

Jewel City Review



Volume 2



City of Glendale Poet Laureate Program

The mission of the Glendale Poet Laureate program is to promote the art of poetry in Jewel City. Through community workshops, public readings, and other initiatives, the Poet Laureate utilizes the art of writing to serve as an ambassador to represent, engage, and nurture Glendale's rich culture and diversity.

Poet Laureate (2024-2025): Raffi Joe Wartanian

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Mission

The mission of the Glendale Poet Laureate Program is to promote the art of poetry in Jewel City. Through community workshops, public readings, and other initiatives, the Poet Laureate Program utilizes the art of writing to represent, engage, and nurture Glendale's rich culture and diversity. To learn more, please visit www.eglendalelac.org/poetlaureate.

Land Acknowledgment

The County of Los Angeles recognizes that we occupy land originally and still inhabited and cared for by the Tongva, Tataviam, Serrano, Kizh, and Chumash Peoples. We honor and pay respect to their elders and descendants—past, present, and emerging—as they continue their stewardship of these lands and waters. We acknowledge that settler colonization resulted in land seizure, disease, subjugation, slavery, relocation, broken promises, genocide, and multigenerational trauma. This acknowledgment demonstrates our responsibility and commitment to truth, healing, and reconciliation and to elevating the stories, culture, and community of the original inhabitants of Los Angeles County. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live and work on these ancestral lands. We are dedicated to growing and sustaining relationships with Native peoples and local tribal governments, including (in no particular order) the

Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians
Gabrielino Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council
Gabrielino/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians
Gabrieleño Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
San Fernando Band of Mission Indians

To learn more about the First Peoples of Los Angeles County, please visit the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission website at lanaic.lacounty.gov.

Introduction

Something special is brewing in our quarterly poetry workshop-readings. There's a palpable sense of urgency, ownership, and openness that writers demonstrate. The material they generate and share is infused with heart and grit—reflections on facing cancer, confessions of love gone awry, clarion calls for justice in an increasingly autocratic world. This material and candor with which it is shared has fostered a powerful sense of community for it is through our poetry we raise our individual and collective voices, uncover common experiences, and discover our shared humanity. Last year, our first edition of Jewel City Review contained 17 individual poems by 13 poets, and three collective poems with contributions by numerous community members. This year, Volume 2, represents a considerable jump: 112 individual poems by a total of 54 poets. Dear reader, I'm humbled to share their words with you.

To me, poetry is the freest form of writing. That's why I love it. Substance eclipses style. We concern ourselves with what must be said, what wishes to be expressed, and poetry offers us countless forms for how to express ourselves: free verse, ekphrastic, cento, sestinas, erasures, and beyond. No matter our experience, skill, or language, poetry affords us freedom and permission to say what must be said, to truly write from the fire in our bellies. From our dynamic community of writers and workshop-readings, I have thus learned to define poetry as an authentic form of self-expression.

This definition might be simple, but I believe it possesses power, for the capacity to seek and speak our truths is, ultimately, an act of liberation. Rather than internalize pre-packaged descriptions of senses, experiences, and ideas, we articulate our own specifics. The personal, then, is universal, and the writer who can lean into their idiosyncratic truth is the writer who gives us all permission to do the same. And so as writers, we purvey freedom. It is for this reason, I believe, that autocrats past and present seek to silence poets and other writers. Once we glimpse the truth, accepting anything less becomes sacrilegious.

In January, clouds of smoke blanketed the sky as fires raged in Altadena ten miles to the east, and in the Pacific Palisades. Soon, flecks of gray twirled downward, carrying with them bits of homes, schools, and memories. These particles—representing the lives of our friends, families, and acquaintances in neighboring communities—reminded us of life's fragility and the gift of each breath. Four months since, we are only now starting to slowly understand and grapple with the tangible and immaterial impacts of this devastating conflagration. I sincerely hope that anyone reading these words is recovering as well as is possible from these impossible past few months.

The darkness from the fires has, sadly, extended far beyond the skies as our country faces an onslaught of autocratic tendencies: the silencing, disappearing, and coercion of dissent recalls history's grimmest chapters. Hateful rhetoric targeted toward members of the LGBTQ+, AAPI, Latinx, African-American, Jewish, Palestinian, Armenian, Indigenous, and countless other groups threatens to erode our civic fabric. Book bans recall the expansion of an Orwellian "thought police" dystopia. And the genocidal violence perpetrated with impunity against the Armenians of Artsakh, the Palestinians of Gaza, the Darfur of Sudan, and countless others has raised significant questions about the international order's integrity, and our ability as individuals to process and respond constructively and with dignity.

In the face of this silencing, then, we must speak. In the face of destruction, we must create. In the face of erasure, we must manifest. In the face of distortion, we must distill. In the face of lies, we must seek truth. In the face of trauma, we must heal. In the face of genocide, we must live. In the face of division, we must find a way to unite. Here in Glendale, poetry is showing us the way. Serving the City of Glendale as its inaugural Poet Laureate has been an absolute honor and privilege. From the bottom of my heart, I sincerely thank every writer, stakeholder, library staff, city personnel, elected official, and well-wisher who has made this endeavor a beautiful practice of community, creativity, and humanity.

Raffi Joe Wartanian
Inaugural Poet Laureate
City of Glendale, California

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For the people of Glendale

For the people of Artsakh

For peaceful poets

For Sevana Nazarian

Love Letter to Beirut

by Alene Terzian

In this slate of stars,
moonlight polishes night
clouds, highlights sweet
vowel sounds and still
the divide between us
vast as milky way dips
into vapor.

I am listing troubles, raging
your haze and disbelieving
the scent of lingering
home; coming back, darkened
sky divides and sun curves
to burn our body
construct.

Is it too late to name
each constellation or claim
these spaces—room to room
our fingers dusting
every surface? How unfairly
we set these rules, demand
this love, push potion
around and in the cracks.

Is it too soon to apologize,
mend distance, distract each
finger from bending toward you?
Like Orion, I am tall with regret,
majestic with sorrow,
spelling out: please and lonely.
Like blown stardust after burn,
I spill in absence and settle

Ground War

by Alene Terzian

Beirut, I imagine you a debutante, your secret
lover slipping a corsage on your tender wrist.

I imagine the way he fawns, zips up
your party dress; you are popular and fresh, wind swept.
But what if you were borderless, careless

undressed on the dancefloor, not listening
for rocket hiss, his lips on your neck? Is it too
soon to wrap your hands around his waist,

sway to forget the day, the trouble you're in.
What if the headline is you on full display, your
blown pupils, slurred words, how far you've fallen.

No. I'd imagine you'd be two left feet,
tapping to the raucous beat; arms raised, you'd wait for
the next suitor to fill your dance card. The last time
anyone asked for forgiveness, there were forklifts,
bulldozers, and the dirty bomb that barely missed—wasn't
that fun? All that showboating for what?

The Morning After

by Alene Terzian

It's a hellfire of tickers blasting
pundits and polling numbers,
the summersault of stomach,
then a room full of weeping—
as if
all the evil eyes in the world could alter
what we already know:
how quick we ignite, launch
into vitriol, the same
we who cried for Gaza, for Beirut,
the blood of our cities pooling
in aqueducts, ankle-deep in iron and plasma,
the same we who scraped
out knees last night, praying
for the first time
(in how long?) to spare us, to give us
this one thing, this one thing,
this one thing,
and even then, all those millions of you
and your primal screams,
your matchsticks; we are even now—
you and your holy ghost
can make
peace;
we are still here,
waiting for different news.

Walking

by Amanee Izhaq

Walking
And walking
Endlessly walking
Bombing
And bombing
They're endlessly bombing

While they're walking
While they're sitting
While they're wishing to die already
Where are they heading?
Where is the wedding?
The bride has died
The groom is still alive physically
Mentally he is broken

Still walking
On and on and on
Until he's gone
Until the bomb kisses his lips
Like she would have
If they had more time
To walk down the aisle
Smiling
Shining
Now he's covered in ash
As he walks passed the church
Passed the hurt
After the third month of her passing
His back aching from grief
The leaflets have stopped falling
Yet, the bombs continue dropping
Walking
Forever walking
For there is nowhere safe to stop

Bloom

by Amanee Izhaq

A child in the bloom of youth is strewn across the floor
Dismembered
Never to know her first spring
The church choir sings
The children
Beckoning toward the heavens
When did this world become so callous?

Malice had become mundane
Shame irrelevant
The tents shiver throughout the winter
Burning in a cold inferno
The children yearn for death
The baby's breath wreaks of decay
Of delayed promises
And a dishonest tomorrow

This sorrow knows no tongue
No stomach
No life
A child in the bloom of youth has died
And the Earth has dried up

Spirits

by Amanee Izhaq

Spirits fill my chest
God bless the beaten and the damned
The crammed in tight tents and left to die hungry
With nothing
Bloody is the ballet
Callous and criminal
Indivisible with liberty and justice for none
But the one percent
The sent straight from hell
Of unparalleled evil
Deceitful
Bleeding from their mouths
Dripping onto the children
The women
The men who will never see a tombstone
My womb groans with each cycle of life
I shed myself
The version of who I once was
Never to see her again
Dead is the girl who smiled with her light
Her warmth
Now cold and heavy
And everything is dark
Dead
Or dying
Trying to survive a genocide from thousands of miles
away
From the same thread
Dead, the girl is dead

As she stands before the crowd
And speaks aloud
About the spirits that live in her chest
The ones who beg for life
Trapped inside a nightmare

Arachne

by Meri Tumanyan

I weave tapestries with words,
like Armenian women wove
Vishapagorg rugs:

dragons, phoenixes, the Tree of Life,
symbols of eternity enmeshed in yarn,
spun and dyed since the dawn of time.

These women defied all
who sought to steal their art.
Since then, rug-weaving has been,
primarily, a woman's craft.

I'm Arachne in disguise.
I spin my webs and well I know —
to trap predators in silk
requires both scrolls and ink.

I climbed a winding staircase
to a room full of books —
a room our fathers built,
forbidden to my mother's foot.

I swallowed words I read
in these musky ancient books
that learned men had penned
for other men alone.

I was taught to glide through life,
a dainty little girl,
to catch fluttering butterflies,
and cage them in a jar.
I crocheted doilies—
like my aunt,
who was meek and docile,
so that was her pastime.

I learned to trap fierce lions
in cobwebs Mother laced—
ensnare the gems hidden by men
in dusty treasure chests.

I fed the famished dragon
dormant in my gut, until it
growled, and belched out rhymes—
embers in the dark.

Yet she who weaves the truth
in time becomes a spider.
Knowledge is the heaviest bane—
a woman's verse, pure niter.

Mom

by Meri Tumanyan

You carried me through sandstorms
toward this world,
and laid my heart like an empty shell
in my hands.

Write, you said, when it was time,
and I did, each word a pearl.

I clashed against waves,
treaded through sand dunes.
I carried your cries across oceans
and deserts.

Mom, before you found your words,
were you lonely and frightened, too?
Were you also an echo in a cave?
Once, you sang beside me in the moonlight,
and told me about a castle of dreams.

Or was it a burning tower of books
with a room full of poems?
I know now, I am those poems.
Your wails through the desert
have led me here.

Whispers of the Soul

by Meri Tumanyan

I cherish all

that nestles in the soul—

like dew upon a petal,

a feather adrift in the wind,

glances that speak,

silently gleaming,

words that linger,

fading into night,

melodies drifting

in endless flight.

To Those Who Stayed, To Those Left Behind

by Sima Ghaddar

Time and space feel so different these days.

Time surges and slips in war – racing, bending, nearly outrunning itself. It speeds up and slows down, forcing itself upon you in waves as violence swells, vengeance loops, hysteria rings at a pitch the mind cannot grasp, the mind refuses to grasp.

Each morning yawns into an endless day. Each night drags on for months. Time spills over itself – dawn bleeds into dusk, dusk into dawn.

Time unravels, begins to pull itself backwards. Thoughts about the past creep into the present: past violence, past “civil” wars, past occupations, checkpoints, the scars our parents bore.

We always speak of “the war yet to come.” Every day, we teasingly ask, “أشئ أولك بتعلق؟ اليوم؟” *Al-shay’ al-awla’k bita’laq? al-yom?* I don’t want to translate anymore. I’ll leave it to you to explore.

As the war widens, time becomes marked by countdowns – the countdowns of evacuation orders.

Evacuate – a strange word, bitter at the edges. It carries the weight of abandonment, as though leaving is a choice, as though dignity is disposable, as though refusal isn’t stitched into the fabric of every home.

The enemy mocks us. *Ten minutes. Nine. Eight.* Plenty of time – plenty of time to evacuate our lives, leaving echoes of home, memories once guarded, cherished, and stowed. *Seven. Six. Five. Four.* Still, plenty of time! *Three. Two. Plenty.* Time slips. Time’s up.

With each evacuation order, each leaflet dropped, each audacious mapping of our streets, our homes, and our neighborhoods, our sense of now erodes, and with it, a future we fight to hold.

Missile strikes become the hands of our clocks, lighting up the night sky, one interval at a time.

Every morning, we wait for the cries of ambulances, our heavy hearts falling deeper into grief for those who sacrifice their lives to save those who can’t be saved.

The gaps between blasts mark the hours, the minutes stretched by flames still burning.

When did they hit? Where? How deep? How precise? At what pace?

Come morning, we tally them up. Eight strikes, two a.m., landing every half-hour, for five, six, seven, eight sleepless hours.

Tremors become our clock – decibel time. Every time we hear a blast stronger than the one before, we learn to sleep through anything below the new decibel floor. And on, and on, and on—until, maybe, one day, we feared we might hear nothing at all.

The silent missiles haunt us most. Drones whiz overhead – and then nothing.

We hate the silence of those bombs. I want to hear the *Boom*. I need to hear the *Boom!* Just to know when to move, or whether I ever will.

One thing we retold: not moving from this land!

Morning trips to a blast site replace the coffee shop.

A friend once said, frantic, “I wake up at seven. I drive to the site. I map the destruction. I check if my home survived. It awakens you. You go about your day having seen the worst, and so you think – how much worse can it get?”

We both knew it wouldn’t get better.

Another recalls the time he nearly overdosed: “If I died once, maybe I can do it again. If you have felt a past death, how much worse can it be in the present?”

I heard the crack in his voice.

Yet still, we wake up from each sleepless night
and ride toward the unknown, to a nine-to-five
that beats on, despite everything.

Shrines, villages, treasures of our land – now
burned to the ground – become our moral
compass.

Their rubble waits to be excavated, displayed as
annihilated remnants of history, landmarks denied
a land.

We tell ourselves: the land may not remain to tell
its story. But maybe sometime, someone,
somewhere will tap into painful memories to tell
their own.

If not tending to the land, then tending to its
memory.

We map space by the crazed words of our fathers
and mothers when they say: “I will not leave my
home. I am going to go plant instead.”

War becomes the rhythm of our days; a pulse
we’re told we must endure.

More than anything, we celebrate the resolve of
those stuck under the rubble, the unbreakable
spirit of those buried alive.

Survival becomes spectacle. Strength, forced.

Today, heroism lies in the art of staying put, of
suffering beautifully, of learning to “die well,”
“burn well,” and “mourn well.”

With every crumbling building, every burning
body, survival itself becomes a performance of
strength.

How much resilience should one reveal to the
world?

What does it mean to be a hero today? To endure
“stuckness” long enough to win the sympathy?

Did we pass the endurance test? Did we beat the
finish line? Did we tell the right story of survival?
Did it appease your Western gaze?

War becomes a mode of being. Crisis becomes
order. Stuckness becomes the tragedy of human
agency.

Why should we be denied our agency, our political
subjectivity?

I don’t want to be an “innocent civilian” to claim
life anymore.

In moments of disbelief, when time is out of joint,
we leap forward – avowing our resolve against the
chaos of human nature.

In times of war, we hold onto shards of hope. A
long time ago, we learned hope must be cultivated,
watered, nurtured, conjured, even as it leaves us
wrung out and dry.

An eternal recurrence of some sort. Where does
hope come from? Is it always bred in death and
destruction?

As the war stretches its shadow, the wounds seep
into the streets. We map space through fierce
solidarity, marking the paths of those who left
their homes with hearts still tender.

We set up community kitchens, collection sites,
sorting zones, distribution routes.

Many believed kindness, like layers of bedding,
could soften the blow.

We count sidewalks, abandoned buildings, sandy
beaches, schools, parking lots – all turned into
homes. Open roads, into encampments.

As the displaced drift far and wide, society’s
fractures widen – fractures that define the war’s
inner sprawl.

Class and dutiful zeal become lines of fate,
binding some, condemning others.

As the war sinks deeper, we return to a new
normal. Perhaps a new status quo? Shaky. Always.

We take one step forward, a great leap backward,
hoping for something more.

Always hoping. Maybe, just maybe, for the
intifada yet to come – again.

But what is the cost of an intifada, if not our
collective trauma, our collective erasure, our
collective fight against the amnesia of our
parents?

Despite everything, we ride toward the unknown
together, to a nine-to-five that beats on, to a life
untethered by the brunt of it all.

To those who stayed, to those left behind – we
remain.

Ode to Trash and Man

By Zareh Melkonian
Translated by Alec Ekmekji

Waking from a dream, startled,
Suddenly
I plunged into another dream....
Where I a painter of marvel,
Dipped my brush
Into a colossal pale filled with
Sorrow, phlegm, and excrement,
And with violent strokes
I painted in multicolor
Man's expansive universe,
Which was placed on the tripod of nothingness
As canvas...

The longings of men, I painted colorless,
With the color of pain I painted flight and arch,
And in vain I searched for the dreams of men
To paint them with the color of silence....

The roads where men hurried
I covered with rust,
And where lay their loves
I gouged holes with the end of my brush,
And where lay their eyes
I pasted pellets with rusted glue...
I planted ash, dust, and soot
Where once were the promises of men,
And from an old box I grabbed blunt and crooked nails
Which I nailed on the spots where stood their smiles...
Then, with slivers of rotting rags I covered where lay
The breasts and secrets of men.

And then I dug a bottomless pit
In the belly of man
Where I buried the last revolution of the world,
And into it I crammed
The minuscule history of equality and love,
And I plugged it with the curdled tedium of the slaughtered
And the yet-to-be-slaughtered freedoms,
And I signed my masterpiece with scratchings
By the nails of my disgust,
And I hurled it there from where I had taken it,
The putrid nothingness, revoltingly desolate.

Ode to a Filicide Mother on her Deathbed

By Zareh Melkonian
Translated by Alec Ekmekji

The Diaspora, an ailing elephant,
Collapsed on itself and, barely asleep,
Is snoring already.

I try to rouse it
Before it sleeps the sleep of death.
I pound it, rattle it,
I prick its half-open eyelids
And I scream into its drowsy ears,
But instead of bruising it
Instead of waking it
It is I who bleeds,
It is I who falls to the ground exhausted.

Suddenly I hear a ferocious roar
That seems to erupt from the dark caverns.
Somewhere mountains collapse on themselves,
And gorges suffocate in the dust of amnesia.

The elephant twitches
And looks at me with half-closed eyes.
"My son,"
It tells me,
"You must not love dying so well...
"You will hardly be the world's first orphan...
"Orphans go on living without their mothers...
"So now, my son, let me sleep my final sleep,
"Let me rest before I die."

I gape in horror
As it attempts to bid goodbye
With a wave of its tail.
But its tail bludgeons my terrorized bones
And hurls me to the ground one final time,
And beneath its tail it is I who's buried
Even ahead of its own death,

It is I who dies before it
From the blow of its final goodbye.

Heat and Hearth

By Jony Melrod Weiss

This is my siren song
Longed-for lyrics
Slightly singed
A slow burn
From heat to hearth
The melody of meaning

A chorus of intangible lines
A minor scale
Like puzzle pieces I keep rearranging
Discovering my next self-installment

Intimacy and abandon
Shower thoughts and public transport
In the morning, he invents form
At night, she performs
Private poetry
With people

The mysterious marriage
Of hunger and harmony
From rhythm to rhyme
The beat, of my feet, on the street
This is how I gamify my growth

Fluidity and family
From head to heart
From heat to hearth

What was my given name?
I left her behind in the old
Rented apartment of Manhattan's fourth floor
Before we closed the last door
For the last time

Hearth, heat, heart

Life is a puzzle we keep rearranging
And I am busy unwording
A tangle of thoughts
The clutter of
Consequence

Until there is just

Space

Between lines

Finally, my words are free and open to the public
Hear me in the heat!

Find hope in the hearth of the Earth
As our humble homeland

Refreshments will be provided
All levels of experience are welcome

The Genesis of a Poem

by Melineh Yemenidjian

You, like the matron of a bordello,
seduce me. You fill coins of gold
in my mouth left on chests by regulars
who cultivate tête-à-têtes
like the Bible swallows myths.

Your hand is a stone that sends
ripples along my arm, leading me
down a candle lit hallway.
Keys on the ring clink together when
you lock my room after I step inside.

Stripped—I, a woman
tattooed with roads of stretch marks
and a cesarean scar like the portal
of a valley sliced by a craggy river.

I lie waiting on a lace spread.
The boudoir is scented with rose and musk—
the furniture draped in soiled silk.

Sweat competes for a place
on my skin against the albatross
studded with emeralds
clasped around my neck.

The burden is my penance for
slipping away to this secret place
where I can buck with abandon

and at once become virginal—
a neat plot of soft, green grass
ready to be strewn with seeds.

The lock clicks and my pulse
flurries like a scribbling hand.

A figure cracks the door and
stumbles in. It is my friend, who
has become a ghost.

Her long, blond hair is now cut short.
Her eyes, like cracked lenses, project
distorted reels of our long-lost sisterhood
and what would have been if she wasn't so
broken. Then she flickers away, a hologram.

Then, through the door appears a string
of ex-lovers, a psychiatrist, my husband
pushing our children in a red wheelbarrow,
grandmothers holding pomegranates, bullies,
and my poetic ancestors—
arm in arm.

They gather around my bed and stare.
Then you, dark dahlia, part the crowd,
slide yourself through my fingers, and bleed
as I pluck your petals.

Concealed, 1970

by Melineh Yemenidjian

I hid
 my mouth
 in my apron
 when

 he pressed
 the glowing ember
 of his cigarette
on our daughter's tongue
forcing her to swallow it
 like medicine

I took
 sheets down
 from the balcony

 as he played house

 with our oldest
 and made her
 the mommy

I dug
 the flesh
 from an eggplant

 while another child
 escaped through me
 like tomato juice
 through a sieve

I cleaned
 dinner
 off the floor

 because his fist hurtled,
 down on the plate
 shattering salvation

Krikor Shirozian

by Melineh Yemenidjian

*Dedicated to my great-grandfather,
and all souls lost in the Armenian Genocide*

(Syria, 1915)

I never knew my name,
only Shiro, the town
ransacked by Turks.

They first arrested my father.
Then the rest of us. My mother
and I never saw him again.

We tumbled and limped to
the desert of Deir ez-Zor—
each step a searing agony.
Horse shoes were beaten
into the soles of those
who dared complain.

I woke one morning, my face
drenched with sweat.
I heard lowing sobs trapped
in our makeshift tent,
only to realize they were my own.

Hard ground had stolen the
warmth of my mother's lap.
Only her scarf remained,
draped over my brittle frame.

A hoarse “Mama” escaped my lips
as I clung to the thought that she might
be bartering for bread with the gold
sewn into the seams of her skirt.
Yet the caravan’s supplies lay barren—
like the haunted darkness of Armenian eyes.

Suddenly, a man’s silhouette loomed,
drowned by the harsh sun. A pistol glared
at me as his tongue lashed like a whip.

A wet stain spread down
my tattered clothes. I covered
my face as the hammer clicked.
Before a single tear could fall,
the ground gave way.

Harsh wool grazed my skin
as sturdy arms hurled me over
the rippling muscles of a horse.

I awoke to the bustle of the Euphrates,
where a Kurdish family placed me in a wagon.

They spared my body but not my childhood
and were no better than the desert.

When asked for my name, I could not
tell them—from then on, I became Shirozian.

Losing our patience

by Alan Lamberg

Autumn leaves piled up,
My little arms and legs swim through,
Rustling thrill of noise and lightly thrown,
Maple brown and yellow and ochre,
Distant voices crackling.

Dad calls my name.
He was waiting for me to turn,
Ready to catch the baseball
In my leather-webbed glove,
Its scent blends with the chilly air.

Look up at the blue sky,
A sea of wooden fingers,
Waving slow, a brisk wind,
Swaying the trees
That stand sentry all around, watching.

As I throw back the ball,
I realize his tone
Was a little impatient.
I wonder why he was sad.
For that moment, it lingers.

It reminds me of other times
When he lost his patience
And he gets quiet,
He hides himself while standing there,
Once a buoyant balloon, wrinkles low.

This was one of our defining themes.
Something bothers Dad,
No matter how big or small,
The result is the same,
He goes within,
I can't reach him.

I realize I live by this theme.
We model what we see
From those closest to us,
No matter how happy or sad,
We are the same.

The choices I make
In the most critical moments,
I might lose my patience,
I might get quiet,
Hide in plain sight.

Or lose my mind, GODDAMNIT!
When the customer service rep
Says we have to visit a local bank branch
To submit the power of attorney.
The closest branch is in IDAHO.

Then I talk with the supervisor.
We work out some solutions to try
While my Dad is in the hospital,
While the leaves are falling
Into piles in that park in Baltimore.

Our caregiver, she tells me
Dad fell asleep on the conference call.
After the supervisor is done,
My shaken heart urges one more thing,
"Please tell your employee, I'm sorry for raising my voice."

A Life Denied

by Timothy Maloof

A flower grows, a flower dies
The garden grows, a garden
dries A seed is sown under dry
skies Awaiting rain to come alive

A life denied, a life denied

A screaming bird, nowhere to hide
Sent by the herd of paradise
Controlling earth and river wide
What is next, the wind and sky?

A life denied, a life denied

The Mirror

by Timothy Maloof

A mirror to your face, look what's behind
How far in the past, stirring the mind
What do you see?, What they want you to be
The mirror is dropped, now moving in time

Superstitions abound, seven unforeseen
But can't move ahead, with glass unclean
Are you their kind?, you're not their kind
I've kept the potatoes, but let off the steam

The glass was not cracked, only set aside
I use it for preening, held memories inside
This glass is precious, I use it to see
What's kept in the silver, my irreplaceable guide

No More Fear

by Timothy Maloof

Hanging on to our words
As if they mean more
Hidden Language, new symbols
A color I've never seen before

Communicating through shape
A twist of wrist, lips agape

I'm back, did you miss me?
I'm ready to tell a new tale
With sounds, sounds, sounds
I'm in control, I cannot fail

Hello, I'm trying to talk, do you hear?
Doesn't matter, no more fear

Ode to Glendale

By Sevana Nazarian

Glendale, oh Glendale.
I remember when you were just a little town,
Not this ever expanding, ever growing city.
I still call us one of the first settlers and laugh.
Mom would say she hated all of these skyscrapers.
"They ruined Glendale," she used to say.
She missed the way it used to be.
I miss being able to see across the city unobstructed, too.
I miss the lack of hustle and bustle, the lack of traffic.
We were never a sleepy town, Glendale, but we took our time.
We were khalvat - hangeest.
Now we're always in a rush.
I wonder if the sleepy little town of Usingen is still a sleepy little town or if it's like Glendale now,
perpetually in a rush.

Glendale, oh Glendale.
You're still my Glendale.
Your beauty is unchanged.
Your soul is still the same.
We've evolved but we're still the same.
Glendale, you are still the Jewel City.
We are all but little jewels, sharing in your riches.
Eem sirely Glendale, thank you for all the new places and the old ones too.
Thank you for the people.
Thank you for the memories I have of you

And for all the memories I have yet to make.

Glendale, oh Glendale.
Glendale, my Glendale.

How to Eat the Moon

by Erwin Arroyo

I woke up with a toothache; the moon must have
been too sharp last night. Should've let it
soften in milk,

should've swallowed the rind whole, should've
left it hanging like a fruit, unplucked.
But hunger—hunger—is a kind of inheritance.

My mother taught me to break things gently: bread,
silence, bones too small to know names.
She once folded the ocean into a pot,

Stirred it until it wept salt.
I watched her tongue collect the brine, say:
This is what survival tastes like.

I wake with a mouth full of questions;
I spit them out like teeth, like seeds, watch-
ing the moon from my window—

Who first looked up and thought it was edible?
Whose hands held it first—not in worship, but in want?
Was it cut with a knife or peeled like an orange?

Did they know it would grow back, bright as an old
scar?

I wake, the hunger still clinging. I check the
sky— the moon already half-eaten.

One Wish

by Erwin Arroyo

She makes her cakes in her old microwave
For she has no oven, no stove, Her
baking's been getting better though—
By adding on a spoonful of milk,
The sponge would get less lumpy.

She repeats this process year after year
Every 5th of September, to be precise.
Each year an additional candle—
She starts counting 36, 37, 38, 39
Next year she will buy the 40th candle.

This year she would wish for a friend,
Or why not a cat, at the very least.
Though she lived in a small studette
Where a dresser, sink and squeaky bed
Were all crammed in an eight-feet square

She planted staked the candles into the cake
And lit them up onto her bed
Before she blew, she changed her wish;
To stop the war and bring some peace.
Looking up, she whispered *Happy Birthday mom.*

Ask the Graystone trees²

by Erwin Arroyo

Come hither, step gently! I promise
This grass won't prick your feet.
You see, these roses and bushes and trees
They just want to talk
These lonely trees
The sun has dried them of their tears
Spruced in lavish oily leaves,
As green as dollar bills
They whisper among themselves day and night
The secrets of this mansion they recite.

Come hither, listen to them;
They have seen it all
They have heard it all
They will tell you—that
In this garden there's a fountain
Where we liked to meet
To take our minds off work.
Oh, how I liked to see his reflection,
There, on the water; drizzled breeze
Lands on his handsomely stern expression
The water gently invites me in and—SPLASH!
No, he did not drown on his own, as you've been told

BANG!

BANG!

We did both.

Still don't believe me?
Go ask the Graystone trees
They have seen it all
They have heard it all—
They will tell you
My name is
Ned.

Ned Doheny's death at Greystone Mansion is a mystery that has puzzled people for decades. On February 16, 1929, just five months after moving into the mansion his father, oil tycoon Edward Doheny Sr., built for him, Ned and his secretary, Hugh Plunkett, were found dead from gunshot wounds. The deaths happened during the fallout from the Teapot Dome Scandal, a corruption case that involved both men and reportedly caused tension between them. Although the deaths were officially ruled a murder-suicide, with Plunkett allegedly shooting Ned before taking his own life, the accounts given by Ned's wife and others who were at the mansion that night didn't match the evidence, leaving many unanswered questions and sparking rumors about what really happened. In this poem I explore the persistent theory about the deaths of Ned Doheny and Hugh Plunkett at Greystone Mansion, which suggests they were romantically involved, a relationship that was hidden due to the social taboos of the 1920s. This idea is fueled by their lifelong closeness—Hugh was not only Ned's secretary but also his childhood friend and a trusted member of the household—and they often spent time together in the gardens of the mansion during off-working hours (especially around the main fountain—their favourite place). The haste with which the incident was officially ruled a murder-suicide also raises suspicions; it is possible that the Doheny family, concerned about their reputation and already entangled in the Teapot Dome scandal, had reasons to ensure a quick resolution to avoid further scandal.

Bullets

by Mohammed Ahmad

I wish you were a dove mirrored in my green eyes
Rather than a breathless
bullet scraping my blue skies

Beneath your wings, falls an array of death.
With every flight,
I disappear into nothingness

Nearly no harm is done, as the bullets invade

This life happens to be the same story
Gossiped on tv, left undone, bloody
forcibly gray

Bombs begin dropping, earth vibrates from the sound,
Little kisses that send us to sleep,
make their way round

The rocket that shoots, cradled in american wage
leaving me orphaned, leaving me lonely,
leaves me in a fit of rage

I hug sister tightly, this may be our last
She whispers how
quickly the days will pass

I remove the code off my phone, check it off my list
Keep it in my pocket
so they know we exist

I wear the darkest red, so the blood doesn't protrude
Nearly no harm is done,
as the bullets intrude

Something Happened Here

by Mohammed Ahmad

A fire roars upon a strip of land, I
haven't slept since yes-
-terday, a parade of fireworks, or
am I dreaming a-gain? I know nothing
of the moon's frost beyond this arma--geddon,
only roll-ing faces, that black-en and redd-en,
the tv screens buzzing 24/7,
because of you, the towns kids know everything a-
-bout heaven. nothing but a pain that is never dead end, dark signals begin
to leap out, families weaved tightly in blankets holding their hands in each stone house,
Hold what is important, your heads and shoulders, knees, and thighs,
your flailing limbs,
My heart, your tongue,
My eyes
Something
ha-ppens
here. They said it took 2 hours to
bury a family of 5.
Rubble and Rubble and Rubble
damaged schools, an orphanage, where the smoke huddles
standing firm desperately to survive, but there is no
fear, just faith only faith, this faith says that
it will pass tonight.
Yesterday our bodies were,
massacred in the blue light of your screen,
now my house has just
collapsed. My home. I have lived in it for
20 years, a home is a refuge,
this is all I know, staring deadly in a black
abyss, chiseled skin, silver smoke, something
happens here. It happens very fast. I
disappear, then re-
-appear, I blend between the dirt and the grass.
I die and become
another,
and
another, just a number, are your eyes still detached?

Something is happening here, he lost
his mother, he is only 10, he knows nothing
but her hands, her skin, and the walls of her
protection. He knows nothing else, but a
roar of fire,
a strip off land,
a family of families,
a siege,
a sea,
a heart filled with rage.
Something happened here.

Ocean Deep

by Mohammed Ahmad

I remember when you left me that day, my love, ocean deep
Though I knew you were in my way, I think of you, ocean deep
Winters reeds fall blue and frozen, summer comes loudly to play
Pink hydrangeas dance to the gray water that lies ocean deep
I wondered what would've happened if you tried to stay with
meThe memories of you still run cold and ravaged, ocean deep
You had left me in the wailing dark, lost and confused per say,
You forgot our windowed room, upon an ocean so deep
I called to you, begged you to please love me and decide to pray
But you were already gone, lost in a world ocean deep
What can a lover do, when supple love wants to walk away
Into a troubled black life whose sins of sins run ocean deep
I grasped myself, held my love, waited every single May
I remember when you left me that day, the pain, ocean deep
No one could ever love you like me, not even the ocean deep.

The Hy-Phen

by Rebecca Davis-Ohan

Two syllables on either side each a
complete name. The first, so common
it can hide in a crowd.

The second, deceptively simple
wanting only an apostrophe or a C
for mistaken identification
into another world.

Five letters and four
letters tied by a hyphen
make a new name.

An original, one-of-a-kind name in spite of objection from
Social Security, DMV, banks and credit cards, schools, airlines
medical records and military records.

A hyphen binds them
A strong little line with
no spaces on either side
to separate them

A look-again line
A don't-judge line
A wait-a-minute, an hour, a day, a lifetime
And live, line.

An Honorable Life

by Kay Mouradian

The vibration of a clear awakened man
is unforgettable.

The greatest of those in history revered
and loved were simple men.

During their lives they worked, spoke
and acted quietly.

The potency and power of their being
And the quality of their actions,
deemed them unforgettable.

That is the power of every being who is
honest about his deepest potential
And becomes what he can be.

Your Heart

by Kay Mouradian

Your heart is the center
Of your life energy.
How often have you heard people say
It was heartfelt
My heart is broken
I learned it by heart.

People say
I love with all my heart.
They never say I love
with all my brain.
You may think you
think with your brain,
But you do not.
You think with your heart.

Is there such a thing
As an Armenian heart?

What I Learned

by Kay Mouradian

My teacher said to me
Look into a man's eyes

Learn to read his spirit.
His countenance and his eyes
Tell you what quality is in him
More than the words he speaks.

In Memo-random

by Danielle Acheampong

Who remembers that you circled back?
That you sent one more message to the channel on Slack?

Who remembers how late you stayed when meetings ran long?
How you learned a whole new way of being, just to get along?

Who remembers the old KPIs?
From 2010 or 1950? Or 1805?

No one

An endless pursuit of upward trends
Exhausting our planet to the very end

Who remembers that your team maximized profit?
Those left on our planet will only remember you lost it

Walking In His Woods

by Jennifer Berry

Letting him lead, he takes a path I would not.
He is only two, so I follow.
Follow for him, follow for me.
Weight of wordless gravity line my maternal melancholy
I'm heavier than he but willing to forget it out here.
A spindly spider web coats his frail face.
Laughing that toddler laugh, he removes the widow's design with wonder.
Leaves linger between his feet.
Discovering green moss, touching more majesty.
Emerald color, tree wallpaper dotted and dated this spring.
Further forging the path, running to a Pine Tree that smells like butterscotch.
Surgery sap surges the aromatic air.
Scared, he becomes suddenly, as the path grows dark.
Turning around he runs to brighter bees that hover inside a flower.
Will he get stung looking for beauty?
I cannot protect him from that quest.
We walk, weaving.
He stops unable to talk, asking me a question.
Is this really for me?
He questions with his eyes only.
The trees?
The land?
The woods?
For me?
Asking again.
Yes, baby, the whole world.
It is all for you.

(For Jonah)

Teen Fire

by Jennifer Berry

Teenage Girls listen to me
They will denounce your poetry
with red pens and snide critique
Tearing apart your unique
It is an ancient dance
Isolated men stealing a glance
At your power and poise
telling you to make less noise
Wild hair, songs and sorrow
Wishing only for tomorrow
Free classrooms without oppressive teachers
Hiss and whispers behind the bleachers
You must hold on to your voice
even when it seems you have no choice
A few more years, many less tears.
Loud and proud you must remain
To fight the war in a male domain
It's war worth winning even though your head is spinning
Keep talking
Start Walking

The Women in My Family

by Jennifer Berry

The Women In my family die alone
Except for the ones that kill themselves.

That takes longer and will not be me.

I was the girl who cried in the coat room
Surrounded by wool and fleece
Unable to speak her truth

I knew pleasure and pain were coconspirators.
That both could live inside
A life, a love, a laundromat

That irons can smooth a shirt while burning a hand

California born, I loved the sun
There is a reason for the raisin and other shriveled
things

Age makes wine and women wonderful

Jennifer or Jenny?
I've been both

The girl who was hit
The woman who fought back

I was a girl with a past who grew into
A woman with a future

And inside my revolving reverie
I can only light the spark that is my

Voice
Vision
Velocity

Movement beyond now
And meaning in the present

I think I might die from gratitude
Given gifts I did not earn

That what's they'll put on my Urn

Ashes
Ashes
Spread

A fragrant fire that once burned.

The Cause Was Lead

by Tenita Sellers

25 years to life, the judge read
Now I know...the cause was LEAD
Lead is what led me to be
The thug, the "G", no pedigree.
I've learned the truth
Of what robbed me of my youth
Diminished I.Q., can't read or add
Now I know...the cause was LEAD.
Locked inside a mind struggling to understand
How I got poisoned but lead didn't take the stand.
Photo, mugshot, hands up - I surrender
But it's the lead that's the repeat offender.
You want me to rehabilitate
When it's you that cultivates the hate
You placed me in a project of peeling paint,
But it's my culpability that you mediate.
Lead has led to so many dead
In da hood from my homestead.
Instead of being pure-bred,
I'm fed the American nightmare instead of the dream.
This lead shit is more poisonous than it seems.
Watch our potential bleed out in the streets
As we get jail time instead of college degrees.
I too believe my life should have gone differently
But what choice do you have
When it's your own home killing you mentally?
Historically, my mentality is systemically stereotypical,
It's just my reality.
Look at me and all you see is a criminal,
But these crimes on my body
Are handled at a minimal.
How can you expect me to sit, wait and be patient
When it feels like the environment is racist?

We'll never solve the equation of our lack of education
Until we change the station and start the conversation.
I just say all of this to illustrate how we urgently need to eliminate
And recreate neighborhoods without a toxic fate.

Don't Try to Change Me

by Karine Armen

Be careful brother
I am not a girl anymore
Stop labeling me
Marxist, liberal, leftist

Be careful darling
I am mad like a woman
not like a little girl
I am a feminist

I was not born with anger
Boys are playing with my nerves
You can't do it, girl
Made me mad and powerful

Laugh at me one more time
Be sarcastic again
Awaken the beast in me
I am an angry feminist!

Free Me

by Karine Armen

As it happens, I have never tired of traveling.
What shall I carry with me?
Pack that yellowing photograph of my grandparents
The only document showing them.

As it happens, I have never tired of my ancestors.
How did they survive the Armenian Genocide?
Here, Grandpa in a suit, Grandma in a dark dress
Nobody smiles; their eyes touch mine.

As it happens, I have never tired of fighting for justice.
When shall I stop worrying?
It's in my Armenian genes to worry.
The Ukrainian Grandma transmits superstition.

As it happens, I am tired of All American Cities.
How can we change our past?
Visit other countries; learn the history
Leave your racist suitcase at home.

As it happens, I am tired of chains.
How can I leave the trash behind?
Pack that yellowing photograph of ancestors.
Burn the wounds; destroy the superstitions and worries.

Administrative Assistant IV

by Millie R. Schacher

I'm sittin' at my desk,
my disposition grotesque.
It's the constant daily struggle,
of an unwanted muggle;
commiserating on her lack
the slack,
the flack,
the crack on jack,
that's making her really wack.
Decidedly she's decided she's glided
and chided the pride she hid
for the hours and hours she resided.
She takes a drink of her joe
and emails her beau
because her foe is slow,
and he won't know.

He sits on his throne
of condoning cologne
and eats up his slugs,
these thugs,
with passionate groans
and vainglorious moans
and from his lips,
the oozing slaver,
the gurgle of a baby's babbler.
The pinkness of his cheeks
matches the intimacy of his techniques.
I'm a ripe country scholar
stuck behind a molar.
He gnaws on me then dispatches
all of last week's batches.
The floor, a hideous hue,
let's you know what we went through.

Brother's Memories

By Hope Innelli

I remember when we'd watch baseball games together,
and he'd regale us with his knowledge of stats tracing back decades,
I remember sitting atop his tall shoulders at the stadium during twilight double-headers
so I could get a better glimpse of the feild,
I remember peanuts, and popcorn, and crackerjacks and an ice-cold coke.
But can he?

I remember pick-up games in the court outside our home,
Breaking the temple window with a cool grand slam,
Offering to mow lawns to pay for the damage,
And waiting through winter with its high snow drifts and endless shoveling,
until spring arrived again and we could play once more,
But can he?

I remember 1969 and the Amazing Mets like it was yesterday,
And I remember all of our slumps—sportswise, personal, and professional too,
I remember both of his runs for Congress,
and his rising again from the ashes with hope,
I remember his idealism, his genius, and his sheer determination,
But can he?

I remember his illness stealing a base from him, then another, and another,
and I can't help dreading the day when it finally steals home.
Then I will be left to remember alone.

The Balm of Faith

By Hope Innelli

I fell into a Fibonacci funk,
spiraling as if in a nautilus shell a thousand times my size.
I had deduced, observed, discovered a growth—
A malignancy in my bosom—
and worse still, in several of my lymph nodes.
What force, leverage, friction, or
momentum could I apply against it?
Was it not just a matter of physics?
From “particle to wave, matter to energy, survival to creation” as Dispenza preaches
And so I pulled myself up and out of my shell,
built a spiritual vortex around me,
welcomed the swell of hope,
Remembered my love of life—
the tea scent of roses,
the odd elegance of spotted, round-bodied lady bugs,
the buss of the sun on my face,
the joyful aura of a newborn baby radiating past the fog of its powder-dusted skin—
and I made myself one with the unending existence of space,
the dark unknown midnight of the unconscious,
I accepted my projected healing as truth,
Was carried out to the sacred sea of trust by a jetty of gratitude,
And swam to my delight in the buoyant heavenly pool of God’s love,
here in the mind,
on Earth,
In the world,
in wonderment,
in the year 2024,
and in the body of my own remaking,
ahead of schedule—
ahead of it happening.
I am thus far still able to give testimony to the prophesy of my return to health.
And so I lay my head down,
Not to rest, but to plan for all the fantastical things I will do next.

Smoke, No Mirrors

By Hope Innelli

Waking to that smoke cloud the first day,
It was as if dawn broke twelve more hours of night,
The constant pings alerting us to more evacuations,
The ringtone heralding breaking news,
Zero containment of tears, nerves, stress, shock, and flames
for what felt like an eternity,
The trauma when one, two, then three dear friends posted they had lost their forever
home,
And still another who reported he held disaster at bay with a garden hose when his
backyard fence and trees blazed,
What hellscape,
What wretched purge,
What negligence,
What five-alarm wake-up call,
What long overdue penance to nature was this?

YEAH.

by Joshua Moore

Fuck life.

It's poorer than a dog in the summer without water.
It goes and goes and goes until nothing means anything.
You're just lost in a daze.

You see the artists wait tables and strain inside L.A.'s Labyrinth.
All is lost until it's found, so they keep going.
They are heroes.

You see the homeless deranged and laying like starfish in intersections.
No one pays them mind, they're like insects.
It's the fate of those brave enough to dream.

You see the people strapped to their fancy cars and gold adornments.
Worship disdains anything less than full zeal and fury.
They dig their own graves and hang themselves with the jewelry on their neck.

We all just want to be something.
A bright speck amid an ocean of black.
We just need to be something, we just need to be.
It's only a matter of time before everyone sees who they are.
It's a fate you can't avoid.

Then you have poetry to describe it.
Why does everything have to rhyme?
It's not like it masks the truth in the lie.
The truth always arranges its own discovery.

Love life.

See, we're all alone in that we're alone.
You can choose to see the pain and struggle,
But there you will find immense beauty amid the blood if you look.
It's the heart beat that makes us all reflect,
The concrete love that binds us all and calls us human.
Never forget you have stardust in your veins.

All we have is each other.

Make It Home

by Gio Schwab

They say you're not a real New Yorker until the city you remember no longer exists.
And the farther I get, the closer I come.
And the less I remember.
My girlfriend thinks I'm weird cause I can't sleep... Studio City is too quiet.
I miss the hydraulic hiss of the M101 bus, kneeling like some Savannah beast.
I miss the medallion taxi for its novelty, not its speed. To own a yellow cab was to own pride. To work for Uber is a gig.
I miss the impatience, tender, in its way. You read anger, but I see love on the other side of shared inconvenience. A common enemy, the Brooklyn-bound L train.
What happens to the career waitress at the Greek Diner when the Olympic Flame is extinguished?
When the Borricuas move out of East Harlem...
When the mom&pop gothic coffee shop is razed in favor of another non-linear, post-modern, pro-function, anti-homeless, autocrat high rise, standing tall like a Great. Big. Urinal.
Manhattan, from the indigenous Manhatta, after the native wood used in bow-making. A wood that bends but Does. Not. Break.
The more things change, the more they stay the same—
99c pizza costs a buck-fifty out here.
Broadway is populated by movie stars and Hollywood Boulevard smells like Times Square.
I know God lives in those subways because the turnstile was always my altar; I'd pray I had enough to make it home.

Simon Says

by Gio Schwab

Simon says walk
So I walk
Simon says talk
So I talk
Simon says talk less
So I shut up
Simon says eat
So I gorge
Simon says less
So I starve
Simon says like
So I love
Simon says he wants blue
So I wear blue
Simon says not that blue
So I burn my clothes
Simon says love differently
So I hate the same
Simon says nothing
So I do everything
Simon says shrink
So I vanish
Simon says I'm handsome
So I beam
Simon says I get it from him
So I owe
Simon says he's due
So I slave
Simon says he doesn't get it
So I abandon
Simon says do better
So I am perfect

Simon says you're welcome
So I thank him
Simon says he's proud of me
So I weep
Simon didn't say cry.

APHASIA

by Gio Schwab

The grey matter
blinks out
Electrons shut down.
And as your words begin to fade
And the poet loses power
Blue becomes green
Bed becomes cloud
Son becomes stranger
To me, *you* mean more than ever.

orange rings and mango skin

by Natalie Oganessian

orange rinds and mango skin
this summer i'm peeling it all
back, sucking the juices so it's
sickly sweet when it drips onto the floor

and when the air gets muggy
i will let the mosquitos eat my flesh
just the same, let them live i think
bug spray is annoying anyway

i'll read a book i wish i would have wrote
reminding myself i have to
catapult my mind into now
pulling on the string like a kite

the sun will make me woozy, but
i'll drink it in, forget the water;
in the prosecco bubbles i'll find
salvation, or at least inflated air

when i let the pool baptize me
i'll daydream about god, curse him,
and then beg for forgiveness,
demand he explain it to me just once

i'll let him erase my memory after since
we're not supposed to know, which
makes me wonder if that's what deja vu is,
and suddenly it's 95 degrees

i shiver violently when i'm too hot,
sweating and breathing hard
with no door out of the sauna;
i want to be the coolant condensation—

you know, that puddle that drips and amasses
smelling like a stinky stale breeze;
it must be nice to be the air conditioner
important and in control
i'll take myself too seriously, forget it all
the next day and repeat it in the afternoon
for breakfast i'll eat nostalgia
and then hedonism will be the soup du jour

then i'll smoke a cigarette, get more
lightheaded and have a laugh
think about how i'd kill to be a giraffe
and how nothing is anything even when it is

Colima

by Peter Cromwell

Yeah, take what you can grab

Purple sun cresting the silhouette shadows outside
Pooling through the windows in volumes of dust
Rubber gloves wrinkle as you
Reel them off wet, tired hands
Macaroni makes a childish image
Mummified on the old Sears refrigerator

You remember

Glue crumbles to pebbles
Gathering hardened noodles on the linoleum
Wax texture from the crayon
Weaves the crude drawing
Into your fingers before it finds purchase
In your heart and denim pocket

Years ago, you signed it
-Whoever

Glimmerant

by Peter Cromwell

Glimmer on,
the timber-folk
'afrom the bloc
the axe 'ey took
Otherwise,
by thistle-pine
a blightous ruin
enrare'd in time
Glimmerence,
that happy stroll
a wooden girl,
off path – appall!
Burdensome,
the apple-rot
a lord's report
the fruit 'e caught
Pleasant luck,
the girl did stand
and o'erheard
one nasty plan
Glimmerant!
A mighty sword
her axe, a word
the folk had heard
Petrichor,
that happy smell
of timber-folk
and tales they tell.

Why do we say “Fu” Cancer

by Judith Whitaker

I am looking at a photograph. It is of an artist who died. Young 50's. with friends. They
are

Smiling with love. She is smiling and has a cane

Their shirts

Say “Fu-- cancer “ the UK of “Fuck” is blanked out.

Why is that?

Why can't we say “fuck cancer” not “Fu cancer.”

FUCK

FUCK

FUCK

FUCK

FUCK

FUCK

CANCER

It is killing me

I think.

This year started with surgery

Out came my uterus and ovaries

10 hour surgery

Scraping away cancer

I awoke my body ravaged

My legs swollen

My husband gone

They had sent him home

The surgery had gone so long

I called him

Where are you

He came and told me the bad news

Stage 4b uterine cancer

Chemo followed

Made me sick

Kept me home

40 pounds gone

So was my hair

I didn't care about the hair

It is growing back

But my body is still aching

Neuropathy in my feet make me unable to walk easily

And after 6 months

I was back in the hospital

They didn't know why

6 days of seeing many doctors
Different Ologists
Parading in and out
Good care I know
But so hard
Not to feel well
I feel pretty good now
Less tired
Back at work
And doing my art
But I just learned
The cancer is back
That's what the blood test says
Don't know what it means
There are people in my cancer support group
That are dying and staying with the treatment
That won't be me
When the treatment becomes worse than the cure
If I can't enjoy my life
If I can't work
If I cant enjoy my friends
I will stop treatment
Be strong some said
I got angry
I don't know about strong
I said
I'm more of a puddle
Oh then be a puddle he said
I was glad he got it.
So much has been humiliating

So much has been beautiful
I wake early every day
I savor the goodness
Sipping coffee on my front porch
My sanctuary
While the sun rises and the rest of my house sleeps
I meditate sometimes with a friend
Life is good right now
But we all die
And I'd rather do it later than sooner
Please

Melrose Park

by Judith Whitaker

“Get a good Education because that’s the one thing they can’t take away from you.”

We were sitting in the living room of my suburban home and I was not yet 15

Nanny was not from the suburbs. She, my father’s mother, had come to this country as a child fleeing the pogroms.

“But Nanny,” I replied, “we’re in the suburbs.”

Nanny knew better.

She has come to this country as a terrified child I am sure, but she had grown tough as nails.

Her parents had died from an unnamed epidemic and
She had arrived in “this country” at the tender age of 8.
Before there was a welfare state
as a child she had to work.
She had to go to school
and to
work at night in an umbrella factory.

I imagined Her tiny hands
sewing and sweating
over the fabric
after finishing a full day
at school
trying to learn English without an accent
so she could blend in safely.

She became a nurse
married my grandpa
raised her children in the tiny town of Brooklyn.

But she never forgot where she came from.

I had inherited her trauma
though I grew up in a beautiful suburb.
With Tree lined streets.
In a unique styled house
with large windows that let in the light.

Outside

There was a double lot,
the lot adjacent to the house
was filled with trees and brush
we called it "the woods".

Surrounding the house was a long green lawn,
a side porch that faced the woods
we would ice it over in the winter
and ice skate on it when it got cold enough.

In the back yard there was a long green lawn,
a back porch where as a child
I would stand under the awning
and catch water in a paper cup when it poured rain.

A mesmerizing activity
that would lull me into a feeling of safety
as the drops fell in one
By one
In the front there was a rock garden,
a lilac tree,
a dogwood tree
and a large magnolia tree
In the back yard
that touched the sky.
I would climb that tree to escape my inherited fears.
Up high
a daring run upward
from branch
to branch I would climb.
An otherwise not so much daring child.

My imagination could run wild there
Where I could escape it all the trauma, the fear. The
shouting, and the world that scared me.

I was happy, I had found my sanctuary.

My other grandma turned her trauma to anxiety instead of anger,
Zaftig and fearful she loved me unconditionally and gave endless warm hugs.
That taught me to heal
and to be a mother
and to lessen the trauma passed down
to the
next generation in a kinder softer way.

When I turned 15, we had to leave that home. We were all sad. It was a hard house to sell
because it was different, but we loved it so much. We wrote on the wall in the tiny storage
space under the stairs in the basement-we hope you love this house as much as we did."

Home Is

by Johnny Torres

Home is, Abuela's empty room in the morning, me on the hard wood floor in the patched up blankets, the sun creeping into the room, adorning me with a soft warm halo, fresh jugo de china, desayuno, pan con mantequilla.

Home is, the hug we shared when neither of us had words to express or even alleviate everything we had been going through.

Home is, the permanent orange overcast lens on our existence, southern sun-rays, sweat beads on my forehead, on my everything, beaten and worn.
I felt comfy in these clothes even though they weren't originally mine and never will be.

Home is, your gaze, uncompromising, tenderly held, you dare to love me so much I was confronted with the task of actually loving myself.

Home is, an island, I am often an island, I hope I am found by someone sailing their seas of life, undiscovered and not walked upon selfishly, but curiously with care.

Home is, that loud pride they tend to call disruptive, ghetto, peace disturbing. We are ruining things because we dance? Because we cry? Because we talk about our home land like we forget about it as soon as we change topics.
We HAVE to remember, the TRUTH has been DISPLACED.
If I forget, home is will be home where? Home when? Home what?

It's up to me, my family is trying to forget the struggle, they can't worry about how it was written, they want peace and quiet.

Generations of , "Whose going to keep this roof over your head." and still no peace and quiet.

Can I come home from work to some peace and quiet?

Still no peace and quiet.

Why are we like this to each-other and not THEM? All we have is eachother...

Still no peace and quiet.

The revolution will be a thought in the mind and it will be so loud it will be spoken, and it will be spoken so truly that it will undo itself and it will undo itself in a way that cannot be ignored. It will be recognized, and hopefully in all of that noise there will be some type of peace and quiet.

Home is, the prospect of this, even if just a passing second... for in that, i'm almost sure we can feel some type of forever some type of freedom.

Mira, El Miradero

by Polly Geller

February ongoing Think: S P A C E a S P A C E

Think: r
There
the pivotal
milestone
a roster
an anniversary
Think: past,
ochre,
teal,
charcoal & chaparral
& boxes of graphite whys
Think: focus

A testament
maintained

Chevelure a Lla Francois

by Polly Geller
(after Troy Lo Vegates, aka Other)

Better One, or Two?
The aardvark, or Mama's unrelenting questions
The hours overspent,
The drone of shame, shame and who's sick, or dying.
Have you heard?
It's terrible...Can you imagine?

Yet, here you stand,
Once the artist,
now the patron!

Where would they hang best?
The aardvark looks, you say, dismayed?
So it shivered
Small and patient
exposed to the elements.
Yes, perfect, I agree,
for the guest bathroom.

My mother? Where?
Why do you ask?
She's the reason I started painting.
it's deafening.

Thank you for understanding.

I am on sale,
You, the frame

where is our village?

by Foster Wilson

where is our village?
i watch the sad, sunken eyes of isolation
and deprivation
trod down the sidewalk
long past fatigue
and into an incurable state
of being forgotten
gone is the vitality
the life force that channeled all of existence
to create and bring forth a soul
and all that's left
is a gaping wound
that was never stitched closed
how is it that we discard
the ultimate givers of life
tossing them to the wild animals of exile
serving them endless commodities
in a vast cardboard box
without the touch of guiding hands
and knowing hearts
every drop of wisdom and colostrum
wiped clean by a cold shipment
designed to solve an unanswerable question
where
is
our
village?

'i'm missing a color'

by Foster Wilson

'i'm missing a color'
she spoke to me
heart broken open at the sight
bleeding out her secret to me
as i held her wild mind
in the folds of my hands
'i see their palettes
with pigments i have never known'
devastated by the unfolding
of this sacred mystery
'how do i paint this world
with less than all the rest?'
she cried
and all i could see
was an artist who wanted to paint

you are a work of art

by Foster Wilson

you are a work of art
don't believe me?
live today as art itself
make each movement a dance
wear colors that emerge from your soul
choose your words like poetry
see the impact of your art
in the eyes of strangers
do this from dawn to twilight
once
and try to tell me
you are not art itself

Gentrification

by Kate Martin Rowe

Plastic and contrary, in my neighborhood we
surprise easily. We pave all the rivers, asphalt
lawns, sear trees. Track pigeons

on staircases, the street-performing, magic-
caped pigeons in the eaves. We scout
coyotes that terrorize our kittens.

On the streets of our city, opossums
square off with cats, tiny
alligators scale the drainpipes, people die

in sidewalk tents. Once in a while it rains.

We block the calls of the wild
parrots, avoid the black widow swaying
from a thread.

We rattle and shiver, wear our
fog like a hand-knit wrap, breathe
fire and cough. And when a rare hail

falls in the courtyards of our empty apartments,
we take it as a sign. We're organic, of regular
strength and height, we say,

mapping the neighborhood in intuitive
aqua, divided but reaching, we say, just
sprawling. Over the blank.

Grief Hour

by Kate Martin Rowe

At that hour, the concrete takes you where you
want to go, blue faces that glow behind
the glass, the imagined lives of neighbors blowing

closer. On some streets grow hallways of trees
you walk through. Dogs bark from roofs and kumquat-
colored clouds linger between humps

of mountain that last August burst into flames and blew ash
in your yard like tiny gray butterflies. Jealousy
is like that, a bruise

that is first invisible, the sound of a rusty gate swinging
open, a suburban peacock crossing. The work that is performed
by other people in their houses

seems important. You say hi
to all the gardeners packing up their trucks
in the semi-dark. You imagine their families, the stories

they read their children, what they fix for dinner.
On your return the cats are clawing at the screen
and there is dinner yet—

sex, God, and television. The inertia
encircling your wrists.

something uncomfortable, a neighbor's bent
fence, that metallic taste

in your mouth, which is the taste of God.

A permanent, crimped feeling
and the hot wind that makes you
alive and unbelieving.

Smile

by Zahida Sherman

Two teeth resting
worlds apart behind lips
pursed and chapped
from laughing wide
and free
no apology in you yet
shame had not become
an unwelcome squatter
marking their territory
in your spirit.

In some cultures women with gapped teeth
are placed tenderly
on pedestals
for the beautiful
their smiles enrapture men's' fantasies
and they command adornments
spoils, and treasures
just because
they flashed diamonds
on eyes ready to devour
just for the thrill.

But their fate and yours
are worlds apart
eyes reign down pity
when they see you
Poor girl.

Who's going to love her?
elders bargain with your parents
to pay for braces they can't afford.

Beauty is inconvenient
but its card will carry you far
if you know how to play smart.

So you will your back to relax
in the plastic chair chilled to sterile temperatures
every appointment
teeth tighten through metal bracketed
wires
that seem to span endlessly.
You say your prayers
and picture the agonizing edges of sound
50 shades of blue and gray
spanning farther than your eyes can take you.

There is no pain and aching here
your beauty will absolve it all
your smile will hold the keys
to the prison of their freedom

Spirit Guide

by Zahida Sherman

Remind me who you are
that you're still here
with me
listening between the wind's breath
peeking through the rays of warmth
that beam down on me
right after the fog clears in the morning.
Sometimes in the depths of my dreams
I can hear the echo of your laughter
robust and promising
strong like your arms wrapped around me
your sacred fortress
and my heart knows
I am still loved.

Truth and Lie

by Medrik Minassian

Fancy the truth, not yet I believe
For you are not ripe
For you have not been fed enough lies
For you have not fought for it yet

And the truth, as written, is the wisdom of
God
And that truth is the glory of life
The peaceful zephyr in every human breath.
But rarely has it been written
Widely spoken in foul languages
Unpleasant to the innocent ears.
Lies, as the Devil told the Lord,
Are as sweet as your morning marmalade
As tempting as your midnight madness
But bear no fruit for they are infidel words

Ever wondered where truth and lie, lie?
Side by side, in the comfort of your soul
Which one prevails?
The one your tongue utters.

To Spend Countless Strokes of the Clock

by Medrik Minassian

To spend countless strokes of the clock
Waiting for the fall of dawn
Waiting only to awaken to the sound of defeat,
But where do all these mysteries go?
Far away from me and you,
Only if we wish to.
The Sun rises as duty requires
You and I choose to see its rays.
The love that was lost yesterday
Was found by another.
And today, when you count your mistakes
They are countless full of undesired moments
Glance through that window
Not the one viewing the meadow
Glance through that very window
That sees the light of life glow
Forget the century-old proverbs
Look for new ones instead
Let every circling day take its share
But don't spare any second for another

Smile in the most laborious hours
For what they strike is a mere passing of time
And you shall own the day and the coming days
Only if you see life through those glowing rays.

(Au)gmented Reality

by Anna Maria Osehobo

With gold as the goal, we think we are
bold, But in our raw spirit, we've lost
more than sold.

The thrill of the guild ensnares both young
and old. Scalded by shine, shielding shares
of a scold. Lured by the karat, while the
stick waits on hold.

Embossed yet encumbered, called "free" but
controlled, connected by coin, emblazoned,
unparoled. See the gilt is the jilt! Still it shim-
mers, lit gold.

For some mint their treasures while other hu-
mans mold. Beholding abundance, still spare
cents they withhold. Is common sense a casual-
ty? Leaving victims unconsolated.

A lesson the lucky learn, now fair warning
foretold; There is no metal yet worth the
weight of your soul.

Wisdom's Veil

by Anna Maria Osehobo

Shipwrecked off the shore where my eager enemy lies.
Such royal disposition they will surely recognize! There's
just one way to sneak about and pray I do survive, find a
fitting local dress, to be a queen, but in disguise.

Search Flight

by Anna Maria Osehobo

A butterfly landed on a flower, only to discover
its nectar was sour.

Without sweet succulence, it now seeks succulents,
to sate it by the hour.

Award Seasons

by Morgan Barney

Some people say LA has no seasons,
but it is March and the jacarandas'
leaves are turning yellow.
Soon, they will fall and branches burst
with fluted purple petals coloring May Gray skies
and my parked car's windshield.
June Gloom afternoons turn bright
with the promise of hot August days
and long, warm October nights burn
with fire season's treacherous blazes, hot
Halloween costumes on Hollywood turn
soon to wet season umbrellas
or the chill dry winters of La Niña
that beckon the jacarandas to change
early this season, when Oscar's billboards
are replaced with next year's considerations.
Maybe this year, we will find the best beach
or brave the waves of tourists at the pier.
Maybe this year we will pluck sweet loquats
from our neighbor's tree,
turn farmers' market berries to jam,
take a long drive to see the snow or
hike to orange clouds of poppies.
Maybe this year, our favorite artists
will take home their golden statues
and we will be warm again on the first day of spring.
We will soak up the omnipotent Southland sun
and the jacarandas
will bless us soon again
with their
late falls
and
purple
gems

Prompt Song

by Morgan Barney

Sorrow croons as love begs

the only tree left standing in the forest

If you don't risk anything, you risk nothing

A man lives with regrets and imagines how his life could have gone:

a flourish of hate

a scoffing sun

a character sketch of a sore loser.

I tie the ribbon foolishly, the delicious fragility of the tragedy where we still laugh and hope

The hallway is silent

Point of view: a strand of hair

the twelve worst pretend movies of all time

a minute failure

a cliché poem

a magazine image of a man who teaches cockroaches to tap dance.

Behind her, the noise escalates

38th Parallel

by Erin Schalk

At twenty-six,
I was caught behind
the base's web of
razor wire
end-over-end spirals,
ensnared potential
energy, galvanized,
but not by action,
as it wove a matrix
that allows vision, but
denies being,
outward, into
rain ribbons that plunged
from the bus windows,
camouflaging
a frayed coast,
as sea and slate sky fused
into monochrome silence as
the fogged horizon
split, revealing
an outpost stilt hut
that sheltered
its faceless
gunner.
Still,
the razor wire
rushed past, framing
our view outward.

Sensation

by Erin Schalk

(A poem about Autism Spectrum Disorder)

brain and neurons
on fire, liquefying,
detonating through
a fragile barrier of skin
engine rev of the blender
knife-grind of the garbage disposal
fingernail-screach of packing tape,
ripped from the plastic dispenser
pierce and pitch of a baby's cry
sandpaper-weave washcloths
sun-glare eclipse of the kitchen's LED lights
staccato choke-gag on chunky tomato sauce
clawing at your temples,
screaming —
help me not feel everything

Song of Returning

by Erin Schalk

(First thoughts when listening to Armenian Oud music)

Listen, breathe
the wind that flows through
the tree grove, branches like
instrument strings—humming,
reaching to leaves, blurred
tavush-green clouds.
My drumbeat pace alternates
across a gravel path, traces
dancers traveling beyond the horizon,
their graceful spins, sways, tips,
and pause—my body and mind
now also silent.
I press my feet to continue,
retracing a path from decades
before, to uncover the unheard
steps of returning home.

Մենք դեռ շատ չգիտենք

Ռոբերտ Հարությունյան

Մենք դեռ շատ չգիտենք Եվ նման ենք մանուկի:

Մենք մոռացել ենք մեր անցյալը՝

Եվ ապրում ենք նորովի...

Դարեր են անցել...

Ավա՛ղ՝

մարդկային դատողությունը նույնն է

մնացել,

Յուլյնիսկ մարդկության պատմության

բնույթը չի փոխվել,

էլի սարսափելի պատերազմեր են տեղում,

Ու մարդիկ անխնա իրար են կոտորում,

Որ սիրեն ուրիշին, ստրկացնեն մարդկանց՝

Դարձնելով նրանց խոնարհ ու հնազանդ:

Ինչ արքաներ, փարավոններ, շահեր, կեսարներ,

Էլ չհաշված սուլթաններին ու ցարերին

Մարդկության գլխով եկան ու անցան:

Ինչու անցան...

Դե թող մնային, տիրեին հավերժ,

Չէ՞ որ շատերը պարծենում էին,

Որ Աստծո կողմից ընտրյալներ են նրանք:

Նրանց հետ ինչ եղավ,

Բոլորս գիտենք...

Սակայն...

Յուլյն պատմությունն է ընդմիշտ՝

Գոծողություններ նույն տրիվիալ

բանաձեւային շարքը՝

պատերազմ, սպանություն,

թալան, խնջույք,

գահակալում, մահ:

Կրկին պատերազմ--մահ--պատերազմ--մահ:

Չի հոգնում նա միայն սպանելուց:
Ինչքան ժամանակ է քեզ պետք,
Բնության տիրակալ՝ մարդ արարած,

Որ հասկանաս՝ ժամանակավոր ես դու այս երկրում
Մի՛ վատնիր ժամանակդ
հիմար ու դատարկ գործերի

վրա:
Մի՛ պաշտիր նյութը՝ փարամոլ մի եղիր
եղիր մարդասեր, ոչ մարդատյաց,
Ստեղծարար՝ եղիր, այլ ոչ մարդասպան:
Հազարամյակների դաժանության միջով անցնելով՝
Չըմբռնեցիր, չհասկացար ցարդ
Աքսիոմատիկ, էլեմենտար մի բան.
Ամեն ինչ ունի վերջ,
 Նույնիսկ՝ ամենահզոր ուժը,
Եվ փոփոխական է ամեն ինչ,
Երբ ուժի ու նյութի վրա է խարխաված:

Հիմնովին վերանայել է պետք մեր մտածելակերպը,
 ու արժեքների համակարգը ողջ
 Մարդկանց պետք է արաջնորդեն
 համարդկային արժեքները
 եւ մարդկության բարօրության

Գաղափարը:
Այսքանը

ኑገ ጥራጥራ...

Ժամանակն է փակելու նախապատմության այն էջը,
երբ բարբարոս, մարդատյաց էր մարդն արարած,
ներկա օրերի պահանջն է դարձել՝
Մատյանը բացել
Խելամիտ մարդու պատմության:

We still don't know much

by Robert Harutyunyan

We still don't know much
And we are like children.

We have forgotten our past
And we live anew...
Centuries have passed...
Alas!
Human judgment has remained the same,
Even the nature of human history has not changed,
Terrible wars are still raging,
And people are mercilessly slaughtering each other,
To dominate others, to enslave people,
Making them humble and obedient.
What kings, pharaohs, shahs, Caesars,
Not to mention sultans and tsars,
Have come and gone over the heads of humanity.
Why have they passed...
Well, let them stay, let them rule forever,
Didn't many boast,
That they were God's chosen ones?
What happened to them,
We all know...
However...
It's the same story forever:
The same trivial
formulaic sequence of actions:
war, murder,
plunder, feast,
enthronement, death.
Again war- death, war-death...
Okay, until when, how long...
Sooner or later, a person gets tired of everything,
He doesn't get tired only of killing.

How much time do you need,
The ruler of nature, a human being,
To understand that you are temporary on this Earth...
Do not waste your time
 on stupid and empty deeds.
Do not worship matter, do not be ambitious,
Be humane, not misanthropic,
Be creative, but not a murderer.
Having gone through millennia of cruelty,
You have not understood, have not understood yet
An axiomatic, elementary thing.
Everything has an end,
 even the most powerful force,
And everything is changeable,
When it is anchored on force and matter.
We need to fundamentally revise our way of thinking,
 and the whole system of values.
People should be guided by universal values
 and the idea of the welfare of humanity.
That's all,
And...
Nothing...
It's time to close that page of prehistory,
When man was a barbarian, misanthropic creature,
The demand of today has become
To open the Book of the history
 of a reasonable ma

Ցավը Ռոբերտ

Հարությունյան

Ամենուրեք եւ ամեն ինչում
Մարդուն փոխարինում-կրկնօրինակում է ռոբոտը,
Միայն մի բանում նա չի կարող
Մարդուն նմանվել մարդու պես լինել՝
Ցավ զգալ ու ցավից տառապել:
Երբեք ռոբոտը չի հասկանա մարդու ցավը,
Տառապի ցավով ցավից գալարվի,
Ցավից վեպ գրի,
Երգեր հյուսի հոգեմաշ:
Այնպես որ ցավը մարդունն է,
Մարդը ցավի՛նը:
Չլիներ ցավը մարդը չեր լինի այն,
Ինչ կա,
Չէին լինի մշակույթը կոթողները՝
Հիասկանչ, անձեռակերտ...
Չէին լինի Գարնին,
Զվարթնոցն ու Գեղարդը՝
Կերտված ցավով հայի,
Քանի որ
Ցավը հայինն է, հայը ցավի՛նը:
Իմ որդին ինձ ցավ է պատճարում,
Տարապեցնում է ամեն օր,
Դրա համար ես նրան պատժում եմ,
Ասում եմ՝ ցավդ տանեմ:

Միայն հայերն են այդպես ասում,
Այդպես են պատժում
Ու ցավ են տանում,
Քանի որ հայը լավ է իմանում՝
Ինչ բան է ցավը.
Երբ տառապանքից էլ ձեռն գիտակցում ու զգում՝
Որտեղ ես դու, ինչ է կատարվում,
Ինչի համար,
Ինչ նպատակով եւ
Հանուն ինչի...
Ռոբոտը լավ է ամեն ինչ կատարում,
Հասկանում է շատ բան,
Միայն մի բան նա լավ չի ըմբռնում, գիտակցում
Ինչ բան է մարդկային ցավը:

Pain

by Robert Harutyunyan

Everywhere and in everything
The robot replaces and imitates man,
Only in one thing it cannot
Resemble man, be like man.
Feel pain and suffer from pain.
A robot will never understand human pain,
Suffer with pain, writhe in pain,
Write a novel from pain,
Weave songs from the soul.
So, pain belongs to man,
Man belongs to pain.
If there were no pain, man would not be what
he is,
There would be no wonderful cultural monuments:
Garni, Zvartnots and Ani
Made with the pain of an Armenian,
Because the pain is Armenian,
Armenians understand pain well.
My son causes me pain,
He torments me every day,
That's why I punish him;
I say, "I'll take your pain."
Only Armenians say so,
That's how they punish and suffer,
Because an Armenian knows well:
What is really pain.
When even from suffering you don't realize and feel:
Where are you, what is happening,
For what,
Why, for what purpose and
For the sake of what...
The robot does everything well,
Understands a lot,

Only one thing it doesn't understand,
And realizes well:
What human pain is.

Ճմարտություն, Արդարություն | Truth, Justice Սերգեյ Շահնուբարյան | by Sergei Shahnuparyan

Ով մարդկային արդարություն, թող ես թքնեմ քու
ճակատիդ: -Սիամանթո

Ho! Human justice, let me spit on your forehead. -Siamanto

Ճմարտություն, արդարություն.
Սերտ կապակցված երեսոյթներ,
Որ միշտ հուզել, ուղեկցել են
երկրի վրա ապրող Մարդուն:

Ճմարտություն, արդարություն
Խնդիրները՝ տարաբնույթ,
Մարդու համար դարձել են
Կյանքի, մահվան հար հարցեր:

Ուրիշ ինչպե՞ս գործեր Մարդը,
Յնադարյան անգոր Մարդը,
Երբ ստեղծվելուց դեռ շատ վաղուց
Չեր տարբերվում այլ կենդանուց.
Երբ կրվում էր իր գոյություն...,
Պահանջների բավարարման,
Իր նմանին պաշտպանելու,
Եղած ցեղը պահպանելու:

Այսպես անվերջ գոյ-կրվի մեջ
Այս հնամյա Մարդը կյանքում
Ինչպե՞ս պահեր ճշմարտություն
Ու պահպաներ արդարություն:

Չե՞ որ ուժին էր իր սկզբունքով...
Կյանքում գործում ամեն հարցում,
Ու առ այսօր այդ սկզբունքը
Դեռ գործում է շուրջբոլորը:

Ու քանի որ ուժերը մոտ
Թույլ են և որպես միշտ մեղավոր,
Արդարության ճամփաները
Հա կլինեն խռոչափոթ:

Այնուհանդերձ Մարդ կոչվածը
Պիտի ձգտի
Ճշմարտության-արդարության,
Քանզի արանց արդարության
Մարդկությանը կգա վախճան:

Truth, justice.
Intimately connected visions,
That have always perturbed,
accompanied
Man living on Earth.

Truth's, justice's
Challenges—differing in essence,
Had turned into man's
Searing questions of life and death.

How else should have man functioned?
The powerless man of antiquity,
Who from his creation long ago
Did not differ much from an animal.
When he fought for his existence...,
To satisfy his needs,
To defend his kind,
To preserve his tribe.

In this endless fight for existence
In the life of this ancient man
How could he have kept truth,
And maintained justice?

Wasn't it strength in its origin...
At play in every matter of life?
And today, with that origin
It is still at work everywhere.

And since for the strong
The weak is always at fault,
The roads to justice
Will remain potholed.

Thus, he who is called Man
Will strive for truth-justice,
Because without justice
Mankind will meet its end.

Տարօրինակ է Ապրելը Հիմի

Սերգեյ Շահնուբարյան

Երբ ջահել էի ու հոգերով լի, Քաղցր էր
կյնքս՝ հույս-հավատով լի, Իսկ հիմա
ինչ է՝ խորհուրդ տաղտկալի, Ասես
կենդանի որ այլ ելք...չունի:

Եվ դիմում եմ տրտում անանուն
պոետին՝ Հարյուրն ապրած Գրիգորյան
Անուշին, Նրա խոհերին, անեղծ
հույզերին, Աստծուն ուղղած բողբոջ-
հարցերին:

Այսպես խարնվում եմ մոքերս ուժին,
Երբ փորձում եմ պարզել՝ ո՞րն է
էական... Ու գլորվելով խորքերն
իմացողյան... Մնում եմ ես սին, առանց
պատասխան:

It's Strange to Live Now

by Sergei Shahuparyan

When I was young and preoccupied with work,
My life was sweet: full of hope and belief,
And now what is it? Boring meaning,
Alive you say, for whom a way out...there is not.

And I endlessly approach the sad, nameless poet:
Grigoryan Anoush, who has lived centuries,
Her thoughts, her incorruptible emotions,
Grievance-questions aimed at God.

This is how my thoughts swirl,
When I try to ascertain, "which is significant?"...
And tumbling through the depths of knowing...
I remain empty, without an answer.

Glorified Pain

By Mary Terterov

There is a glory and pain in motherhood
It is not meant for comprehension

It's an enclave of feelings
Melted paint of confusion
Disordered furniture
Cluttered thoughts
Whirlwind of instability
Suffocating lows
Unreachable highs
Down in the gutter
Up in the clouds
On the bottle
Off to the sky

Sad Braids

By Mary Terterov

There is a glory and pain in motherhood
It is not meant for comprehension
It's an enclave of feelings
Melted paint of confusion
Disordered furniture
Cluttered thoughts
Whirlwind of instability
Suffocating lows
Unreachable highs
Down in the gutter
Up in the clouds
On the bottle
Off to the sky

The Price of a Stolen Destiny

By Mary Terterov

This is a story about what you do
when your kids don't become
what you expect them to become,
and the disaster that follows ...

First you kick.
Then you scream.
Then you hold your breath
until you pass out.

Bad news...
the worst is yet to come.
You regain consciousness
and realize you are orchestrating a reality
that doesn't belong to you.

A future that was stolen from your imagination.
A hope that found a grave too soon.
An ambition that you could not inject or infuse inside another person
even with the world's largest needle.

But you still tried,
Oh, how you tried!

A spiraling staircase that leads to the bottom floor
which leads to a door
which leads to a room
which leads nowhere.
Shut,
Locked,
Hello dead-end. How do you do?

What is the tax to pay
when you force someone
to live YOUR version of reality?
When you dictate a life that THEY find unimaginable?

And when the explosion occurs
and the debris settles on your tired, dusty body,
You finally realize...
you've manufactured a debilitated, needy monster
AND YOU ARE THE KEEPER.

The little ones by the ocean

by Olena Bobak

The little ones by the ocean
Little feathers that don't uplift
Tell me Aves-will they eat
What we are eating
Tell me Ornis do you have fear
We cannot eat the same thing
They do not know what we hear
When will we know what clean is
How much of salt can we intake
Nature lives within us
We do not live in her

Watercolor Love

by Danielle Kellman

Your eyes held the same heat as the desert.
You were my desert rose even in the winter.
We walked one thousand steps and found the rhythm in each city.
The shore was our best friend waiting for us every night.
We sat along the orange tree with nickels in our pockets.
Making funny faces while we drank fruit punch.
You were my winding river who made me feel safe again.
You never picked my flowers.
You loved my striped vase.
I call your name tonight.
I call you to my place.

Live On

by Danielle Kellman

My soul cries for people I've never met.

I'm introduced to them by the words they left behind and the stories they told.

What haunts them haunts me.

They share their dreams alongside their simplistic joyous ways.

I can't help but feel all they felt.

Honored to know their life.

Brining them back to life with my steady eyes on the pages.

Chills falling into thin air where maybe they can feel me too.

I'm shaking and breaking once more for all of you.

The dead live on.

California Free

by Danielle Kellman

The ability to live free...

Go go go.

Reach the truth.

Reach my hand.

Touch all that remains in the sand of your memories with a smile.

Which takes me to the countless times a California native has asked me if I ever saw a crocodile.

That's not all that lives in Florida.

Part of my heart does too.

I mean Megans there.

My true-blue no matter the distance.

We are all running towards something right?

We ran towards our dreams Mom and I.

Shit we're still running.

Only now you can see us.

We've made it through the California rain.

Our scars fade away effortlessly on Sunset.

Oh, wait you still see them?

Well I guess you know what time it is.

Time for more art.

Time for more music.

I am a pilot after all.

Take off is here.

Cancer / fire / rebirth / cancer / fire / rebirth

by Gwen Kellman

Dedicated to all warriors of cancer.

You came at me suddenly with fury and I looked you in the face
and said no.
Not me not now.
Looking death in the face made me stronger.
I knew I could make it and I did.
You came again five years later...
I summoned up all my strength and spat you out.
How dare you come again.
I beat you before and I will again.
You gave me strength I did not know I had.
You shaped me into a survivor, not just a cancer survivor but a survivor of life.
I will always remember you.
Thinking about you now gives me chills.
I am free today because of you.
What did you think?
I would just lie down and not fight.
My strength as a mother for Danielle saw me through.
The fear you tried to instill in me got smaller and smaller.
You are a big ugly thing that took my body piece by piece.
You never took my heart, my soul, my will to survive.
How can something so ugly teach such beautiful things?
Like how grateful you are to have just one more day to look in your four-year old's face.
You are scary.
I see you as a monster.
One that taught me to never take anything or anyone for granted.

I know that you must fight for what you want in life.
Cancer / fire / rebirth / cancer / fire / rebirth

սպիտակ թուղթ կապույտ գրիչ

Սարա Հարությունյան

Ես կնստեմ չոր հատակին
ու կմտածեմ քո մասին
Ռեստորանում ճաշելիս
չես էլ հիշի ինձ

Մայրս կբարկանա
որ սառը հատակին եմ նստում
ու ես ինձ կներշնչեմ
որ հանուն քեզ անձնազոհության էլ եմ պատրաստ

Կերեւակայեմ որ եթե ես անընդհատ
քո մասին եմ մտածում
ուրեմն դու էլ մտածում ես իմ մասին

Ես սպիտակ թղթի վրա
կապույտ գրիչով գրում եմ քո անունը
որ դու ետ գաս
Դու հազիվ ես հիշում քո անունը
ուր մնաց իմը

white paper blue ink

by Sara Harutyunyan

I'll sit on the hardwood floor
and think about you
while you're out to eat
You won't even remember me

My mother will reproach me
for sitting on the cold floor
and I'll tell myself that for you
I'm prepared even for self-sacrifice

I'll imagine that
if I'm ceaselessly thinking of you
then you're thinking of me too

On a white piece of paper
I write your name in blue ink
so that you might come back
You barely remember your own name
let alone mine

Ես էլ եմ գնում Սարա

Հարուդյունյան

Ես էլ եմ գնում:

Բռունս սեղմած մի ափ հայ հող՝
Տանում եմ՝ ցանեմ օտար ափերում,
Որ հետո տարած սերմերը մանրիկ
Թաղեն այդ հողում:

Ես էլ եմ գնում:

Ու ռունգերումս զգամ պիտի
Բարձրիկ սարերիդ բուրմունքը անեղծ,
Ու մազերումս՝ շոյանքն զեփյուռիդ:

Ես էլ եմ գնում՝

Աչքումս պահած երկինքդ ծավի:
Գնում եմ ու երբ կռունկիդ տեսնեմ,
Պիտի հարցնեմ համը արեւիդ:

Ես էլ եմ գնում:

Սեղմել եմ հոգուս Նարեկս անգին,
Որ զնամ, այնտեղ հոգի տամ մարդկանց:

Ու երբ մի օր էլ թակեմ դուռը քո,
Կբացես իմ դեմ, որ ներս գամ նորից,
Ու որպես մի նոր անառակ որդի՝
Շնչամ կամաց, <<Ահա ես: Ներիր>>:

Now I'm Leaving Too

by Sara Harutyun

Now I'm leaving too.
Clutching a handful of your soil in a fist,
I take it to spread in far and foreign lands,
To bury your seeds as proof that we exist.

Now I'm leaving, too.
And in my nostrils I will always feel
The indelible scent of your tall peaks,
And in my hair - the caress of your breeze.

Now I'm leaving, too.
I leave, in my eyes - your indigo skies,
And when your crane and I someday cross paths,
I will ask her about the taste of your sun.

Now I'm leaving, too -
My precious Narek clenched onto my soul,
So that I can bring that soul overseas.

And when one day, I knock at your door,
You'll open for me to let me back in.
And as yet one more prodigal son,
I'll murmur to you, "Forgive me. I'm here."

flatline

by Sara Harutyunyan

the preliminary diagnosis:
right person, wrong time.
but it's all good - you'll see.
turn the long-life LED this way.
steady, I whisper to my shaking scalpel.
just a few precise incisions
and we'll see where the meat and bone of our times
need to be cut and rearranged.
steady, i reproach my heart
for already premeditating toasts.

if we're going to do this,
we're going to do it right -
person and time.
once i'm done with the surgery,
I'll feel all better.

beep. beep. beep. beeeeeeeeeep.
time is flatlining.
we've lost her now.

ma'am - i so

ly tell myself,
as i hold my hand,
i'm so sorry for your loss,
but she did not make it.

on the table, i look tired.
I don't look peaceful -
I've never gone out without a fight in my life.
in peace, I will rest.

we really need to pass some bills and regulations -
on who can just pick up a scalpel
and play a surgeon.

First Time at The Beach with My New Cane

by M.S. Marquart

Standing for a moment
at the ocean's edge,
I was mesmerized
by my 3-legged shadow
on the wet sand,

captivated by my sparkling reflection,
my cane a part of my body
dancing on the shallow waves
rushing up and back,

enthralled by the feel
of the cool water
pulling at my toes
and tugging away my support,

disbelievingly grateful
to have returned
to the salty air
I thought lost to me
forever

Khachapuri

by Mari-Elena Arutyunova

Scream of liquid over metal
Drops of gold, leaping, splitting
Desperate, desperate as they brown
As they burn, as they drown.

Oh, to be the oil that burns on metal
That sends the hissing siren voicing its intention
Moulded to melt, built to burn.
Crafted to curdle to cry out to crawl.

The cursing spitting threats lend me
a black mark - i spin away
His hands shoots into shields
He smiles: then the beast yields

First gulping breaths of newborn bread
form its crevices, its crusts
Sulgun rushes the unsealed edge by untrained hands
In red it screams, then rusts

Pan flipped: not burnt:
Amazement at success so sudden, unexpected
Wonder on his face - we made it -
It calms, melts its threats into cheese
Yeast caverns form havens for hisses to rest
To quieten, to nest.

We do it differently back home
He says, in anatolia.
with thicker bread, with thinner cheese
With fewer layers, with more ease.

I look at him and through him to my lands
To Van that once was mine
To mountains that never more will be
To those that were hunted and murdered alone
Amongst sand and stone
Never again to go home.

But the smell of cheese on dough
His laughter as he flips it
from callused hands of georgian elders in Adjar
To turkish hands in dilijan learning how to fold
From an armenian, learning how to mould.

The khachapuri splits in half
A thank you, smile, a laugh
I look at him, and I don't see my pain
I look at him: my fear was in vain
I look at him stripped clean
of where he comes from and will go
I look at him, no plot, no plan.
I look at him
And only see a man.

Paklava, Baklava

by Mari-Elena Arutyunova

We pack forgiveness between flaky layers of memory
Patient, we wait for them to rest,
feed each other their stories.
Full, bloomed and ready
They come out:
Warm, tender,
Complete.

Words in sand

by Mari-Elena Arutyunova

Hay em
Two words
Took a hundred years to form them again
on my land amongst my kin

He looks at me now through the rearview window.
Hay es?
A question where hope is inherent
It slides over the curve of my nose
To the slant of my jaw
Through the pain in my eyes
It transforms into a response
Confirmation
A mirror to all that can answer
'Hay em'

That glass
Though battered and beaten and buried and humbled
Did not crumble into sand in Aleppo

He looks at me now through the rearview mirror
And sees himself once more
Hay es?

Apricot Blessings

By Gabrielle Suzanne Avedian

I eat an apricot-
Prunus Armeniaca -
And close my eyes
Longing to imagine
The taste of the more magnificent apricot
From Armenia,
The land of my grandparents,
Where some claim was the real Garden of Eden.
The sun melts the snow
Where Noah's Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat,
Into water that trickles down the highlands and collects
Into Lake Van,
And blesses
The apricot firstfruits
With an April blush.
My grandma
Ate belly-fulls
Freshly picked
From the trees
Behind the house
As a child
Until she was driven out.

We have read
In our Bibles
That this age
Is only a foretaste
Of the age to come.
The blessings of today – types -
Are a pledge of superior, future blessings - antitypes-
In the new creation

I consider how
My apricot is only a type
Of the truer, more perfect Vanetse apricot.
My apricot a blessing,
But the apricot of my ancestral homeland
The sweeter, most exquisite blessing.

My grandma,
From Heaven,
Retrains my eyes upwards,
Instructing me, "Takouk,
Even an apricot from Armenia
Is but a guarantee
Of greater, future blessings
In glory."

The American Dream! (Baskin Robbins)

by Susan Alami

I pledge allegiance to the Tehran airport—
its empty vastness echoes against clean, white columns—
with its exhaust fumes and gold-wrapped rosewater nougat candies.
The signs in Farsi that I don't understand above the baggage claim conveyor belt
slice open a valve somewhere down deep inside me,
and acid memories of my grandmother's lost girlhood leak out.
There was promise here once,
exhilaration and saffron and mini skirts
and hair flying fearless in the wind.
I can feel its ghost.

I pledge allegiance to the sun-faded strip malls
of the San Fernando Valley—
doughnut shop, nail salon, laundromat, rinse, repeat—
to the ice cream clown cones from a Baskin Robbins
somewhere in dark blue Bakersfield that my father used to own,
off Pearlblossom Highway, en route to burnt orange Reno,
that pseudo-Las Vegas,
with its marquee lights and go-go dancers,
its sequin tassels and feathered drinks and all-night casinos.
The American Dream! The American Dream!
Where the chalky dust settles and the gamblers never win.

Beverly Hills Cab Co.

by Susan Alami

Down on Wilshire Boulevard, from the front seat of the cab,
Los Angeles is a smoke show in the early evening,
all blue and pink and glitter,
all dreams and whispers and promise.
It's enough to make you fall in love with yourself.

You can lose yourself in the bougainvillea,
in the twisting streets of West Hollywood,
in the brilliant, heady rush of gorgeous melancholia.
Only in a place this pretty, this unblemished,
does sadness feel worthwhile.

The city is beguiling, billboard after billboard,
wine bar after wine bar,
acting studio after acting studio,
and I can taste already, on the back of my tongue,
how it'll break my heart in every zip code from Santa Monica to Studio City.

If The Radio Works

by Susan Alami

Snow falls.

My mother glows orange in old lamplight,
a gossamer window curtain, floating with whispered grace.
The cardigan she wears pales thin in yellow splashes,
spread flaxen like the skin beneath her eyelashes.
I want to ask if exhaustion has picked at her bones,
if she feels sharp snaps when she runs without caution
to catch lightning strikes before they melt away.

She borrows my warmest sweater,
and rests her head on the pillow I sewed my first college winter.
Our apartment is a flickering motel rubbed into a back road cul-de-sac.
There are no atlas lines or freeway signs,
just forgotten birthdays and silent dinners.
My mother, the wearied expedition seeker,
I, her pool-eyed helping hand.

We substitute the parenthetical spaces for
latitude and longitude with syndicated reruns of Three's Company.
We sit, awash in television blues, hushed against scripted adventure.
I want to ask what she sees when she counts sheep,
what starless boulevard she crosses in her dreams.
Agreement is an antique we pawned off years ago.

We walk up hallway stairs, knees bent under
laundry detergent and milk cartons.
Our keys don't work in the door lock.
My mother fumbles through the pocket of her coat
For the number of our landlord.

Department store pearls clutter the floor.
The hem of my pajama pants trails the floor.
The light catches her face, and I see my mother in her youth,
In red lipstick and pretty scarves.
She turns to the stove.
She is mine. And I am hers.

A small apartment was the right size for us.
I miss you, I want to say, while she heats up water.
If the radio works, will you dance with me?

Poem 11132024

by Joan Angel Estrada

How can we consider that a womb
is more than a holding place?
The beginning connection to the
beyond. To something before.
A moment when you were a part
of yourself. Both you and not-you and
you - all in conjunction with each other.
Recently I learned that plants make ticking
sounds to communicate with one another.
They say things we cannot hear.
Here, and not hear. I want to open myself
up to listening. Through vein - through
nourishment - through water.
And if I ran through that door
might you consider it swimming?
What sound would the grass make
if it could hold the memory
of my leaving
And might it make the same sound
as the slap of the doctor's hand
on my bare rump as a baby
to make me take
my first cry

Day Off

by Dean Vismanos

As I began my day, it was a very cold winter morning. I prepared my food before I left the house. Oops! I forgot my watch. I lost my head, oh boy! So, I went back home. Beep,beep, go through the traffic. I can't believe that it's 5:00 o'clock in the morning. The second level in the parking structure is full.

Oh No! I put my feet down. I realized that it was my first day back to work after my long vacation. I said hello to my colleagues to start my day right. How are you doing today? Sipping my hot-chocolate milk,the brewed cocoa aroma filled me with joy.

Thank God, it's Monday! Click,type and start my day over again with the long report that is due towards the end of the week. Hey! What's our lunch today? I brought a salmon,cheese and egg sandwich topped with lots of tomatoes and mustard.

Didn't notice the clock was ticking and all of them were gone. Poor boy, my ears are ringing as if I'm floating on air in my head because of jet lag.

Beautifulness

by Dean Vismanos

To my surprise, it's so hilarious to see a mountain covered with white snow. I felt mesmerized by the beauty of nature, living in a hot normal summer climate. This experience is so amazing, and how lucky I am to see this up close!

Living the reality in the winter alps is such a blessing. Ha, ha, is it true I am touching the ground? Boots, shoes? 1-2-3 I knuckle down, flexing my neck, tapping my cheek. Oh! Wake up, glide and slide now. Peers had teased me to jump right off, and dig your head in little white balls. It was a mix of joy and laughter.

Yeah, at long last, I am sledding already, so watch out! Back down the hill I'm coming, and that's where it all started.

անվերջ պտույտ

by Raya Sargsyan

Մի անվերջ պտույտ անծայր տիեզերքում,
Մի կապույտ մոլորակ ջերմ արևի հետ վալսի
բռնված,
Իսկ վրան կյանքեր՝ փոքր, աննշմար,
Բայց մեծ թվացող ամենն իր աչքին:
Ո՞ր ենք սլանում այսպես սրընթաց:
Ո՞րն է իմաստը այս մեծ պտույտի:
Հայտնի՞ր ինձ, Աստված:

endless spin

by Raya Sargsyan

An endless spin in the infinite universe,
And a blue planet in a perpetual waltz
With the igneous Sun warm as it is.
And lives on the Earth small as they are
Seemingly important in their own eyes.
What is the essence of this infinite spin?
What is this rush all about? Oh, tell me, God!

Independence

by Sarbani Bhaduri

Never a child
Running in the fields with brothers
Or playing idle games
Book in hand
English schools, Sanskrit scholar
King George, looking down

Village School far away now
Excelling, maths, sciences, English perfect
Pride of the family, brilliant,
University bound

Quit India, Gandhi , Nehru, Jinnah proclaim
Freedom opens its door,
Come through but pay the price

Bharata
Jai Hind , Bande Mataram plays in the land
Brother against brother , souls wither
Death and famine surround
The Union Jack stripped down

Free Now
To do better, stand tall , Indian citizen
Journey across the sea,
America for knowledge
Pay the price first,
Family behind

An explorer,
Searching forwards to perfect freedom
And knowledge
But first
Pay the Price

Butterfly

by Sarbani Bhaduri

Sunlight Patterns on gossamer silk sari,
yellow orange, hue
Movie star sunglasses
Red lipstick
Flowing in the west Texas wind

Out of place, butterfly in the desert sand
Seeking your homeland, and familiar faces in this distance place
Your hands making sculptures ,
molding plaster of Paris

Your children act out
in American English you cant understand
while Laughing at your Geronimo , Moustache, schedule
but sometimes a spark of remembrance
of days past
and what could have been

A life , not among strangers
in cowboy hats

My father John

by Sarbani Bhaduri

I see you in my mind's eye
Young, thin and handsome,
White Tshirt, Silver tags, Body hardened by fate
Vessel bound,
Eye on the horizon, watchful,
Blue current surrounds

Black thunder, drops from above
Screaming ire

I see you Father
Fire, water sparking , oil everywhere
Burns, on the flesh
Diving, diving for life
Life, Mother Rose says
Life is God's most precious gift,

Swimming miles and miles
through dark, waters deep,
Poseidon hand, is beside you
Are the celebrant of the ocean
Son of the sea, you cannot fail those who you carry
Landing on a shoal full of corral and sharp creatures,

I see you John
standing on the shore, looking over the endless water,
Invoking that who cannot fail you, to become
One with the water
Through the endless horizon

Clown in the Mall

by Nol Martin

Our promenade through gilded walkways promised
Champagne-wishes-and-caviar-dream romance

Celine-Dion-wannabe songs pumping out of gas lamps
Mirage of your love in the concourse of window displays
Rejected leftovers hang from Nordstrom Rack
Gucci and Fendi emblems harass like a swarm of voracious locusts

You promised me Godiva, but gave me Costco bulk candy
Blinded me with Zales CZ bling
You seized and stuffed my heart
Into a Build-a-Bear and added it to your doll collection

I am left scarred with surcharges and unauthorized fees
Swindled of my love deposit

I caught that fraud alert a little too late

Empty Basket

by Barbara Sheppard

A basket I have is perfectly woven
The contents I felt were not so well chosen

I placed them myself to fill up the void
That's very interesting...I could hear Dr. Freud

I thought it was better to fill it with something
But the dusty fake greenery filled me with nothing

So I made the bold decision
To go against by original vision

I took out the stuff that was causing distress
And to my surprise I loved what was left

A beautiful basket just the way it was made
It's lovely and perfect in how it's displayed

To some it may look and seem all alone
But it's not empty at all...it's simply great on its own

In the Presence of Music

by Barbara Sheppard

We're listening to something
We're not sure it's classical
Does that really matter?
We just know it's magical

We hear voices like angels
We're told it's the chorus
But whatever it is
It seems to restore us

There's a tune in our head
Sometimes in a trance
What is this that...
Makes our heart want to dance

They tell us it's music
We just have to sing
The sounds of the world
Can solve everything

Because of Jazz

by Barbara Sheppard

The notes of life
The beats of time
The depth of every soul

The highs and lows
The joy and pain
The struggle takes its toll

But it's the songs
A prayer through jazz
If we don't play we die

It's what we know
It's what we share
We never question why

We are Armenians

by Arman Kaymakcian

We are the distant memory of kings across the highlands of ancient empires.
The song of the oud and the beat of the drum,
The finger on the pulse of a people past and present
Let your soul sink into oblivion as the words from Siamantos bloody news fade to black.

We are the screams of a thousand mothers
The moonlit dreams and prayers of a thousand sons
The descendants of Noah
Whispers on the Ararat plains
Haunted mountains, songs of praise
Jewelers, gold, and silver smiths, artists, artisans, musicians, writers, merchants, and carpet weavers working their craft at sunrise. Fingers at the loom.
Storytellers, making melody ashugner (singers/poets)

We are tender lamb sacrificed on the skewer, wrapped up in the bread of life, for the sustenance of those we've fed.

A million and a half shadows, dancing in the clouds.
We are magicians, sages, fortune tellers, fooled by our own lure, traveling through coffee grind paths flipped upside down in ceramic demitasse, doubting and sinking tossed like waves in the sea.

We are echoes in the distance and the bright sparks that fly up out of the tonir surrounding the flames laughing in the black of night.

We are Fathers we are mothers; we are grandparents and children we are teachers we are sinners, and we are saints, we are believers in the one true God, namely Jesus Christ.

We are the architects and painters of ancient Christian domed cathedrals on every continent. carriers of crosses, carvers of stone.

We are the ancient writings and symbols on the walls in catacombs glowing in the soft glow of candlelight vigils, worship services, and secret prayers.

We are the beating hearts of a nation that can disappear and reappear at will.
The forgotten shadow of rewritten history in Turkish museums, showcasing Armenian gods and goddesses found underneath what was always our soul, renamed, and relabeled "ancient Turkish history" as well as stolen so-called Azeri structures.

We are the original inhabitants of the Armenian Highlands renamed "Anatolia"
We stand silent in the face of denial, knowing history speaks loudly enough for all to hear. Our presence tells the story of 1.5 million truths that are impossible to deny.
We are as fertile as seeds from a thousand pomegranates smashed against the wall.

The fragrant offering of meat roasting on the apricot coals.
And the sweetness of rice pudding scented with rose
We are the dust rising up from deep in the mountains
And beautiful as the purple and yellow wildflowers that rise out of the green herbs.
We are the somber song that is sung from the duduk
And the joyful noise that is played on the oud.
We are the brightness of the morning sun
And the soft glow of the fullness of the moon.

We are truth and lies
Past and present
Here and there
We are
and are not
We are Armenians.

Saudade

by Maryam Camila Dabo-Roy

As the sunlight peels away from my vision,
Retreating from the brick steps.
Clouds shadow the surface.
A small shift, the air chilling.
Darkened trees.
The dirt below my feet
gifting me perspective with the changing of the seasons.
The coldness of the air hugging me with icy hands
I lay bare on the road looking up
So that after a while the leaves above may mimic your eyes.
Haunting me from your own world,
Existing in the oxygen I breathe,
Allowing me to still see your reflection when I stare into my black coffee in the morning
And in the murky sink water when I wash the dishes
Following my routines and using wind as a vessel for contact.
But still, having taken a part of me and holding it captive
And to this day, reaching my arms out to feel your fingertips.
The skin on my hands died with you.

Soil

by Maryam Camila Dabo-Roy

The only true wish I have ever had
Is to lay in the soil,
Slowly sinking into the ground
Dark and damp and deeply uncomfortable
But calm, the storage of peace
Resting deep within the Earth
I wish for my bones to mark the dirt
The black ground suffocating my organs
To have roses blooming within my ribcage
Floating down into my birthplace
I want to immortalize myself in the worms that will consume my body.

The live man's practice

by Maryam Camila Dabo-Roy

In accepting consciousness
We accept suffering
Beauty must always be handmade
Something we must create
In order to feel
The same way,
Excitement is a desperate illusion
A man must first
Put himself in a trance
In order to enjoy any given moment
How vividly he experiences it,
And how quickly he can enter the state
Is a matter of practice
Every man must work towards this practice;
The art of creating your own beauty
And living in it without breaking the self-induced
Half-hypnotic state
All your life will be mundane
Learning to find beauty in normality,
Is learning to survive.

to the one who will kill me with no gun

by Marina Arzumanova

Here's my fear
I'm ready to take yours.
I can't see it clear
What will happen next year.
Here's all my sorrow.
I'll be yours tomorrow.
The bridge is too narrow:
one will fall
the other will grow.
I've been in a room
Darker than the substantive moon
But I still want to ask.
Will you take off the mask?
I want to see the scars
covered in shiny stars.

The textbook

by Marina Arzumanova

Shh!
Don't talk about corruption.
Look!
What a beautiful illusion.
You should think about your future,
A program called
"The flawless culture".
The program is pure.
Your behavior should be acceptable.
Keep in mind:
Vivid colors are not wearable!
And if you read
Only books from the list
You will not feel lonely or dismissed.

Evening self talk

by Marina Arzumanova

I miss the Lake.
I miss the Green
and the Snowflake.
I've missed my time.
I've faked the sublime.
I've forgotten my friends,
Haven't seen them in a while.
I bought a new lens.
Sound of the Loneliness,
It's a bit different from Silence:
It'll go away I guess
Maybe
With coming of a change,
Something strange,
Someone with new range.

CONTRIBUTORS

Danielle Acheampong is a research director with 11 years of experience in education. In addition to writing, she enjoys reading, playing musical instruments, learning languages, and spending time with family in nature in her free time.

Mohammed Ahmad is a Palestinian-American journalist, writer, and actor based in Los Angeles. He holds a master's in Professional Creative Writing (Poetry) from the University of Denver and is the cofounder of Poets for Palestine, a collective dedicated to amplifying Palestinian voices through poetic resilience.

Susan Alami holds an MFA in Creative Writing (Fiction) from The New School and a B.A. in English Literature from UCLA. She loves cappuccinos, old sitcoms, and handwritten letters. She's currently working on a novel set in Los Angeles.

Karine Armen is a writer and photographer. On March 9, 2025, she had a book presentation in Cuenca, Spain. She was an elementary school teacher for 32 years and a social worker for six years. She has extensive travel experience and degrees in photography, social work, and educational administration.

Mari-Elena Arutyunova, am a 17-year-old Russian-born Armenian diasporan currently living and studying at a UWC boarding school in Armenia. I draw inspiration for my writing from my background and family history - the universal tale of survival and resilience. I have a great enthusiasm for writing, philosophy and politics and aspire to study journalism and law.

Marina Arzumanova is a filmmaker passionate about capturing the beauty that hides in life's simplest things. She graduated from the Yerevan State Institute of Theatre and Cinema and has six years of experience as a film director, video editor and a special effects artist. When not behind the camera or creating something, you can find her dreaming of becoming a veterinarian.

Morgan Barney is an attorney and writer in Glendale, California, where they live with their wife, dog, and cat.

Pete Cromwell grew up on the OTHER coast, in a small hamlet on Long Island. Down the street from the 7-11... You know the place. No, the freestanding 7-11, not the strip mall one. I figure the rest of the bio is fairly self-explanatory!

Maryam Camila Dabo-Roy is a 16-year-old poet, raised in Glendale, CA, and an avid reader. Her interest in books and desire to express her thoughts and views through poems started at a very young age and has been growing ever since. She has written more than 100 poems.

Not a Glendale native, but a long-time local, **Rebecca Davis-Ohan** has often considered changing her last name to an invention of her own - Odarian.

Alec Ekmekji was born in Aleppo, and came to the United States when he was thirteen. He holds a M.S. degree in physics, worked as an engineer in the defense industry, and has written two books of poetry. The first book, *Beneath the Glass Bell*, explores relationships among science, literature, music, and women, all under the umbrella of elusive beauty. His second book, *The Unauthorised Biography of Tango Woman*, is autobiographical, and chronicles his transitioning to a new life in America, his discovery and immersion into western culture - science, literature, music, and his distancing from his Armenian heritage and his subsequent attempts to recapture it. Currently, he is translating the works of Armenian poet Zareh Melkonian into English.

Polly Geller is a jazz vocalist, writer and translator who currently resides in Montrose and teaches writing, French & Italian at ArtCenter College of Design.

Robert Askanazi Harutyunyan (b. 1951, Yerevan) hails from a family of elementary school educators. In 1974, he graduated from the economics department at Yerevan State University. In 1982, he defended his thesis at the Soviet Institute of State Planning in Moscow. For many years, he worked as a director in Armenia's state planning system along with serving in the ministries of education and science. He taught in several institutes of higher education, and has published over 80 articles and three creative books. "Love and Communal Philosophies" is his first poetry collection.

Sara Harutyunyan is an aspiring writer whose work explores themes of love, queerness, migratory grief, and identity. Through poetry and storytelling, she seeks to capture the complexities of belonging and selfhood.

Hope Innelli is a ghostwriter who has written multiple New York Times best-sellers. Previously, she held positions with HarperCollins, Random House, and Bantam Doubleday Dell, editing over 100 bestselling titles. A dramatic performance of her early poetry was staged by the IMUA Theatre Company in NYC, under the title *Semplice*.

Amanee Izhaq is an award winning Palestinian-American poet and producer. Her work has been featured in the UN, Be Still Media Foundation, The Markaz Review etc. Her work takes influence from Hakawati, the ancient art of storytelling, being that her great grandfather, Khaleel was the village Hakawati.

Arman Kaymakjian is a newly published Armenian American author and poet. His highly anticipated breakout memoir, *He Calls Me Redeemed*, was released on November 3, 2023. His poetry "To the Bone" was published in the June 2023 Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) issue, as well as an additional poem titled "Here On The Bosphorus" in the April 2025 issue.

Danielle Kellman is an LA-based poet who found her voice through poetry. She thrives on bringing people together through her words and art. She enjoys creating space for expression, inclusion, and emotion.

Gwen Kellman is a resident of the Jewel City for the past 10 years. She is a mother, attorney and social worker. She currently works for Los Angeles County. She is a cancer survivor and hopes that her poem will help the reader.

Alan Lamberg enjoys writing poetry, novels, screenplays, and directing dramatic audio plays. Raised in Baltimore, studied film and theater, public administration in St. Louis, lived in Nagano, Japan, and works as an urban planner. He shares life with his partner and their spirited dog in Northeast LA.

Timothy Maloof has been involved in the arts his entire life. He holds BA's in Art and Music and a MM in Music. His involvement in the written word has been through song and verse. Timothy is an educator teaching Culinary Arts, Violin, Oud, and Digital and Media Design.

M. S. Marquart (she/her) is a disabled, mixed-race Asian American, diasporic Korean American and German American poet. Her writing explores the impacts of chronic illness, disability, and intersecting issues, and sheds light on the hidden daily lives of people living with Long Covid and myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME or ME/CFS).

Nol Martin-Tungplan, originally from Hawai'i, lives in Long Beach, California. He is currently a student in the UCLA Extension Creative Writing program. During the pandemic, he retired early from his academic counseling job to pivot into his creative passions and the start of his 2nd Act.

Medrik Minassian grew up in India and now lives in Glendale, California.

Kay Mouradian is a professor emerita from the Los Angeles Community Colleges. She wrote and produced a documentary based on her book, *My Mother's Voice*. Her other publications include *Reflective Meditation* and a Guide for those Teaching Yoga in the Community Colleges.

Natalie Oganessian is a journalist, poet and writer, having been published in magazines and online including *Variety*, *Slate*, *Deadline* and many others. When she is not personally or professionally writing, you can find her inhaling books and baking.

Anna Maria Osehobo thanks God for the gift of words. Her work in criminal law informs the choice allegories found in her poems. She hopes her tongue-twisting rhymes ignite philosophical contemplations about concepts of temptation, dilemma, and wisdom.

Erwin Arroyo Pérez is the Founder and Editor-in-Chief at *The Poetry Lighthouse*. He also teaches literature and works as a translator in Paris. He holds a Master's degree in English Literature from Université Paris Nanterre and King's College London. Erwin's poetry has been published in literary magazines and anthologies.

Kate Martin Rowe's poems and nonfiction have appeared in *Fourth Genre*, *Mutha Magazine*, *Hypertext Review*, *fugue*, *Brevity*, *VOLT*, *Zyzzyva*, *The Denver Quarterly* and *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, among others. She teaches writing at Glendale Community College and lives in northeast Los Angeles.

I am **Raya Sargsyan**, a linguist with a passion for languages. I live and work in Armenia. I have translated a few bestsellers and led teams to complete translation projects. I write poems as a way to express myself at times when the only person who may truly understand you is yourself.

Millie R. Schacher is a playwright and a budding poet. She lives in Pasadena with her husband Cory and their daughter Wendy.

Erin Schalk is a writer and artist based in the greater St. Louis area. Her poetry has appeared in numerous publications including *Stirring: A Literary Collection*, *The Petigru Review*, *Willawaw Journal*, *Parentheses Journal*, and others. Her poetry has received accolades from *Writer's Digest* and earned a Best of the Net nomination.

Gio Schwab is a Los Angeles-based actor, director, and writer. Credits include *Grey's Anatomy* and *Fresh Off the Boat*, among others.

Tenita Sellers is currently a junior at Eastern Kentucky University, where she is studying Psychology. She is a mother of two, and a grandmother of three puppies. This is her first published poem.

Sergei Shahnuparyan, was born in 1940 in the City of Baku. My parents were originally from the historic village of Khntzoresk in the Zangezur region. After graduating from the Armenian school in Baku in 1958, I moved to Yerevan where I was admitted to the Armenian National Agrarian Institute and graduated with high honors in 1963. After, I spent a few years as an agriculturalist cultivating land in Kazakhstan. I then resumed my training in Yerevan, with an advanced degree in science. For many years I worked in Yerevan as a research-scientist in the field of bacterial genetics. I have published numerous scientific articles. In 2001, I moved with my family to the USA, to the City of Boston. I now live in the City of Los Angeles. I cherish literature and poetry.

Barbara Sheppard is a freelance music coordinator and author. Her book, "Without Condition: Inspirational Reflections", is a collection of meditations and uplifting observations. She has also written company profiles, artist website biographies and promotional content. Her creative writing interests have recently expanded into poetry.

Zahida Sherman is a proud Seattle native who made her way to Glendale by way of everywhere. Her previous writing has centered on culture, belonging, and wellness for *Bustle*, *Healthline*, and *Well and Good*, among others. This is Zahida's first poetry publication.

Shooshanik Tarpinian's grandmother and namesake, at age 10, fled Van, Armenia, narrowly escaping the massacre that took her family. She memorized most of her Bible should "the Breath of God" ever be seized from her again. With gratitude, she perceived, identified and recounted bounteous grace, inspiring Shooshanik to recognize blessings.

Mary Terterov is a true Cali girl who loves to write poetry, novellas and short stories under the golden sun. Her first poetry collection, *Silent Warfare*, was published in 2024. With a Juris Doctorate degree and experience in criminal and civil litigation, this mama of three is an attorney gone rogue. She is also the host of the *Jump In With Mary* Podcast featuring short stories on the human condition and the friction between our internal and external desires.

Dr. Alene Terzian-Zeitounian is a globally minded leader, poet, and educator whose work focuses on advocacy and identity. She received an M.A. and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing, Poetry along with a doctorate in Education, Leadership, and Innovation. Currently, she is the Humanities Department Chair at College of the Canyons where she teaches creative writing. Her works have appeared in the Bellevue Literary Review, Colorado Review, Mizna, and Rise Up Review among others.

Jean Marco Torres is a Puerto-Rican Writer, Musician, and Performer born and raised in Central Florida. Based in Los Angeles.

Meri Tumanyan currently lives and teaches in Los Angeles, California. She earned a B.A. in English and Comparative Literary Studies from Occidental College and an M.A. in Creative Writing from CSUN. Meri is the author of the poetry collections *Love in the Time of Corona*, *Shadows*, *The Promise of the Pomegranate Tree*, and *Black Roses*. She has also written several children's books, including *Mommy*, *the Dreamweaver*, *Daddy's Waltz*, *Never Be Anyone Other Than You*, and *The Girl with the Purple Umbrella*. For her, writing is an exploration—a journey toward reconciliation, hope, fresh perspectives, and a deeper self-awareness.

Dean Vismanos finds inspiration in everyday moments and quiet reflections. His poetry captures themes of memory, place, and human connection.

Jony Melrod Weiss grew up on Broadway in vibrant, multicultural, New York City but now calls Los Angeles home. She holds a master's degree from UCLA in Public Health, and when she's not writing poetry, she's designing and teaching wellness workshops, creating custom photo cards, or doing improv comedy.

Judith Whitaker grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia and moved to LA in 1994. She has worked as a writer and a Licensed Clinical Social worker. She lives with her partner of 30+ years, their two young adult children and two dogs and two cats.

Foster Wilson is a poet, filmmaker, postpartum doula, and co-host of the podcast *Beauty in the Break*. With an award-winning career in independent film, she is also the author of *Afternoon Abundance: Poetry for Wild Souls*, exploring identity and motherhood through deeply personal work that honors the beautifully messy human experience.

Melineh Yemenidjian is a musician of words. She has spent her whole life recording the dynamics of her interaction with the world, then studied under those who have made their voices heard with skill that matches talent. These lessons have led her to confidently perform her creations on stage and entrust custodians of art to preserve and dispense her message while living a whirlwind expedition with her husband and two sons.

GRATITUDE

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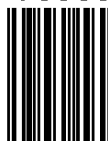
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