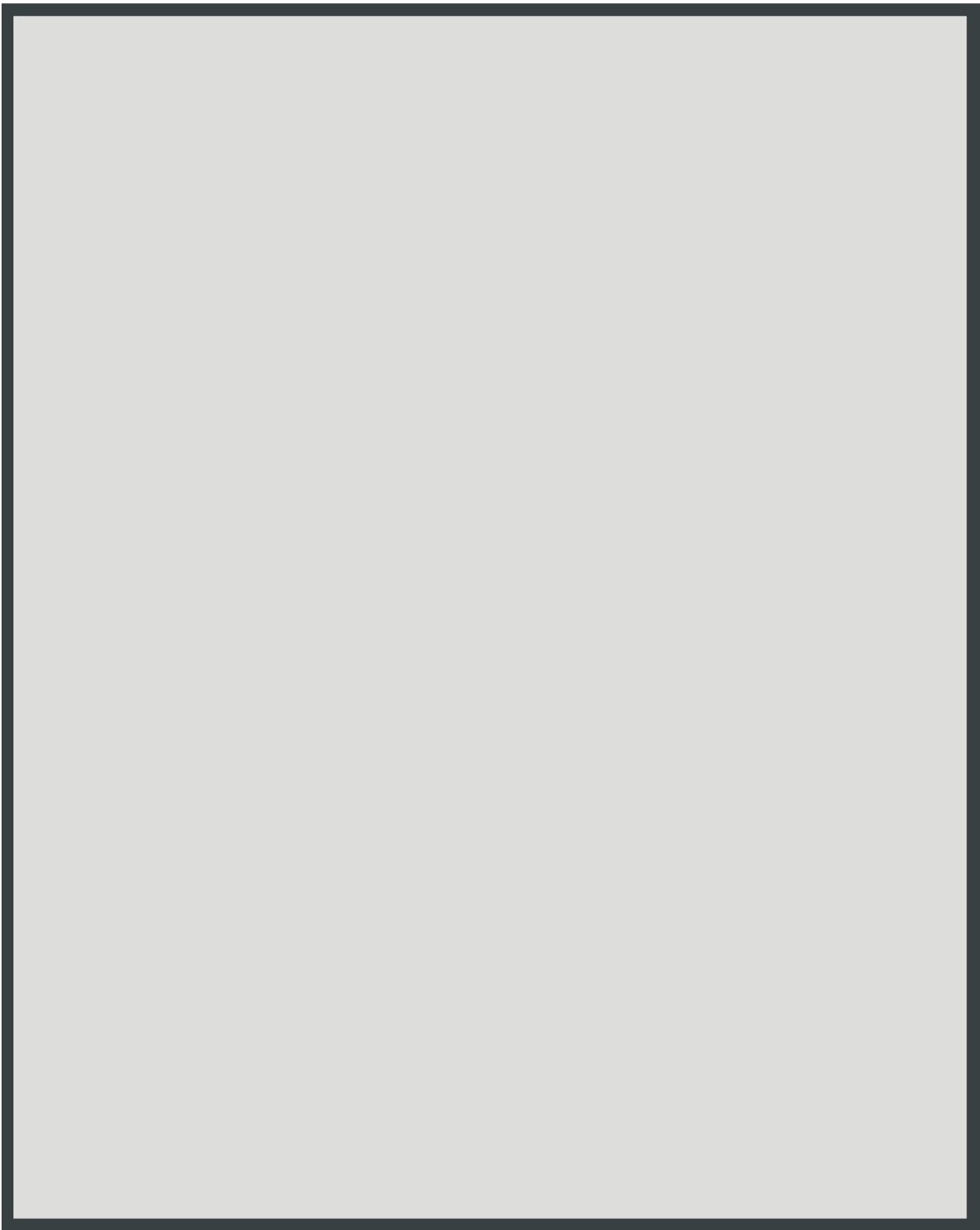


Ijagun Poetry Journal

Vol. 1, No. 3 – December 2013



IJAGUN POETRY JOURNAL

Vol. 1 – No. 3

December 2013

Edited by

Gabriel Bamgbose

Tai Solarin University of Education



**Ijagun
Nigeria**

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Editor's Note

Poetry signifies many “things” to many people dealing creatively or critically with the art. Recently, I bump into an idea about poetry’s nomenclature that is presented by Jonathan Silverman and Dean Radar in their book, *The World is a Text*, published in 2006. Here, poetry is metaphorically described as “a narrowed window into the living of life, often reflecting the ideas and emotions that people experience.” The idea of the “narrowness” of the poetic window through which one can have a satisfactory view of life is intriguing. Every poem is a *small* outlet into the *big* picture of life’s experiences and (un)realities. Of course, poetry is not a *wide* door through which one enters into and exits from the experiences of life. It is rather a *narrow* window that holds one down in a spot and lures one into having a full view of life’s beautiful and ugly compelling scenes and keeps one wondering about their banalities and mysteries. That sense of “holding down” is what makes poetry lives and lingers long in us after a fascinating encounter with it.

We cannot just forget the charming and evocative verses of John Donne, Anne Bradstreet, Walt Whitman, Elizabeth Barret Browning, W. B. Yeats, Emily Dickinson, Pablo Neruda, Dorothy Parker, T. S. Eliot, Gwendolyn Brooks, William Shakespeare, Anne Sexton, Claude McKay, Rita Dove, Wole Soyinka, Veronique Tadjo, Kwesi Brew, Gladys Casely-Heyford, Kofi Awoonor, Abena Busia, Mazizi Kunene, Mabel Tobrise, Agostinho Neto, Amina Said, L. S. Senghor, Luvuyo Mkangelwa, Dennis Brutus, Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, Christopher Okigbo, Flora Nwapa, J. P. Clark-Bekederemo, and Lola Shoneyin, just to mention few poets that have lasting impressions on us. It is that sense of imaginatively “(re)living” in a poetic text after one’s encounter with it that makes poetry a *living form*.

This issue features fine poems by Damon Marbut, Shoshana Cohen, Neil Ellman, Basit Olatunji, Jessica Tyner, Schuyler Peck, Robert Okaji, Abiodun Soretire, Joan McNerney, Adeola Goloba, Anthony Ward, Goodness Olanrewaju, Aneesha Roy, Gabriel Bamgbose, David Schwartz, ‘Deji W. Adesoye, Dyah Ikhsanti, Kousik Adhikari, Tyler Kline, Kevin Thornburgh, Tope Omoniyi, and John Landry that would keep you waiting and wondering at the narrowed window of poetic experience, an artistic magnifying lens into the living of life in different worlds.

Compliments of the season!

Gabriel Bamgbose

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Damon Marbut



Damon Ferrell Marbut is a Southern novelist and poet. He is author of the coming-of-age novel *Awake in the Mad World* and the collection of poetry *Little Human Accidents: Chaos Poems From The Brink*. His work has been featured in over 30 magazines, journals, anthologies and the bestselling textbook *The Conscious Reader*. (Photo by Larry Graham)

At a Café Window with an Empty Glass of Tea

If asked,
What do you want from love?

An older me, and so a younger one,
might have cried out,
Everything!
and not meant it.

The soul of youth fails in its rush toward definition.

Now, and after much time,
if asked once more I may say *Security*.

But after a breath, there's more:

*Comfort in knowing
I am more human
from having had it.*

After Three Take Dinner

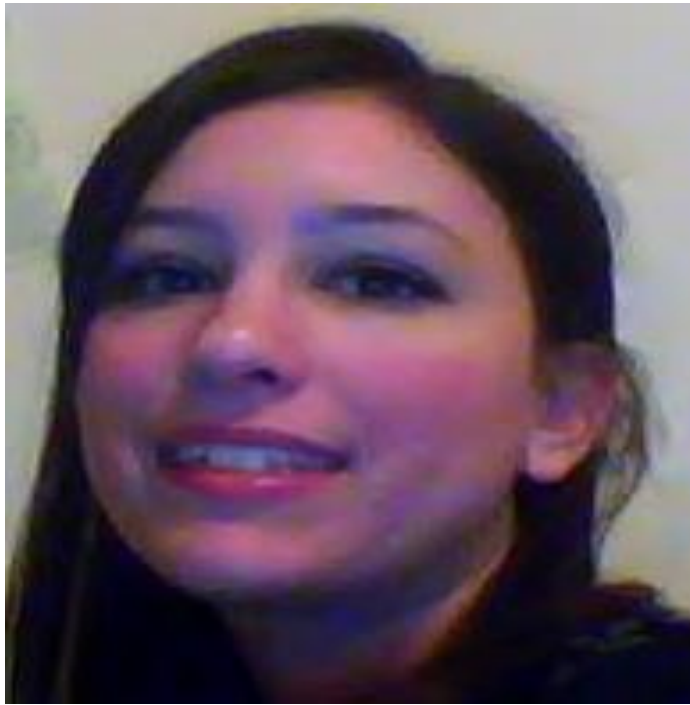
The last time I looked out the window
 at the Mississippi River down the road from here,
 and like I could see it rippling,
 I was softly toeing around the bedroom like I had a secret.
 It's not such a cautious love affair anymore.
 Dogs watch their owners drown in its thick mud.
 It seems what impresses me from here is my distance.
 The Beatles are on, and whatever roils in his or her liquid forms
 doesn't apply to me.
 Even when I'm soft like this,
 playing harmonica in a corner beside a wall where the air
 blasts at me to say, Damon, just go outside anyway.
 I want to.
 I want to dream I can live a long life on this old Smith-Corona,
 daring myself to find food in the stories that come and go
 like barges I watched just off the French Quarter with my partner's mother,
 feeling years ago now. I didn't like the bum playing harp behind us.
 But she did.
 She kept throwing up a thumb,
 and not as if to say *anything*. It was saying something very specific:
 Don't you dare stop. I want the moon to shine a light on me
 and this and my son who's fallen in love.

Musical You

I want to go to California, baby,
 and write you a song in aggressive fires
 that threaten every building around us,
 and I want you to teach me like you can
 to dance and say words with my body in the sand
 and I want to be a boy bent over a guitar
 adoring you each time I question the strings I touch
 as though they are you and the inside of your thighs
 and those silly moments of your hilarious forgiveness
 of me when I break the rules of caressing
 and spill over into just the two of us being this unheard-of thing,
 a wild union of flowers and stupidity,
 and I want to pull your hair while we challenge the harbor boats
 way away from here in New Orleans,
 where you look at me in the kitchen
 and tell me Thank You for washing the whites
 and you tell me I am beautiful on the days, most days,
 when I don't feel it and border on apology for who I am

as though you didn't marry the former version,
already,
years ago,
when you told me to stop thinking of dolphins
but wanted me never to end the labor toward
a song I keep trying to sing.

Shoshana Cohen



Shoshana Cohen currently attends Dawson College, where she studies Social Science and where she volunteers as one of the editors of the Dawson English Journal. Any spare time that isn't given to homework she dedicates to reading and writing. She has been writing poetry and fiction ever since she learned how to put pen to paper. Her first published work appears in the *Ijagun Poetry Journal*. Her favourite author is A. A. Milne.

Gazing 'cross Time

I gaze across time –
 and see the seconds
 that have passed into years.

And the dreams that were mine –
 have faded with time –
 laid to waste
 by my fears;

Now undreamt they die
 then washed away
 by unshed tears.

Smile At Me :)

Love to feel your joy,
 Cuz it lifts me up too;

I can never feel alone,
Sitting here with you.

Love to hear you laugh,
As you so often do.
Love to watch you smile,
Cuz it makes me smile too.

Promise Me A Lie

You tell me to promise,
so I open my mouth
to give you the words
that your ears long to hear.

But silence comes out.
I can't make a promise
that I can't keep.
But you insist.

Promise me, you say.
I try again.
This time, the words come out.
But they are no words
that I intend
to keep.

I have just promised you a lie.

Watching your eyes alight,
my heart breaks.
How I wish that
you wouldn't
believe me.

Neil Ellman



Neil Ellman has been nominated for various honors, including the Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net and The Rhysling Award. Hundreds of his poems, many of which are ekphrastic and written in response to works of modern and contemporary art, appear in print and online journals, anthologies and chapbooks throughout the world.

Flowers of the Universal Flowering (after the painting by Pavel Filonov)

Flowers grow
where no flowers grew
take root
in the glow
of day's first light.

The flowering
of the universe
from seeds of sacrifice
awakened
from their sleep of night.

Hear the yawn
of destiny
like morning's glory
open for a moment
then to fade

and sleep again.

The Conjurer

(after the painting by Hans Hofmann)

Out of the fabric of his past
 from its tangled threads
 black defeats, blue indignities
 the embarrassments of red
 he wove a litany of lies
 cities sieged and taken
 nations conquered
 by his command
 the stars at his fingertips
 he discovered new life
 in yellowing rolls of yarn
 conjured gold from iron chains
 the magic of his words
 unspoken spoke rebirth
 in woven tales.

The Cardinals Are Dying

(after the painting by Max Ernst)

Too slow, too weak, too old to fly
 on confident, preternatural wings
 with only words
 a book and stars as guides
 the cardinals are dying
 fallen from grace
 their scarlet feathers litter the ground
 and fill the catacombs
 with unanswered prayers.

Basit Olatunji



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

My Ladylove Was Not So Tough

One lady encountered I
at an odd time in late July
odd I say because it was not a trial
just a perfect escapade of a liar

But that was not my perpetual toga
I felt unusually serious with a swagger
I was dangerously determined
even if I was struck with a dagger

Never had I been so stupidly mesmerized
never had such sensation got me so stupefied
but alas, mine was not a usual show of affectation
I truly had a feel of romantic affection

My mind was milder and tender
even tender than the care of a babysitter
my heart was deeper and fonder
even Romeo's could not have been so fonder

Her voice was calm like a sunless winter
 her cheerful smile was warmer than a cool weather
 her soft spot cleverly hidden in a ladylike manner
 but I pressed on with a masculine ginger

I approached her not with a devious sense
 and her response was not so tense
 but I wasn't so good with words with women
 especially the one so elevated with high acumen

She posed with self-conscious beauty laced with pride
 with a defence not to be taken for an easy ride
 whether consciously or absentmindedly
 all I know is my words had some weight

I told her she was a damsel
 and her world would never be a hell
 I told her she was an angel
 and that cannot be too much to tell

She smiled faintly concealing her interest
 I knew I had won
 at last my pressing yielded a gentle nod
 and a breezely quiver of her slender body

I'll think about it, she said ducking
 yes of course, I saw it coming
 the words parted her lips like an apparition
 so brief, so soothing and much enthralling

I went home that day as a lady's lord

You and I

We started this game
 As an entry into our fame
 Not a shame in our name
 Or to maim our fine aim

We started this game
 As peaceful pigeons
 Not as reprobate sir or dame
 That ends in a rueful region

We started this game

Not with a lame foundation
 But with a strong sensation
 The one we lacked before we came

You and I
 Shall have to try
 So that we can make
 A love less of a fake

You and I
 Need not a lie
 To keep our heads on the way
 So that we may not sway

You and I
 Need not a fee so high
 To make a long date
 At a very steady rate

If There Is No Poetry

If there is no poetry,
 How would we address the tensions
 That suppress our delicate minds?

If there is no poetry,
 How would unexpressed words
 Not coagulate into meaningless bits?

If there is no poetry,
 How would Wordsworth,
 With his bonnie bucolics,
 Romanticize the common sense of nature?

If there is no poetry,
 How would Donne establish
 The reasoning of metaphysics?

If there is no poetry,
 How would Osundare,
 With his finely built words
 Dare
 Unravel the mystery of poesy
 And load words with the burdens
 Of our homegrown intricacy?

If there is no poetry,
How would we not express our feelings
In droll cacophonies?

How would we coach our words
Into fine speech?

Jessica Tyner



Jessica Tyner is a Pushcart Prize nominated writer from Oregon and a member of the Cherokee Nation. She has recently published short fiction in India's *Out of Print Magazine*, and poetry in *Penumbra*, *Straylight Magazine*, *Solo Press*, and *Glint Literary Journal*.

Passing

I was twelve before I realized my father wasn't white,
 until then I thought nothing
 of his clay colored skin, eyes dripping
 like honey or ropes of black licorice hair
 snaking alive and furious down his back.
 My breasts sprung early, hips splayed
 wide as an overeager invitation
 with bones pushing unforgiving
 against my own skin, pale and quiet
 as the illness. You took me to Radio Shack,
 your syrupy southern drawl wrapping like a shy gift
 around the simple words,
My wife put something on hold,
 and the young clerk, not a decade older than me,
 looked at both of us with blatant disgust,
 loathing and a shot of envy
 even I could sniff out, like a dog
 or a wild thing.

Is this your wife? he asked, and my chest

was in a painful awakening of an instant
 freakishly large, my hips
 unable to slam shut, and you
 too stunned to be ashamed or angered just whispered,
That's my daughter before walking out, the snakes gone still,
 but for the years I'm too sorry to take back,
 the years until the cancer sucked you dry,
 I felt it for both of us,
 felt it in my thighs built like a horse
 and my lips too ripe for a child,
 in every year after labor heavy year
 I refused to be seen with you, I'm so sorry
 that I saw you gut, punched and ugly as a man.

For the Animals

A horse's heart weighs more than you'd think.
Make them work for it,

the keeper said,
 so I hid the organs and quartered head pieces
 around the sagging chamber,
 a macabre and ridiculous game.
 But the cold heart I placed prominently,
 with a sickening wet slap,
 on the apex of the slab. And the lions roared,
 a gut crushing, ancient wail
 while I grappled with rump meat,
 velvet nostrils and black scared eyes,
 and the lions didn't care,
 foaming with want, restless
 like I was for you for all those years.
 She licked the shoulder to the bone,
 with a blood-stained lipsticked muzzle
 while he worked teeth through hair
 coarse as untended pubic down
 no fingers would claw, rake or search
 but the cubs,
 still young enough to share a ribcage
 that took two of us to carry,
 ignored the carnage and stared me to stillness, ticking off
 the last day of my cycle.
They can smell me,
 crouching beside them,
 heat with slivers of copper,

thick and heady between my legs.
 They were too stupidly new to do anything
 but notice, watch and wonder at me—
 paws as absurdly oversized and dangerous as yours—
 me with my too-thin legs wrapped in tired denim
 and spread like an afterthought of an offering
 only for the animals.

Produce

Some people have pendants
 for winning radio contests, others for numbers
 of the choice prizes at the bars—the artists or doctors
 instead of the waiters or students—but me,
 I get the grocery clerks and confused check stand men
 at the corner store who give me fruits for free,

tucking them fast as a secret
 wrinkled and splitting into paper bags,
 but really,
 it has nothing to do with luck.

I've always loved the over ripened fruits.
 Not the ones which are just slightly sweeter,
 but the bananas with no yellow left to give way to brown,
 the plums with skins as finely crinkled
 as a grandmother's décolletage, and kiwis
 so fragile and soft that even the lightest touch
 leaves permanent sloping impressions.
 And it's not because I'm cheap,
 at least not this time,
 it's because I remember the taste of the treasures foraged
 from my parent's backyard, the ones beyond the horse pasture
 and growing from the neighbor's side,
 the ones nobody would eat, baking warm in the Oregon sun.

How can something be too sweet?
 Like all those people who told us our love was too much,
 it must be delayed infatuation, the kind reserved
 for teenagers and drunks, like that time you told me
 my words were too big to bear their weight,
 they'd surely implode one day,
 or the time I missed my cycle
 and neither of us cried,
 not when I called to tell you from California

or when It crept in shamefully two weeks late
like a dog with his tail slipped between legs
and we never talked much about it, just sat
side by side shell shocked
and amazed at the almost.

Schuyler Peck



"Schuyler" has been pronounced in every which way over the last 19 years, so she's learned to call herself whatever mouths can muster, but prefers Sky. She was born in the great upstate New York, and now studies under the wide Idaho skies. Writing has been her craft since she taught herself how to hold a pen, and these crooked pretty words have been coming out ever since. Schuyler writes about what she understands, what makes her think, and what she doesn't have a clue about; but mostly, what's real. She hopes to reach people she might never meet, and wrap them in welcoming words. Poetry can be sad, but she tries to leave a light on, illuminating the front porch so people know they're not alone.

Swallowing Secrets

The only thing she's been swallowing is secrets,
 And she's been living off them for days.
 But of course, she's only taking half the serving;
 Measuring the ounces in palms of her hands,
 popping open another 0 cal Diet Coke can.
 Blonde is turning brittle,
 trails falling out every time her boyfriend runs fingers through her hair.
 He kisses her harder than her lips have strength,
 Hoping he can breathe his love into her lungs,
 That it'll be enough for her to survive on;
 it'll be enough for her to stay.
 The mirrors hanging in the bathroom are shattered.
 She's arranging them in stain glass,
 because anyone could look angelic when their faces are broken color.
 Her father's talked himself through this the night before,
 swearing he'll speak up,
 promising to pump the life back into her

even if it takes the coils of an IV drip.
 But, in the morning, the dead are walking,
 And the moment her doorknob knees greet the kitchen,
 His voice is vacant, is as empty as her belly—
 there's not a word left his soul could muster.
 What do you say when you're speaking to the grave?
 There are caves with more wind in their bellies than in the organs in her system.
 I want to open her eyes like blinds on the window,
 Hey, are you listening?
 You
 Are so. Beautiful.
 Right now.
 And not with the fish swimming in her collarbones,
 Confusing them for ponds.
 Not with her ribs rung like ladders,
 Climbing to a hardly-there heart beat.
 But the beauty of everything that can't wither away,
 her life sounds stronger than 98 pounds.
 Her bones are no more beautiful than the skeletons
 sleeping six feet under.
 Sucking the life out of her skin doesn't make her any more lovely.
 And whether there's some lover that doesn't see the way
 her shoulders drip under the 3 AM moonlight,
 Or it's her mother, rattling her branches like hurricane winds,
 Or if it's herself. Spooning this sickness onto her lips,
 believing a little more will make her better;
 a little less will be worth it,
 more and more and less and nothing.
 She is shrinking into the corners of the room,
 fading into the pale white wallpaper.
 And I know, I want to tell her,
 I want to whisper when she's dreams of falling at night,
 That I know she's trying to make her reflection match her mind.
 She's dressing her body in the disaster her head has tailored.
 But in swallowing secrets, she's only ripping the seams;
 And I want to let my steady hands weave stitches where she's unraveled,
 But I will let her hold the needle.

Love Reads Braille

You do not love me.
 You love the way my eyes look under these fluorescent lights.
 You're in love with the colors with which I paint my words.
 The arteries of your heart are directly linked to your eyes
 Like the jumper cables for cars with dead batteries.

You think I can restart some missing part of you;
 Some spot that forgot to wake up one morning with the rest of you.
 You're not in love with how my soul's turned dark-
 Its run its hands over the walls, flipping the light switch off.
 You're not in love with my silence,
 When my thoughts are doing all the talking,
 And I turn into nothing but a sock puppet to the hands of my demons.
 Normal is a thing I've never known,
 And I can't keep apologizing for my nature;
 Not even ballerinas can tip toe over all of these eggshells.
 You'll miss me when I'm gone;
 The ghost of a hand you're no longer holding.
 My name isn't written in the leaves
 At the bottom of your tea.
 There's another face you need to meet;
 Someone whose irises have been waiting long to see yours.
 That's how this story's been written,
 and while I'm flattered by your confusion,
 we can only take the plots we're given,
 And I need to remind myself
 when the longing-eyed lovers leave,
 that one of these days it'll happen.
 A lot of people confuse love for being blind,
 but that's only because love touches your skin
 like it's reading braille.

To Bodies and Hearts Involuntarily Undressed

You are the sea –
 you are so much bigger than the parts
 of you people try to hold in their hands.
 But “hold” is too much of a kind word
 for the things that you have seen.
 You have been grabbed, unraveled and misused;
 a paper so drawn on you can only see slivers of the ghost white it was.
 Do not take residence in those pages;
 you can't make a life in shredded paper.
 Those hands do not deserve to mold themselves into your skin.
 Snakes shed their layers two or three times a year,
 Slithering out of the old and leaving that part of them behind;
 you need to shed yours today.
 Never take the blame that isn't yours;
 don't let it be pearls strung across your neck –
 It's not a gift, it's a threat,
 and it's a burden you need not wear.

Your words were sturdy, even if they were in a shaking breath,
there's no confusion to be made –
denial is not desire.

Actions may not be able to be undone,
but trees take every disaster their roots have seen,
and shape them into a ring;
not proud of their cracks,
but not afraid of what they've withstood.

Your skin has a history too,
whether it's read in freckles or scars.

Do not make yourself small just so you can't fit into your memories.

You are the sea,
big, and beautiful, and strong,
and not a thing can rule you.

Robert Okaji



Robert Okaji lives and works in Austin, Texas. His work has recently appeared in *Vayavya*, *Middle Gray*, *Clade Song* and *Prime Numbers Magazine*.

Agave

It might deceive.
Or like a cruel

window, live its life
unopened, offering

a view yet reserving the taste
for another's tongue,

ignoring even the wind.
The roots, as always, look down.

Nocturne with a Line after Kees

I close my eyes and see nothing but rain.
And after, take pity

for what turns beyond sight: the wretched

flower, a hiss from the road. Last night the wind
stole sleep from my body,

leaving me alone, wordless, listening
for her next breath. An alchemist,

I transmute the memories of old wounds laid open.

Earth

Tremor and
stone

beset upon the calm.

Now water
lines the road's

bed, and we see no means
to pass.

Even so
you break what falls.

Abiodun Soretire



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

Keeping up with the Joneses

In rat race we jostle
Competing not complementing
Envy and jealousy balkanize us
And every sane man goes bananas
Vanity, says the preacher

We stumble and fumble
Through faceless crowd we jostle
Many gored oxen left behind in grumble
Only to get to the front and tumble
In a free fall, to a state most humble

The Haughty

Let the haughty
Go on being naughty
Till in knots he gets caught
And he comes to naught

The pig-headed
Never learns when well-fed
Till the good goings get ended
And he returns wretched

Joan McNerney



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

Angel

I want to make an angel
in the snow though I am
old for that sort of thing.

That is something I have
never done. A woman from
Vermont told me about it.

Nobody made slush angels
in Brooklyn...unheard of...
with no meadows to angel in.

We just threw hard packed
snowballs at each other
sliding over icy streets.

Now I will take my pick
of snow. Find a perfect
field of that lush white stuff.

I will lay down on a cool bed
flapping my arms up and down
to make sacred patterns.

Yes, I will angel away
over and over until finally
I fly off to heaven.

Want to wing it with me?

Suncakes

Do you know how to make them?
They're supposed to be light
bright and full of vitamin C.
Everyone says you just glow
after eating one. My friend
had a shining recipe I kept
asking for. Suncakes stop you
from being cold and lost in
avalanches.

I remember something about filling
golden pans with flowers seeds
sunflower seeds...bake at
high noon, of course. If only
there were a suncake now to
have with hot cocoa. My friend
is so lucky wintering in Malibu.
Who gave her that recipe anyway?
I'm the one who's freezing!

Adeola Goloba



Adeola Oladimeji Goloba (born on 13th July, 1973) is a radical writer, poet and journalist. He had a Diploma in Accounting & Auditing from Kwara State Polytechnic (1996) and a B.A in Linguistics from University of Ilorin (2004). He is a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors, Lagos Chapter. He currently is the assistant editor of *Awori Magazine*. Adeola currently manages the blog, MEMORIES <<http://adeola-goloba.blogspot.com/>>.

Let Me Live On...

Please...let me live on...
When sudden darkness falls upon the sun
That my toils shall never be in vain
But I know how hard it's to keep the pain.

Let me go on...
Like a shinny Urn
Where beloved ashes must always lie
That visions of them shall never die.

I utterly beg of you today
That tomorrow when I go away
All the muses I've put on slate
Never shall see the wrath of fate.

I say, do not my labour betray
To have your duty delay
But to let me go on and on...
Even if I am gone.

I be certain that when I'm done

I can from great beyond carry on
As Homer, Shakespeare and Milton hath their pen
Before they all retired to their quiet den.

Let me go on...
On and on the way of Leon
That my creativity reach immortality
And go on this way till eternity.

So, let me live on and on...
Even if darkness falls upon the sun
That my toils never shall be in vain
As I know how hard it's to keep the pain.

Midnight Rape

Every night that I lay upon my bed
Snoring deep like a man dead
They come suddenly and murder my sleep
Altering my dreams I wake up and weep

Rattling, struggling, dragging, Rats plunder my stock
Bed-bugs, Mosquitoes prey upon my blood and suck
Cockroaches too invade and *Tambolo* will bite
For blood-suckers, before dawn, are all out of sight

Why they come at such a time I snore deep
I do not know, but their menace'll make me weep
Even I cannot my sweet dreams hold and save
Because every time of my night's a midnight rape...

Anthony Ward



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

Good Add-vice

You say it takes fewer muscles to smile,
Yet I find frowning comes more natural.

You say it costs nothing to be polite,
Yet when I'm polite I find myself spent.

You say it doesn't hurt to be nice,
Yet I find it pains me to even try.

You tell me to cheer up,
As if I didn't want to.

You tell me to look on the bright side,
When my thoughts remain clouded.

You tell me to think positive,
While you charge me with negativity.

You tell me the world doesn't revolve around me,
As if I didn't already know.

You tell me to get over it,

Even though I can't get on top of it.

You tell me that it might never happen,
But that is what I'm afraid of.

You tell me to quit thinking too much,
As if there was nothing I'd like to do more.

You tell me to get over myself
Even though we're so close.

Mushroom

Hidden beneath the surface
The vegetation burrows through the milieu
Absorbing what it needs
To produce the fruit
That spumes towards the sky
In ashen plumes
With hues of the sun
Setting below the horizon
Intently autumnal
Before the bleak hibernal din
Decimates all that thrives above
That which lies beneath.

Goodness Olanrewaju



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

The Spider Effect

How could failure be my gain?
As much as I tried hard
Sad and tired
I had tried and failed again
I nursed the thought for moments
Importing sporadic loosed comments

I gave up...
Was about to give up
Like a broken glass cup
Then came the spider
Black and furry legs like an armored tank
Sinking deep into space
Soaring higher....
Glued to a tiny transparent web
From its thorax's bank
Caressing the air at every ebb
Like a policeman on a chase

Pulled down
It was back spinning

Every time, it was winning
 Like the outbreak of dawn
 Such determined little thing
 And its web, feeble and thin

Amazed at the awe of its finished
 Magnificent web tentacles
 Exposed by the flaunted rays of light
 Her Majesty sank in the middle
 Like a queen wrapped in the radiance of beauty

My oozing shame away went
 A pure hope in me trickles
 That I felt in me a new might
 To fight failure of its meddling
 In my life and fix myself
 In the triumphant troupe

This spider could achieve
 Farther and wider
 For this I believe
 I have got the effect of a spider

Nude

Tables for two
 It's me and you

In our air of love
 Come let's celebrate
 Our first nakedness

Let this auspicious dove
 Bless the rays of our fate
 This soothing openness

Come, come, come
 Strip it bare
 Naked without shame
 Open every covered dome
 Dare my dear for the love of a dear
 For love's hall of fame

It is not a strip of clothes
 But the strong bond of souls

Aneesha Roy



Aneesha Roy is an avid reader and writer of poetry. She is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in English. She is interested in literature, classical mythology, feminist criticism and philosophy. She currently lives in Kolkata, India.

Insurrection

They categorically stated:
 'It is your lot to be subservient;
 Accept it without struggle.'
 The following diktats were
 Emphatically articulated:
 'Embrace the limitations of
 Your kind, be content (with
 Whatever crumbs we
 Dole out to you) or,
 The fate of the over-reacher
 Will befall you and you shall
 Feel our wrath for your
 Devious intent.'

And you chose the second.
 You chose to defy.
 You chose to dare.
 You chose to be presumptuous,
 Hoping to shatter the glass ceiling,
 Hoping to leave an indelible imprint
 On the sands of time.

But they were not the
 Sands of time, you
 Thought them to be.
 It was instead the eternal shore,
 You could never lay a claim to.
 The extended shoreline, the
 Coarse grains of sand, the
 Iridescent nimbus, in the
 Dauntless vault of the blue
 Firmament above,
 And the sylvan green
 And the sanguine red
 And the sunshine yellow,
 Was all theirs.

You chose to strive.
 You chose to wage war
 Without any decorous fanfare.
 No alarums trumpeted when
 You strode into battle,
 When you rode in on the
 Invisible horses of poesy.
 None bedecked you in armour,
 None anointed you with holy oil,
 None garlanded you in fragrant flowers,
 None drank to your occasional
 Triumphs, your hard-fought
 Skirmishes.
 Yet, you chose to strive.

But there was something you
 Couldn't get rid of,
 In the three score years
 You lived after that.
 Whispers of censure.
 Guffaws of vituperation.
 Bellows of slander.
 Clamours of condemnation.
 Clangour of atrocious libel.
 Impassioned paroxysms of abuse.
 Encrimsoned cascades of scandal.
 Rippling tides of grudge, rage
 And base, caustic jealousy.

You wanted to attain immortality
 Through your written words,

Wanted to invoke the spectral
 Aura of Orpheus through your
 Lyric.
 But little did you realize
 While being enmeshed in
 Your lifelong crusade that
 What you endured for years,
 Stoically, relentlessly,
 Your curse, the infesting canker
 Endowed in your being
 Will fester and breed and thrive.

It will be perpetuated in
 Your befuddled progeny,
 Unwittingly born into the same destiny;
 Their lives traversed by the same fate.
 They are the potential, unsung fodder
 For the selfsame, multitudinous,
 Bilious hate;
 Not because they share your
 Blood-congealed drive or
 Possess your martial spirit,
 But for the popular suspicion
 That they might.

Judith Shakespeare

I know Judith Shakespeare is alive.
 I have seen her scattering her dreams
 To the howling winds outside.
 I have heard her stifled sobs resonating
 From closets, cloisters, caverns alike.
 I have seen her dewy tears freeze on
 The very brink of her dark, wondrous lashes.

I beheld her sullen face in the glinting mirror,
 Braiding her hair, adorning her tresses with
 The gifts bestowed by her precocious, officious
 Betrothed; who she had been inordinately
 Prevailed on to marry. He was a squinting,
 Obsequious man with a dreadful roving eye,
 Apprentice to the local carpenter.

I have often traced the fluttering movement of
 Judith's quick poetic fancies,

I consoled her, petted her after every
Heart-breaking egress of her fickle muse.
I have watched her weave the eternal tapestry
Of paradise, with sonorous verse and song,
The dissonant bricolage, all the more beautiful
For its delicate, crackling novelty.

I caught the lilting cadences of the song that
Escaped her lips at night, tantalizing playfully the
Mystic orb of the blanched moon in the sky.
I had carried her with me to the magic well, she was
All agog to visit, hoping it would replicate the mysterious gifts
Of the Castalia, and bind her to her muse forever.

I often saw her ashen face, reflected in the polished parquetry.
I often gaped astounded at the tuneful rhythm of her artistic creations.
I hounded her persistently, to reveal to me the whereabouts
Of those elegant verses she had apparently hid, for fear
Of discovery.
I poked the red embers to retrieve the charred remains of the
Verses she had burned.

I heard her piercing screams, pervading the night,
Emanating from within, when she was beaten, gashed
And flung about the room.
I had followed her to the city, waited at the door of the
Theatre-house with her, while she begged for work,
Pleaded for mercy, hoping the world would be at least
As kind to her as to her brother.

She was soon disabused of her pitiable naivete.
Her fanciful innocence escaped her soon.
I had heard her hopes die within her with a whimper.
I had traced her footsteps to that morbid place,
That night, when she decided to end her life.

But she still survives.
I can tell you where to find her.
I can tell you where she lives.
This is the golden archway leading towards the earth.
Ascend those stairs, walk down that archway.

You will then have reached the mouth of an enormous
Cavern leading to the vast, wide world.
Continue your journey, knock on every door
And gain admittance into the nether regions of the

Private chambers of every house you see;
You shall find Judith Shakespeare, cowed and
Weather-beaten, huddling inside,
Weaving, knitting, baking, washing, sewing, nursing,
Doomed to a life of eternal domestic drudgery.

Gabriel Bamgbose



Gabriel Bamgbose is a Nigerian writer and critic. He is currently teaching Literature in the Department of English, Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria. Also, he is an editor. He is widely published in different academic and literary journals, national and international. One of his poems is longlisted for the 2013 Ghana Poetry Prize.

Thy Freedom Come (for Madiba Mandela)

When freedom laughs at you
All you have to do is laugh back
Even when freedom laughs and lashes
You still have to retain that calm smile
To reconcile your living with your existence

Yea, freedom is sweet
Even Sweeter than honey
Even when freedom wraps you up in the aura of splendor
Even when freedom comes with its pains and pangs
Even when freedom wears the apparition of *freedom*
Nothing can match the feat of freedom

But when the thought of true freedom
Engulfs our canal minds
We sense its bitterness in our flesh
Oh, it pierces so hard
That we often seek to avoid

Its momentary trauma
 Yea, freedom is bitter
 Even more bitter than bile
 Because the true freedom
 Stays waiting in the necropolis
 Where you and you alone
 Would live and exist in your vault
 Where nothing batters your being

So when thy freedom comes
 Wait and look it in the eyes
 Embrace it and let it cuddle you
 Wait for that which has long been waiting
 For you since that day you with your hard head
 Successfully dive the deep through
 Wait...and let it swallow you up!

NIGHTMARES

Night falls on the sunny city
 In an apparel of darkness the day is clad
 Giving away our festivity for a dreadful carnival
 Horrored by weird cane-armed maskers
 Trailing us in this moment of the dull doldrums...
 Morn o come I pray and hurry hither that this
 Angels in *Egungun* regalia haunting me may
 Retire with the spectral night! I wish not behold those
 Even faces in the afterlife now though my days
 Sun-dried here are wretched and miserable!

David Schwartz



G. David Schwartz is the former president of Seedhouse, the online interfaith committee. Schwartz is the author of *A Jewish Appraisal of Dialogue* (1994) and *Midrash and Working Out Of The Book* (2004). Currently, he is a volunteer at The Cincinnati J, Meals On Wheels. His newest book, *Shards And Verse* (2011), is now in stores or can be ordered online.

Don't Do It

Listen to me
This cannot be
Don't do it
It will pain you
Putting pea's up your nose

I Grew A Fig Tree

I grew a fig tree
In my own back yard
But I couldn't figure it out
The figs were awful hard
I put one in my mouth
Then I bit my lip
Figs in the diner is surely not like this

‘Deji W. Adesoye



Ayodeji W. Adesoye was born in Epe-Ekiti (Ijero Local Government) in South-Western Nigeria. He attended the University of Ado Ekiti, Nigeria, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy in 2010. In 2012, he advanced to the University of Ibadan in pursuit of Master's degree. Adesoye is an Epistemologist, political philosopher, essayist, and poet.

Plea of a Seeing Soul

Take me not to a brook for bath celestial
Where the mind jitters furiously about
Sudden ministerial acts unforeseen
That in cassock and collar might seize my breast
And untie holy sash toward canal assault.

Take me not to this eerie divination chamber
Where works of art violate principles of beautiful arts
That they refuse to be appealingly fantastic
But loom appallingly terrific to the young and the old
Where ache is expunged and ague installed in its stead.

Take me not to the roof-tops
Where matriarchs sit on broom sticks
And cause night winds to move currents on Day Sea
Where house rats dare not peer out during parliamentary session

Take me, I beseech you...
To the pulpit
Where on my knees I shall be

Till the hand of trinity is lain on me
Take me...to the communion table
Where the Precious Blood that makes me whole awaits
In the cups of saints
That wherefore I dine I shall starve no more
Wherefore I wine I shall thirst no more
That I shall die without dying
And die no more.

Promise to Mr Deejay

Behind
The curtain of night
The deejay played his tune
In the corner of my room

In whimpering interest I started
Dance I could not do
Eyes I could not dim
The deejay stopped short

Like an emergency ambulance
The deejay, who was now become
The attendant, chauffeur and surgeon
Blared his siren
Across my head
And jabbed his syringe
In my neck

I shall raise a wall of wire next time
Mosquito

Dyah Ikhsanti



Dyah Ikhsanti is a 27-year old freelance writer for an education website. She likes reading and writing creative works, and she does regular meditation too. She has been writing since 9 years old, because she spent most of her lunch time in the class than playing with friends.

In Some Kilos

Wind blows and flows in random lines, breezing, and weakening
 Our minds fly above alpha borderline
 Can anybody survive this line?
 Bodies are drained; senses are trapped in a fuss
 Is there anybody feeling like this?
 These feet are going to be limped, but our *some more kilos* is still far ahead
 Whether we like it or not, we get to the point between want and don't want
 Like and don't like
 Because we must

There's no end
 Drained until numbed

I am waiting the time when only my body is talking
 In gesture louder than any voice
 When sense and heart are no longer there to feel

Bending, we will surrender

Kousik Adhikari



Kousik Adhikari, an Indian research scholar, has several publications consisting of both creative and critical writings, published in India, Nepal, USA, and Thailand. He is interested in literature, linguistics and cultural studies. He has over 20 publications of poems.

Calling You Flower

Calling you flower,
 Have I descended in hell?
 As all those long-curved memories
 Cheat me so nicely
 Of those sparks that dance,
 Those that freeze us in between,
 Night's lonely hour I cared
 Leaping headlong cursed by God;
 Hell was always smooth, cool,
 Before you look fevered.
 Heaven's now a delicious hell
 That sits and sometimes jumps
 Like unicorn over my heart,
 Looking for any eve's humbled lie?

Tyler Kline



Tyler Kline is an emerging free-verse poet from Chalfont, Pennsylvania. He's inspired by the ordinary and utilizes his daily interactions with others as writing material. He is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in English at the University of Delaware. He has been published in *Caesura*, *The Main Street Journal*, *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, and his work will appear in the upcoming *Black Bottom Review*. For more information or comments, please email him at tkline@udel.edu.

That Night I Held You in Timbuktu

That night I held you in Timbuktu,
my fingers spun your hair
like a Greek silkworm god,
commissioned by the aphorism:
love is all you need.

Bullshit.

I swam in those inlets of dusty gold
only to find myself shipwrecked.
Your scalp – adorned with bumps –
kind of bitchy:
a field pumpkin left in November.

That night I held you,
we breathed coffee instead of air.
Our clothes were fragrances left off.

You made the mistake of looking me in the eye.
Of sparring with my ghostly white toes
under the sheets. Of returning me to port.
I loved you last Wednesday.

That night,
the languid morphine-drip of rain off
my roof did the talking.
And for some reason I thought of our hands
forming a tourniquet instead of a heart,
something alive and running.
The peach shine of your inner thighs
radiating salvation and sin.

I'm praying you suffer.

Now your teeth are all I can think of.
How today is now Thursday

and you're still lost at sea.

Kevin Thornburgh



Kevin Thornburgh is a Los Angeles based poet, earning his MFA at Antioch LA in 2000 and being featured in *Barebacklit* and its anthology *Unwrapped* as well as in *The Pacific Review* and *California Quarterly*. His books are on Amazon.com. He has a website on Yola.com.

I am the man who left on the ship

I am the man who left on the ship
And I am the man who came back

I am the one who is not recognized
No boots, no letters

I am the one who fell in love
And grew my hair

I am the one who picked the flowers
Who saw the naked and the sleeping

I am the one who was embarrassed
When he kissed you

I am the one who sang
And played in the ocean

I laid in the dark and opened my eyes
I danced with women I didn't know

I am the boat that floats towards you
What once I had I will have again

Tope Omoniyi



Professor Tope Omoniyi is the Chair of Sociolinguistics in the Department of Media, Culture and Language, Roehampton University, in London. He is an accomplished scholar with numerous academic publications in sociolinguistics to his name. He is also a poet and the author of *Farting Presidents & Other Poems* (Kraft Books, 2001). His poems have also appeared in journals in Nigeria (*ANA Review*), Singapore (*AWARE*), Malaysia (*Tenggara & The Gombak Review*), USA (Quill Books and *Anthropology & Humanism*), UK (*The Unruly Sun*), seven Forward Press anthologies, and in Sweden (*Nordic African Institute Newsletter*), and *African Writing On-line*. In 1985, he won a runner-up prize in the National Anti-Apartheid Poetry Competition in Nigeria and in 2001 he received a honourable mention in the *Anthropology & Humanism* Annual Poetry Competition.

I hate the past tense ... (for Madiba)

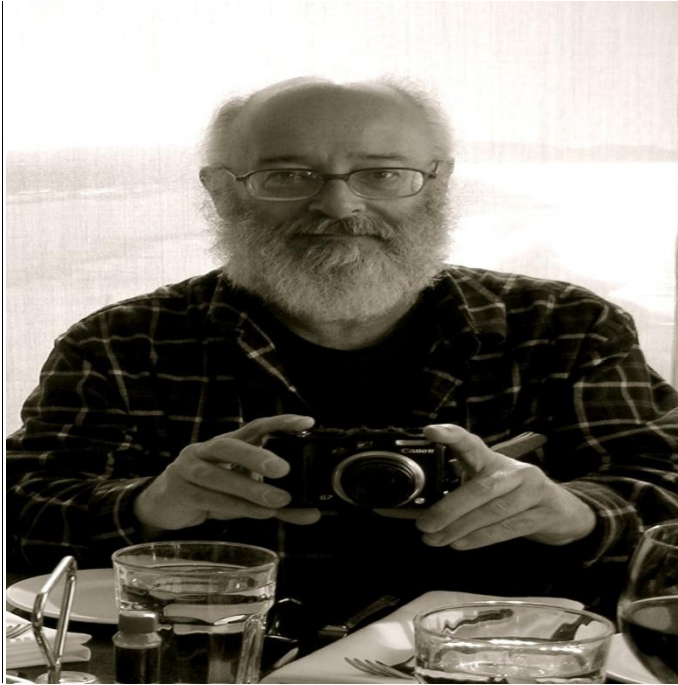
Times like now, I just hate the past tense
I hate the insensitivity of the speed
With which it wraps up the life stories
Of people I love with its -ed strings

I hate my incapacity to challenge
The callousness of this grammar
That 'ceases' claims to now and beyond

I particularly hate that the past tense
Lumps Madibas and villains together
In assigning DID to all in equal measure

I know it waits for me too grinning
If only I could knit a cloak from threads
Of a language without the past tense.

John Landry



John Landry's poems have appeared in *Elective Affinities*, *Elohi Gadugi*, *ditch*, *Heartfire*, *Istanbul Literary Review*, *Xcp cross-cultural poetics*, and *Perfume River Poetry Review*. He read his work at the Library of Congress at the invitation of Gwendolyn Brooks. He served as poet laureate for the city of his birth, New Bedford, Massachusetts, in the long shadows of Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville. (Photo by A.D. Winans)

Recreation

cracked open
the surface
tension of things

in the shade of
the world tree
here at the self-
designated
center of
the cosmos

bird – sky
spread in a wide-
embracing ecstatic
dance over the
mouth of the earth

fasting into trances
you are my axis

my shadow low beside me

my conch shell horn
my hollow reed flute
thru which my song flies

my heart beats
my gut pushes up my
lungs & air comes up
through my throat

the rabbit I eat
helps me dart & run
& blend in w/
my surroundings

the bird I eat
lightens me and swims
dives deeply into
my reliable wells



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