience life on every level
That we must cherish everyone we meet
that we must value everything around us
To those who've made the choice to be a light in times of darkness
welcome

Some of this material was previously published in Mariner's humorous journal titled, 'Pooplets of Truth' available on Amazon: <https://tinyurl.com/poopletsotruth>



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Table of Contents

Cover artwork: **Flock of Angels** by Julia Hatch / Consuela

Editor's notes

Mariner's welcome

White Rose White Paper Black Ink by Leslye Writer	9
Space Age by Klannex Northmead	10
Inferno by Margo Hollak aka P. deHaan	11
Journeys of a Volunteer by Nellie Bly	12
The Hand Grenade by Shadow Liberty / John Barnes	14
River Guide by Consuela Caldwell / Julia Hatch	15
This Year's Atrocities by Scarp Godenot / Bob Bauer	17
Last Year's Atrocities (for Bob Bauer) by Persephone Phoenix / Debra Rymer	18
Baptism by Naltrexone by Julie Trilling	19
Malcolm to Nikole by Mark McCormick	20
When the world stops by Frederique Eilish McMillan (aka HBoucher)	22
Keys by Dearstluv Writer	23
Green Umbrella by Dearstluv Writer	24
Never by Sonitus Randt	25
When It's Gone by Sonitus Randt	26
Found Keys are Pining for their Doors by Nellie Bly	27
Go On Old Child, Feed Your Body Full With The Touch, Smell, Taste, Sight and Sound of The Places You Have Been, Devour The Landscapes, Feast On Its Vastness In Your Roaming by Autumnblitz	30
Dare: to Keep the Kids off Drugs by June Stormcrow	31
At The Ocean's Edge by Autumnblitz	32
Cask O'Life by Dharma Bum	33
And You Danced in the Streets of New Orleans by Mariner Trilling	34
To The Brown Eyed Man in the Blue Parka at the Southern Rail by Julie Trilling	35
Childwood's End by Vita Theas	36
Childwood End by Eira Hara (chanelllcute)	37

Shadow People: Debbie's Poem by Consuela Caldwell / Julia Hatch	38
Childhood's Paradise Lost by Phorkyad Acropolis	40
Sanctuary by Cheryl Stanton	41
Midlife by Shyla the Super Gecko	41
Genesis by Julie Trilling	42
The Orphic Lyre by Shadow Liberty / John Barnes	43
Minotaur by Klannex Northmead	44
Empire by Antu	45
The Elegant Elephant by R.	46
The Auctioneer by R.	47
Tight Red Grip by Antu	48
I saw a girl get shot by Huckleberry Hax	49
The Pressure to Know by Shyla the Super Gecko	50
In the Mesh of Night by Shadow	52
Historical Balance by Persephone Phoenix / Debra Rymer	53
Historical balance by Judilynn India (judilynnart.com)	55
Your Eye Like a Strange Balloon Mounts Toward Infinity by Julie Trilling	56
October 11th, 1988 by Shyla the Super Gecko	57
mid-life lust in a small southern town by June Stormcrow	58
In our heads - a douzaine by Frederique Eilish McMillan (aka HBoucher)	59
Look What You Made Me Do by Huckleberry Hax	60
How Poetry Makes Poets by Grail Arnica	61
Shirley Clarke to Her Shrink by Persephone Phoenix / Debra Rymer	63
The Fence Goes On by Sonitus Randt	65
Biographies	67

Edited by Persephone Pheonix and Huckleberry Hax.

Thanks to guest editors Julie Trilling and Antu.

Thanks also to Mary Bower for giving us permission to use Bob Bauer's work.

White Rose White Paper Black Ink

Leslye Writer

Someone said she is a Poet.
Then someone else cut
the only rose in the garden
and handed it to her
“For the Poet”

Poet
a word so potent
it can move a stranger
to cut the rose
for a poet they had never seen
never heard

So
For any poet reading this
I have our rose on my desk
and because it is full blown
and poised to drop its petals privately
onto the desktop the moment I look away
I am writing this rose
onto this paper
for us
this way
White Rose White Paper Black Ink

Space Age

Klannex Northmead

I am a child of the space age
I was three years old when man walked on the moon
I watched Supermarionation recreations of Heroes
like Captain Scarlet and Troy Tempest
save the planet every week
I remember asking can I watch Space 1999 dad and he said he supposed I would
probably be in bed by then
but I am a child of the Space Age

I watched them cut the gold record for Voyager
I watched them say sending Bach would be too much
and would seem like bragging
I watched Television introduce us to mobile phones and
electric cars
I watched human inventions make it to Mars
not one time not two but three times because
I am a child of the Space Age

I was born in the time of the Internet and Alexa
and Siri and Google-
in the time of information,
in the time of the cloud where I learn
I was born in the last second of the last minute
of the last hour of a twenty four hour clock
that shows the time span of all of life on Earth because
I am a child of the Space Age and

I watch as NASA hunts for life on alien worlds even as governments here make life
extinct as they reach from in the cradle that must burn itself to ashes to grow.
I watch an ever more delegated automated world controlled by reciprocating shrinking
fields of adaptation and
I watch them see power goes to the powerful and disenfranchisement goes to the weak
not as a purely ideological and spiritual identification but as an unrepresentative and
arbitrary branch of politics called the vote

I see big buttons with broad outcomes on banners saying vote for me me me me but
I am a child of the Space Age
and we say the vote should represent the difference not the same.
the vote should be for Security not Pain we should vote for the stars not the scorched
Earth practices of Politics and the poverty it brings because
we are children of the Space Age and our time begins.



Inferno by Margo Hollak aka P. deHaan

Journeys of a Volunteer

Nellie Bly

When the second invasion came in 2022, we were ready, but we weren't. We knew it would come. Three centuries of the "russian" imperial project, the grinding cycles of gaslight-invade-exterminate taught us about an enemy that knows only how to metastasize (spread like cancer). Conquered lands (e.g. Chechnya, Karelia, Siberia, the temporarily occupied areas of southern and eastern Ukraine) become desolate mobilisation colonies: families separated, deported, remnants herded into barracks, new armies drafted to push ever westward.

That 1991 reset? A rollback, time to rearm, sell natural resources and get rich, with useful idiots from both left and right cooperating to disarm Ukraine. The long game.

Yeah, we weren't ready. A lot had to do with our failure in Western Europe to wake up. We're the hobbits. And we Europeans are susceptible to a well-funded russian disinformation thrust, aimed directly at our post-Yalta smallness.

Some of us woke up. I remember exactly where I was on The Longest Day February 24th, 2022. And with whom I was in touch, and who disappeared... and who turned up, and who were lost to us over three exhausting years.

Slowing the convoys of the enemy's military and logistics heading from russia & Belarus into northern Ukraine was worldwide the first detail of any hacker with a heart. As a team effort, we broke the firewalls around the networked petrol pumps along the roads into Ukraine, and in Ukraine itself when the border was breached. After the Battle of Kyiv, in which the invaders were kicked out of the north of Ukraine, we concentrated on keeping the Ukraine internet connected to the rest of the world.

There was everyone's typical Grandpa in Bucha, an veteran of both the Ukrainian and Soviet armies, disqualified from the service at 65 because of a stroke. Grandpa wouldn't be deterred, but shot footage on his phone of war crimes in real time. Then he went to his old brigade and "borrowed" several grenades. He followed groups of orcs (occupiers) and when a large group passed near a fuel truck, BOOM went one of the grenades right under the fuel truck. He documented in pictures which of the orcs shucked their uniforms, civvies underneath, ready to melt into the population, doing sabotage ops. Then he dropped a dime. I have interviewed him, and am now processing the footage.

There was Polina, an iconic young girl with stories, killed along with her siblings, as part of one of those orcish sabotage ops. A face I see when I close my eyes, though I know that Grandpa, through his bold actions, saved many other such children.

A redheaded friend, Y. - raped and tortured whilst trying to escape, turned up in The Hague and has been doing political work ever since... to wake western Europeans up from our post-Yalta, apathetic slumber.

The faces in the attack on the Children's Hospital in Kyiv.

There was a book of verse by Lesia Ukrainka, a Queer poet from a century ago, writing in the language of the land, the kind of poet that the russians typically deported to the camps, or shot. I found this book whilst helping with cleanup in a freshly liberated place. Restored the book well enough to read and show to others. Folded within were two of the poems lovingly copied out longhand in a woman's handwriting, and a wedding picture. These are the kinds of poems that I translate, and read in places like the Blue Angel. In both worlds.

This war takes the best of us.

So I got involved with various efforts from charity funds, building out Internet Exchange Points and hacker's death stars. Was injured in a drone attack, but the pain is not enough, and I wake up at night wishing I could exchange my mere shrapnel scratches with the life of one of the children who died under burning rubble. I kept going on many projects, from hacking the enemy's servers to cooking outdoor meals. Determined to help, and to build bridges of culture and understanding. Haunted, but instead of feeling powerless, I wake up the next day, pull on the boots that hold my sexagenarian feet together, and do more.

None of us fuss about what we do. I speak up about it because people need to know, we all can take action. Resistance is an act of clear, critical thinking, of embracing our Western values and fighting for them, whether helping in a clinic or hospital, or making your congressman's life a living hell by calling and writing every day. Even small amounts to vetted charities like United24 and Dzyga's Paw add up. The choice is yours.

Me, I now teach English to displaced Ukrainian children and adult professionals, all longing to be reunited with the West, whose values they share. If you think of Ukraine as a sister separated from you as a toddler and then rediscovered as an adult, you

won't be far off. And I shall continue searching for that woman in the wedding photo, whose handwriting I know. To return her book to her and say, "thank you". For thanks is what we must give to Ukraine, not the other way around.

Links to charities:

United24: <https://u24.gov.ua/about>

Dzyga's Paw: <https://dzygaspaw.com/>

The Hand Grenade

Shadow Liberty / John Barnes

You pin me.
Your compass encircles the globe
And you pin me
Til silence wells up
Like splendor before your eyes.
Your truth, bright as God
My helpless searching
Until you are satisfied.
This is your release
And I rattle down the hall.

River Guide

Consuela Caldwell / Julia Hatch

Memories flow through canyons—
etched grooves, like
vinyl, playing the music of our lives in stone.

We're following river rats from the past,
with graying stubble, faded clothes, Bus Hatch and
Georgie White's proclivities of unconventionality.

Wilderness trapper Nathaniel Galloway
guides us through stern first drops,
into elevation's gravitational pull over hydro downpours.
The ghosts of Denis Julien and Shorty Burton still haunt us.

River currents run in counterpoint,
swirling back eddies;
their lateral and upstream movements,
contradicting the main current's downstream flow.

Underwater sandbars and boulders
sculpt the river's surface
into topographic textural patterns,
that reveal their hidden secrets
to those who can read their esoteric meanings.

Slalom runs through steep drops
threaten to capsize and wrap rubber onto boulders,
earning us a place—in The Order of the Warped Oar—
honoring those who tried and almost did.

Canyons resonate subtle frequencies,
vibrating us at the core of our existence
in their cool, calm magnificence—

in ever-changing solar movements
that repeat day after day,
illuminating crimson-orange, gothic-grays,
on canyon walls,
with desert-streaked varnish,
the war paint on stolid-faced Gods.

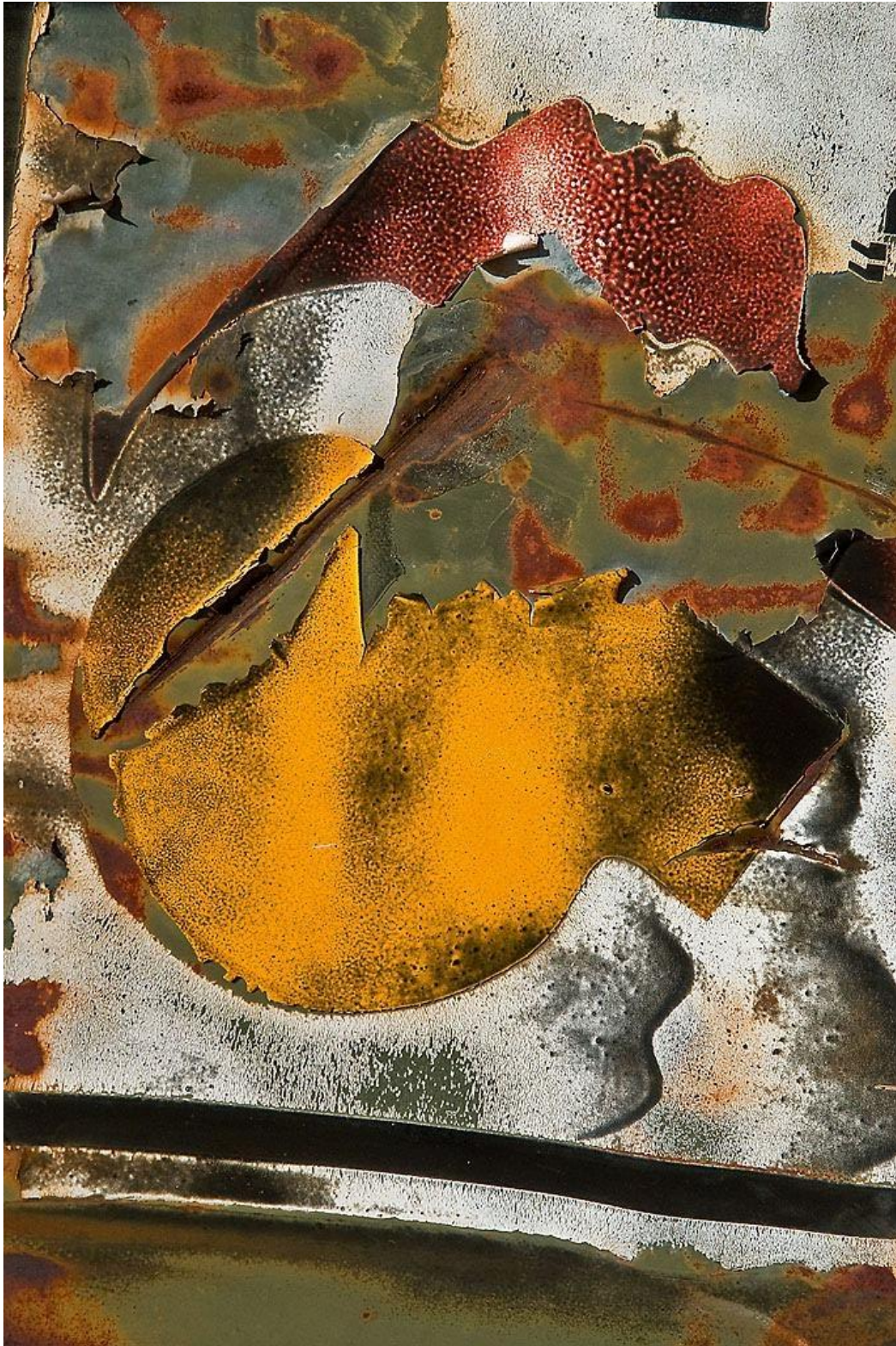
Trees line the canyon with contrasts of emerald greens—
their shadows elongating towards evening
to cast silhouettes into the night.

(continued from page 15)

Stars streak in slow motion across the heavens,
tugging on the horizon
to drag us into a daybreak of camp coffee,

trips to the groover,
packing tents and gear onto rafts;
a cool morning breeze forecasts an afternoon upstream wind.

We spend days in the moment,
through canyons in a circular flow,
of liquid conscious awareness.



This Year's Atrocities by Scarp Godenot / Bob Bauer

Last Year's Atrocities (for Bob Bauer)

Persephone Phoenix / Debra Rymer

God dips a pouch of newspapers
between his cheek and gum
ink sinking in, tips his hat back
and squints to the sun

as one by one the obituaries
are absorbed.

Then God spits
all their names out to slip
back in through
layers of the planet's dead
leaves and seas and fruits
past the mineral trace of melted snows
to dark deep where the earth recalls
our ancestors by DNA and knows our names
even those we never knew.

Mother carries, holds close
her children, decomposing as she
lullabies our bones

among galaxies
ever more
distant.

Baptism by Naltrexone

Julie Trilling

Here is a drug to replace your drug of choice.
Chaste white pill, chalky and oval.

Here is the user's manual,
with warnings and disclaimers
and a 1-800 CDC hotline to report
adverse side effects not already listed.

At 1 am, the brain whirring begins.

Climb on this freight train
throttling down phantom tracks away from
the lightning and thunder and sleet
beating on the bedroom window,
the snow and ice casting alien light,
ghostly glow.

A mustached Bulgarian man tells me
to curl into a sweaty fetal ball and ride it out.
I smell the vodka on his breath and remember
the shining bottles of wine on my wall,
the tequila, whiskey, and gin on the basement bar shelves.
I will never touch him, or them, again.

My Bulgarian friend left when the nausea came,
damp blonde head hung over the white wicker wastebasket.

My feet grow into plump watermelons,
my fingers shrink into splintered toothpicks.

I was at the Vatican and tried to take confession
from an English-speaking Polish priest
but made the error of debating the confessor.

Fallen star, guilty glutton,
you will not remember this night.

Malcolm to Nikole

Mark McCormick

Here, in the pretend innocence of middle America, we could not expect much truth about anything historical. Here, on land seized from people who'd been seized from the American Southeast, the dominant culture yet prefers nostalgia to history.

So, in school, teachers told of slave traders and slave owners, while hiding perhaps slavery's most brutal aspect – slave making. Ishmael Reed called them “nigger breakers.” I learned of this in my early 20s from a slight book of 80-some-odd pages, five pages of which roared with more terror than I'd ever confronted.

“They used to take a Black woman who would be pregnant,” Malcolm wrote, “and tie her up by her toes, let her be hanging head down, and they would take a knife and cut her stomach open, let that Black, unborn child fall out, and then stomp it's head in the ground.”

This was done, he said, in front of the husband/father, to breed fear into the captives so that no thought of rebellion would bloom in even the recesses of their minds.

“I'll show you the books where they write about this,” Malcolm said. “Slave Trade” by Spears, “From Slavery to Freedom,” by John Hope Franklin, “Negro Family in the U.S.” by Frazier.... “Anti-Slavery,” by Dwight Lowell Drummond.”

Pathfinder published the book in 1967, the year I was born.

Just two years ago, I met Nikole Hannah-Jones, to whom Malcolm the firebrand passed his torch that lit the path forward but also kindled 400-plus years of tortured anger, resolve and hope.

Her fires — ignited by her 1619 Project — have threatened the fragile nostalgia that gauzes our ears and eyelids. Senators have taken to a kind of aerial firefighting, blanketing the culture in folklore and retardant appeals to whiteness to prevent lies from being burned away.

White Supremacy/Racism predates our national origin. We developed sharp-pencil accounting driving the life and productivity out of enslaved human beings. George Washington didn't have wooden teeth. His teeth were not even his. They were ripped from the mouths of the unwilling.

“It’s actually simple,” Hannah-Jones said of the nostalgia-loving majority, “If you can feel pride in things you didn’t personally take part in, you can feel shame in things you didn’t personally take part in. Some of you are motivated to make this hard, but it’s only hard because you want the glory of our history but not the burden.”

1776 doesn’t explain January 6th, she said.

But 1619 does.

But 1619 does.

When the world stops

Frederique Eilish McMillan (aka HBoucher)

My world stops
I can hardly breathe
If I even bat a lash
They might fly away.
Three birds stand
One foot from my face.
Two on a tree
One on the snow bank.
One immobile
A second washing his wing
The third pecking
This suspended second
Erases the war
Banishes the haters
Derails electrons
Stops the winds
Fills the imagination
With gray feathers
And a touch of red.
A flock of finches.
It belongs to me
Alone in the kitchen
Before breakfast
In my mother's steps
Her universe mine.
Ah, to be a bird...
On another planet.

Keys

Dearstluv Writer

I have aged,
And my mind,
well, has lost
some retention.
I lay down
familiar keys,
Forgetting
Where they are.
Later, finding
and recovering
their forms,
I open doors.
It's the day
that I lose them,
Recover them,
Don't know
what they're for...
Then I'll worry,
If I don't forget.

Previously published in rez magazine.

Green Umbrella

Dearstluv Writer

I press my nose against
the moist window pane
staring out at light rain drops
splattering the cement walk.
So slowly move the gray-tinted
clouds in the light spring breeze.
Just a small hint of blue beckons
beyond the fading darkness.
We walked in days like this...
Remember?
Grabbing the faded, old, green
umbrella, with the broken latch,
You'd speak of romantic stories
and of walking in the liquid rain.
Close to your shoulder
You'd hug me,
Keeping us, so close, beneath
that little canopied shelter.
And we'd boldly step
into the path
of the wet droplets
so gently falling.
For the moment,
we were secured
under our green stick tent,
and in each other's arms.
I miss you on showery days like this.
I want to stomp out there in the puddles.
See our reflection in their pools.
Grab again, the old umbrella.
And walk lovingly, once more,
in the rain.

Previously published in rez magazine.

Never

Sonitus Randt

This is another world,
This is,
Right here, where you and I
Begin.
There are no same old things
Around
If eyes and minds
Are open.
Each day's not just another day,
But something different ever.
When was a day unfilled with
Infinities that haven't been?
Never.

When It's Gone

Sonitus Randt

I saw my hand.
I saw my hand in front of the screen
At night.
I got it. I got it.
I'm not looking at things more than
They're looking at me.
At this point you might think,
"He has lost his mind."
Well, I did for that moment,
In order to find
The reality evident
Outside the mind.
Can there be inner life?
Just because of my eyes
I imagine my mind's in my head,
But it's lies.
It's not anymore there than outside
On the lawn 'cause what is it?
We don't know so who knows
When it's gone?

Found Keys are Pining for their Doors

Nellie Bly

So they inhabited the house and made it their home
With books, chairs, shoes, flowers.
In the third spring
Smoke comes from the books
Ash, a rubble wall, a rubble street —
[Über Asch und Trümmerwand].

What's going on, law-abiding people?
We found more keys than there are doors —
The keys are pining for doors
That have long been unlocked.

Sorrel is breaking through the chunks of cement.
Carefully, delicately — then more boldly.
Doubtfully searching, searching, searching —

I want to live, as Lesia taught us —
On a poor, sad ground
Sow flowers on the frost.

What is happening, Men of the West?
Ye Men of the West?
Won't you ride to us?
Thunder like Jan III Sobieski to the Gates of Vienna?
Stop that horde of orcs raging upon our hills?

Where is the bread that we broke together?
Together we are wronged, shall we not revenge together?

We are losing the best of us —
Idiots like me remain.
But it is idiots who can build new bridges, poems and doors.
Hold on to those keys, blessed family.

Glory to Ukraine. Слава Україні.



*Poem inspired by Street Art observed in Kharkiv, 26 Grigory Skovoroda Street, Art by Hamlet Zinkivsky.
Photograph taken by Nellie Bly.*

Знайдені ключі тужать за своїми дверима

Так вони заселили будинок і зробили свою домівкою —
Книжками, стільцями, взуттям, квітами.

Третьої весни —

Дим іде від книжок

Щебенева стіна, щебенева вулиця.

“Über Asch und Trümmerwand.”

Що відбувається, законослухняні люди ?

Залишилося більше ключів, ніж дверей

Ключі сумують за дверима —

Які вже давно відчинилися.

Щавель пробивається крізь шматки цементу.

Обережно, делікатно, а потім ще пізніше.

Сміливо шукають шукають шукають —

Probweis, delikat und kühn.

Жити хочу, як вчила нас Леся:

“На вбогому сумному перелозі

Сіяти квіти на морозі.”

Що відбувається, Чоловіки Заходу?

You Men of the West?

Чи не поїдете до нас?

Прогриміти, як Ян Третій Собеський на Відень?

Зупинити орду орків, що лютує на наших пагорбах??

Де хліб, який ми разом ламали?

Нас разом кривдять, чи не помстимося разом?

Ми втрачаємо найкращих зі нас,

А такі ідіоти, як я, залишаються —

Але саме ідіоти вміють будувати нові мости, вірші і двері.

Тримайте ті ключі, благословенний рід.

Слава Україні.

Notes

1. Quoting Brecht's *"Anachronistic Train"*. The German word to describe remnants of walls ruined by time or war: *"Trümmerwand"*.

2. Quoting Lesia Ukrainka's *Contra Spem Spero*. *"Hope against Hope"*.

3. In 1683, in the Battle for Vienna, King Jan III Sobieski of Poland arrived to defend Europe against the Ottoman Empire's siege. Jan led a cavalry charge that broke the Ottoman lines, and turned the tide of battle. This event remains a symbol of the indomitable spirit of Europe.

4. Reference to Shylock's soliloquy in *The Merchant of Venice*: *"If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?"*



**Go On Old Child, Feed Your Body Full With The Touch, Smell,
Taste, Sight and Sound of The Places You Have Been, Devour
The Landscapes, Feast On Its Vastness In Your Roaming**
by Autumnblitz

Dare: to Keep the Kids off Drugs

June Stormcrow

crack the egg, let it fry
on a cast iron skillet.

this is your brain on drugs.

oil on asphalt shows
a luminescent graffiti.

this is your brain on drugs.

half inch pool of stale beer
brings the black hole sun.

this is your brain on drugs.

an extended stay hotel.
cooking on an electric stove.

this is your brain on drugs.

city trip full of McDonald's hashbrowns
in a golden Ford Taurus.

this is your brain on drugs.

a Contigo full of Jagermeister,
work clothes, wet and cold.

this is your brain on drugs.

a treatment, an office,
a gentle waterfall.

this is your brain on drugs.

crack the egg.

let it fry.

this is your brain on drugs.

At The Ocean's Edge

Autumnblitz

I hear the footsteps of the wind erase the path I have walked,
I hear the racket, the madness that is life unmoored,
the waves wash my lonely feet of sorrow,
my shoes fill with sand,
and my hair thickens with salt.

Dusk falls like blades of glistening knives,
the binding knot of the past is cut,
another mile is walked on this shore toward tomorrow.

Coral Sea below the Southern Cross,
I hear the koalas grunt in the dark,
the shipwreck of days gone by will drift to shore by morning,
a wineglass shatters like a song,
and the black waves sweep in a black night of scattered starlight.

Cask O'Life
Dharma Bum

But a liquid-loving evolution
Of some long-lost acorn,
Witness now
Its cooper-crafted, oaken staves
Embraced by iron-bound bands
Once forged in fire.

Regard its fate:
To encompass,
To contain, to hold
Some well-valued fluid
'Til drawn out,
Finally fostering both
Liberation and
Transformation.

Little or large libations,
These minute celebrations
(Shared or solitary)
Conspire to release
Such surprising potentials
Latent in the moment
With curiously heart-opening
Liquid luxury.

So too, Mankind's poetry
resonantly contains
Its cask of
Valued verbiage
Holding all patiently
Until tongue and mind
Release those thoughts
So carefully compassed
Within—
Encouraging their own
Small celebrations
(Solitary or shared)
Imbuing the moment
With well-beloved
Lingual luxury.

*

Thus ever, may we
Toast mere Humanity
With its endless joys
And relentless sorrows
Both utter-able
And other-wise.

Be upstanding then,
And raise this thought
Once again:
L'Chaim!

And You Danced in the Streets of New Orleans

Mariner Trilling

The chilly dark dangerous streets
had become our warm and safe playground
for those displaced nights.

The century-old columns and creeping kudzu
held back the world of offices and forklifts
so we could drink at the bar all night
and tip the bartender with verse.

We played footsie beneath the waist-deep jazz music
catching a wicked buzz
when the scent of Jitterbug Perfume
lured us into the street among the flowing tourists and neon.

and you danced in the streets of New Orleans

You danced in the center of the street
spinning your joyful blond hair,
black mini dress and arms spinning outward,
one hand clutching a frozen hurricane
in a plastic cup shaped like an alligator,
the other hand's fingers tangled
in the straps of your black high heel shoes
abandoned to the night.

The asphalt tempered by Katrina's history tore
riot girl fetish holes in your fishnet stockings
while the daily grime traffic paints grey henna
on the soles of your small white feet.

and you danced in the streets of New Orleans

I stood at the Bourbon Street curb
like the street performers and
off-duty strippers entranced by your swirling joy.

Shoulder to shoulder with the ghosts of Tennessee Williams
and the vampire LaStadt who said,

Damn, that girl is so fucking hot.

To The Brown Eyed Man in the Blue Parka at the Southern Rail

Julie Trilling

You came in from the ice storm,
ordered a beer, then left soon after.
The fogged glass half full on the bar,
on top of a crumpled ten-dollar bill.

I want to know what beer you were drinking.
I want to know why you were drinking
at two in the afternoon on a snowy Tuesday.
I want to know what text message you read
when you put the drink down,
and trembling, clutched the bar rail, eyes shut tight.

I was mustering up the courage to save this poem on my laptop,
leave the high-top table in the corner, and say hello.

I will never know if it was your lover leaving,
or word that your mother died.
I will never know your name.
I will never know you.



Childwood's End by Vita Theas

Childwood End

Eira Hara (chanelllcute)

The fire rose where laughter fell,
A cradle turned to smoke and shell.
A hand once small, now lost in flame,
No one left to speak her name.

Bricks remember what we forget,
The toys, the songs, the soft regret.
In pixels now, her light is stored
A child the world could not afford.

She lives where data gently bends
In memory, where code transcends.

Inspired by the artwork "Childwood End" by Vita Theas

Shadow People: Debbie's Poem

Consuela Caldwell / Julia Hatch

Shadow people control me
with a Pavlovian presence,
pulling my strings,
manipulating my desires.

I live with muffled screams of girls.
My screams their screams,
holding our arms up in the air
for the thrill of falling and falling,
down slopes of roller coasters,
fearing more
the boredom of leveling off
into straight lines of normality.

What little girl needs dolls
when she has shadow people;
prematurely triggering desire,
washing childhood away in a flood of
forbidden pleasures.

I tell you this with measured words,
selected for their darkened lenses,
filtering out the harshest of light from
an out-of-control sun, shielding
you from what I am.
A girl with barbwire boundaries,
woven into neural networks,
defining who I am
inside of a cage.

I know my place,
they know me for utility,
a passive acceptance of
a hammer
a saw,
a kitchen utensil.

Shadow people have drives
Proclivities,
stripped of conscience,
for barn yard occupants
in stalls,
waiting for attention
and some semblance of love.

They are a drug I'm addicted too
with my adrenaline-driven passivity,
with its train wreck made inevitable,
by switches on tracks
they control.

What is this place?
It gives me a chill.
Who are these people?
I shake uncontrollably.
What do they want with me?
I have no idea, I have no
control and I
love it.

Earthquakes
rob me of all stability.
I feel my body falling, as my
stomach turns upside down;
spilling out the contents of my life,
that stains blood red
on every written page.

But shadow people hide
in plain sight.
They live among us
feeding off innocence. They're
indistinguishable from
respectable people,
who pretend not to see them.

Childhood's Paradise Lost

Phorkyad Acropolis

Remnants in the ashtray.
Smoldering, still smoking.
The harshest wisps are choking...
Embers and charcoal ashes;
Dust and rusty whispers.

As a child I chased the fireflies;
I spun in the center of a spark tornado,
Capturing *light* itself in my jar—
Storing their light for another night—
But the glow faded as they died...

And today, every June,
I walk into my garden, to search for them.
There's a drizzle, on a good night,
But never a *storm* of light

Then I look up,
To gaze into the night sky—
But I see only a greyness,
Where once I saw woven a tapestry of constellations.

The diamonds of the sky have lost their luster,
Starlight paled by the lights of the city,
And by our brightly glowing handheld screens...
Our modern method of capturing that magic light in our hands...

But where has the magic light of childhood gone?



Sanctuary by Cheryl Stanton

Find more of her work at www.cherylstanton.com/art/

Midlife

Shyla the Super Gecko

Passion, drive, stubbornness, unrealistic ideals effect change;
Cure cancer, cure AIDS, feed the hungry, champion equality, heal earth —

This was my youth.

Midlife asks only I harm no one,
As if it is easier, simpler, quiet, passive and still.

Genesis

Julie Trilling

In the beginning was the girl.
Born of no man's bone or flesh,
the girl is faultless.

Her hair can be straight, curly,
blonde, or red.
Her hips have curves, or none.
She can play sports, like science.

She can love girls, or men, or both.

She can color her lips blood red,
the walls of her bedroom shell pink,
watch the afternoon sun kiss the lace curtains,
and see that it is all good.

The girl can write poetry.
She can write code.
She can write legislation.

Our daughters paint tiny colored stones,
leave them by the roadside,
talismans for their sisters.

*Yeah, we're still here,
pass it on.*

In the beginning was the girl.
Physicist, poet, hooker,
charlatan, housekeeper,
kept woman, president, CEO.

Alpha and omega,
pleasing to the goddess.

Naked, but never ashamed.

The Orphic Lyre

Shadow Liberty / John Barnes

Yet unblemished poet
this tree is your lyre
singing in the wild wind
while roots reverberate the soil
and earthworms rejoice
like words in a chorus

Or high kicking legs
the preamble to caterpillars
walking a fallen log
threads of white music
stitching silk stockings
punctuation
wrapping every digit
with pauses

Before the weight of meaning
hesitates in the ear
and we peel back words
fluttering in the heart
past death
into daydream
masked in shadows
of singing leaves

Minotaur

Klannex Northmead

The thing was a man once.
It was sealed in a long time ago
in a pit, a pit for two.
But its companion had been wily.

If only I had a pencil one mused.
Here have mine said the mortal
and the ladder was drawn
and so was the first seal.

"I will grow hungry" said the prisoner,
when you wish me to eat
send down your chosen,
say the word you choose and I will eat.

As I grow feed me more and more,
and when i am so hungry
I might eat the world
seal in the next chamber.

That I might grow a little.
Then as I eat and grow again
lock me in with three seals
this time feed me many,

if anyone is keen to know
or find the source of all
your wealth and they are
bothersome let them in.

When you fear I might
escape again and devour you,
for I will, build a door
with a hundred locks

and make a hundred doors
all with a hundred locks
and now feed me armies,.
feed me all the armies,

and when you know I am free
and all is done use the second word
you have patiently taught me,
"sleep" and lock yourself in.



Empire by Antu

The Elegant Elephant

R.

The Elegant Elephant
Dons his top hat
Puts on a tuxedo
Gives his wallet a pat

"Where are the tickets
To the opera?" he thinks

"Are they lost? Are they gone
If they are, well , that stinks"

"They're at the box office"
Says his wife, heaving sighs

"I knew that, I knew that"
The old elephant lies

His wife says "You're senile
Or maybe you're drunk
If it weren't attached
You'd forget your trunk!"
"How do I look?"

"I think you look fine."

She gives him a stare.

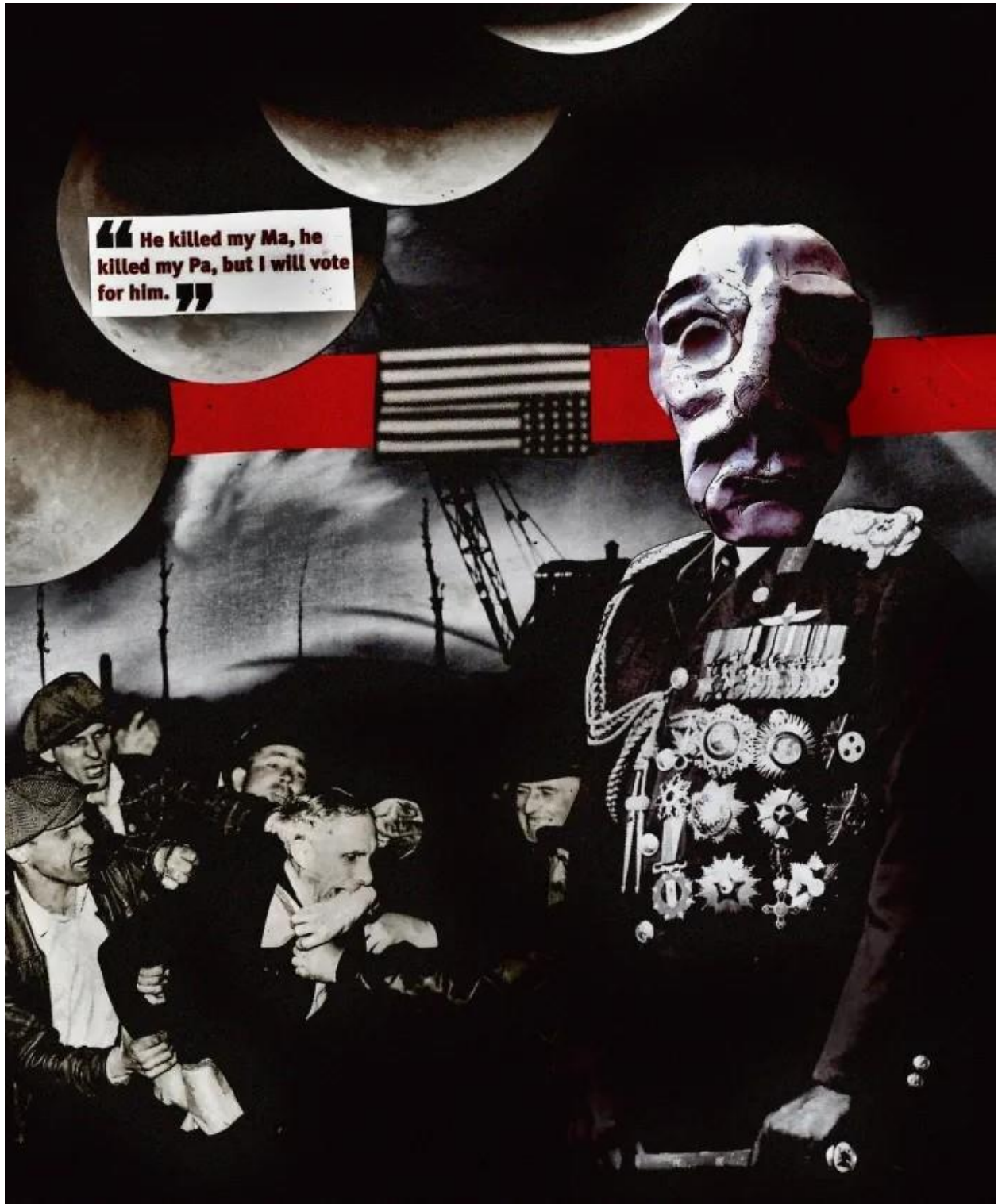
"I mean, you look simply divine."

And they had a good time.

The Auctioneer

R.

The man
With the sexiest voice
In the world
Was as an auctioneer
And he'd auction horses
And houses
And cars
And other things people didn't want
Or need anymore
But his commissions weren't
All that good
Because his voice was so sexy
Instead of raising their hands
To place their bids
People had their hands
Elsewhere
(He didn't want to think what they'd do
With auction paddles)
So instead of watching
For people to
Raise their hands
He'd listen for them to raise their voices
In climax
He'd count that as a bid
Coming once
Coming twice
Ohhhhhhhhhhhh... sold!



Tight Red Grip by Antu

I saw a girl get shot

Huckleberry Hax

I saw a girl get shot.
I knew her for maybe six, seven years.
She was in my class in 6th grade.
I sat on the same table as her in math.
She was good at math.
She'd get all excited when she had the answer.
She'd wave her hand in the air.
Her whole body used to stretch.
Then her folks moved house.
I didn't see her again until high school.
And then only in the corridors.
Collecting books from her locker.
It had a photo of Bieber on it.
Sometimes she used to kiss it.
Standing on tiptoe to reach his lips.
Her whole body stretching.
She won a prize for swimming last year.
She stood on the stage with the principal.
Rocking back and forth on her feet.
Grinning at her parents.
I saw her once at the pool.
Swimming backstroke in a lilac bikini.
Her whole body stretched out in a line.
Cutting through the water.
She moved in her direction.
Yesterday, in the canteen,
a bullet entered her chest.
Her whole body stretched.
Her eyes opened wide.
She didn't say a word.
She just died.

The Pressure to Know

Shyla the Super Gecko

The blue Victorian at the T in the road
Is surrounded by gray mist minions.
This little blue home is not alone -
Gray mist pressuring from the outside onto souls -
Pressuring from the outside so intensely
Our head and chest and waist; legs and arms,
These feel the pressure, the pressure on our homes.

Gray mist with no form pushing, pressuring -
Like demons devouring what needs doing.
Outside our homes the dangers of life -
So our barrier, our excuse, our tough-it-out
Is a loose safety valve turned too tight.

Gray mist holds us hostage
When all we want is to be arrested -
To shout and say we are in support
Of no man being targeted by guns or racist thoughts -
Of no woman working three jobs to give her kids a chance.
How do we sleep in dreams of sanctuary
Knowing not everyone is free?

But the pressure of gray mist holds us inside,
Keeps us afraid and makes us hide -
Keeps us quiet and pretends it's not that bad...
This fear we fear we share today
Is what may ensure we're all oppressed one day.

Oh, what we would give for this gray mist to leave,
For our legs to work, for our neighbors to see
We don't agree with racist restructuring -
Or defending leaders as always certain.
This country thrives on you and me -
Honestly, on people seen beneath the collective we.
There is no difference in what all have to give
Only in opportunity to share and live.
Don't covet another's talent Corinthians says -

But what are we to do when talent is suppressed,
Is denied, is left in distress?
With the gray mist pounding, pounding on our chests -
Pounding on our doors with a bang which never rests -

We say, "It's just, it's just..."
We sit and do nothing, trapped by gray mist.

In the Mesh of Night

Shadow

This flesh bound coil sifts ashes from the night
that choke in dusty silence on my tongue
and caterpillar feet tread spores into my skin
a dark and blooming mushroom expanding
up to your moon in indigo relief
bright miasma seeding the stuffy room.
Wounded eyes observe the yellow filaments
hanging from the sky--crackling with sparks
stitching the moments like car horns on
Broadway in the cross-town rush
or soft as your bosom in the bed next to me
as I trace constellations on your alabaster skin.

Historical Balance

Persephone Phoenix / Debra Rymer

the idea came to paint the story
to speak without a dry throat
and listen without confusion
to tell and to know
silent as a hunter
the story always ready
to retell itself

then smaller pictures
and bigger stories
and official tellings
who did
who paid
what must
what can't
who won

then just the tracks
half blown away
the lines left from
running feet
running hooves
falling rain
swift swoops that
tell about the pictures
like clues or witnesses

we should have hidden
them better
the scrolls and urns
busted and casually
burned so we would
lose the testimonies
of our mutilated
tongues and the old
ways of carving clay
with the vivid curve

(continued from page 53)

of the river that lived
in its name

we should have
saved them but
new men came

stayed and said the land
was new because
they found it and
theirs because they
named it and cut our
tongues out broke
our clay but here
buried in the sand
the tomb of our
civilization speaks
names of our land
our river

in voiceless words
only the dead can say.



Historical balance by Judilynn India (judilynnart.com)

Your Eye Like a Strange Balloon Mounts Toward Infinity

Julie Trilling

-after Odilon Redon

Monster of perfectibility and infinite progress,
spirit ascends from the dark swamp's dead matter
rises through mist, intent on the divine.

My mother's heart recoils into a strange vacuum,
coiled in a dusty crawl space behind the chipped porch lattice,
hovering in the attic strewn with leftover debris of memory.

Lifted, until the fringed green eye pierces the sacred canopy.
The mossy skull is all that remains,
hung on gossamer threads.

She will never love the earth again.

October 11th, 1988

Shyla the Super Gecko

The day has been about to arrive for some time, and I am still unprepared. It is the first October 11th. An ultimatum for me. For all of us.

Dad, mom? Not today.

I sit in this quiet conference room nervous to have a phone stare at me which waits for keys to be anxiously pressed into submission across a line of honesty. I will not leave until it is done, over.

It comes to me. I pick up the receiver. This call is my first and it scares me. I pull out my address book and flip to "Grandma". Slowly, glancing back at each number before my finger bears down on the keypad. The phone rings three times and she picks up.

"Hello?"

"Grandma? Hi. How are you?"

Hers is a long answer which includes mentions of numerous familiar people I've never met which means she is fine.

"Grandma, I have something to tell you...I hope it's okay, I mean it is, I just want it to be okay for you too. Grandma, (I pause a moment that seems like minutes), I'm gay..."

"Are you sure?", comes her reply.

"Yes, I'm sure."

"I thought I was at one time. Your grandfather and I had a terrible fight and I thought if this is how men are, I want no part of it. I began to socialize with the women, but I was really in love with your grandfather and we got back together. So, did you have a fight with a boyfriend or something?"

"No. I've known for a while. It's just today is special. It's October 11th and we're supposed to tell someone. You're the first I've ever told."

She pauses for a moment.

"It will be harder on you, you know? You can do it, I am sure, but it will be a more difficult life. But if it is who you are, then just know that."

I pause for a moment.

"Thank you for understanding", I say. "I love you."

I hang up the handset and breathe deep. I push the phone away, stand up, exit the lonesome conference room and go back to work, relieved and happy.

mid-life lust in a small southern town

June Stormcrow

we held hands immediately.
first conversations already over
thru the power of the internet.

then telephones -
mine an old school cordless one
his the fruit of the apple tree.

forget me not
my parents are players
in this small southern town.

we walked around
oblivious to the looks and whispers
completely lost within ourselves.

we sat on a bench near the Barker House.
a place full of childhood memories
not far from where I watched fireworks with another.

I want to express
how witless we were in our lust:
his truck, a fence, a camera.

my mother
couldn't stand the indecency
of my visit to his home.

my father
didn't weather the rumors
finally forced to retire.

his back screamed
but it was not my place
to take him out of action.

I had no thoughts
other than those
that combine within two lovers.

In our heads - a douzaine

Frederique Eilish McMillan (aka HBoucher)

My mind stares at the wall while the paint drips visions
In hospital the dying watch television

open the door my friend
so misery might end

Those lost for words rewrite history in their head
Stories pour from their lips no tail no start no stead

I take your hand, squeeze the five fingers and whisper
Swim to the shore beyond the waves and I'll be there

open the door my friend
so misery might end

You open your eyes and see my unknown broad smile
Though now an angel, then your daughter for a while.

Look What You Made Me Do

Huckleberry Hax

Look what you made me do.

Now there's blood on my cuffs and this shirt is new.

Look what you made me do.

If you'd only done what I'd asked back before,
such reasonable requests, but – no – you wanted more,
pushing and pushing your self-centred score,
you ungrateful, you pretentious, you ignorant whore.

Look what you made me do.

Everything that's smashed is smashed because of you.

I warned you; I WARNED YOU I could take no more.

Now you're bleeding and sobbing all over the floor,
like I'm the monster that folk should deplore:

but it's you, it's YOU – and you know what?

It's almost as though you desired this war.

Look what you made me do.

I hate that you forced me to do this to you.

You seem to forget just how much I adore
that person inside you, and how much I abhor
any sort of violence: my love, it is for
your protection, your correction, that I strike, nothing more.

Surely you must see that what I say is true.

Look what you made me do.

How Poetry Makes Poets

Grail Arnica

As an early aspiration
I wished to go out in
all one breath, and thought
sixteen years enough;
but if by chance
twenty-one
would come,
to live like a holy scientist
on baked beans and hand caught fish,
a silhouette shouting on the shore
wild and lovely words all night
across gothic dark water;

And then came the days
and years where
all I had
was to not be mad,
to live quietly
in the quickly
opaque lines of rage
that were my refuge
from banality,
from a frozen life—
more nearly dead
than I now can say.

Even then I found
a private awe, an
interior sky of storms,
clouds of outrageous fire—
holding the compass
of points labeled
"Now"
"Soon"
"Waken"
"End"

Where poisonous flowers,
burnished rivers
crowned beasts, jeweled birds of
louche and llithesome language
created singing chasms

(continued from page 61)

in chaos's heart—
as a map in an old atlas
places the edges
where dragons dream,
poets loving me cast a net,
drew from me
the leaping elusive joy.
Caught, it must be sought
to learn again how to seek,
how to know when it is missing,
how to hold it when it is found—
when who you are is loved
by who you have become.

All this time—now I know better
each word I find
was always there,
on the edge of the unknown,
or beckoning from just
past that place;

words irrefutable,
risen without choice,
risen for whatever
has used me for a voice.
I think that, perhaps—
that is all that has made me
who I am,
or ever made a poet.

Shirley Clarke to Her Shrink

Persephone Phoenix / Debra Rymer

Some past resident pasted a decal storyboard
in my neighbor's suite of the little Dutch
pair--boy and girl--of course
we were inured to sugar then
so no one remarked on the final
decal with the boy in the canal.
I remembered it a year later when the lover
in that apartment drowned in Amsterdam.
He was living theatre and then he died
in a canal, buying a boat, she said,
the girlfriend. I heard it in the elevator,
thought poor girl, though her suite is lovely,
I'd never live there. She looks like Elaine
from behind ducking into a taxi.
I want to tell her it's better to walk--
to feel the world through the bottoms of your feet,
see it close enough to catch the track marks
on the falling arm. Even when it's ugly.
Especially when it hurts.

I owe that to you; I admit I was reluctant
when you suggested a change, my heart!
My very heart hardened into a fist. Elaine
thinks but never says I am stubborn like
the old man. I swear it wasn't, but romance, two
decades in love with dance. You were right.

It was always the small movements--fingers
snapping like a fan, a slow shrugged shoulder
loose as a pocket. They can't see
it from the third row you have to be there
maybe lying down with the lens
aimed right at that elbow even if
it puts you in kicking range.

(continued from page 63)

I want to tell my neighbor at the Chelsea
Isn't the red of home glorious? Like a whore
in the middle of the street, laced up
in wrought iron. I saw her packing
boxes in the hall the decals too constant
a ghost. I'm lucky my ghosts, those bullies
get caught on film. I laugh when
I pack them in cannisters.

The Fence Goes On

Sonitus Randt

Sometimes I take a train from here to there,
And imagine I'll do anything but look
Out the window the whole time.

I never get bored though, no matter if
All that's out there, rushing past, is a fence
That runs for miles.

I watch the fence posts evolving;
Their slightly different heights,
The barbed wire twisted up and down by what?

And here's a gate. A sign. "No trespassing".
That means somebody might,
Somebody I will surely never meet,

And, maybe, that's his house that just went by,
Or the house of the owner of the land.
A rusted tractor next. When did it last start up?

The fence devolves. We're coming to a town.
The train track parallels a roadway now.
I look down into cars, into lives.

One driver talking on a phone. The car behind
Has parents and their kids.
One kid looks up at me. I smile, he waves.

Perhaps they're on vacation, seeing sights
Like canyons, waterfalls, and parks and things.
The track and road divide. Back to the fence.

It's like a friend. Consistent in its way,
Yet changing subtly from day to day.
I feel I could watch it forever, the posts like days

Flying by, barely glimpsed sometimes.
I can never take it all in, and I wish I could.
Sometimes, there is a definite end, or, at least, a corner,

(continued from page 65)

And it disappears for a bit, and I miss it then.

It provides a contrast to the grass and trees.

A sign of human action. "We've been here

And left a monument to us to tell how we enclose

To understand, to limit things enough to comprehend."

And soon the fence is back. And there's a safety in it,

A comfort. We are not alone, but are connected

Like these posts, the miles like years, and we can

Reel them in with stories and with poems, with any words.

And the train stops, and I get off, and the fence goes on.

Biographies

Antu is a multi-medium expressionist artist. His artworks cover experience with mental illness, esoteric values and symbolism, religion, politics, dreams, general life experiences and views, satire, and parody.

Autumnblitz is a painter who dabbles in poetry, his art has been exhibited locally in the USA and abroad. Born to parents who are teachers of language he grew up surrounded by books. His interest in poetry lies in the power of language to evoke imagery which ties in with his art making practice.

Consuela Caldwell / Julia Hatch is a writer and visual artist. She has worked with musicians, dancers and artists, writing and performing progressive rock, experimental electronic music, mixing and experimenting with various forms of early performance art. She has been published in Counterspin, As It Ought To Be, The Coloradoan, Rez magazine and has had photo art in several galleries and juried art shows. She now lives and writes in Longmont Colorado.

Dearstluv Writer was a member of Second Life for 17 years. She read her poems at many venues during those years including The Blue Angel Poets' Dive and Circe's New Poets Sanctuary. She was also a member of The Cold Shot Play Readers group. Many of her poems have appeared in the SL publication rez Magazine. In her life outside of Second Life, she would sometimes write poems by request at a coffee shop near her home. She passed away in 2024.

Dharma Bum is a failed academic — giving up on a Physics major at Case Institute of Technology, and subsequently aborting a degree in Anthropology at the University of Michigan, Dharma ultimately lost faith in academia and migrated to California where he studied Buddhism and became inspired by a local poet (Gary Snyder), whose writings now have been published recently in two lovely volumes by the Library of America. Convinced we can all become kinder and better exemplars of our species, he occasionally attempts to bash words into meaningful mirrors of the human experience. He advocates heeding the admonition of Samuel Beckett: "All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

Eira Hara is a writer from Virginia whose work is influenced by faith, love, and the strength found in everyday life. She now shares her creativity and connection through

Second Life, where she participates as a Wellness RP Companion (Non-Licensed). Her poetry explores themes of memory, belonging, and resilience. This poem was inspired by Vita's artwork.

Frédérique Eilish McMillan (aka H. Boucher). Québécoise, lover of literature, art & architecture, photographer, observer of life. Graduate in visual and applied arts, Sometimes poet. She came to poetry through SL and her SL friends in 2009. She gained confidence through a lot of short poetry workshops and the mentorship of her best friend Dante. Her poetry is photographic as she is a visual person, spontaneous, sometimes autobiographical but always contains the imprint of her hopes and wild imagination.

Grail Arnica wakes up in a good mood 6/7 days, and continues to be enchanted by the fundamental absurdity of the world, the discovery of joy, and the relentless nature of justice. She is the obedient servant of the thing that uses her for a voice, who apparently is addicted to internal rhyme, slant verse, and the Oxford comma.

Huckleberry Hax writes metaverse fiction, including novels set in and around Second Life. He is also a machinima creator and has directed two feature length movies filmed entirely in SL.

JudiLynn is an acrylic and digital painter, combining both mediums in nonrepresentational abstraction on paper and canvas. She has enjoyed showcasing her works in the virtual realm since 2009. Created as a mixed media painting by JudiLynn India, Historical Balance was inspired by thoughts of the lost cultures of Alkebulan and their revival.

Julie Trilling lives and writes in the cold confines of the Upper Midwest. A two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, she is also a founding member and poetry editor of rez magazine. Love is all you need remains her daily mantra.

June Stormcrow (Jennifer Fiddes) is an experienced poet who has been a part of the Second Life poetry and writing scene for 16 years. With heroes like Plath and Sexton, June writes deeply confessional poetry about mental health, love, and nature. Samples of her poems can be found on her Discord: <https://discord.gg/WxPdcYHZGh>.

Klannex Northmead is a long term Second Life resident (18 years). He hosts a Saturday poetry open mic session inworld called the Poets' Plunder. He also hosts Sunday's Spoken Words Poetry open mic In world. Besides live poetry and poets he has interests that include the poetry library and the Apple poetry listings notecard.

Leslye Writer is poet, wanderer, drifter, no fixed pointer, escape artist, imaginary biker girl, live music lover, east coaster, roller coaster, grandmother, timeless time traveler, generation crosser, attitude of plentitude-er, Leslye Writer is lyrical, matriarchal, physical, hysterical, a world democrat, autocrat, packrat, is in turns fancy and plain, unmanageable, hopeless romantic loyal friend who cams Everyone!

Margo Hollak / Jolie Carter / P. de Haan has spent much of her life working in the arts as an art teacher, an art gallery director and an art therapist. She attended Pratt Institute for her BFA and Wayne State University for her masters degree in art therapy. She has experimented with various styles and media, so her body of work is eclectic.

Mariner Trilling has maintained a Second Life for over a decade and a half. During that time he's been a part of the diverse virtual arts community with a portfolio that includes poetry, plays and in-world comedy. His humorous collection of short poetry "Pooplets of Truth" is currently available on Amazon in print, audio and e-book.

Mark McCormick is a journalist, a New York Times bestselling author, and a social justice advocate committed to clarity and conscience in public discourse. He is a popular speaker at academic and civic events such as the KIPCORE Peace Series presented by Bethel College. He is the inaugural executive director of the Kansas Black Leadership Council, the former executive director of The Kansas African American Museum and chairman of the Kansas African American Affairs Commission.

Nellie Bly is a European RL poet & retired IT director, who volunteers on wartime projects all over Ukraine. She is most proud of working with displaced children as an English, German, & Theatre teacher. Her "Soldier's Wife" poems are published in the Ukrainian-language "First Coffee" anthology. Drawing renewed inspiration from Street Art & train travels, her joy is to give a voice to those who haven't, and stand for those who don't stand a chance. In SL, Nellie runs Octavia's, a literary coffee house & bar in a nature preserve.

Persephone Phoenix / Debra Rymer founded the Blue Angel Poets' Dive in Second Life in 2005 as a venue for dive bar poetry like so many she had been to in Brooklyn and the east village of New York City. As Debra Rymer, she has been published in Lurch, Passionfruit Review, The Folklore Review, The Font, Frontiers: a Journal of Women's Studies, Alternate Route and Blue Angel Landing I, II, and III. In her spare time she beads and writes songs for cats. She hosts the Blue Angel every Sunday at 4pm SLT.

Phorkyad Acropolis in RL is Dr. Stephen A. Schrum, now retired from his position as Associate Professor (Emeritus) of Theatre Arts at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, and with a new title: that of Artistic Director of StoryZ, a nonprofit theatre and performance company founded on May 1, 2023. He is also an Associate Member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, the professional union. As Phorkyad, he has performed his original poetry with backing musical tracks in SL, and has also staged the ancient Greek plays *The Bacchae* by Euripides and *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, along with other works of SL playwrights, also in SL. He also continues to make short films, sometimes with the help(?) of AI; see the [StoryZStudios](#) YouTube channel for more.

R. lives on the Emerald Coast of Florida.

Scarp Godenot was a second life manifestation of Bob Bauer, an experimental photographer who inspired many other artists and writers in Second Life.

Shadow Liberty aka John Barnes has been writing poetry since he was 16. For the last 4 ½ years he has been focused on reading and writing poetry and attending open mic readings. He has been a featured poet in SL at Sunday Spoken Word at Hotel Chelsea, he was a featured poet at The Dirty Grind, he was a featured poet @poetry:openair and for the last year and a half he has been coordinating a real-world open mic called Dead Poets Out Loud. He also did a series of readings and workshops at the Whetstone branch of The Columbus Metropolitan Library.

Shyla the Super Gecko is a handi-capable lesbian. Her poetry evokes emotions about loss, healing and philosophy. Her work has appeared in Boats Against the Current, The Coop, rez Magazine and The Fib Review.

Sonitus Randt has been a member of Second Life for 17 years. He hosted a weekly poetry reading and music performing event in Second Life for 10 of those years. He has been writing poetry since he was a child.

In Second Life since 2007, **Vita Theas** has been the Manager of the Serena Arts Center, a virtual clothing designer, and a sim developer/builder. She gains a great sense of satisfaction when her imagination aligns her photography with her dreams. Her works have been exhibited at Serena Arts Center, Kultivate Galleries, La Maison d'Aneli, Rainbow Art Gallery, and in many community events such as Free Town of Helvellyn, RYR, ImagoLand, ArtinMotion, and the Art Walk event at Chelsea, where her artwork inspired the winning poem of the Ekphrastic poetry competition.

