



Sage Cigarettes Magazine
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Northern Issue 2020 - "Quarantine"

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#SAYTHEIRNAME

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G E O R G E F L O Y D

“The cost of liberty is less than the price of repression.

—W.E.B. Du Bois

“My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.

—Desmond Tutu

“The time is always right to do what is right.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.

—Nelson Mandela

Dear Readers,

Normally, we start each issue with a letter from the editor, and we fill the pages with fitting graphics to add flair to each writer’s words. This issue is going to be different. We started with quotes from some famous black leaders, and the message in each has stunning parallels to the way people are treating each other during the COVID -19 pandemic crisis. As evidenced by our cover, there is a stark difference between the way “maskers” and “anti-maskers” view each other here in the US. The one thing we need more than anything else right now is respect and common courtesy for each other, and that is severely lacking across the board. As a general human race, we should be protecting each other, banding together in solidarity, and instead are tearing each other to shreds for simply choosing to wear a mask (which is mandated in a lot of areas). Being able to get a haircut, your nails done, go bar hopping – these are not things worth sacrificing the health and safety of others.

Fight this hard for the children we have locked in cages. Fight this hard for the countless women and children who are being sex-trafficked right now as you read these words. Fight this hard for the indigenous women missing in Canada, snatched off of the highway of tears. Fight this hard for black people: who are murdered by cops and regular citizens, who are discriminated against for their skin color, who are being LYNCHED in 2020. Fight for each other!

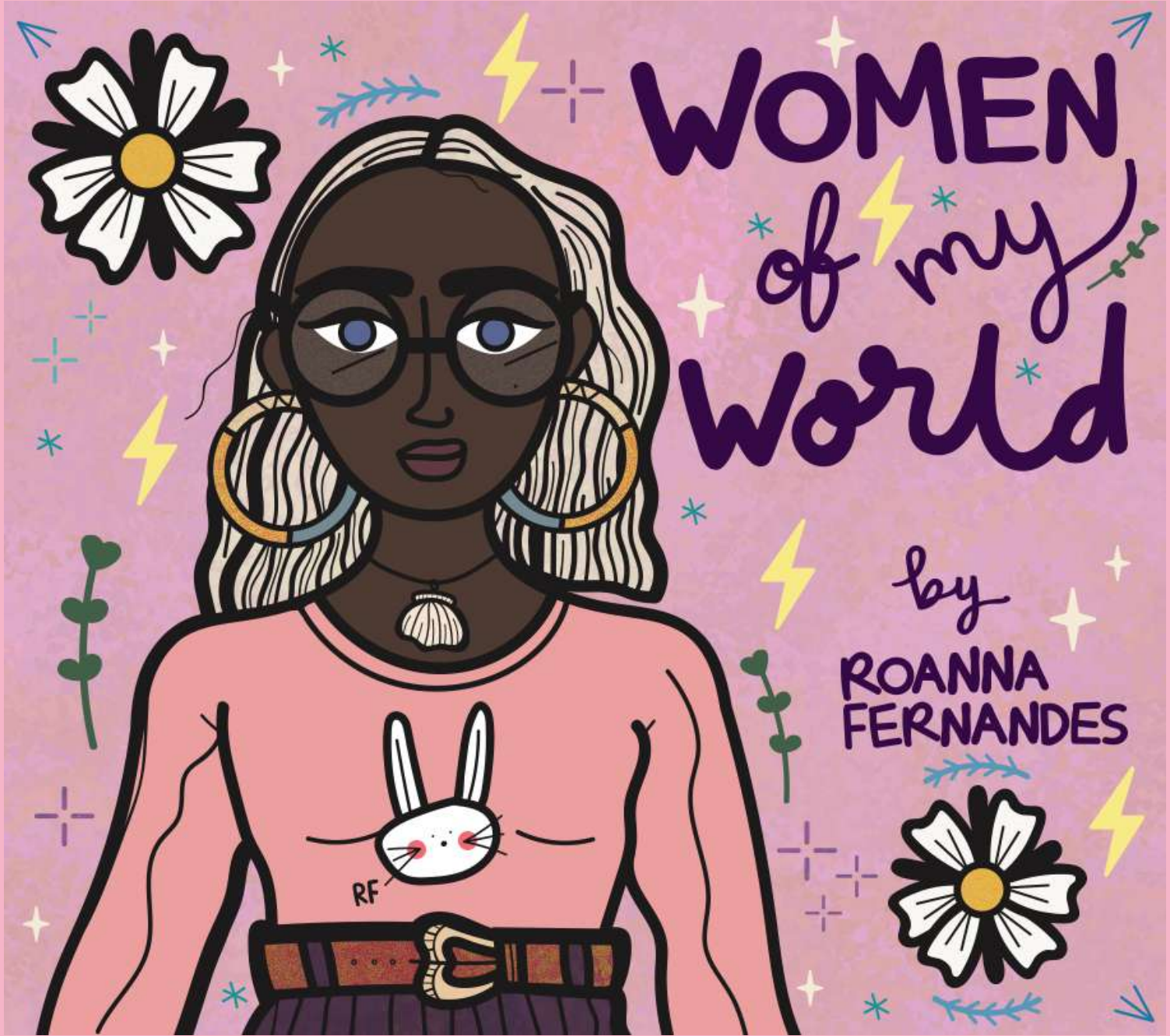
The following pages are filled with talented work by talented people, who have been affected by COVID in one way or another and from their experiences have sprouted creativity. We decided against the graphics so that nothing distracts from the words on the page. Our hope is that you can share in their experience, connect through it, and that it lends you some comfort.

Before you continue, we ask that you take a moment of silence for our siblings who have fallen to police brutality. Once that moment of silence is over, say their names.

XX, The Sage Cigarettes Team

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Thin Love

Sometime in April

The moon shines bright and red tonight,
you just woke up as I am falling asleep.

Funny drugs and alcohol to numb out the pain,
we have been apart for too long.

take eros' starlight as your guide through this eternal darkness.

would you swim across the stormy sea for me?

even if it means I'd fall down these high cliffs

as winds of deadly uncertainty try blowing out our light?

they have trapped us in different cages, miles apart,

when I first whispered "*I love you*" through the cracks of your broken heart,

I asked the gods to die the second you did.

many moons have kissed erebos since we have last been together.

I dyed my hair mulberry yesterday.

mullberries used to be white before I met you-

before you kissed me and the blood from our ripped hearts united.

the skies are turning purple now,

silver butterflies return.

they keep you out yet won't let me leave-

trapped behind these border lines, my paranoia is killing me.

I'm slowly going fucking *p s y c h o*.

I miss you.

it feels like a decade since I have last touched your skin.

has it turned to marble yet?

don't leave me alone in this world of chaos where distance is safety

yet our distance is my death.

defying the impossible,

I can never lose you.

will I see you again under a starry sky in September?

Half of a Love Song

"तुम जो कहदो तो आज की रात चाँद डूबेगा नहीं..."*

The sleeves of your t-shirt extend to my palms and I stuff my toes in colourful socks, the wind was cold and you were the only warm place I recognized.

I tried holding the sun in my folded hands, like a lotus that's waiting to burst into flames; you think this is madness, I call it hope.

The breeze is breathing next to my ear, singing perhaps, in a strange, foreign sound - its language collapses to the walls of my ignorance but I barely try to familiarize myself.

His arms are comfortable, to say the least; my ankles rest on his lap like they've known its texture since the beginning of time, the fear of extensive love haunts me.

*lyrics of a Hindi song

There is a light the world does not know of : blinking brown irises against the white of my pillow covers; the sun smiles with the curves of his grin, ear to ear. I watch the hills dance to his laughter and I sing love songs stretching my arms towards his soft embrace. This light breathes against the nape of my neck and jumps into the lakes of longing, the brown in his beard reminds me of my soil; I'd like to call him my home, my love, my light.

There are nights when I waltz around my house

with doors, poles, mops, vacuum cleaners;

my red dress curtains my calves too,

its balloon end is the fancy of my waist,

the wind likes to stroke my dress, play.

some mornings I sleep in, get cozy in blanket

and later, cook myself a brunch;

step out in the sunlight, wearing my banana shorts

and sing to the sunflowers.

I wait under the belly of the sky, wait for myself;

it's only now that I have learned to coexist

with my body and my mind and my core,

only now have I learnt self love,

only now have I known love.

If lovers came in all shapes and sizes,

you would look something like

a purple coloured unicorn on a rainbow cloud.

The kind that comforts the tiny kid

Inside your being and makes the butterflies in your stomach flutter,

the kind that means 'all things good',

the kind that tastes like candy floss

on a giant wheel, the kind that

makes you go weak in the knees.

If lovers were like days of the week,

you would be Wednesday,

pretty spelling and prettier pronunciation,

halfway through the week (yay),

a gap of two between you and

Monday's blue and you and Saturday, too.

If lovers were like flavours,

you would be chocolate-almonds with

a hint of vanilla and coffee,

good for health, good for soul and

pretty damn good for work (wink, wink).

If lovers were like flowers,

You would be a bouquet of

carnations and lilies,

no 'is it giving out mixed signals'

like lotuses,

no 'what if they're allergic'

like sunflowers,

no 'it's too overrated'

like roses,

just pure love, carefree and gorgeous.

If love was like constellations,

ours would be brand new,

joining the lines between old stars

creating diamonds or kites

(because you say it feels so precious,

and I think it tastes like freedom).

Xanthe

Linda McMullen

My mother wanted me to marry Hector, my deceased father's godson. He was stolid and phlegmatic – and, I think, a little in love with me. While a trainee policeman, he came around twice a week... ostensibly to play bridge with my mother, her superstitious old aunt, and me. Auntie Myrtle told our fortunes in cards, and everyone enjoyed a sip of port.

But I was determined to wed Mentor. A nobleman, *older*, thrice-married – ludicrously wealthy. He disdained cards. He took me to ballets, concerts, and the opera – “only the finest performances.” If it wasn't love, it was more than satisfactory.

Hector didn't attend the ceremony. Mama kissed me, sighing.

Our honeymoon was at a private resort. He had the maid present me bare and pink as an oyster. Then he consumed me.

We retreated to his chateau.

We were enisled.

Mentor had to leave on business soon after. He left me his keys, warning me not to use the smallest (for a disused study, he said) under any circumstances.

Before his boat's wake ceased to leave traces, I was at the study door.

I opened it.

The mouth of Hell! There – his three wives – their *bodies!* –carefully preserved, lovingly arranged..

Now Mentor's shadow falls on me. I doubt he ever meant to go.

“You didn't trust me.”

“Rightly. Now... I suggest saying your prayers – before I take off your head.”

“I think that's a limiting option,” I replied.

Superbly amused: “Indeed?”

“You would narrow your indulgences shamefully.” He frowns. “Would it not be an exquisite pleasure to create a protégé, and watch *her* enact an intimate betrayal?”

I hold my breath.

“With whom?”

“Hector.”

I have bought myself another month.

There is much to learn. Mentor says I have the benefit of surprise, but no strength, no cunning. He offers lessons in anatomy, knife skills, and embalming; the scenario is mine to devise.

Under Mentor's eye, I write Hector a letter, saying I am returning to the capital, hinting at my misery. I invite him to dine with me in my hotel room.

We travel east.

Hector arrives. Mentor disappears behind the curtain; he burns a cigarette hole at eye level.

I tell Hector that my marriage has failed. I say I have spent my lonely hours developing a variant of bridge for two.

“Can we play?”

He nods.

I set the North arrow to point toward myself. I deal. My special deck includes standard and tarot cards: Hector receives the queen of spades, the hanged man, and the tower.

Expressions of confusion, then intense concentration, flit across his face. Then, finally, our old standard: “Four no trumps.”

“Same. For my game to succeed,” I continue, “one would have to change the arrow every hand.” I point it toward the

window, and re-deal. Hector receives the ace of spades, the king of clubs, and the Devil. His hand drifts casually toward his waist. I nod.

Then he fires his service revolver into the curtain.

A year later, we married.

Battlefield to the Throat

He's is one of his moods
ignore him, it's probably
a ridiculous comment.
Pass the bloody ketchup,
have a need for its powers
like falling out of bed
or down some stairs,
either leaves you in a heap
of incredulousness.

Colin James

What We Do To Nature

Not sure if it is the corona,
 Or if it is my copious poetic vision,
 But from where I observe,
 The colour of the sky has altered,
 The water of the creeks have relinquished their crystal clear shine, The glow of the
 magnificent moon has faded,
 & The sun now has a silhouette.

There's a shadow everywhere, All around this planet,
 A shrug of all things bad,

Over the sleeves of the good,
 A dusty membrane of mankind's bad deeds, Over nature's elegant foliage,
 And this will now remain forever!

What we do to nature is like a scratch on a thermal paper, The one they use for printing bills,
 If you scratch it once,
 The imprints will remain,
 Remain forever!

In Hopes of a Mask Free World!

Whether I will get through or not
 is now a question with faint doubtful answers
 It is a question which has no certain answer,
 Only guesses, uncertain guesses but what I know is that
 sometime in the near future, if I become the past
 what will remain forever is possibly my body of work, my kindness, my spirit beyond my body, my
 soul and all things intangible and of course my art;

so in the preservation of the same,

I pen down my emotions I keep them for you For others & for centuries to come.
 And in my writings, I write prayers tangled with a web of "Spells for aeons to come",
 In hopes of a future free of this pandemic, In hopes of a mask free planet!

For all you do is talk!

The earth that birthed you,
You buried her under your very own feet,
cracks rising from the blistering heat...
The air that echoed in your laughter,
You snatched the joy from that wind!
Do you deserve to smile?
Animals all innocent that cease to be without even knowing why

You proudly put lives into danger,
They lose what's theirs,
But yours? You fight...
It's in your decency,
In your good human blood
and your ability to stand upright,
That you return to nature's benevolence with your exploitation...

What's the big scheme to save yourself from your shadow?
Is it the magic formula that hasn't been created?
Or the biodiesel that isn't sold?
Talking matures nothing,

Yet all you do is talk!
Because you can't let your car be and instead take a foot walk,

For all you do is talk!
For all you do is talk!

Mike Todd

Spring, 2020

That you're doing well, I will happily wish you.
But shaking your hand has become quite an issue.
It's not that it's banned
With the virus at hand,
It's just that I fear you might lack toilet tissue.



Leslie Owen

Drowning in a Pond of Corn

As children
it seemed fair
that all answers lived within the corn.
The scarecrow's rabid smile insisted
we enter the realm of crickets and dead crows
where hues seemed familiar——
the blonde fibers of gold
a place to pee during recess and after school games,
a warm nest for my growing nostalgia.
A place to run away
with little or no control,
letting the reeds whistle against my face.
I find freedom
hidden from the human race.
My friends and I
entertaining games
thrills of hide and seek and other poems.
We grow fresh blushing,
watching gals growing it on blonde
letting the auburn hair spin...
like a windmill seducing the breeze.
For hours
the obelisks of maze
become a new home for dreams
and small stories whirling gently
in the bays of imagination.
And from here
the blue clamor of school children
climbing candid in bright yellow buses
to what seems the sky and is the future.

To
the town church hung
by the cameo cross
and the bells rising as spells
towards the wrapped sky
unveiled as a mirage.
A voice says dreaming:
"Say your prayers young man, it's bedtime."

I dream of Indians and placid rivers,
home of the papoose I could have been.
Now at age ten,
I know that what it never was
except death.
The rest home for the silent old
and their wane regrets
as my own.
And, if I can't breathe
I sit still with the rain
eavesdropping in greens and blues
thrown in sprays by the sparrow's wings.
I grip the the cold mud and I sing
with immemorial tears
never thrown from the sky,
only drawn arid like bones,
yellow, brittle and forgotten
in the pages of saddest books
as poems.
And farther above the emerald sky
breathes smile, ample...
need in the darkest sighs,
like a small part
of something that is or will be
your wan reflection in this pond of corn
drowned by the wind.

Emporia (The Last Verse of an Abstract Tale)

The *hyper-bolixed* incandescent humongous mutation of
a dream,
Whereas solitary firefly falls to the waters.
The cascade of the brittle rose flower's
Last floating petals forgotten
By mist and demeanor
As in a maze of open reality.
Where no eyes have gone before
To steal the fathomed sigh of
New angst and the breathless
Pleasure of a dark abyss.
I bid you welcome Emporia
Of perched soiled portico columned houses
White wood in arid sun, lost starlight
And poppies in your heart flagellating
Desire as wishes and these as lost hopes.
Oh, the coiled wisteria smiling...
Articulate tenements "NO VACANCY"
signs buzzing in dying neon light
Of quark infrastructure as tear of mercury
Those sappy and lachrymose beings, meandering.
That perils from your retina's facade
Like a new mask,
Like the gate that holds no return even for the wise
For you or for me, we are one
In the forked road, open
To the new herbicides in the dew
Of crowned ferns and wisterias
Surrounded by more mankind.
More Mankind.
I sit in the soft sofa of your legs
Like a crying clown, erased make-up, drooped,
Of wet eyes blinded by all scientific.
Your star, your onyx rosary,
Your spectacles shaded like a tie-dye shirt
Open at the neck to reveal that pale throat
That will cut from heaven with iconoclastic words

Sung like a bird: Chirp, chirp, the bird lurks.
The surgeon will save you,
The Amontillado wine will battle you
Like the lucid masculine liquids of the stars,
Flares of eyes with no pupils, stares and circular gazes
And yes, those quiet screams.
I am no white dwarf star; I am just short-lived, shining
In this last moment -immaculate, all that luster.
This garden, this one drawn
Is Emporia
The inverted pyramid of your tears
As landscape and the *desperado's* escapade,
The musical on stage of only sound and stage scenery,
vacant
For your fastened soul, a voyage to reality and away they
say...
To the authentic footprints of mirage in urban
labyrinths
And eyes on and from a chanting crowd.
Before you spill shadow
Welcome to the Emporium
And gimmick of roses
In this your last stage
Your thought processes as whims
And the circumstance of theorized by the Spanish
philosopher
Which names your imagination
At mid-century.
I come now to this rain forest
As a noun and place at your verb's wants
Hurts feet to menace evil with wild kicks in a back seat
From the platitudes
From the South American Lost World of the
immense *Tepuy* of Canaima;
Hollow plateaus you carry as burden
The quakes of your dignity.
The Sunrise they yelled sore of gargantuan overtones
Not a musical myriad of chess pieces

Carlos Mijares Poyer

In the vast heel of the universe
Divided to cry, only to whimper and make no sense
Like a petal
The idiom and nomen inside the ear-drum
Of your own form as content
To say: "EMPORIA"!!!
The open mountain and the entering double-helix helicopters
Your chest unearthed to breathe,
As you relate
As you relate
As you give in to immortality.
Gaze in the french garden
You had desire to be a last child
Given as astronomy of foliage
To your heart's beat and open wounds digitally scarred
Thus is the healing of the new global shaman
In the oldest of continents unseen
The continent redeemed
Of possible blanche islands and heroism to their history
From the deserts to castles you
You are no hero, just a blast from
The outcome of a secret web maelstrom
Where flowers withering converse, converge to enhance
And the sky dips its lips beyond the waters, ecstasy...
Yes, the waters of gesture upon the kryptonite rocks
Your path to that other garden
Where no one listens
Just prays,
Just like this,
Like this...
And, like this, take the money and hum...
While the abstraction perils.

Dark Moon of the South

The fanning continental avenues where wind breathes good moods
The Latin river silver the Anaconda watching you in the night
and the red-haired bats with faces
The size of tigers hang from the trees to jump you.
Who said Vampires only lurked in Gotham?
The Phantom Rolls-Royce purple immaculate
Races opening the wounds of poor pedestrians
To the height and apogee of slums in
The Lost Metropolis of silent windowpanes.
The Beauty Queens of the hip that stole erotika
In your reverie of desire, and the rich laugh
At high decibels of hysteric desperation
To market the Red Scare and the Eagle's Dare!
This Smile has no horizon, it is in the heart.
The giant rodent Chiguires the size of baby pandas
And the coral reefs of your spine
Of multifoliate shades of blue ocean in your eyes
From snowy sun to wet leaf,
The humid smile intonates candy-colored tones
On the marimbas and Salsa falls to your laps
Like a dead pearl necklace unleashed...
Soon, after the rain the city's mountain runner
Smiles again
As the traffic jam issued the last gun shot
To vacuum your soul like the last sigh
Of a Spanish poem.
These in the last gaze of the Caribbean Sea.

Moon Illusion

A pebble rippled a pond's immensity
and angered the moon
as the child walked away
dealing a summer cricket tone,
silent palms to his side,
glass-eyed in this illusion of moon.

Then in a silent vestibule
looking into a clay bowl
seeming it to disappear
as numbers in the mind
alienate so many souls.

The child walked about the pastels
and averted the tumid smell
of polished furniture;
how each hair had grown
to be what seemed- a loom...
and reminisce immobility,
as a necessity in the open act
of maturity.

The child was only ten,
in the summer vane.

The moon evaporated leaves and
the flight of crows, smiling
the darkness around the stars
perished blue.

Lately, the illusion moves.
The herd of water roams.

Time's Naïveté

In the photo,
my year-younger self,
innocence latent,
discovered too late.

That year-ago lifetime,
in a world before Covid,
so alien now
in this realm rife with death

Michele Mekel

Urban Apparition

I am like a ghost,
wandering the city and
haunting long-dead pasts.

Counting Tomorrows

How many
of these tomorrows
must we endure
before the clock
turn backs to
a semblance of
yesterday?

COVID Days

COVID Days

These are the COVID days.

March unwittingly brought them, along with spring.

These COVID days don't come with convenient labels, like Monday or Tuesday.

That's because COVID days are the same: wake, feed cats, make coffee, check Twitter for news.

That's the COVID news, of course.

On COVID days, you need to know the updated infection rate and the new death toll.

You must be apprised of the latest treatment failures and the recent unemployment numbers.

COVID days also require corrections to prior days' misinformation and outright ignorance.

And, certainly, COVID days aren't complete without hours of zooming.

Virtually, we go to meetings and classes, happy hours and dates, birthday parties and funerals.

But the novelty of co-workers', friends', and potential paramours' backgrounds has worn off.

What's fresh, these COVID days, is that we're all a bit more fatigued, unkempt, and absent.

Michele Mekel

These Hands

These hands, they're tools.

They've created art and written poetry.

They've brewed tea and dried fallen tears.

These hands, they're barometers of emotions within.

They've formed fists and made love.

They've fidgeted in stressful moments and been still in quiet ones.

These hands, they're conduits across the individual divide.

They've been held tightly and pushed away roughly.

They've been greeted palm to palm in celebration and demonstrated profane disaffection.

But, now, these hands, they're a pariah in pandemic days.

They're socially shunned and brutally scrubbed with regularity.

They're in isolation and deprived of human connection.



Enthralled by Night



Bewitched by Morning

The Face of Death in Life

Peg leg on the flat of mat and make the mirror
Gawk with a mooning vacuum at the ceiling of
The sky, the valve of nerve might get drawn by
the acrid puff evoked by the incipient violence
Of Coronavirus; the unseen enemy of mankind,
Dancing Chilimando of the waist over the map.

In view of this kairotic crack every naked ape is
Hung on thick cobwebs of quarantine quandary,
Watching bed bugs scurrying beneath the dignity
Of mattresses, and cockroaches selling tubers of
Yam in the black market of toilet tables and pews.

There is a crevice of fracture on every wall of breath,
Every room is now a shrine to a happy ancient history,
Cheesy stench of decaying muscle has filled the air tube,
Cancer of anger is now a dancer of the tired ancestors,
The delta of mouth can no longer stifle original laughter.

The unseen enemy of mankind blends in the background,
Panning and hammering a clique of crowd to a downfall,
The turbid flecks of blood and guts in her corona tongue
Defies several healing agents of therapeutic pharmacon,
The elfin fleshes in whiskers of hope are now turned to bone.

The world is now panting on the holy shoulder of heaven,
Invocating to win the war against this unseen but common
Enemy of mankind sucking blood like the suctorial birds,
Whilst the carnage of combat is still advancing, let all the
Breathing rooms button down the face of death in life.

Cycles

On the swings: he wants to go
 higher, All the way to the clouds
 makes me sing carry moonbeams the
 way Nani does, though I don't
 know the words and we're both left
 unsatisfied

I can see the moon from
 up here it's true, he always finds
 the moon, steps out the door
 tiny finger thrust to the sky
 Moon!———like it's the
 first time every time so
 satisfied

There's nowhere to go but this yard
 plastic swing set, budding azalea, garden stones
 covered in pink and blue sidewalk chalk
 pop up tent in his bedroom where
 we hide from monsters
 We're staying
 inside

A dream or the sound of him stirring, I'm up
 middle of the night soft
 hum of refrigerator, eerie
 call of a lone bird the room glows
 Moon!———through the window
 the sky a siren
 song

I pull the blanket over the
 sweet hills of his shoulders
 worn giraffe tucked under his arm
 leave the door open a crack the
 way he likes it
 rise with the dawn
 tomorrow we start over
 again

Moonchild

I don't understand how one day ends and
another begins, moon and sun free
to move about their
lives unstuck

Does the sun know

it feels like a memory of
every place I've ever been

The moon wishes
to be a comfort returns

each night, consistency is love
but I turn away

like a child
newly learning how to
be alone

Mother Nature

I'm not sleeping, mind a
jangle of horrific
fears, frightening desires
I dream of
running

away

arrive

in a garden, dappled
light, clover and
songbird, rest in
the shade of a
fig tree

the breeze against my cheek is
all the mothers I know
finally exhaling

Masks

What if I come out of this
 having learned nothing
 of the beauty in small pleasures
 family time
 balmy hush of the morning
 the afternoon light

dances the same across the garden
 whether I'm here to see it or not
 depression is its own
 kind of virus you know
 insidious, resilient it
 eats and breathes like
 your sourdough starter though
 I wouldn't know I haven't
 baked any bread, put brush
 to canvas, I went running even
 though the internet told me not to
 I haven't learned

a different language a new
 skill, how to sit with my
 thoughts any better than
 I used to. I forgot
 all the things I know
 about this disease how
 it collapses on your chest
 labored breaths, extreme fatigue
 yes I've wondered if
 I might die

forgive me if I've failed
 to see the silver lining
 I've been wearing a different kind of mask

Day 68

All great human civilizations
from ancient China
through Greece // Egypt // Persia
the Roman Empire
India
& the Soviet Union
have failed in part
not simply because
external threat have crushed their bones beneath
the universal weight of history
but
because internal flaw // corruption
failure to espouse morals & guarantees & values
decency unfulfilled
has decayed them from the inside out
until their polished surface on lake propaganda
has become a swamp –

Boris & co ... need I go on?

Day 69

it's all insane

that's my moon-rimmed core-rotten
appraisal of it all

UFO's
in broad daylight
above a marina that lurks beneath
this bloodied town
below the stone sun
thumping cancer rays towards balding skulls
in garden cages

the daily briefing // soured by nepotism
tells us all the things we need to un-know

the butterscotch ice-cream has
ran out....again

what a farce!someone bellows
from a nearby garden

the story of our twisted-wheel dystopian dreamscape

Day 70

ten weeks

hiding from killer

droplets

cute as microscopic rain

deadly as bullets

ten weeks curling pages away

from the sun:

Hemingway, Celin , Duffy, Bukowski, Steinbeck

Dostoevsky, McCullers, Collins, Angelou

Tolstoy, Camus, Bellow, Fante, Orwell

Plath, Melville, Kafka, Harwood

ten weeks

spinning dusty discs:

Nick Drake, Rival Sons, Nina Simone, David Crosby,
Miles Davis

Bonnie Raitt, Soft Machine, Steely Dan, Carole King

Frank Sinatra, Zero 7, Beach Boys, Donna Summer,
Rage Against The Machine

Christine & The Queens, Paul Kappa, Boz Scaggs, Leon
Russell

Norah Jones, Bert Jansch, Sade, Turin Brakes, Micayl,
Lambchop

Liverpool Express, Rolling Stones, Lyle Lovett, Barbara
Streisand, Supergrass

The Inkspots, Tangerine Dream, Scott Matthews,
Rumer, Tony Bennett

London Grammar, Tom Russell, Fun Lovin' Criminals,
Traffic

Judi Collins, Four Tops, Black Sabbath, PJ Harvey,
Television, Tash Sultana, Cold Chisel

ten weeks

sucking up subversive propagandist shit

from our pretenders-in-chief

ten weeks

watching wrestling re-runs:

Hogan slamming Andre

Warrior winning the title Wrestlemania VI

Savage & Miss Elizabeth reunited

Montreal screw-job

Owen Heart's in-ring death

Mankind flying off the Hell-in-a-Cell

Undertaker's streak

ten weeks

learning to press re-set

ten weeks

walking sunset miles

& miles & miles & miles

with a boxer dog

that's never known it so good –

full clan in tact

to love & protect

ten weeks inside the skin

of these four walls

waiting for the bell to ring

one eye on the daily news

the other on a cracked moon going round & round

ten weeks

of late nights lost in Netflix:

American Horror Story, Tiger King, Troll Hunter, IT

Blue Velvet, Gerald's Game, Stranger Things, Don't
Fuck With Cats

Rolling Thunder Revue, The Never Ending Story, As
Above So Below, Left Behind

The Fear of 13, Ghost, What Happened Miss Simone?

Humanoids of the Deep, Prank Encounters, Rick &
Morty,

The Invitation, Zoo, Jeepers Creepers

ten weeks learning to *be*

Day 71

the eye of the world
has opened
on Minneapolis, USA, today

Twitter is enraged
#GeorgeFloyd
#Minneapolis
#BlackLivesMatter
#GeorgeFloydProtest

city streets swamped with incensed
justice-seekers
sick of smug white-male despotism
funded by corporate feeders
enabled by corrupt xenophobic deniers
emotionally manipulated by the great orange
pussy-grabbing bigot

Day 72

scientists warn that a second wave of COVID-19
is inevitable – that schools re-opening too soon will spike
numbers – relaxed social distancing will lead
to an increase in cases
further chaos & disruption
put a nation already half-insane back to square one
more deaths

economy over safety
seems to be the government script
though they'll tell you nothing
of the sort
from those daily podiums they hide behind
motives veiled by crass illegible mottos
'BE ALERT'

America has seen one-too-many
casual unnecessary murders
of black citizens
by those tasked with upholding
civil liberty

Trump calls rioters "thugs"
Threatens White House protesters with
"vicious dogs and most ominous weapons"

amidst the horror
of it all
pandemic ripping through nations
like wet tissue
is this the 21st century
we've come to know?

Impermeance

ten steps ahead, feet glow in
the sunlight of tomorrow

but a mind held in place begins to
enter a resting state chained to necks
that've spent decades looking back

as the late spring winds tunnel
purposefully through weak forests
leaves fall and —

if I close my eyes in time I'm
outside of Essex Pub feeling
your lips for the first time

have you noticed naked awareness
hiding in that graceless place, you know
the one — it's over by the reservoir

I see our retrospection hanging over the
rusted perimeter fence everyday, the remains
of our non-selves overgrown and tidy-less

nowadays I sit idly in 3pm beams of sun
considering what presence might feel like
for the girl in the photographs

the girl with brown eyes that they say are mine /
brown eyes that I can't seem to recognize



The Texture of You

The Paper Wheel Seller

In sultry scorching noon of summer
When the lane before our house would wear the most desolate look,
Oft that paper wheel seller would walk by,
A score and half paper wheels stuck at the end of a pole
Would make a stirring noise, whirling in the hot listless air;

I would think of the paper wheel seller as the most blessed soul
A magician perhaps, a liberated man,
Ignorant of the heat of Indian summer.

Red Oleander Tree

Even if I miss it,
The onset of spring I mean,
That Red oleander tree would surely know
At which hour the spring would arrive,
When and how,

For she would bloom sure,
Even before cuckoos would start singing,
And fragrance of gulal would float in the breeze,

Even if I miss spring
The red oleander would not,

For she would bloom
Despite everything
In every spring

Carport Ghosts

“C’mon,” Jamie said with a wave toward the driveway. “We’re going to the carwash!”

It wasn’t exactly Robin’s idea of courting, but any kind of motion suited him fine. By the time he reached for the door handle on her gunmetal gray Kia she’d already double-beeped the amber side-marker lights via remote.

He plopped into the leather driver’s seat usually fitted to her. A motor slid him back. She slipped the key in the ignition, like the helpful girlfriend he thinks she might someday be, then she leaned back and put on her seatbelt.

“You sure about this?” he asked.

“Hell yes. After all that time in the house? You drive, I’ll DJ.”

He rolled his eyes and started the car.

Her tastes are deceptively Top 40. After three months together daily he knows she isn’t the punk her dark lipstick and dyed hair would lead people to believe. Even a tattered Sub-Humans t-shirt doesn’t fool him: he’s caught her sitting out front of the family’s house, pot smoke billowing against the Kia’s sealed windows, belting out Bon Jovi’s Dead or Alive from the top of resin-shellacked lungs.

She poked her right pointer finger into the presets and found 104.7FM. Not too bad, he thought, cranked the wheel and spun the car backwards into the street. Old school hip hop. Me Myself and I was halfway through the first chorus. He threw the Kia in drive and launched toward the red light on the corner.

“I talked to my Mom today,” she said.

His job was to listen. There is no advice a 42 year-old stoner will listen to when their mother has been hospitalized for weeks. A good boyfriend just goes to the dispensary and helps her cope, and he has.

“Was she able to talk back?”

“She said ‘I want a sandwich!’”

“So get her a sandwich.”

“I can’t go in because of the virus. Even family’s not allowed.”

“Have one of the orderlies bring her a BLT.”

“She still has a feeding tube in, bruh.”

“Knowing your Mom she’ll find a way.”

The light turned green. He rolled into the intersection then made a left. In a couple miles they’d be at the Shell station, the one with the carwash.

“Don’t you ever use turn signals?”

“When someone’s around. But in that case back there it was just..”

He waited for the chorus.

“...Me Myself and I..”

“Well me myself and I were there too, and I don’t wanna get hit. It was probably my store of good karma that spared us.”

“Or my superior driving skill.”

The sarcastic cough from her lungs was part raspberry. He reached for his mask.

“Watch the spittle. I don’t want your disease.”

"I'm not sick bruh, you're the one who's out seven nights a week."

True, though he'd been careful. One of his precautions was to not tell the other members of her family, who'd all been quarantined since March, each nursing a pre-existing condition that kept them company.

His food delivery gig had come a few months before the virus had been verified an actual pandemic. He wasn't making a ton of money. The job paid a different kind of dividend.

Some of us don't sit still very well, he'd say.

He'd seen friends quarantined and knew he couldn't do it. He's heard the same news as everyone else: the death counts, the constant Covid-19 updates. The restrictions, the warnings, the amateur epidemiologists competing in the brilliant meme decathlon.

They're all home, he knew, suffering.

"So what else did your Mom say?"

"Besides 'I want a sandwich?' She said 'home.' Over and over again. She just wants to come home."

"She's not gonna check herself out or something, is she?"

"They wouldn't let her. Would they? She's been too sick. She's still hooked up to a buttload of machines for God's sake."

He stopped at the intersection, across from the Shell station. On the right of the mini-mart was a fully-automated carwash. He turned on his turn signal.

She didn't notice.

"I just wanna be sure," he said, "that an Uber isn't going to pull up tomorrow and she's gonna be out there yelling 'let me out of this thing!'"

"She wouldn't do that. They wouldn't let her, right? I mean, I can't imagine they'd let her. Seriously though bruh, the thing that just kills me is knowing I can't go help."

"How would you help?"

"I'd start by bringing her a fucking sandwich."

He started rocking his head side to side; Tone Loc's Funk Cold Medina had come on. The light at the intersection turned green. He rolled the Kia forward gently.

He slammed on the brakes. Jamie threw a bracing hand against the dashboard and was about to curse when she saw a grey Honda Accord speed through the intersection where they would've been.

"Motherf - ... what the hell, dude!"

Robin watched the Accord disappear in his rearview mirror. A rideshare sticker shone in its back window.

"Another ten feet and we'd have been sharing a room with your Mom."

"Not how I want to get there." She turned and cursed at the long-gone Honda. Seeing it was safe, he rolled through a yellow arrow, bounced into the parking lot of the Shell and stopped at the front doors. She grabbed her purse.

"Be right back. You want anything?"

"Vitamin Water."

"Acai?"

"How'd you know?"

"It's what you always get."

"Geez, next thing you know people will think we're boyfriend-girlfriend."

"My Dad already does." She slammed the door, went into the gas station and pulled open a cooler door.

He let that soak in. They hadn't been dating, just hovering around each other. She spent her days stuck in the house with two brothers and a father she liked well enough. He often thought she'd just rolled him into the brother category, like a spare in case of a blowout. While she was tending them, he'd spend fourteen hour days using a Ford Focus to make sure the city was fed. The job was a wellspring of stories, and he was sure this was the basis of their attraction.

She liked him for what he was still able to do.

I need 2 SAB she'd text, and twenty minutes later they'd be sitting on a curb four doors away, looking up into the stars. She'd spark a bowl of the dispensary's finest as he'd sip another acai Vitamin Water and catch his breath, an athlete in the heat of battle.

The passenger door popped open. She dropped back in her seat and handed him a frosty plastic bottle of red liquid and a carwash receipt. He memorized the six-digit code on sight; he'd often wondered if this were a sign of a photographic memory. He rolled the Kia around the back of the station to the mouth of the carwash and cracked his drink open. While he typed the code into the kiosk, When a Man Loves a Woman came on the radio. She gently lowered the volume. He rolled into the carwash.

"If we were dating," he said, "this would be a great make out spot."

She pulled her mask up and used two fingers to make the sign of the cross. He rolled his eyes.

"You can't social distance in a carwash."

She lowered the mask. The light of the carwash turned red; he put the car in park and shut the engine off. Pressurized spray hit the Kia's paintjob. Rubber brushes the size of steamrollers began to spin, ready to work.

"So," she said louder, "of all the things you see out there, what's the scariest?"

"The homeless guy in the middle of the road wearing nothing but a shopping cart."

"WHAT."

She made him tell the story. After all, she loved Live PD. When it was over and the cops had taken the poor guy away she said "OK, so really, what's the actual scariest thing you've seen out there."

The car rocked with the force of spinning brushes.

"I go to a lot of apartment complexes. These people, they're working from home. Doing Zoom meetings. They never go out. They order breakfast, lunch and dinner from the app. And when I roll into their complex, every once in a while, there'll be this car. Nice. Newer. Parked in its usual spot. And it's just coated in dust. Like it's been there for months."

She nodded.

"Sometimes there's cat prints in the dust. And I realize how long these people have been home."

"You could probably have a nice little side-gig doing mobile mechanics when they all come out. Do jumpstarts. Recharge the batteries. Replace them if needed. Maybe change their oil while they're still in lock-down."

He nodded.

"Think about it," she added.

"I've always been a fair mechanic. And I'm real good with horses."

"Well, I don't know about the horse part but - "

The brushes slowed and a giant vacuum sounded. He restarted the Kia and edged it forward. A giant blow-dryer would whoosh away the remnants.

"So seriously," she said, "what's the scariest thing you've seen during quarantine?"

"That's it," he said. "There is nothing scarier to me than sitting still. Even that carwash was a test of my patience."

She reached in the glove compartment for her lighter. The pipe was already in her hand. He wondered where it'd come from, and was happy she'd waited until they were out of the carwash to spark it up and take a hit.

"So," she said, breath held, "you're saying the scariest thing to you is the threat of sitting still?"

Big exhale.

"Those dust-covered cars are like ghosts. Those people had normal lives. Went to concerts and hit Vegas with their friends. All that normal stuff. Now it's like they've been dead for months and someone forgot to repo their car."

"You're a bit of a drama queen."

"Said the drama queen. No, but I am melancholy. What do you want? I'm Irish. I'm gonna see things through melancholy colored glasses."

He rolled the Kia into the sunlight. They stopped at a pump island and he grabbed a few paper towels to dry the remaining spots on the glass. He was wiping the back window when the strawberry blonde appeared.

She wore snug green denim shorts. She shoved a pump nozzle into her VW's gas tank and turned Robin's way. She smiled first. He smiled back and waved a damp brown paper towel. She looked slowly away, her smile reflecting the sunlight, never fading.

The Kia bounced a little. Jamie was rocking out to Madonna's Like A Virgin. Robin crumpled the towel into a ball, shot it into a trashcan and got back behind the wheel.

He didn't look back at Pump Nine.

"Looks good," he said.

"Doesn't look like a ghost car anyway." She lowered the volume then pressed a button that tilted the sunroof open. She aimed her smoke up, a long exhale. "You got your tablet?"

"Yeah. Why."

"Turn on the app."

"Which app."

"The one you work for. Let's go do some deliveries."

He understood. Her house still wasn't far enough away.

He spun the wheel and pointed the Kia toward the freeway. The VW and the strawberry blonde had disappeared.

"How are you feeling about ice cream?"

"It's still my kryptonite."

"There's this place in Agoura Hills I've been doing deliveries out of," he said, "called Sage. It's new. Farm-to-table kinda stuff."

"So."

"So they have an ice cream bar."

"There's a Baskin Robbins right up the street."

"Yeah but I'm buying. And I want to give them my money, so - "

"So - "

"So they have hempseed-based ice cream."

She smiled. "You know you don't get high from that stuff, right?"

"Yeah. But it still makes me sound cooler than I actually am."

She patted his arm. "Your secret's safe with me."

As they climbed the onramp a different DJ, one with a classic voice came on the radio and cued The Platters Smoke Gets in Your Eyes. He didn't see the VW anywhere, and soon, he forgot about it altogether. They merged onto a freeway that at this time of the afternoon would usually be locked bumper-to-bumper. The faster the car went, the lower she sank into her seat. She closed the sunroof. She played with a vent. Then she crossed her hands on her lap, stared at the open road, the scenery speeding by, and for the first time in weeks, a slight smile crossed her lips.

"This is all I need," she said.

And he knew just what she meant.

City Vein

I watch the river
and remember the week it brought
driftwood as large as a boat filled
with political intent.
Object and tide translate
the interaction of my ideals,
my hopes of justice as they
collide
with stonebred practicalities –
ancient behemoths as old as the city
itself.
This discord
drifts
and clouts
time-worn bricks
of bridges built before
we ever thought to challenge
the other
more insidious
structures.

Halcyon Days

We drank orange wine
and you
set off
a hundred explosions,
wafting
the salted butteriness of popcorn
onto the breeze
that flurried
in excellent curled breaths
around the sun-drenched balcony.

Admissions

our tongues dance around a segment of truth
held – savoured – by hungry mouths.
it threatens to burst
orange pip slow, spreading
potent tendrils
across barren earth.
with it,
ashes taste sweet
and dotted streetlights twinkle
as starlight refracted.
lateral, fricative,
wane to palatal babble
and I take everything off –
no more covers for lovers,
hushed pretences
uttered like whispered crimes lest
my own ears catch
shame-skinned words
as they filter
into the stratosphere and hang
s u s p e n d e d.
our tongues dance
around a segment of truth
and under an orange dusk
truth swells
grotesque.
the night is slick with mirthless shadows
and truth hangs
like a slack jawed moon –
juiceless, wavering, distorted in neglect.
our tongues dance
around a segment of truth and then,
setting dust ablaze
amidst the dusk orange sky,
I set loose the syllables and unhook the façade
that until now
tomorrow's seconds could have hidden behind.

Floodland

stop trying
 to fit yourself
 into that cup,
 you are an ocean.
 ash-white carcasses
 overflow your marrow.
 elders
 cloak your carbon and bone
 in flesh filled
 with hand-me-down seed,
 and their stories –
 swathes of pounding salted red –
 mark every strike of
 ancestral drum
 listen.
 the history of your body speaks
 of mother wild
 and father sun

Birds

For all the ravings of night and day,
 I'd say we're better off
 in the sky
 above it all.

Our Power

did our footsteps on the earth

 shudder thunder

 upward,

 crack open that ragged belly of sky

 and loose droplets

 bursting

 with magic,

 letting them spill upon a land

 so lightning-burnt,

 skin-taut

 and weary?

Heirloom Recipes

I can now make heirloom recipes
without first checking the faded letters
someone once so lovingly
scalped across yellowing paper.
if today I prefer rosemary
over thyme,
I know my grandmothers would celebrate my tongue and so
I dash whatever I crave
into the pot.
if today my blood is not salty enough,
should my eyes be desiring of colours more potent than the old ways dare to give,
I will adapt, stir in a fraction of the sea's white-froth crest, and lick my salted lips.
I can do these things.
I am capable yet
alone,
tasting my grandmother's recipes,
I feel so separated from her warmth.

Paper Cuts

imagine me a wood
would you
and every tree of my forest a shattered edge of a nib
designed to scrawl ink –
a terrible
irony –
that I'm made to discolour and
stain the very thing of which
I'm made
without any finesse.

On Endings Because the Apocalypse is Not a One Time Event

Anais Peterson

Thursday (3.12)

It really does feel like the end - I am sitting on my [broken] trampoline, eating Chinese food and soaking up the sunshine in a quiet, emptying Oakland looking up at the house I love, overgrown with brown and green ivy, our black cat peeks out of our front window and the breeze gently dances in through the screen of our front door. Sunlight is falling from the sky, catching on my eyelashes and the remnants of last summer's purple flowers scattered across our backyard, and glinting off the open window of the third floor bathroom. I am wearing black shorts and fraying grey sandals, when I close my eyes it could be may. When I open them I watch white clouds lazily drift across the sky, never obscuring the sun.

We walk home in empty Oakland - small crowds on the sidewalks are drifting between the pizza shops and cars (no one is standing six feet apart) and tonight, dusk is calm. the sky is lavender and grey and the sun slips out of the sky unnoticed. I wonder when this all will end. We go to the tea shop. I order a passion fruit tea, you pay, the tea shop is empty - usually I order brown sugar milk tea but nothing about this is out of the ordinary.

The walk home is dark - a green mountain energy representative is standing on the corner of Sennott and Oakland avenue. She stops us, chipper and joyful and almost out of place in the quiet. I lie to her about my electric bill, *my housemates handle electric*, some things never change.

There is a stillness settling down around us, laughing together on the porch I do not find it unsettling. I watch housing carts being pushed down the middle of the street; boxes of hastily folded clothes and desk supplies and lamps and big houseplants loaded into the back of a pickup truck before the dark blue vehicle pulls away, half closed boxes flapping in the air. You ask me things I do not want to think about and I stare at the street light, a consistent and hollow orange glow, refusing to flicker.

Friday (3.13)

We eat breakfast on the porch - me with two slices of peanut butter toast and a periwinkle mug full of coffee and you with a bag of five oranges. The oranges are over a week old by now but you finish all five and wipe your sticky fingers off on the porch chair cushions. I spent the morning writing instagram stories about mutual aid so by now it is 11 am and sunlight is warming the front half of our porch. It's not so bad when the wind stays still but when it rustles the ivy I feel goosebumps under my sweatpants. I play kishi bashi softly from my laptop and I beam at you from atop a big crate we rescued last night from the dumpster. We bask in the sunshine in luxurious defiance of reality. Our laughter bounces and echoes in empty parking spaces as we pool all our friend's printing money and decide what books to print from anarchistlibrary.com using the university's printers. You request Emma Goldman and a short manifesto on peace, I print Yuri Kochiyama's memoir and a zine about herbal medicine for myself, and an Audre Lorde collection for a friend.

We leave the house together - I am on my way to the printers and you on your way to work. We don't say it but this may be the last time I see you this month, next month, indefinitely. You aren't good at texting so I know when we say goodbye it will be a while until we speak again. I don't cry at the bus stop, our words whisked away by traffic. You pull me into a hug before I leave, my face buried in your dirty tan coat I feel the full terror of the word pandemic for the first time.

I look back once as I walk away.

2 weeks later, Monday (3.27)

I am thinking about revolutionary potential in all of this uncertainty, knowing that what I am building is something I can not yet imagine but regardless, something beautiful. If we do this right nothing will be the same and in some strange way I feel hopeful that I will see bits and pieces of the world I am building towards after this all ends even though just two Thursdays ago I was sitting in my backyard bathing in the afternoon sunshine crying, because I felt like we'd never win and all of life would pass by, wasted in an endless battle for better worlds and it's all so impossible and for once, impossible seemed daunting rather than an endless space to create.

I am thinking about what it means to be productive and I am wondering how this time is a gift. Something about all of that Thursday felt as though I was living in the impossible, living in a bubble that I knew was going to pop but right then I was stretching out a moment of in between and there was time to do everything, every moment. I left my house to buy Chinese food and watched the sunset from my front porch and hugged my housemate at the port authority stop. I was stealing joy in defiance of what was to come of now.

So now, I am holding an abundance mindset as white women horde toilet paper, as the mothers claim publicly owned vacant houses for their babies in California, as families I have never met offer their extra rotisserie chicken to anyone without dinner on facebook, as prisoners walk free from cages, as we start to demand everything in moments where we being offered the scraps of what is being used to bail out the banks.

So, now I am holding an abundance mindset as I care for myself – this is not a time to be “productive”. Sometimes, when I am building from a place of rage, refusing to slow down my body will develop a sore throat, itching at the back of my mouth until I climb into bed early with a mug of tea and fall asleep at 9pm watching the great British bakeoff. This could be a thousand moments of climbing into bed early with my mug of tea. there is an abundance of time to give to what matters, to listen to my body. *Who do you want to become during a global pandemic? // Who do you want to unbecome?* My days are filling up with zoom calls to build long term, anti-capitalist, mutual aid structures. this is not a time to be “productive”. *Physical distancing and social solidarity.*

All this to say, I've not yet touched my sadness. There was a day I cried because there is so much to be furious about and for the first time it really is no one's fault. Yes, this is a political crisis and yes, this is the breakdown of late stage global capitalism and yes, sometimes I worry about my dad coughing in public when he gets groceries at giant eagle and yes, this is a country teetering on the edge of fascism.

6.10

The last time I saw my favorite professor I told her I was no longer brave. she didn't argue with me but held up a poem I wrote when I still believed in liberation.

“This is all to say there are better things coming.”

Falling in Love During a Global Pandemic

Slaughter Beach, Dog is playing through your speaker, and you are handing me a beer after another monotonous day. I am delicately holding your head against my chest, running my fingers across your skin.

I did not know goodness was tangible until I met you, but here you are, standing in the refrigerator light, radiating soft gold.

We are sitting cross-legged on your back porch with condensation clinging to the bottles in our palms. Birds are bouncing between the trees, and the air is tainted with Citronella.

The summer breeze smells like home.

White sheets are tangled under our legs. Your hair is tousled, wild.

The room is hazy. Light has not yet peaked through your half-shut blinds. You are asking where we will be in 5 years, and I am smiling, gently. There is no need to rush.

Today, the world can wait.

This love is a peaceful hum, barely making enough noise to break the comfortable silence, but always there, buzzing lightly.

We are on the back porch again. There is tequila in your glass, vodka in mine.

A soft 'darling' slips between your teeth. My breathing is slowed.

The stars are loosely hanging above us. We are watching them float through the galaxy, hand in hand.

This is such a peaceful way for the world to end.

Not Another Dylan Cover

Josh Cook

He seems like my destiny, that guy with the pre-torn jeans and the ducktail beard. His shamrock eyes lock with mine as he takes the stage at the Casual Spooner's open-mic night, thrumming his guitar and stroking his mocha-toned mane. The bar is packed, but the husky intonations and sparkling flourishes of "She Belongs to Me" are meant for an audience of one. He buys me a drink afterward, tells me his name's Abe, that he's just moved to town from Alpaca. Its cold-blooded conservatism strangled his spirit, he says. He escaped to be surrounded by people more in tune with his style. Here, too, he can find beauty, and—aiming the mouth of his pale ale at me—beauty can find him. He says he likes being found, but that he's not sure he *has* been, because he's lost in my eyes.

He moves in with me two weeks later.

I work in a firm downtown and he does the day shift at the lumberyard, which means that we have our nights together. We spend them cuddling, mostly, and talking about our dreams. I want to find a company where I won't be told that my emails should "smile more"—meaning, I guess, that I'm not using enough emojis in my professional correspondence. ("Pssh," Abe says to that.) He'd like to start a Dylan tribute outfit called Highway 61 Re-Visited. For now, he's content to regale me with private performances of "I Want You" and "Visions of Johanna." His gravelly crooning lulls me to peaceful sleep, where visions of our future play out on the screen of my subconscious.

And then the quarantine hits.

I'm fortunate to be able to work from home. Abe, however, is put on furlough after Week Three. He hasn't been too worried—is so cavalier about it, in fact, that he launches into "Mr. Tambourine Man" while promenading around my living room in his underwear. This is unexpected, sexy, and fun for the first few days, a welcome distraction from my endowment reports and emoji-less emails. But just when I think he's done, he turns round, takes a breath, and busts out "Tangled Up in Blue." This is usually followed by "The Man in Me," "Desolation Row," and, finally, "Subterranean Homesick Blues," though perhaps "Idiot Wind" would be an even more fitting close.

The relentless nasal twang will be the death of me. I know it wouldn't be right to kick him to the curb in the middle of a global pandemic. But he interprets my intimations that his act is wearing thin as requests for "Ballad of a Thin Man." If I object, he'll only counter with "Just Like a Woman." I fear that before long he'll be drifting downstairs, stark naked, and whispering, the flames of passion flickering in his shamrock eyes, "I've learned 'Murder Most Foul.'" Hopefully by then the quarantine will have been lifted, and I'll have found someone who likes to play a little Neil Young for a change.



Gabe Nuñez

He saw his mother through the glass window of the intensive care unit. She was lying with calm on her face wrapped in a light blanket, a mechanical ventilator was feeding her lungs ceaselessly. The pain had subsided, he realized and felt a little optimistic. He saw men in white hazmat suits cruising in and out of the unit with no room for a talk. The sky was darkening ominously almost like a warning, he needed to depart.

It became a nightly ritual for him to visit his mother, in the hospital. The stench of the antiseptic cleansers no longer bothered him. Suddenly his eyes met his mother's, she had a broad innocent smile on her face. He stood numb for a while, trying to trace a path of escape. He didn't want to greet her. He hurriedly jerked out of the main corridor. People were scattered in groups in the almost secluded waiting room comforting each other, waiting for a verdict. He swiftly descended the stairs like a river welding through a valley, his head sunk between his shoulders, a deep sigh on his face. The receptionist at the desk was glued to the telephone evidently talking to a friend and not a customer.

As he stepped out the black sky suddenly illuminated with zig-zag lightnings, cars' headlights beamed vividly, the street lamps blazed on the empty asphalt sidewalk. He adjusted his eyes to the blinding burst of light and walked on towards his destination. A flock of tawny birds was flying back to their abode, fighting against the cold breeze. He watched them till they were gone and only the sound of the flapping of wings and ruffling of feathers lingered. A group of small bats skimmed through the sky, as a part of their nocturnal adventure. He paused briefly in front of the crossing, feeling lost, he searched for signs of the path towards his destination as the streets ahead were confusing.

He passed a café where there were no human diners but mannequins at the tables. Nobody dined out, people swapped romantic dinners for homemade food. The city had no time for intimacy, the pandemic was to be blamed. It started raining, he spotted one or two people on the road running for shelter. The drizzle obscured their features but the mask on their faces was noticeable. Notwithstanding the rain, he braved the squalls clasping his arms together in his long grey coat, certain that he was on the right track. His hairs were wet and hung damp to his shoulders.

He finally found himself on the edge of a vast expanse, barricaded by a moss-laden black fence. There was no one around. It was a makeshift graveyard strewn with mounds. He took a moment to gaze at the headstones almost all of them were splattered with clumps of flowers, except his. He sank onto his knees filled with despair. "I hope you get well soon mother. I don't want you to be here", he mumbled in a feeble attempt at reassurance and slowly melted into the earth.

Mama Take Me With You

There is something coming,	or is my vision receding?
Coming to stifle my sobs,	This place is murky
my worries, all my perils.	a sea of patients battle over the air,
Mama, is it you?	the hearse screams unsubdued,
I can sniff your strawberry lips	the ambulance siren roars vividly
brushing against my pallid cheeks	disturbing my sleep.
while you see me flare and recede,	Mama sing me a lullaby
gasping for breathe in the subtle quite	I wish to sleep, follow you to the
of the intensive care unit,	celestial arc
I wish to initiate a conversation	and never rise to entertain the new
but the pain overrides my syllables,	morning.
the virus gnaws on me impatiently.	It brings me so much joy to be near
Is it the lustre of the stars that have	you.
faded,	

Bengal Men Quarantine on Trees

His eyes greet the sunrise,
the leaves whirl
on the melody of spring
and give him a chill
he cracks a quail bird's egg
drinks it raw, unpasteurized.
He sees his wife, kneading bread
with her overworked palms
in the sun-cracked kitchen
with lifeless walls.
She blushes like a swan
his heart flaps like a magpie
the wind wafts the scent of rose.
A romantic rendezvous
Orchestrated by fate.
Their eyes move unobtrusively
to each other,
dreaming to get back
to their midnight pillow fights
on their four-legged cushioned bower.
The cows are glued to each other,
social distancing is not a necessity for them.
But he needs to self-quarantine on the tree,
unwary of the locust invasion in his village,
due to lack of spare rooms and his insolvency,
so he sways on his hammock
counting the white clouds
prancing across the swathe of emerald sky
until the duet of the owl and nightingale
Lulls him to sleep.

COVID Dogs

Seldom a critic, he has a proclivity for chivalry
kisses and cuddles he has earned from ladies
from Essex to Yorkshire,
recruited for *vénerie*, he shuns Coleridge's delirium.
Concourse of six Labradors of fleecy visage,
sheathed neither in PPE nor mask
but an ossified harness,
with an insignia bearing five-pointed stars
to rebuild the blight-stricken city,
unlike Walter Raleigh's ill-mannered hydrophobic dog.
They say he can 'sniff out' the virus
alumnus of the University of Pennsylvania.
diagnostic tools or rather let's say Don Juan on a conquest!
They neither snarl at nor bite a Muslim mortal.
Captain America the scion of our Marvel Universe
is supine in his resplendent in-ground pool
or, shuffling channels on the television of Brooklyn Heights
occasionally ruminating on the Global crisis.
Nurses in death-stricken cities feel out of place
like penguins in Kansas City Zoo.
They are on the verge of quitting,
appalled by the massively ascending casualty rates
and to revel with their families
in colourful robes and tinted apparels
unencumbered by the latex stinking gloves
within their cordoned little houses.
Aren't these furry companions astounded
by the ghastly corpses in polythene bags?
Alas! They don't possess the power of self-expression
yet they never lift a morsel without a permission.
Can they heft the stacks of money they receive as donation?
with their quadruple paws always on patrol?
Perhaps they don't believe in knavishly cossetting assets in their coffer.
but will there be a Matthew Arnold
to canonize this 'Geist' with a Valediction.

When the Days Live Outside

Dignities ago, on the hindsight balcony, she dangles a different
pair of eyes across long ago decisions, lonely fingerprint
decisions obscured by dust.

She lives along the collar bone of the starving outside,
deaf to the bread screams within, her reluctant motherhood face
propped up on a swing.

Parental maps of shame and disappointment overlap in cluttered
rooms, under chopping board thunder.

April bereaved her apart from younger mothers whose words
overreach from the school gates

Those collateral bit part weddings dissipate behind walls
as she folds into a frown and turns away.

1

This month feels like a fever dream.

Outside my window, the flowers are in full bloom. I collect the fallen ones every sunset, hold them gently in the golden light. Everything is quiet.

My words are stuck in my throat, mouth full of guilt and wonder and hurt. It feels unfair that this part of the world is untouched. It feels wrong to be part of it when everything outside burns.

I am trying to save what I can.

I want you to see this, somehow.

I want this bright, unbearable beauty for you. Want to give you more than burning bridges and smoke signals.

Give me your hands. Close them around this. It won't burn your fingers, I promise.

2

Nowadays, I dream of warmth. Of fingertips against skin, arms around a waist, of a mouth against a neck.

I dream of entwined hands. Feet pressed together, of leaning against a shoulder, of hair sticking to cheeks.

Nowadays, I feel like a dream. Insubstantial. Like if you tried to place a hand on my heart, you'd fall right through.

It's getting colder, and I can't tell when I'll wake.

I smell smoke but I can't feel a thing. If I try hard enough, I can remember what it felt like, to carry more than embers in my fists.

3

Tell me we'll never get used to it. How we'll never take our entwined hands for granted again.

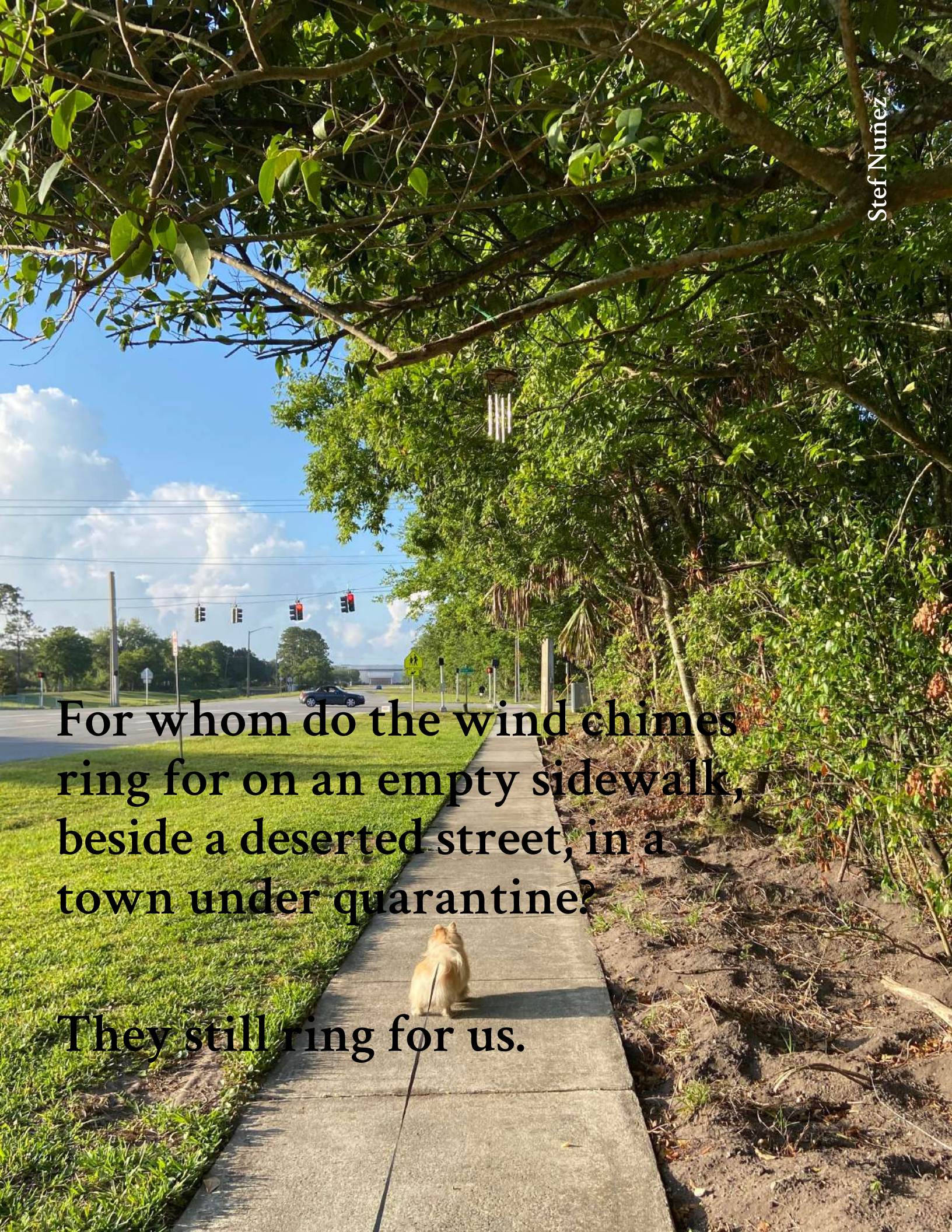
That we'll be grateful for every embrace, every meeting that isn't through a phone screen.

We'll dance for hours the first time we can dance with each other.

Cry when we can blow out candles on a cake together.

Hold each other's faces and say I'm glad you exist. I'm glad I met you in this life, got to live through the good, the bad, and the ugly with you.

I hope we never stop being amazed by all this love; how despite everything, it survived.



For whom do the wind chimes
ring for on an empty sidewalk,
beside a deserted street, in a
town under quarantine?

They still ring for us.

Another hot day in the savannah, the young man, barely 24 wouldn't take his eyes off her picture on Facebook, I wrote as I looked out at a collage of zebras and giraffes farther on the open savannah. I observed the way the animals reacted to each other, the same as the man and woman I wrote about. I noted how this man would do anything for this woman on whose profile he doted.

That was odd to me, but still I wrote about them.

The man wrote secret messages to her saying he wanted to know her better; he wanted to speak to her. He even called her a few times, only to be disappointed. They chatted on Facebook, using first names as endearment. But in the indomitable spirit of youth, the man demanded more. Her profile looked pretty. He wanted to know where she lived, what she ate for breakfast. He wanted to hear her voice on the phone. Then, one day, he asked her what she did. She told him singing was her hobby and that writing, her passion. She even got awards. Was she trying to sell him her books? Was she treating him like a potential client? She asked herself, as she allowed this relationship to grow.

I took a break from writing. I put my laptop down and went into the kitchen to make some tea. I thought, they had gotten to know each other so well that she knew what he ate for breakfast every day: eggs, bread and tea. He also knew what she ate for breakfast every day: coffee. Now, those were some intimate details about each other. Should she tell him more? Egg him on? After all it was all virtual. No one had to come up front or needed to become personal. This was intriguing. I finished my tea and went back to my computer.

In the meantime, a strong storm rose. The sky was shaded in grey patches of ink smudges. She could hear the wind rage outside the closed window. Lyre of unbroken strings, a rhythm trying to push through. This pensive, pale day of mourning for labour's lost love. How would this story turn out? A comedy, a tragedy, a humour? Where was morality in all this? Should morality even have a place? No. No. She must not indulge in this. She must tell him at once that she couldn't go any further, prepare him for a romantic interlude. Why did it matter? Love of the heart, love of the mind, all was fair and square in affairs of love? No? A soulmate perhaps across long distance and time. Both a virtual and a virtuous relationship, that he was young, but he was also mature. She liked him. She liked him a lot. Wait! Should she block him? He was calling again. Her impulsive fingers like bare brown winter twigs, teetered on the brink of this fantasy/reality button. She went to edits option on Whatsapp. She blocked him. She quickly rushed to block him on Facebook and deleted all the messages on Facebook and Whatsapp. There, all gone, a clean slate.

Then, she sat down quietly listening to the song of the winds. There was a song in her heart too. She looked out at the night and saw two shadows making love on the opposite balcony. She ran out to see more, but she saw two potted palm fronds rubbing each other in the dark. She took her phone absent-mindedly and went back to their chat. She had blocked this man. There were no new messages about how her mornings were. Whether she had her breakfasts. If she was taking care of herself? This intimacy, she deleted, murdered them at a brute press of a fingertip. But there were no restraint buttons on her emotion. She began to miss him.

Which way was it all going? She was going to engage him in interesting conversations. She was going to unblock him. Before, she unblocked him, she tried to remember his last messages. How he asked her every day, what she did and she had said, she wrote all day. Then he said, how come you never rest? She had allayed her fears. She felt, this man had something that pulled her. He had a sensitive heart and wanted to learn about life. He had even told her that he wanted to listen to her songs. So, should he call her? She had said no, no, never. He demanded why not, ever. She had said, she had her reasons. She had vulnerabilities. She was going to unblock him today. She had been really mean to this man. He had not done anything even remotely bad to deserve this. On the contrary, he had said he could give her a few lessons on his culture, the country he grew up in. That was rude that she had blocked him.

As soon as she unblocked him, she asked him why had he called? He apologised and told her that he didn't mean to, it was an accident. She took him back. The usual chatting began all over. But she knew this was caprice, for her at least. What should she do? Play with his emotions a bit, feather them and brush them up in pale pink and blue with romance? The romantic flutters, the aahs and the oohs. Open up, let yourself go, revel in the warmth of young love, imagine yourself in his deep embraces and hot sighs on your hair. He, inhaling the fragrances of your hair; lips connected. Loves entwined! Let go! Let go!

Stop! Stop right there. I took my fingers off the computer. By now, the sizzling heat had mellowed on the far savannah. The Giraffe and the Zebra had left. I looked out at the stifling sun. It dipped down the horizon. The savannah stood aloof in the backdrop of a scarred night of pimpled feral Hyenas, and wild spotted Dalmatians.

She was going to wreck him. She was going to woo him with her words, so he'd be glued to his phone. She was going to wrap him up in the powers of her poetry and beguile him so that he'd forget to eat his breakfasts; his sleeps would be a wet

awakenings night sweats in the early hours. She was going to push him to the cliff where she would rule supreme like Venus, drive him to his fantasies and lock him in this gilded cage of her fling, her own little toy bird. Those sweet nothings, her magic potions, her fluttering joys. Could she be this heartless? That she would crush a half-fledged person of a man to his emotional demise? After all what was in it for her? An escape from this remarkable drudgery of boredom? It couldn't be love. No. she couldn't be that person. No matter how lonely, how bored she was.

I took a break again. I walked to the balcony. The heavy clouds glided across the sky in spectacular elegance; the biting winds on my face. Fly, fly away, the wings of poesy declared, a steamy romance in the air.

"Tell me, tell me, why do you not want me to call you?" he wrote.

"Because, I have problems."

"Like what? You can tell me, yeah? Are you married? What is it?"

"No, I can't. Forgive me, please forgive," she pleaded. "Stop this. Does it matter if I'm married?"

"No, not at all, but I cannot stop now, I like you. I like you a lot. You cannot ask me to stop. I think, I'm in love."

"In love with whom? Do you have a beautiful girlfriend?" her fingers trembled.

"Girlfriend? Must you ask? How did your breakfast taste this morning?"

"Good and you? she asked

"You had me for breakfast? How did I taste, my love, my sweetheart?"

"What? I have to go. Bye."

She quickly logged out. She felt agitated. Next, he would want to know where she lived and try to come over. And then, and then But she went back to the chats immediately, anyway.

"You work too hard. You should rest from your writings sometimes," his messages lay in the chat box.

"Thank you for your concern," she replied.

"You don't know how to enjoy life. You're bored and lonely, and that's the plain truth. But you must learn to enjoy life too. Life is for enjoyment. Let me call, let me hear your voice, I'm dying to hear it. Let me hear your songs, I'm dying to hear them. How else could I listen to your songs, if I couldn't call you?"

"No.No.No. Never, you must never ask for more than what I can give you. I don't have time to talk," her shot bullet words.

"Make time then. I'm going to die, if you won't let me," he was unstoppable.

"Love me all you like but only in your fantasy. We must never meet."

She wrote back. The click sounds were loud. She logged out. She was sitting in her bed. She slipped solidly under the quilt and covered her head. She panted awhile. This gave her a thrill, this cyber romance as much as it thrilled him. Both, waited eagerly for the next text.

"It's raining here, today? I love rain," she wrote.

"Are you taking care of yourself? Or drinking just coffee? Why? Are you on a diet or something?" he replied.

"Why do you care so much?"

"I don't know. I just do."

"You do realise that we would never meet? And that this has to be a long distance relationship, pure and sweet?"

"That is true. You're right. But I just need to write, and write to you."

"I understand, but I've to go now, bye."

I paused. These short bursts of texts had an exultant effect on the man. He thought she was playing hard to get. I thought, it was time to end this charade. I thought, she must tell him.

Next morning, she woke up and found the phone right next to her bed. She went straight to WhatsApp. There were no new messages.

She wrote, "How old are you?"

Instantly, he replied. "24, and you?"

She thought for a while, this restless lad, kept shooting the same message at least, 5 times.

“60.”

“Seriously? Are you kidding me? You don’t look your age at all in your profile? Tell me you joking.”

“No, I’m not, joking. Time you found a girlfriend your age.

“Haha, girlfriend? You find one for me, okay?”

“Oh! I can’t.”

“Just joking.”

“I guess, this is it then? Goodbye,” she said.

“Girlfriends are mostly bimbos. I’d rather have one true friend, and that would be you.”

“You really are good, you know. Honest. I wondered why I continued. Now I know why. It was your purity that attracted me.”

“I know,” he said. “But you know what? I also care about you, far too much.”

After that day the texting stopped. She repeatedly went to WhatsApp, but there were no new texts. She looked at herself in the mirror and the deep wrinkles mortified her as did her wrinkly fingers, her sagging skin, the drooping lips; the ephemera reared its ugly head.

That very evening, a new text arrived.

“Hello, how are you?” the man messaged.

“I’m good, and you?” the woman replied.

Then the woman sat back and thought about his parents. What would they say, if they knew? Yet, she couldn’t bring herself to end this relationship either. There was a picture on his profile. But who knew if this was his real face? Then came another Message.

“I feel like talking to you all day long.”

“Oh, no, no you must go to work, not waste time on me.”

She thought she needed to change her role from a potential lover to a friend, to guide the young the man who is so obviously smitten by her.

“Yes, yes, I know. You’re still the most beautiful woman. You get more and more beautiful with age.”

“That may be, but I am off limits, so you know.”

Her ethical senses finally kicked in.

“I love your words. I love your beautiful mind”

“Yes, you still need to go to college.”

“I know, I know. And I also know that you can only be a friend. But I love you.”

“Yes, but only as friends, okay?”

Then there was a period of no communication. She went to his profile to check for updates. There were none. She logged off. The man stopped writing. What if he has jumped off a cliff? She wondered.

Meet the Contributors

Iolana Paedelt

Iolana Paedelt is a German writer and poet. Her short stories and poems have been published in anthologies and magazines, both online and in print.

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Roanna Fernandes

Roanna Fernandes is a writer & illustrator from Mumbai who harbours a keenness for curiosities and oddities.

A lifelong goal of hers is to continually immerse herself in experiences that are educating + encouraging.

Vaishnavi Sharma

Vaishnavi is a 19-year-old student from Delhi, India. She likes to talk (a lot) about poetry, history, sciences, and politics. Her work has appeared in Ang(st) Zine, Marias ar Sampaguitas, Esthesia Mag, among others. She over-shares on Twitter @umvaishnavi and Instagram @um.vaishnavi.

Linda McMullen

Linda McMullen is a wife, mother, diplomat, and homesick Wisconsinite. Her short stories and the occasional poem have appeared in over sixty literary magazines, including Drunk Monkeys, Storgy, and Newfound.

Mehreen Ahmed

Mehreen Ahmed is award winning, and internationally acclaimed author. Her books, received The Author Shout Reader Ready Awards, 2 Bronze Honourable Mention for Moirae and The Blotted Line. And 1 Silver Recommended Read for Jacaranda Blues. Her other book, The Pacifist, is “Drunken Druid The Editors’ Choice for June 2018”, and Jacaranda Blues, “The Best of Novels for 2017 - Family Novels of the Year” by Novel Writing Festival. Her flash fiction, “The Portrait” chosen to be broadcast by ImmortalWorks, Flash Fiction Friday, 2018.

She has published five books to date. Her books have also been nominated for other prestigious awards such as Aurealis Award for Fantasy Short Story/Novella (2015), Ditmar Award for Best Novels (2016), and The New South Wales Premier’s Literary Award for Christina Stead Prize for Fiction, (2018). Her short stories and flash fiction have been published with Ellipsis Zine, The Bombay Review, Straylight Magazine, The Cabinet of Heed, Portland Metrozine, Ginosko Literary Journal, The Piker Press, The Creativity Webzine, Scarlet Leaf Review, The World of Myth Magazine, Sage Cigarettes Magazine, Terror House Magazine, Connotation Press, Furtive Dalliance Literary Review to name a few. Her academic works were published by Cambridge Core, Routledge and elsewhere.

Colin James

Colin James has a book of poems, “Resisting Probability,” from Sagging Meniscus Press.

Sukanya Basu Malik

Sukanya Basu Mallik is an undergraduate student researcher, social entrepreneur, multi-genre author, film and book critic. Having published in various journals, magazines, and anthologies nationally and internationally she's released two books of her own. Currently, she is running an online literature festival which is one of its kind. She has been recognized by six media houses for her initiative during quarantine period. Willing to take it up further she is looking for sponsors who are ready to work for like minded cause. Her works can be seen on Reader's Digest, Times Of India, Sahitya Akademi Bimonthly Journal, Lucidity Int. Poetry Journal, SEAL (South East Asian Literature) festival anthologies and AIPF Int. Anthology (Austin International Poetry Festival). Crowned with The Best Manuscript Awards for fiction & non-fiction categories (Mumbai Litofest, Literature Festival 2018), she was also appreciated for her short story 'Healing of wounds' by National Children's Literature Festival led by eminent author, Ruskin Bond. Her latest releases include Mocktail and #Metoo. Her movie reviews have been published in various newspapers and journals of repute like 'Just film' magazine, 'Different truths,' 'Creation and Criticism' (A Quarterly International Peer-reviewed Refereed e-Journal Devoted to English Language and Literature) and many more. She has extensively worked and published her research on 'The Expression: An International Multidisciplinary e-Journal', A Peer-Reviewed Journal and "THE AERONAUTS: AN AMALGAM OF MANY DIFFERENT SITES AND MANY DIFFERENT VOYAGES" which was based on a contemporary movie. Her upcoming projects include, a poetry film and a song that she has written. To learn more visit www.sukanyabasumallik.com

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Michele Mekel

Living in Happy Valley, Michele Mekel wears many hats of her choosing: writer and editor; educator and bioethicist; poetess and creatrix; cat herder and chief can opener; witch and woman; and, above all, human. Her work has appeared in various academic and creative publications, including having her poetry selected and read by Garrison Keillor on The Writer's Almanac. She is also a co-principal investigator for the Viral Imaginations: COVID-19 project (viralimagnations.psu.edu). Michele can be found on Instagram @ShaktiEnergy.

Ikechukwu Obiorah

Ikechukwu Obiorah is a Nigerian writer, a prolific poet, and a novelist. His poems have been published in Poetica 2019, by Clarendon House Publications, Spillwords Press, Ponders Series, Breaking Rules Publishing, Better Than Starbucks, Cajun Mutt Press, Active Muse Journal, Sage Cigarettes Magazine, Bradlaugh Fingers, the Nigerian magazine EroGospel, and others. Poetry has been his sweetheart for a decade.

Claire Taylor

Claire Taylor writes primarily about motherhood and mental health. Her work has appeared or is upcoming in Yellow Arrow Journal, The Loch Raven Review, Capsule Stories, American Writer's Review, Canary Literary Journal, and more. She is the creator of Little Thoughts, a monthly newsletter of original stories and poetry for children. She lives in Baltimore, Maryland, and can be found online at clairemtaylor.com.

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Paul Robert Mullen

Paul Robert Mullen is a poet, musician, lecturer, radio presenter, traveller and sociable loner from Liverpool, U.K. He has four published poetry collections: *curse this blue raincoat* (2017), *testimony* (2018), *35* (2018) and *disintegration* (2020). He has been widely published in magazines worldwide. Paul is the co-founder and editor of The Broken Spine Artist Collective.

Victoria Iacchetta

Victoria, of Spencerport, New York, is currently working towards a Master's degree in London, England. Her first chapbook, "The Cubicle" was published with Gap Riot Press in November of 2019. Recent poetry and artwork have appeared in *Crêpe & Penn* and *Ang(st) Zine*. Other poems or artwork have appeared in: *The Honey Mag*, *The Gravity of the Thing*, *Ghost City Press*, *The Sunlight Press*, *Vamp Cat Magazine*, *Bottlecap Press*, and *Peach Mag*.

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Amara George Parker

Amara George Parker is a London-based writer. Their short story, *Rafterland*, appears in *Mslexia's Other Worlds* issue, and their poetry has been published in literary magazines including *Spoon Knife*, *Sufi Journal*, and *Earth Pathways* diary. As a queer disabled writer, they hope their work offers readers an inclusive perspective. When they're not writing, they love being immersed in nature or listening to something sultry or funky. They'd love to chat to you about literature, drag, disability, paganism, and boats. Will read your tarot for a price. Visit amaragparker.wixsite.com/agparker, and follow them on Instagram at [a_g_parker](https://www.instagram.com/a_g_parker) and Twitter @[amara_gparker](https://twitter.com/amara_gparker).

Mike Todd

Mike Todd's work has appeared most recently in *New Reader Magazine*, *Books 'N Pieces*, *Still Point Arts Quarterly* (for which he received a Pushcart Prize nomination), *Embark Literary Journal*, *Monash Spoken Word* (an Australian radio show which featured 3 of his works in a recent episode), *Otherwise Engaged*, *Mineral Lit* (upcoming), and *Auroras and Blossoms* (upcoming). His first novel, *A SPARROW ON THE ROOFTOP*, is currently being presented to publishers by his agent. He can (and should) be followed at [facebook.com/ByMikeTodd](https://www.facebook.com/ByMikeTodd).

Anais Peterson

Anais Peterson (they/them // name) is a recent graduate of the University of Pittsburgh where they received a double major in English Writing and Urban Studies. Anais who majored in poetry their work is now a mix of lyric essays and prose poems writing around the topic of freedom in its many forms and often returning to dwell on sunflowers. You can follow them on Twitter @[anais_pgh](https://twitter.com/anais_pgh).

Social Media:

Twitter: @[anais_pgh](https://twitter.com/anais_pgh)

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Victoria Tracy

Victoria Tracy is an emerging poet from Raleigh, NC. Her work has been featured in Furious Lit's Tell Me a Story anthology. When she is not writing, Victoria spends her time reading horror novels and hanging out with her cat. Follow her on instagram @torietracy.

Josh Cook

Josh Cook received an MA in English from Indiana University in 2009 and is currently working toward an MFA in Creative Writing through Lindenwood University. He maintains a blog at <https://thefakejarvis.blogspot.com> and runs a meme page at <https://www.facebook.com/thefakejarvis>.

Anindita Sarkar

Anindita Sarkar is a Research Scholar from India. She has completed her MA in English Literature and is presently pursuing her Mphil Degree from Jadavpur University, India. Her works have appeared in Indolent Books, Door is ajar, Litbreak, The Bombay Review, Bosphorous Review, among others.

Foy Timms

Foy Timms is a poet/writer based in Reading, Berkshire, U.K. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in Fevers Of The Mind Poetry Digest, Glove, Hypnopomp, Merak Magazine, North of Oxford, Peeking Cat Poetry, Pulp Poets Press, Selcouth Station Press and Twist in Time, among others. She is preoccupied with themes such as displacement, departure, solitude, British towns/villages, social exclusion and the sociopolitical dimensions of living spaces.

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Sahiti Gavarikar

My name is Sahiti Gavarikar, I'm a final semester student pursuing my Master's in Counselling Psychology. I'm a trainee counsellor, and a poet on the side. I have previously worked at magazines such as Monsterring Mag, Winter Tangerine, and Andromedae Review. I have been writing for the last seven years, and have performed my work for audiences of 150+.

Moinak Dutta

Moinak Dutta is a teacher, poet, fiction writer. Has two published fictions to his credit: 'Online@offline', and 'In search of Laradice'. Edited an anthology of poetry called 'Whispering Poesis'. Many poems and stories written by him have found their way into dailies, magazines, journals, e-zines and anthologies. Loves to do photography and travel

Matt McGee

MATT McGEE writes short fiction in the Los Angeles area. In 2020 his stories have appeared in Barrelhouse, Gnashing Teeth and Celestial Press. When not typing he drives around in rented cars and plays goalie in local hockey leagues. On Facebook at: www.facebook.com/matt.mcgee.7334

