

Everscribe

MAGAZINE

ISSUE NO. 8

VERBUM CLAVIS

Embrace the art of the written word in Everscribe's eighth issue, showcasing incredible works from our talented writers.

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About Everscribe

Everscribe is a non-profit digital literary magazine dedicated to showcasing exceptional writing and talent. We invite individuals from all backgrounds, experiences, and ages to share their work with us.

Our primary goal is to showcase writing that is impactful, beautifully crafted, and thought-provoking — stories, poems, and essays that leave a lasting impression! We want to break down barriers and provide opportunities for all writers to showcase their talent and creativity, as we believe that talent should speak for itself. Everscribe aims to be a launching pad for those who have longed to share their stories but felt limited by traditional publishing routes. Our submissions are always open, and our process is free, easy, and unlimited!



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Everscribe’s Platforms

Join the conversation and fun in Everscribe’s welcoming community across various platforms.

Visit our official [Discord](#) server and reach out to us on [X](#), and [Instagram](#)!

[@everscribemag.com](https://discord.com/invite/everscribemag)

[@everscribemag](https://twitter.com/everscribemag)

[@everscribemag](https://www.instagram.com/everscribemag)

Editor's Note

Dear Scribe,

I'm so delighted to welcome you to the eighth issue of Everscribe — *Verbum Clavis*, our “Word Key” issue. Each word we write has the power to unlock something: a memory, a truth, a whole new world. This issue reminds us that language is more than expression, it's access.

This month is especially meaningful as we welcome new members to our team! [Michelle Barnett](#) and [Idris Ibrahim](#) have joined us as Everscribe's newest Readers, bringing fresh eyes and kind hearts to every piece. We're also thrilled to introduce our new Community Organizer, [Kat Doria](#), who's already helping our spaces feel more connected and alive.

And as always, I want to thank the steady anchor of our team — [Art Keating](#), our Managing Editor — whose care and dedication continue to shape everything we do.

To every writer, poet, and storyteller showcased in this issue: thank you. Your work moved us. You remind us why we do this, why words still matter, and always will.

May this issue open something for you. We're so glad you're here, and we hope you enjoy reading these beautiful works within!

With warmth and wonder,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Dafia". The script is elegant and cursive, with a large initial 'D'.

Founder & Editor-in-Chief

Scribe's Corner



Word of the Month!

The Scribes have spoken... The word of the month is: **Drift**!

Drift is the quiet motion, the soft release. It's what happens when you stop resisting, when thoughts blur, time loosens, and boundaries blur like fog on the water. Drift is the in-between: not quite arrival, not quite departure. It's where stories meander, where feelings swell and scatter. To drift is not to be lost, but to let go.

Want to help choose our next Word of the Month? Vote in our polls on Discord and social media!



Literary Technique Spotlight

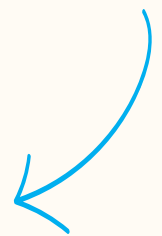
Sometimes, repetition reveals meaning. This month, our spotlight shines on **motif** — a recurring element in a story that carries symbolic weight. Motifs can be images, phrases, actions, or ideas that show up again and again, deepening themes and adding texture to the narrative. The best writers use motif to emphasize emotion, connect scenes, and leave lasting impressions.

Take F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. One of its central motifs is the green light across the bay — a distant, unreachable symbol of Gatsby's dreams and desires.

Question for our Scribes...

April is a month of echoes. Rains returning, blossoms repeating, memories stirred by scent or song. It's a time of subtle patterns. So we're wondering: what motifs do you find yourself drawn to in your writing — or even in your life? Are there images, phrases, or ideas that keep reappearing in your work? What do they mean to you? Why do they linger?

Send us your answers in our official Discord community, or post them on X and Instagram using **#ScribesCorner**.



Interview with *Erinfolami Mayowa Toheeb*

Published in [Issue No. 3, Pulsus Litterae](#).

My name is **Erinfolami Mayowa Toheeb**, known as **Mayor**. I am the current editor-in-chief and co-founder of The League of Young Writers, which I am the initiator. I am a writer, a poet, an activist and a motivational speaker. I am the author of *Whispers of Life and Legacy* and the co-author of *The Shadows of the Unseen Path*. The book: *The Shadows of the Unseen Path*, marked the beginning of the League of Young Writers serving as an avenue for nurturing diverse writing talent across the state.

What inspired you to write the piece(s) that was published in Everscribe? Can you share the story behind it?

The dystopian nature of the country made me to write it. And it's hopes for a change. A change for everybody. That's one of the reasons I am an activist. If you check my poem: The blood price for power, The cost of deceit, Wires of potential, Sparks of change and Threaded in the fabric of life. It's all about hope for a change.

What themes or messages do you hope readers take away from your work?

Theme of change, which is the most necessary thing. Because, emphasis on change start with everyone. Nothing is impossible that the world can never change. That is why I will always say: "Not trying is losing."

How has your writing evolved since you started? Are there any particular influences that have shaped your style?

Actually, it was the dystopian nature of the country, Nigeria. That led me into writing. I have been writing since seven years ago but I stopped because of some challenges I had at that time. It made me lose interest in writing. Suddenly I woke up one midnight, around Oct 27, 2024. Something, struck my mind to bring up my phone and start typing. That's what birthed *Whispers of Life and Legacy*.

If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring authors, what would it be?

What I can say is that: in all what you do in this life. Everything requires sacrifice. Success requires sacrifice. When I first started this



journey I didn't want to spend money at all. But, I later made a sacrifice just to make everything possible.

Are there any upcoming projects or works in progress that you're particularly excited about?

Yes, it's my book: *the Shadows of the Unseen Path*. Which was published on January, 2025. It's a collaboration with different young writers like me from different states. The book is about a hope for change, especially in the exploration of different talent, in Nigeria.

How can readers find you and see more of your work?

Searching for my book: *Whispers of life and legacy* on Amazon and also on Kobo writing life. Search for Erinfolami Mayowa Toheeb to be able to find me directly.

Everscribe is thrilled to have published talented writers like Erinfolami Mayowa Toheeb! We thank you for choosing Everscribe as your literary home. Read Erinfolami Mayowa Toheeb's beautiful poetry in [Issue No. 3, Pulsus Litterae](#)!

Interview with

Joy Funmilola Oke

Published in [Issue No. 3, Pulsus Litterae](#).

My name is **Joy Funmilola Oke**. I am a reporter for a Feminist Media Company that reports on women related issues. I am also an activist. I cover stories on gender-based violence and the like. Writing stories of women who are badass and taking control of the narrative is what I spend time imagining. I plan to get a master's degree from IHEID in the future.

What inspired you to write the piece that was published in Everscribe? Can you share the story behind it?

There was a narrative of firstborn daughters being blamed for how their younger brothers turned out. This prompted me to write on it. I wanted to show in my writing that it was never the case.

What themes or messages do you hope readers take away from your work?

I hope families love their daughters as much as they love their sons too, they should stop enabling the bad behaviours of their sons because that son might end up being a nuisance and liability.

How has your writing evolved since you started? Are there any

particular influences that have shaped your style?

I used to be worried about using words like words "really very" in my writing, and one thing that has helped me to improve is using the word hippo, I promise it makes writing so easy. Writing as a reporter also changed the way I write.

If you could give one piece of advice to aspiring authors, what would it be?

I would say, write no matter how awkward or stale the writing is, write. Commit to writing every day and when you go back a month to see if there is a change, you realize there is growth. When learning apply what you have learned. Talk about what you are reading or writing on social media.

Are there any upcoming projects or works in progress that you're particularly excited about?

Yes, I am currently writing a book titled The Good President. It's about a man who came from another world to help the people of his continent by eradicating corruption and making life easy, but instead of getting praise for his intent, he is about to get killed by the people of the continent who love the oppression they are going through. He becomes a villain by making them his puppets but will he succeed?

How can readers find you and see more of your work?

You can find me on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook with the name Joy Funmilola Oke.

Everscribe is thrilled to have published talented writers like Joy Funmilola Oke! We thank you for choosing Everscribe as your literary home. Read Joy Funmilola Oke's essay in [Issue No. 3, Pulsus Litterae](#)!

Fictional Short Story

Aminat Oyelude

When I See You Again

Missing people is not in my blood. I hardly miss anyone, no matter how close we are. Let alone strangers. So when I climbed the danfo today and noticed that you were not seated, settled as usual in the corner right by the window, with your round glasses pointed down at your phone, I was startled.

Not because you weren't there, but because of the way my heart stung; because of the way my being felt empty all of a sudden, struggling to refill itself.

I've never spoken a word to you

before, and you've never spoken

"Empty all of a sudden, struggling to refill itself."

any to me either.

Actually, except for that, Are you seated all right? Should I shift a little?

I can never forget the beautiful, calm tone in which you'd uttered those words, shutting off my vocal

cords and its ability to produce sounds.

In this very minute, this very second, as I readjust myself on the stiff, wooden seat, I fully understand what it means to miss someone.

I fully understand how maddeningly hollow it feels to miss someone's presence. Someone's soul

I do not know you, seat partner. But when I see you again, in this bus, I'm making friends with you and never, ever missing you again.

Aminat Oyelude is a Writing Studies master's student, honing her storytelling, critical thinking, teaching, and design skills. She loves the rich storytelling in Taylor Swift's music and Korean dramas. She also enjoys watching YouTube pop culture commentary channels and writing/reading romance and slice-of-life fiction. Lately, she is obsessed with pastel colours and leaning more into her femininity. Aminat is currently working on her debut novel and can't wait to share it with the world.

Donna Gum

For My Best Friend, A Thank You Card

Thank you for what you've done for me. You've prevented me from living a life of hell with my former fiancé. From a young age, we'd intended to take part in each other's weddings. That may not happen.

And, of course, it might be difficult to see our friendship in the same light. Taking my fiancé from me caused pain like I'd never known. I didn't want to get out of bed for months.

You've spared me from the pain of watching him flirt, aside from what I've witnessed, of course. Your attraction to him opened my eyes.

I said, "Why don't you come out with the truth. I can sense it."

"There's nothing going on. You need to trust the both of us," you said.

Some positives worked their way past the pain threatening to immobilize me, and I came to realize many things as I lay in bed.

I won't wait for him to come home on late nights, wondering, blaming myself, and fearful at the same time.

It won't tempt me to check his phone later, feeling guilt for the lack of trust.

During time alone, I won't cry and wonder about the best way to fix things between us with my mind going in circles because there is no way.

I won't spend evenings cheerfully with him trying to look as if I weren't crying.

I won't reach the point where all I do is cry.

I can avoid pitying looks from the other women. Pain won't pierce my heart at the sight of happy couples.

By preventing my disastrous marriage, you saved me from the heartbreak of divorce.

Because of your choices, I won't live a hard life as a single mother

struggling to make things meet.

I won't have to explain to our future children that Daddy loves them even if he moved out and has a new family.

As they grow older, I won't need to tell them that anger and bitterness at their father is okay.

"Pain won't pierce my heart at the sight of happy couples."

I hoped to help you when I wrote this. I know you didn't mean to become involved with him. I'm afraid your future with my ex-fiancé will hold everything I've mentioned. It isn't what I would wish for either of us, and you should know that, although it hurts, I've forgiven you.

Donna Gum enjoys writing flash fiction in the Appalachian Mountains. Her recent fiction was published in the inaugural issue of *Borderline Tales*, *CafeLit*, *Fifty Give or Take*, *Flash Phantoms*, and *Freedom Fiction Journal* including upcoming publications.

Swetha Amit

Battling the fog

The cold wind envelops me as my feet strike the muddy trail between Crissy Field and the bay. A fog swirls around the Golden Gate Bridge. It's only been half a mile in this 5K race, but my lungs yearn for more air. As other runners pass me, I recognize some familiar faces from a decade of racing. A pang of envy pricks at me. There was a time when I would zip past the crowd, stomping my feet on these same muddy trails where tiny pebbles would crumble beneath the weight

“I should be grateful to embrace those strides once more.”

of my confidence in securing a podium finish in my 40-plus male age category. The pain eventually subsides as another cold wave of air washes over me.

This pain is nothing compared to what I experienced during the San Francisco Half Marathon last year. At Mile Five, I heard a popping sound in my left knee, like someone bursting a balloon. It felt as if a padlock were strapped to my knee. Landing on my left leg began to feel like stepping on an electric wire. I tried the ice pack given to me by one of the volunteers, but I continued to limp and eventually

had to pull out of the race, much to my disappointment. It turned out to be a meniscus tear. After surgery and several months of physical therapy, I healed and was allowed to participate in running events, understanding that rebuilding my endurance levels would take time.

Here I am, struggling with shaky self-confidence after just a month of training for this 5k race. I watch the running figures fade into the mist, turning into a series of blurs. I sip Gatorade and reach for my earplugs in the pouch strapped around my waist. Listening to music during my runs has always energized me in the past—Aerosmith's “Dream On” plays through the speakers. The lyrics evoke memories of those ice baths I used to enjoy after a hot run. I can feel my muscles instantly relax. The surface beneath my feet feels smoother and flatter. I reach a point under the bridge, and my watch beeps—10 minutes for a mile—a far cry from the 7-minute-per-mile pace I used to achieve.

A year ago, when I was on crutches for a few weeks after surgery, I didn't think I could run again. Even after getting off those crutches, I still had a limp in my left leg at first. With every step I took, I dreaded that my knee might give out again. Not having running in my life felt like being trapped in a body without a soul. What would I do

without those endorphins to clear the toxic thoughts from my mind? Running freed me from being a prisoner of the chaotic and competitive corporate world. It was therapeutic when I separated from my partner three years ago after being together for a decade. Fear wrapped around me like a second skin at the mere thought of being unable to run again. I realize, with some shame, that I should be grateful to embrace those strides once more.

Halfway through the first mile, I face an incline. Self-doubt swirls in my mind like a whirlwind. My calves ache, and my hips feel tight. My breathing is labored. I decide to walk it out. Earlier this morning, when I looked in the mirror, I was met with sagging eyes, traces of gray in my beard, and some loose flab around my stomach, which I know will eventually fade with more running mileage—the challenges of being in my forties, I think ruefully. When the incline ends, I pick up my pace downhill. The trail leads to the paved road. My watch beeps again. Two miles completed in twenty minutes.

I watch people out for a walk or jog—not those racing, but those seeking exercise and fresh air. I notice an older lady walking her dog and a man, likely in his thirties, jogging along the road toward the

bridge. They seem unhurried, relaxed, and in sync. Rather than worrying about being passed by other competitors, I focus on finding my rhythm. When I stop to catch my breath, I spot a man in his fifties in a wheelchair, with a woman walking beside him. He greets me with a wide grin and a thumbs-up, mouthing something lost in Steven Tyler's high-pitched voice urging me to *dream on*.

I smile softly, feeling a wave of warmth. I sense a connection with this random stranger who sees my struggle and chooses to uplift me. The fog clears as the tar road twists into the trail, crossing Crissy Field. The sun breaks through, causing

beads of sweat to form on my forehead. After living here for two decades, I'm used to the city's unpredictable weather changes. With my jacket on, I begin to feel warm and stuffy. The finish line is just 0.25 miles away. I lengthen my stride, pushing off the muddy trail more quickly. It feels incredible to find my rhythm.

Then my heart beats like a thousand birds flapping their wings. My rapid breathing compels me to pause for a moment. I choose not to sprint. Instead, I stroll toward the finish line, where the race volunteers applaud and cheer. They drape a beautifully designed

finisher's medal around my neck, featuring the Golden Gate Bridge. My heart soars as I realize I have just completed a running event. I remove my earplugs. The music fades away. The excited chatter of other runners fills my ears. My head feels a bit light as I sit on the grass, trying to stretch my legs. Above me, I hear the squawking of a flock of geese. I look up and catch a glimpse of the magnificent Golden Gate Bridge against the backdrop of the azure sky and the ocean below. It glistens in the sunlight, appearing sturdy and radiant. I silently hope to grow stronger in the days to come.

Swetha Amit is a writer from Palo Alto, California. She is the author of three chapbooks, and her works appear in *Monkeybicycle*, *Had*, *Cream City Review*, *Door is a Jar*, *Ghost Parachute*, and others. (<https://swethaamit.com>) Her stories have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and Best Small Fiction. Her writing has received support from the Kenyon Review Writers Workshop, Tin House, the Community of Writers, and Writers Grotto.

Christian Jackson

Crouching at your Door

A dying belief in the supernatural had sent Charlie to this house, but he had little hope for what awaited. Inside the home, a man named Samuel Night watched for him. Samuel was haunted by grief. Grief supposedly manifest within his home as apparitions, but Charlie would prove otherwise. He had firsthand experience, and knew how the mind would play tricks under stress.

Preconceived notions didn't prepare Charlie for the house itself. He stood outside a mute blue bungalow with well trimmed hedges and an extensive garden. An anxious chill accompanied him as he stepped through the gate. He walked slow, careful not to disturb anything. The garden was of a most unusual kind, brimming with various flora surrounding sculptures in animalistic shapes and figures. Wind hissed and hummed through snaking sculptures and hanging chimes, all contrasting with unease under the purple clouds. Charlie noticed a snake-like shape that seemed to writhe and whisper in the wind, slinking toward him. "...let the lost lie..." He slipped something between his lips from a sunset colored bottle and the garden calmed. Vivid pathways and shapes guided him up the steps to the doorway.

Before he could knock the door

was already open. A thin man shivered there, lacquer thick eyes darting across the garden. Charlie reached out his hand and a pale one

"Knew how the mind would play tricks under stress."

met its grasp.

"Are you Samuel?"

He nodded and waved Charlie inside. Samuel locked the door and stood looking through the eye hole for a moment. Charlie went to the living room, connected to the dining room by way of a small two-person table. A cold television sat in the corner.

"Please sit," Samuel said, pulling a chair out. He stepped back and walked into the kitchen.

Charlie sat down, staring into the television. Faint imagery swirled, accompanied by soft murmurs. "...let him lie..." He blinked hard and swallowed without thinking. All stilled before him.

"Tea, father?" Samuel asked.

"Yes, please. Thank you... and you can just call me Charlie."

Samuel gave a weak smile. He put water on the stove, preparing tea bags in two cups. Back and forth he spun around in the kitchen, aimless, watching the stove with caution. Charlie sat and held a small bottle

absently. *Take once daily. Do not exceed the prescribed amount...*

"Is cold tea fine?" Samuel asked.

"Uh, sure, whatever works for you."

"I'm sorry I haven't used the stove in a while. In fact, I don't use much of anything in the house."

Charlie noticed none of the lights or electrical appliances were on or plugged in. Samuel brought over the two cups, hands shaking as he set them down.

"Beautiful garden you have out front," said Charlie.

"Oh, it's looking a little rough lately. I haven't been able to get out and work on it."

"Do you spend a lot of time out there?"

"Yes, it used to be hours a day. Alone. My brother helped at times," he said, staring deep into his cup.

"Did your brother visit much?"

"We lived together."

"Oh, I didn't realize. I'm sure that was nice."

Samuel went silent.

"Samuel, what exactly is bothering you?"

"I think it's his spirit... or something like that." He shifted and bent his neck at an awkward angle.

"Samuel, do you believe in spirits?"

"I think so. I'm not sure. My brother did, if that matters."

"No. I wouldn't say so. Belief doesn't change reality."

"I suppose. But I still hear things."
"Hear what?"
"Voices. I think he's angry with me."
"Why would he be angry?"
"I couldn't help him."
"We can't help everyone, I'm afraid."
"Do you think we will ever see the lost again?"
"Maybe, but I try not to dwell on that."
"Do you believe in an afterlife? Like heaven?"
Charlie paused to think. The room was cold and dim. He felt a mental heaviness, even more than normal. It whispered again. "...he is lost..." He drank the rest of the tea and looked at Samuel.
"You only get one life with a person," he finally said.
"If you could help, maybe I could talk again and—"
"It doesn't work like that."
"But maybe if we—"
"It doesn't work! ...I've tried! You only get one life with someone!"
Charlie hadn't realized that he had knocked his cup over and it shattered on the floor. He was standing, hands shaking. Spots clouded over his vision.
"I'm sorry," Charlie said, sitting down. "I'm taking medication. It affects my emotions."
"It's ok," Samuel whispered.
"Let's get back to you. What else can I do?"
"Pray for the voices to stop."
"Samuel, maybe you need some rest. Grief can cause strange sensations."
"I suppose, but there is something I can't explain... at all."
"How so?"
"Come with me."
They walked down a hallway. At

the end was a door. Samuel pulled a key from around his neck, unlocking the lone door. The room was full of small lambs. They turned from the hay-strewn floor to stare at him. The walls appeared to stretch out, a vast plain full of haystacks and distant ponds, with small sheep gallivanting along bloodsun pathways, intricately painted.
"What is this?" he asked Samuel.
"I don't know."
"What do you mean?"
"It all appeared."
"What?"
"I've never owned an animal in my life."
Charlie started at Samuel.
"This was my brother's room. I never came in here."
Charlie was trying to understand why Samuel would lie. He stepped into the room. Dark onyx pearl-eyed lambs watched upon his movements. He walked past them to the wall. The wallpaper played tricks on his eyes as he approached, giving the illusion of movement. A man in a dark suit stood in the distance. He was holding a shepherd's crook, staring straight out, beyond the confines of the wall. Charlie stepped closer, a memory coming into focus. The smell of wheat and wind seemed to peel off the wall. The figure brightened and whispered into his mind.
"Sin is crouching at your door..."
He stepped away, tripping onto the dirty floor. Charlie leaned over him.
"Are you ok?"
Charlie nodded, twisting to his feet.
The lambs started to bleat as they left the room. Samuel closed the door and all went back to silence.
Charlie started to walk to the

front door, feeling the walls closing around him. Samuel tried to call him back but he couldn't hear the words. Again, those same memories returned, like a wave upon his mind. "...didn't make it...not your fault..." He tried to open his bottle but his hands had gone numb, shaking wildly. White tablets cascaded over the floor.
"Where are you going?" said Samuel, his voice like a bullhorn.
"I can't do anything else. I'm sorry," Charlie said, kneeling over the remaining medication.
"You can! Please!"
"There is nothing spiritual here!" Charlie felt small, the doorway seeming to float away as he stood.
"Wait!" Samuel said. He grabbed Charlie's arm and pulled him close. "Will you please pray for me before you go?"
"I-I don't know."
"Please father, I need your blessing."
"I'm not— well, ok, but then I must go."

"The figure brightened and whispered into his mind."

Charlie finally got hold of himself. The shaking stopped and he was able to stand straight. Breathing slowly, he started to pace, murmuring under his breath, watching Samuel in his peripherals. Samuel sat down, anxious hands bouncing on his knees.
"Open your eyes to reality Samuel. Let go of your grief. Amen"
Samuel began to squirm. He closed his eyes and slouched down.
"Please, pray again," he asked.

Charlie repeated the same prayer.

"Once more!" Samuel said, now sitting up, stiff and rigid, eyes roving rapidly under his lids..

"Samuel, the prayers won't save you!"

"Please! Again!"

"God! Open your eyes, you blind fool!"

At once the doors and windows of the house started to shake and creak. Samuel gritted his teeth but could hold in his cries no longer. He screamed, open eyes staring into Charlie's with horror. Charlie was unable to move and felt himself shrinking in his own skin.

"You are the blind fool!" Samuel bellowed

Sickly sweat and heat radiated from Samuel. He appeared to vibrate and grow in size. His eyes swirled like drawn magnets.

Vibrating stellations of his body shook in front of Charlie's frozen gaze. "...you couldn't save them...or me..." Charlie reached into his pocket, but he couldn't feel, his hands seeming to grasp into nothingness.

Everything went dark.

In a blaze Samuel's unfixed mouth and eyes etched themselves firm into space and spoke forth.

"*You do not believe in me Charlie, but I believe in you.*"

The black etchings grew until they overtook Charlie's ever shrinking reality. He could no longer sense his own being.

Charlie awoke in a field. The blood red sun warmed his face. It was a hay field, stretching out beyond sight. In the distance, the sounds of lambs and water babbled together. A voice mingled in. Charlie walked

closer. It was the painted shepherd.

"Hello, Charlie. Welcome home."

Charlie found no definite markers of where they were. It was all pasture and plains.

"Where are we?"

"I'm not sure, but I have my own name for it."

He paused before continuing.

"Hell," he finally said.

Charlie watched him turn away.

"Surely you don't believe in that kind of thing?" he finally called.

"No, but what I think doesn't matter."

The shepherd turned back and prodded his flock along.

"Come along. It's getting dark," he said, maybe to Charlie, or maybe to the sheep.

Charlie watched him wander away into the dimming light. He held the bottle, now empty.

Christian Jackson is a writer, amateur theologian, and multidisciplinary artist from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His writing has been accepted for publication in *Unwashed*, *Down in the Dirt*, *Andromeda Magazine* and more. Jackson and his wife love painting, reading, and exploring all that the midwest and beyond have to offer.

Essay

Rachel Hawk

Oh, Those Dancing Feet

“Come on, let’s do the Twist!” And with that invitation Chubby Checker leapt off the record player and into my life. It was 1961 and I was halfway through college. “You have got to learn this dance” insisted Linda, my friend who was always ahead of everyone on everything. She swiveled and bent her body to the bouncy music, arms pumping.

That weekend my friends and I walked from our dorm to a party at the medical students’ fraternity house. Having abandoned my thick and necessary glasses, I’d smudged my eyelids with blue eye shadow, teased, smoothed and sprayed my brown hair into a lofty beehive, and finished the look with frosted pink lipstick. I was pleased with my baby blue sweater set and the skirt that, having been rolled up at the waistband, daringly exposed my hoseried knees.

“This was not the first time dance changed my life.”

It was one of those soft spring Ohio evenings and music came pulsing down the block. The crowd at the frat house spilled onto the sidewalk and my friends and I worked our way through the

doorway into the chaos. Friday night frat party chaos. It was a ratty place. The med students maintained a reverse pride in their grungy furniture and rundown building. But I didn’t care.

I was, as usual for me in any social setting, so nervous that I couldn’t look anyone in the face. There I was, caught between my desperate wish to be judged attractive and my mortal fear of having an actual conversation with one of those oh-so-desirable future MDs. I stayed quiet, faking the seductive smile and unfocused gaze copied from movie star magazines. What an ambivalent mess I was.

However, after a glass of the famously ferocious Sigma Nu punch, the magnetic pull of the Twist led me to accept an invitation to dance. The sad truth was I’d never felt comfortable dancing with boys. Boys. We still called them boys. They were all in their 20’s. They were young MEN. A terrifying concept. I had no idea how to make small talk and they were always groping and grabbing, but with the Twist I no longer had to even touch my partner. So there I was, for the first time in my life, swiveling up and down in the midst of the pounding pandemonium of the dance floor with a man and almost comfortable.

This was not the first time dance changed my life. When I was little

my feet turned inward, pigeon-toed it’s called. And so, at age four my mother brought me to a ballet class where I would be taught to stand, move and point my feet out. Madame Dubonofskya was a real, live Russian ballet teacher—tiny and haughty and fierce—with a huge, glossy bun of dark hair at the nape of the marble column of her neck. She would swish her long taffeta skirts and lightly tap errant limbs into position with a gold-tipped cane. Madame instructed while some lady pounded Chopin out of the piano. An older student demonstrated how we must always keep our backs straight, our arms in soft curves and hands in graceful extension and we followed as precisely as four-year olds could. I loved it. Nobody cared that I was as bashful as a bunnyrabbit as long as I kept up. And then there was the recital when I wore a frothy white tutu with a sparkling emerald green top and on my head a cap with curly antennae. I was a June bug and in glorious little girl heaven. It was surely good for my feet.

When I was nine our family moved and my new teacher was Dorothy Bloom, another dance petite woman with a huge bun at the base of her neck. A framed poster proclaimed her role on Broadway in *No, No, Nanette*. I was now old enough for toe shoes, beautiful pink satin toe shoes that

were kept snugly in place by their long, smooth ribbons. I learned how to form a little nest of lamb's wool, then to place it carefully around my toes and ease my foot into the firm cup of the shoe, to wrap the ribbons securely around each ankle and tie them in the back, getting it all just right. Then with my toes pointed straight down, I could spring up, my whole body perfectly supported by those two small square inches of contact with the floor. It was strangely effortless and exhilarating to dance up on my toes. Such fun to make a long, quick row of tiny steps, feet nestled next to each other, or with one knee up to the side, to feel the power of snapping my body into a tight little turn, my hands and arms curving upward, back held strong and straight, lovely. Every ballet dancer feels it: that when you get it right, what you're doing is beautiful. I learned that I could be in sync with myself, not hesitant and awkward as I was so much of the time.

There I stayed, in ballet classes until I aged out at 16. But here's the worst part: "You're too tall to be a ballet dancer anyway." Miss Bloom swooped in and yanked the cord. "Too tall by at least 6 inches." Thud. My flickering, secret silent movie dream zapped dark. I know now that a career in dance would not have worked out for me. I was more than a little squishy in the mental toughness and self-confidence departments; and a dancer needs both if she is to succeed. But Miss Bloom broke my heart.

Ballet is all arms and legs; your torso is the steady anchor. The steps, although often stunning are meticulously choreographed leaving no room for invention. The

music is more a means of cueing the dancers than a source of inspiration. But in college, improvisational dance classes shook me loose from ballet's discipline, dared me to be expressive, to pay attention to the music and let it inspire my response. Surely this new-found freedom of movement is what made the wild gyrations of the Twist so easy.

When I moved to San Francisco in 1965, the Hippy era was taking over. And even though I had a regular job as a nurse, I fit right in. There was live music everywhere. I loved Janice Joplin with her bluesy, pain-shredded voice, and also Country Joe and the Fish, Paul Butterfield Blues Band, and Jefferson Airplane. Groups performed in Golden Gate Park, at the Fillmore and the Masonic Hall- these were not places with seats. I certainly didn't need a seat. I would whoop it up for hours in my flowery, loose, homemade dresses; beads, hair and legs flying. No one followed proscribed steps, you just moved however you wanted. Although I was with friends, once the music started, I would always close my

"The music made me dance, made me need to move."

eyes and dance alone, propelled by the music. Dancing became as much a part of the music as hearing it. The music *made* me dance, made me need to move.

In the early 70's I got married, and we moved to Cambridge. We soon found our way to Dance Free,

a no-drugs-or-alcohol-everyone's-invited gathering held each Wednesday in the basement of Christ Church in Harvard Square. There I could dance in my bare feet to an extravagant mix of taped music: not only songs by people like Bonnie Raitt, the Rolling Stones, and Chuck Berry but also Miriam Makeba, Ravi Shankar, and the Klezmer String Quartet. Dance Free saved me, in a non-religious kind of way. My marriage was not a happy one, but every Wednesday I would slip into my purple leotard and glossy green and silver skirt and dance my legs off. It always made me feel better.

In the no-pressure atmosphere I made new friends; and with their support it wasn't long before I built the confidence to leave my husband. I became part of a group getting together for trips to the beach, movies and potluck suppers. We were a band of dancing troubadours, the lively center of many large parties.

Dance Free was the pulsating, vibrant, not-to-be-missed focal point of my life. We would dance until we couldn't anymore. We were not an audience but a roomful of gloriously interactive participants, leaping and bouncing, shaking and thrashing, on the floor, in the air, arms and legs and bodies and butts moving any possible way, dancing in groups, in pairs or alone. Sometimes the whole room danced together. No one had to ask you to dance, you just danced. It was sweaty, exhilarating, fabulous fun.

Finally loosened up and confident, I let myself show off or be silly, or strange or seductive and for the first time I experienced the euphoria that dance shared with

other people can bring. Deep into the music and movement there was for me new territory, like seeing colors for the first time. No, even that's not enough; I was entering the space of joy, utter joy.

My relationship with Dance Free had its own life cycle. I fell in love and married again; we bought a house, had a child and gradually lost interest in going. But loving to dance has been with me all my life and is in my neurons, in the strands of my muscles, in the soles of my feet. It will last as long as I do.

Would I have found dance without those early classes?

Perhaps, but I was a hesitant and gawky girl, and ballet showed me a way to feel comfortable in myself, to be silent and yet part of a group; I could even believe that I could do something beautiful. It led me to the Twist and through the wild abandon of San Francisco to the aptly named Dance Free, past awkward isolation and into happiness.

So it's in me: the love of dance, the loving to dance. Not out of my body but IN my body, and OUT of my mind. People sometimes say they get lost in the music but I think it's more like being found in the music, finding oneself in the music.

I love that I can still dance, can be free in this particular way. When I go out to hear music I especially like, the blues or funky rock and roll, even if there's no place to dance, I'm in the back of the room along the wall, bobbing and bouncing. I can't help it. A friend who is ninety-three years old and has always loved to dance laments that her body just won't behave anymore. "It makes me sad," she'll say. But when Glen Miller or Benny Goodman calls to her from the radio, she still dances, clinging to the kitchen counter for balance. That will be me.

Rachel Hawk is an 83 year old retired educator who is relishing these somewhat quieter days and exploring a more personal form of writing.

Poetry

John Michael Talinio

To: My Rain

I am one with the weather.

I don't go out when it's sunny,
and I am in pain when it's dry and humid.
I am always looking up at the sky,
day and night,
as if they're looking back at me.

People avoid me when I'm around.
Only a few stay to get to know the real me.
I feel unwanted most of the time,
as though I terrify people—
so I do my best to isolate myself from everyone else.
Not because I need to, but because I choose to.

Nature is my comfort.

You will find me under the rain,
all soaked and alone.
You may mistake me as sad or brokenhearted,
but you are very far from the truth.

The truth is, I love Rain.
It gives me a strong sense of nostalgia—
a bittersweet feeling I cannot bring myself to dislike or remember.
It makes my heart ache and feel heavy,
but it elevates me at the same time.

It gives me life and subtle joy.

Even if you don't stay for long,
a few fleeting glimpses of your tears
as they fall so effortlessly
are enough to make my day

I wish to live near you—
a place most people avoid,

a weather most people avoid—
just like me.

I am certain I would fit right in.
After all,
some flowers only bloom under the rain.

Elizabeth Barton

You Have Them to Thank

They got what they wanted.
Your whole life, your happy,
your effervescence and charm.
The elvish humour. Your love
of poetry. I see they've taken it.

And not for love. It was
the only way to survive
in a bully-boy culture, adopt
their tactics. Emulate their style.
You have bills to pay, sure.

But they killed everything in you
that was worth living for.
They whipped you with censure,
petty criticisms; upbraided small
oversights, cut you a thousand times.

Hairline incisions, as you molded
yourself within their ethic. Death
by a thousand paper cuts, as they say.
I watched you vanish, irresistibly
as the tide swallows the sand.

You have them to thank, when life
loses its lustre. When you feel
you have to pass on the mean
to feel better about yourself. When
you lose the reason to smile,

you have them to thank. When they
brand you with the mark of a slave
because you are their choicest prize.
And still you suck the stench of their
wiles as they crush your spirit.

You have them to thank as they
pay you a meagre wage, just to keep
a roof over your head and food

in your belly, but all the gold
in the world cannot reclaim you.

I watched them at work; I've watched
them for a long time, a sentry in a dark
outpost familiar with their terrain.
They will cut you to pieces like carrion
crows to gorge on your stinking corpse.

You will be a memory, a phantom
of yourself. And confused, wonder
where you went when you look on
your life and have them to thank – until
you stand up and get the hell out.

Elizabeth Barton is an artist and poet from New Zealand. She has poetry published in numerous journals and anthologies including *Vita Brevis Press*, *Literary Revelations*, *Flights*, *Suburban Witchcraft Magazine* and *Spillwords.com*. She is the author of the award-winning pamphlet “Mirrored Time” from *Hedgehog Poetry Press*, and “All Revolutions Begin This Way and Auroral,” from *Alien Buddha Press*. Her art is in private and public collections worldwide including the V & A Museum Prints Collection, London.

Thomas Elson

I am Your Traveling Companion

- On viewing photographs in the Science Photo Library

...and we both know how this will end.

Fantasize a triumph as if you'll win a gold medal. Allow others to devise life plans for you. Permit others to convince you they can beat me. Ignore me for months - until after Christmas, or after your anniversary, or a graduation, or your daughter's wedding. React in a variety of ways - overeating, imbibing, behavioral excesses, self-pity: *Why me?* You ask. *Why not you?* What makes you so special? What sets you apart? You'll learn soon enough - I may be slow, but I'm never late.

I'll interfere with your life - once a month, once a week, once a day, then twice, then every night. You will complain, create excuses, worry. If you're pushed into it, you'll have a follow-up; however, by then I will have migrated, and I will stay with you.

There are more steps - wallow in denial and anger, bargaining, a removal, a recurrence, your depression. As travelling companions, we have always known how this will end; because, as you may have guessed by now - I may be slow, but I'm never late. You will run out of time. You have had your chance, and you will lose.

Thomas Elson's stories have appeared in *New Writing Scotland*, *Short Édition*, *New Ulster*, *Lampeter*, *Mad Swirl*, *Blink-Ink*, and *Adelaide*. Moria nominated him for the Pushcart Prize.

Ronita Chattopadhyay

Home in Three Acts

I had seen a freshly painted three storied building
in Dehradun with a plaque and the word **Ashray** on it
meaning shelter and rest and refuge in Hindi.
My childhood imagination peopled that house
and I wondered - had they found all that?

When I was in college in Delhi,
a film (Charulatha) led me to the story behind it
and its title **Nostho nir**
meaning broken nest in Bangla.
Those two words were added to
my multilingual lexicon of hidden tensions
and restless hopes in our personal worlds.

Years later, I would be warmly invited
by people to come to their **Basha** -
another Bangla word for nest -
on both sides of the border in Bengal.
And I would learn how little it takes
to make a house a home
and also how much.

Ronita Chattopadhyay (she/her) finds refuge in words. Her work (poetry and prose) has appeared in *The Hooghly Review*, *Roi Fainéant Press*, *Akéwì Magazine*, *streetcake magazine*, *Setu*, *RIC Journal*, *Everscribe*, *Porch Lit Magazine*, *Dreich*, among others, and anthologies by *Querencia Press* and *Sídhe Press*. She lives in West Bengal, India, and loves mountains, books and tea.

Sofia Bagdade

Sunday

Today is for blue sheets
damp with sweat and bowls
of soup larger than moons,
white sills of just-cut daisies
and the howling wind like symphony

I almost forget the day has
a name, it fogs over with use
like you and your thick-rimmed glasses,
tortoise shell and coffee black with room
whispers of rest that coil and flex

the garden snake put to sleep
and a suit jacket in the shape
of a promise, to rest and find the day
break in the hollow of your shoulder
must be as good as it gets

Sofia Bagdade

Lambswool

Your hands always shook, razorblades and salad bowls
trembling. Today I ask the canvas how it feels to hold
the weight of your fingertips. Your supine intent, gamsol
and oil in streaks—does the blank space fill loud with
light or do our eyes feed like moths to wool? White letters
outside a church on 21st spell “Keep Your Eyes Soft,” so
softens the palette knife. We are the sea in December and
gulls switchblade the easy night, I draw you in. I ask
questions to pages and toothpaste sunken to drain.
Even now I forget your face, and still I soften

Sofia Bagdade is a poet from New York City. Her work appears in *One Art*, *The Shore*, *Red Weather*, and *The Basilisk Tree*. She finds joy in smooth ink, orange light, and French Bulldogs.

Sam Aureli

In the Kitchen: The Poet at 50

after "In The Grove: The Poet at Ten" by Jane Kenyon

The scent of wine cookies curled
through the house at dawn, warm
and sweet, tugging me from
my wild plans to run the streets
of my childhood.

Mom stood, kneading dough
for the meal I'd asked for,
hands steady, floured.
She nodded to the chair beside her—
a quiet call to stay.

Morning sun flared through the window,
bright and bold, and my father's shadow
crossed her face,
yet the warmth held, unbroken.

I sank into that moment,
rapt and pierced,
the hunger rising
till it pressed against my bones.

Sam Aureli is a design and construction professional from Italy, living in Boston, MA. He turned to poetry later in his journey, seeking refuge from the chaos of daily life. Sam looks forward to the weekend, watching birds feed in the back yard, finding inspiration in the quiet moments. His work has been accepted in *Atlanta Review*, *Amethyst Review*, *Loft Books*, *Coverstory Books*, *Rough Diamond Poetry*, *Prosetrics The Magazine*.

Simon Collinson

Its in the Cards

They say you can only play
With the cards you're dealt
That's how its always been done
Since the days that Adam delved
And Eve spun
But it always seems to be
A few are handed packs of aces
And the rest make do with endless deuces.

Simon Collinson is a writer from England. He seeks solitude, sorrow and shadow.

Madison B. Tovey

Mountains

Scratch, scratch, scratch,
go the scrapes of a dry brush.
She sees beyond the four walls
of her white studio, where vivid hues
of blues and greens swirl through the sea.
Far away, something black floats –
a whale or seaweed.
But the canvas is smooth, flat.

Scratch, scratch, scratch,
go the scrapes of a dry brush.
The sea crashes against the sand.
With needle-like strokes, her movements
herd the paint like cattle,
clumping it into tiny ridges,
breaking the surface.

When it dries, she checks with closed eyes.
Then her son hears her steps,
soft thumps on carpet,
before she sinks onto his bed.
She takes his hand, runs it along her art,
guiding his fingers over the textured waves,
wondering if he can hear them – *crshhhhh*.

She glances around his blue-walled room,
his favourite colour – because she said so –
and, watching his fingers trail the peaks,
thinks: *he must believe they're mountains.*

Madison B. Tovey is a 21-year-old writer from Australia with a lifelong passion for storytelling.

Melody Tobi-Makinde

myopia x : astigmatism

for all the bats and to Olatobi Makinde

X

the kids used to call me ugly
sitting in front made a target. a walking billboard for taunts and hurled insults.
this body, a box of so many happenings
contraindication: myopia x astigmatism

XX

you are too proud.
“i greeted you and you didn’t reply.”
i apologize for the shortcomings of this body
my sight is all but a grainy film of fuzziness

XXX

i sometimes wish, this body came with an emblem of instruction;
the object you see may look like they see
clearly, they can’t.
for further instructions; please read label:
esprit de blind

XXXX

alas! just like the prophet said
the seer of sight
the god called glasses
has heard our groans.

C
a miracle in plastic and metal
has granted us
the obesity of spring
the charm of autumn
the pottery of sight

CX
the illumination of blue and pink
suddenly, i can see the yellows
of a sunflower clearly
on a pitch black night.

CXX
receive our praise and adoration
as we polish your ears
with the grunts of our satisfaction
beneath the lens of an azure sky
o! great god named glasses

Melody Tobi-Makinde is a Nigerian creative writer and business management professional. She enjoys novels, music, and engaging in meaningful conversations. Melody's poetry and prose have appeared or are forthcoming in *Zinia Journals*, *Undergrxnd Magazine*, *Ever Poems*, *Hidden Gele*, *Pencil and Marks*, and others. She brings a unique perspective to her writing, blending personal introspection with universal themes to create resonant and thought-provoking works. She tweets @michealynarnold.

Divya Benezette

Weeds/Daisies

my daisies on the terrace
seemed to grow better with weeds
i plucked them out
and nourished my daisies
letting their bodies focus on themselves
rather than a life splitting their roots

but the pot looks a bit empty now,

i'm not sure what i'm so sad about -

i could always fill the space with more daisies
but when i make my way to the garden center
i do not have it in me to look towards them -

i buy other plants instead -

and hope the daisies learn somewhere along the way
to fill up the space, regrow their roots
somehow someway,
even if i cannot look upon them,

i water them with my eyes on the horizon
in hopes that one day they will grow so tall
that the clouds speckled in orange and pink
will have petals, too.

Divya Benezette

My Heart is Built of Extremities

Give me a day where I feel - I feel -
- Content,
I think that's the word,
Where I am not greeting Mammoths at the door

Rushing them inside so the neighbors aren't Terrified
Where I am not weaving through cacti to reach my flowers
Where my candles do not burst into bonfires -

You see,

I don't mind how much my heart swells wrapped in devotion
I just wish she would not let Calamity through my door.

For I love my candles before they burst,
And I do not want my beloved gardens to cause me ill
I wish to be friends with my Mammoths, to walk them through the forest
I wish to bathe in the ocean, and for once, remember how to swim better than to drown

Sweet hummingbirds fly above my roof,
Trying desperately to pick it open
As little as they are,
One day I will open my door and let them guide me
As I nurse these walls back into a home

Divya Benezette is a M.S. Professional Writing student at Towson University. She is an avid reader and poet. She has been published or will appear in *Bardics Anonymous*, *The Greyhound Journal*, *Clover + Bee*, *Skirting Around Magazine*, *The Vagabond's Verse*, and *The Literary Times Magazine*.

Sam Hendrian

The Tragedy of Happiness

Spent Fridays in an auctioneer's back seat
Careening from one traffic light to the next
All while pantomiming pain
To clueless passersby.

It was the bride/bridesmaid empathy gap,
The tragedy of happiness;
People don't care you're in Hell
Once they've made it to Heaven.

Reduced to a social cause,
A matinee movie pray-and-pause
Celebrated by churchgoing charlatans
As fuel for their heroic aspirations.

Mastered the plastered expressions
Required to maximize gentleness
Dispensed by gentlemen
At ten caged compliments apiece.

Tried to get the attention
Of a crowd of protesters
But they were content in their slogans
And had no use for a neighbor in need.

Sam Hendrian is a Los Angeles-based filmmaker, poet, and playwright striving to foster empathy through art. From writing personalized poems for passersby outside of LA's oldest independent bookstore every Sunday, to making Chaplin-esque silent films about loneliness and human connection once a month, Sam lives to make other people feel seen and validated. More poems and films can be found on Instagram at @samhendrian143.

Natalia Battaglia

Metaphors to Dust

Rough patch, crossed lines—
wind catching the sails
of your leaving.

Your rope fraying
where I held it tightest.

The day you vanished:
maggot writhing in warm
butter, stale cake crumbling
beneath unsteady fingertips.

Blood moon hanging—
an executioner's promise
against night's throat.

Omens and echoes
replacing rhythm,
eclipsing ritual.

Love someone who hates themselves?
You'll learn to hate you, too.

They'll trade depths and darkness
for clean slates, doe eyes, soft
feet tiptoeing into someone
else's gentle morning.

Don't tell me I'm a survivor.

I'm just borrowing time
while you tape boxes,
a snake trying to swallow
a capybara,

shrugging at the settling ash.

Natalia Battaglia has spent 20 years writing for corporate executives with a conscience. She is a concertgoer and a Californian by way of Argentina, writing poetry to fill her creative cup while advocating for the rights and well-being of children.

Debadrita Sarkar

New Sunrays

The Night sky of pain,
is slowly vanishing
from the wild cave of heart,
I, hold to my breath
to listen to the whispers
of paradise.
Slowly the dawn awakes in my heart.
Now, there is a sweet mist,
full of love and peace -
cradling the white halo of truth,
defeating the night's deep darkness.

The new sun awakes -
with all its pure yellow wings,
and I raise my hands
to feel the new Sunrays.

Debadrita Sarkar is a writer and poet, based in India. She loves every form of writing. Her writings get featured in *The Hindu*, *The Statesman* and *Cultural flash lit mag*. She has published her first chapbook "Nature And Life" by *Pothi books*.

Rowan Tate

Thaw

The leopard month, crouching
at the seam of spring and winter, fickle
like tousled hair. I
swallow her whole. I
love hard. Spring opens
like a blade. March
is the sharpest knife in my kitchen:
she has mud on her shoes and she's
laughing.

Rowan Tate is a Romanian creative and curator of beauty. She reads nonfiction nature books, the backs of shampoo bottles, and sometimes minds.

Christina Chin & Uchechukwu Onyedikam

The Conversation

forest house
origin of nomadic tales
cattle grazing
the echoes of free
souls

Friday's supplication
notes in lifted hands
widow's mite
anticipating the birth
of a liberator

two families
one union
Ìgbéyàwó
forgiven sins liberate
to divine realms

crushing
forgotten things
mortar and pestle
earthly ties
to spices

falling
dried leaves
all the gossips
after the lenten
mass

Uchechukwu Onyedikam is a poet whose work graces *Petals of Haiku: An Anthology*, an Amazon best-seller now permanently displayed in the Treasure House of Rinsen-ji Temple, Japan, a revered institution with over 500 years of history. Nominated for Best of the Net, Pushcart Prize, and Touchstone Award.

Taiwo Adewuyi

Masks of Tortured Smiles

sunlight falls
on the floor
like broken pieces of
dying embers,
the walls look ashen,
because darkness is painting itself
into the face of the concrete,
the way you once painted
rainbow on the black canvas
of your face
thinking a spectrum
of colours would make you as delightful
as the sunbird trapped in the blue sky
of your bedroom wall.
we deceive ourselves too much,
i say, chewing my words slowly
to savour the bitter taste of truth,
when we think we don't
deceive ourselves.
your embrace feels
like prison walls around
my body
and my words do not walk
the road of my tongue
with the sounds of truth
echoing in their footsteps.
yes, my greatest lie
is kissing myself through your
lips, the same way you
look at my face
and imagine you are in
a different place,
with a different person
who moulds your body into
the most impeccable artwork
your mirror has ever seen.
we are too comfortable wearing
our masks of tortured smiles,
in this cage we call our bird nest
in this jail we call our home.

Natalie Schreyer

Prayer

Holy aurora
on night's crinkling horizon,
a cosmic alarm with golden tentacles
dancing like wasps above a bending petal
tracing loops in the sky,
a language of ciphers.

What looks like ecstasy
is an exorcism,
an implosion from within,
covert but for a faint buzz,
an unholy prayer.

Kirk Lawson

maximum arc

iconoclastic hubby Jim
free thinker clad in cut-offs
curly hair, impish grin

swinging from childhood
into hippy twenties
suspended mid-air
from grape vines

letting go
at maximum arc
to free fall

or hang tight
to return
with pendulum's swing

courage I never had

your trust
in the universe

gravity
unknown waters

your unbridled exhilaration
captivates me still

Kirk Lawson lives Ulster County, New York, surrounded by the Shawangunk mountains. He enjoys poetry as a creative outlet to uncover meaning in living. He has been published in Discretionary Love. Recently retired, Kirk also enjoys volunteer work, yoga, music, cooking and theatre. Grateful to his husband Jim and their dog Cocoa for all they teach him each day.

Azure Brandi

Welcome Home

finality is fake in the digital age
forcibly arrested by fickle equivocations
found out by fever police, claiming you are
a symptom and the illness itself. the
fountain of youth, forgotten.

this farce is fallible
vile valorized vanguards
how are you bound
and to whom

this is the internet
hedge your bets
barter your bride
bait your pride
buffer your bodies
from bulldozing barbarity of beauty queen
nightmares as bite-sized bitters

i will not resolve my identity to give you peace of mind
i am piecemeal, like you

i'm disgusted by the noise of the thing i'm chasing
how to fall in love with the noise
a screwball existence
the desire for perpetual ascent

ascendancy is maddening
because it is so often disguising
the inevitable fall

just remember:
ascendancy is the antecedent to descent.
you are not too mighty to fall.

Azure Brandi graduated from NYU's Tisch in 2023. Previous work in *New Croton Review*, *October Hill Magazine*, *Virgo Venus Press*, *SORTES Magazine*, *Brevi Mag*, *The Gorko Gazette*, *Bending Genres Journal*, and *Thirty West Publishing's Afterimages*. Forthcoming publications in *The Underground*, *Alien Buddha Zine*, *Stick Figure Poetry*, *Flapper Press*, *Basset Hound Press*, *The Up and Coming Magazine*, *Kaleido Zine*, *STARZINE*, and *Vol. 1 Brooklyn*.

Roy N. Mason

The Cardinal

It takes many flights
navigating foul weather
early mornings, dark nights
to compose a song worth singing
they're our stories

It takes many flights
triumphs, victories, wounds
searches far & wide no shame where secrets hide
neglect the regretful worry that destroys
the prosperity of a blossom

It takes many flights
your journey- your learning path
to proclaim priorities
you might find a fledgling or two
to learn from you

It takes many flights
the adventures seen
from where you've been
to realize how blessed
she'd been all along

It takes many flights
for the cardinal
to return to her nest
to know if you're not happy,
it's not the end.

Striving to make each day count, **Roy N. Mason** documents his experiences, observations and lessons-learned in personal essays and poetry. In his free-time, Roy can be found trying to synchronize the clocks in his kitchen. Roy's work has been curated in several journals.

Connie Song

Words Unsolicited

The first incision guts you,
those random words propelled
and spewed unsolicited
like forks poked through
tangled clouds
on tranquil days.

Do you prefer the unmerciful sun
or the gentle rain to rip apart your
swollen, swallowed soul?

Is there any privacy in the fences you
constructed, in the rivers forged to bend
and break against infuriated syllables uninvited,
inflamed and inadmissible?

Connie Song writes short stories and poems from the edge of Brooklyn, New York. Her works include *The Grimalkin*, *The Ghost of Stillwell Avenue*, *Evil Eye*, *Bruised Poetry*, *Perfect Girls*, *Needle and Thread*.

M.B.

Sheltered by Time

As the veil of time unfolds
Across my foreign body—
The promises uphold,
To trap my hands of gold.

The hands which paint the minutes,
Onto a canvas of cyclical patterns.
And hours that are wasted,
Scrubbing away
Their dried up pigments.

From the first breath
Of sunlight—
To the last gasp
Of moon sight—
The lonely clock still wanders
Across its same familiar paths.

Both here and there and here again,
The same, same but different—
Gold brushed, magnificent,
And tied without an amen.

As time was once created,
And no minutes were wasted,
The slashes on my calendar
Are erased to no more falter.

I close my eyes to understand,
This cage around my wrist,
The mirror of past demands,
And why time just tastes so bland.

Morgan (M.B.) is a 15-year-old aspiring poet from Florida. Her goal as a writer is to create pieces that every reader can find parts of themselves in. When not frantically typing in her notes app, Morgan enjoys drawing, dancing, and listening to music. To read more of her work, you can find Morgan on Instagram @m.b.poetry and TikTok @m.b.poetryy.

Benyeakeh Miapéh

SONNET FOR THE BOY WHO CARRIES DAWN

A room feels heavy, walls like weighted stone,
but sunrise cracks the dark with streaks of gold
your breath, a drum—each beat you claim your own—
your mother's voice, a rope when hands go cold

the earth remembers every seed you've sown:
though storms may twist the branches, roots stay bold
laughter of cousins, stories round the flame,
weave armor from the dust that shame once claimed

you carve the path through thorns you've learned to bear—
each scar a bridge, not chains—you're not alone
the night's not endless; dawn will find its way
your hands can build the light to break the gray

home's not the dark that wraps you like a shroud—
it's in the pulse that says—rise up.

Benyeakeh Miapéh is an aspiring young writer from Liberia. A student of civil engineering at the University of Liberia. He has his poetry works in many online magazines and on other websites such as PoetrySoup, Spill words, We write Liberia, League of poets, Poetry, Sleepless night in Monrovia, Eboquills, Pawn's paper, African poetry, theprelude, afritondo, nantygreens and many others. He believes in expressing his thoughts through poetry.

Berrin Yakar

Unshackled by Flames

I've been stranded in a desert,
Two years behind the bars of sand.
Never tried to break free,
Just watched the sun sink with me.

Then one day— like any other,
Through my wreckage, I caught his gaze.
Shivering— I'm cold he says,
Burn me up with the fire you ignite.

Passed beyond my clouds,
Every scar of mine must be his guide.
So I'll drop my broken heart—
Become the spark of your night.

Berrin Yakar is a 20-year-old medical student from Turkey who finds solace in translating her soul into poetry. Her work has previously been published in "Spillwords" and she is continually seeking new spaces to share her writing.

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Future Issues

We're thrilled to announce that our next issue, Issue No. 9, *Animus Opus*, will be coming soon! Everscribe releases a new issue every 1st of the month, so stay tuned!

Writers can always submit their works through our website at everscribemag.com. Join our community by connecting with us on our [Discord server](#), where both writers and readers are welcome. Stay updated on issue releases, special opportunities, news, and more by following us on [social media](#).

For inquiries or questions, feel free to reach out to us at info@everscribemag.com. We hope you enjoyed reading Everscribe's ninth issue, and we extend our thanks to all the writers for making this dream come true!

Until next time,
The Everscribe Team

