

The Quasar Review's
first collection of poems

PARADI(GM)SE

The Quasar Review

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THE QUASAR REVIEW

FIRST EDITION:
PARADI(GM)SE

“It isn't by getting out of the world that we become enlightened, but by getting into the world...by getting so tuned in that we can ride the waves of our existence and never get tossed because we become the waves.”

— Ken Kesey, Kesey's Garage Sale

JOHN GREY

NICE

I am in my front yard
raking leaves

and a friend,
a fellow poet,
walks by
with a golden lab
on a leash.

He stops,
and I pat the dog,
and we agree
on how nice
the weather is.

That's right.
We both use
the word "nice."

Poetry died then.

Even an expression like
"mildly agreeable"
could have saved it.

JOHN GREY

CROWDED

The woman
in the crowded elevator
can't get her hand
anywhere near
the button for her floor

and is too shy
to ask a stranger
to push it for her.

She's on her way
to her crowded office.
She just emerged from
the crowded outside world.

EMILY KLEDZIK

BLESSINGS OF APPALACHIA

i hope when you die, that your veins run with the water of the
brooks,
that your eternal eyes see the decomposition of the leaves—
ferns feasting on your pupils as you see the mites on their stems.
i see moss growing up your bones, it crept over from the waterfall
rocks
to rest on you, to offer softness to your spirit.
i hope that the trout-lily nods gently from your ribs.
i call the fair folk to welcome you within them, to rise in trickery
and joy of life,
let your soul take their hand as they lead you to the land of milk
and honey.
i hope when god is painting the next winter frost, he hands you
the brush for a few strokes.
i hope when the sun is smiling, you laugh down at us too.
i hope you forget nothing, you simply watch the waters of the
river wash away hurt,
leaving ecstatic peace in its wake—your soul's beauty finally at the
forefront.
i hope you are found again as a body of bone, flame azaleas,
softest moss.

EMILY KLEDZIK

SPRING RETURNING,
QUICKLY

plants budding, flowers nodding open in the grass—
pollen exploding upwards like elon's rockets, bursting in the air,
debris falling for human consumption.

cool air kisses me gently, promises hotter moments later today.
i feel persephone's touch and lean my head back, eyes closed,
back arching into the feeling of returning sensation and life.

EMILY KLEDZIK

TO THE WINGED
VICTORY OF
SAMOTHRACE

like icarus, you lift off from the ground.

like you, i am headless and bumbling as a fool in the air.

wings of eternal glory, words of deathless, wretched hubris,
skin of the everlasting, breath of the finite mortal.

i watch him paint the burning banks, and

i imagine the holy one breathing fire down to cleanse the temple.

GERARD SARNAT

BEVERLY HILLS HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1963

To the best of perhaps incomplete knowledge around 30% of all our classmates have passed whereas ChatGPT tells Gerry that “about half of individuals born in 1941 survive to age 80. ...However, survival rates can vary based on factors like gender, lifestyle, healthcare access.”

Not to put too fine a point on it but in the US “the richest 1 percent of men lives 14.6 years longer on average than the poorest 1 percent of men, while among women in those wealth percentiles, difference’s 10.1 years on average.”*

Since data is pre-Trump, now only imagine...

*<https://news.mit.edu/2016/study-rich-poor-huge-mortality-gap-us-0411>

WILLIAM DORESKEI

LANTERNS OF THE NIGHT SKY

The lanterns of the night sky
light nothing but old histories
we're afraid to tell each other.
The lanterns compete with stars
and usually outshine them
with staggers of eloquent fire.
The annals they illuminate
remain as true as ever, texts
composed of brittle human flesh.
Their haunted cathedrals loom
at the edge of forests reclaiming
cities recently abandoned,
but no one dares recite the tales
left untold in the shadows cast
by forgotten Gothic architects.
So many ruins coughing up weeds
and snoring in their spilled rubble.
We never got to visit the best
of them: Babylon, Joppa. Gdansk,
Sophia, Madras, Lhasa, Perth.
These fossil sites will haunt us
for a while, then forget themselves
in brambles, saplings, and dust storms.
The lighter of lanterns has passed,
leaving the sky in ashes. The moon
and the last stars have withdrawn,
leaving the lanterns smiling
over a landscape ripe for revenge.

WILLIAM DORESKEI

SEA DAYDREAMING

Although sixty miles inland
I hear the sea gnawing at rock
festooned with barnacles and weed.
Maybe that's just my pulse angry
with me for ignoring its needs.
Maybe it's just the grinding
of gears on the local trash truck.
You lust for a glimpse of surf
even more deeply than I do
but you claim to hear nothing
richer than black mud slopping
in our rainy garden, May sprouts
drowning in elemental angst.
We could hop in the car and drive
that sixty miles. The radio
would amuse us with religion
and far-right propaganda
that would so infuriate us
we'd dash headlong into the waves
and rebaptize each other in pastel
greens and blues, dripping and sizzling.
But people flaunting their warped egos
in the ugliest of bathing suits
would sneer at us for aging
so normally, our rebirth on hold,
and the water up to our waists
would feel colder than scripture
underscoring our secret dread.

DS MAOLALAI

WORLD WAR 3

he finds he gets away with
not joining the army. it's through being medically
colourblind. it is fine – he is never
considered a coward, though he
is a coward. glad
he doesn't have to join the army.
they are desperate for men
but he holds his exemption
in his wallet and shows it
whenever he's asked.
he's married, but there are many
young women about, and not very many
young men. it's not of much value.
his wife is already a beautiful woman
and she's happy that he's still at home.
during the war it is easy to find work
and afterward he will have experience
so he believes that it will remain easy.
he thinks he should maybe learn
the language of the enemy
on the chance that they win
but that's hard.

DS MAOLALAI

GAZA

genocide again
on the news website
headlines. I make a black coffee
for you with our brand
new machine.

KIMUTAI KEMBOI ALLAN

VERSES TO COVER SINS

We need more names, a catalogue
Of remonstrance, a book of all our sins.
More pages to outline the travesty
And the days will roll on our shoulders
Everything makes the devil laugh
And the priest is reading beautiful verses
This is not a good place
For the meek and mellow
A cheek to receive the alternate slap.
We devoured the lights
In gobbles of insipid demeanour
Nothing else to place in mindful remembrance
Of the sins of our fathers
The books are getting filled with odes.

KIMUTAI KEMBOI ALLAN

PATCHES OF LITTLE WISHES

The little girl knows
Rocky steps down the river
A thirsty flock of cattle
And a plastic container on her tanned back
The dust turned her eyes brown
A black beauty disfaced.

The road is rough
A muddy patch of a nightmare
Swallowing vehicles
And the food perishes with the hours
An unhappy home
A tired citizenry singing dirges at noon.

The little girl wishes
She could get a new uniform
Run to happily to school every morning
They are wishes at best
Stuck in her beautiful heart
She's buried in the hurlyburly of day.

KIMUTAI KEMBOI ALLAN

THE BORED-WALK

There is plenty here I don't remember...
As I take you down the Hollywood boardwalk
And try to build back memories brick by brick
Of eating cheap pizza, slice by slice
Of pressing my feet into the sand and shore
Grain by grain, wave after wave

ERIN JAMIESON

TO SINK

algae tangles
between my
toes and I

cannot say
how easy it
is

to sink

one moment
sunbathing
by white sand
castles

the next sinking
beneath cruel
waves that do not
care what they take

O.P JHA

STREAKS

burnt time, pampered by cruel arsenals,
barking at uncared clinks emitting
incessantly from soft fountains,
carrying colossus craters filled
with scraps falling from frozen
wounds, isn't ready to marry
flowers dancing around the huts
of the Himalayan hermits

it's mocking
& scratching
the souls of the lot
escaping from the fire
of the day
& relishing the smoky items
in the malls – full of glass panes
but no mirror
in a self-forgetful night

here, nights and days aren't siblings
they look like chewed words
of diplomats engaged in spreading
a linen on wounds & sipping cocktail
brewed in the distillery of rage

below the ash
there's a phoenix
exhorting someone
to pluck delicately
grapes in Ukraine

O.P JHA

STREAKS

& dates in the Middle-East

a lonely rose withered
& fell down
lying uncared on the soil, it sobs:
“O flying phenomenon!
I need a road to tread.
The sky won’t decide my fate.
My shadow has left me.

I can’t marry peace.”

Next phase:
dreaming a succulent time
ready to flow through
the two breasts of the Earth
The Volga
The Mississippi
A boatman is searching
a new baby-bottle
on the opaque bottom
of feculent water

fire, ash, phoenix...

A pimple on a stripped face!

O.P JHA

MY LAST PITCHER

sands, as disjoint bruised limbs,
of a hot desert, are heaped in my heart;
under the dunes some footsteps are whispering
elegies on the death that found
no mourners in houses
no clamor in streets,
no epitaph on the grave
of olive whose branches were sold
all the tables of talks,
Arabian Dates
& Israeli grapes
found the place, as lovers
sharing the same pillow,
in the same bowl
& guests enjoyed the dinner

sands, now defeated, neither make a storm
nor enter my ears like a bolt from the blue

now, I pretend to be speechless
like my friend, a distant date tree,
barely visible from the foot
of Mount Zion

here, words aren't the items
for the last meal

O.P JHA

MY LAST PITCHER

or they aren't the Pyramids
where Pharaoh kings are sleeping
for centuries

they're the souls of a dejected desert
trying to find a new life in the bodies
of these sands

I'm saving my poetry
from being the final nail in the coffin

as a potter, I've sands
but I've no water for making more pots
I'm caring my last pitcher for the drought.

O.P JHA

AN ODYSSEY

In present

I love someone, charming
a fresh rose just emerged
out of the grip of the bud,
my love, a possibility
an intoxicating fragrance

when I'm in my heart

I feel a rose in it
I float through a timeless zone

when my mind, as watchman
delves into the affair

I feel an entangled thing,
four feet are moving
through a time-zone
I'm holding a hand
in an omnipresent calendar

we move inside a house,
with us a world enters inside
and many worlds freeze in it

many worlds get squeezed
on the bed
and a world is trickling down
on the linen

O.P JHA

AN ODYSSEY

between the timelessness

& time, many things swing

as long as we're in heart

& feeling a rose in it

my love holds

the pans of a balance

we've weight

but we're not feeling the gravity.

MARK TULIN

PREACHY

I don't like words
other than poetry,
don't like holy
holier than thou,
or holes
with loopholes

endless promises
with little rewards.
It's better to dwell
in the supernatural
without knowing
the all-knowing
without a pastor
who doesn't respect my privacy

who passes around
the collection buckets
while those outside the church
go hungry.

JONATHAN UKAH

IF I WERE TO LOVE TILL THE END OF TIME

If I were to love you till the end of time,
then time must be the impression of an ending,
or a gigantic globe with smooth edges and limits,
gluts of vastness, like beauty in a bloody bottle,
with breakability glittering like white diamonds;
where we can climb while rolling on its axis;
as the end of time is a fragment of its fragility,
and love is another clever art of staying alive,
when time's end stretches beyond imagination.
Then I should learn to cling to the edge of life,
when the globe of love tosses me around,
and I'm growing in the shadows of timelessness
where death will have a taste of that beauty
stacked carefully in the freezers of the living.
I know that life has no time but depth
which is the Heaven of passing beauty;
*for nothing permanent catches the passing eye
when the eye itself is the bridge to a body
condemned to flourish and disappear;
nothing permanent can stimulate the eye
when it stands to survive every season
and movement is not in its compartment.
Nor does it create a pulse through instability.
To love with the heart and not the eyes
is to discard eternity like a trite cliché,
that has neither depth nor admiration,
collapsing on the flat ground of frequency;
there is no precious time to love the living,
but that which is preserved for the love of the dead.*

JEFFREY ZABLE

F A M E

I certainly wouldn't want it because of the fact that you have to maintain the love of people you don't even know.

All it takes is one bad performance, one bad review, or a show of weakness to make people hate you.

Trying to stay in the good graces of the public is about as worthy as trying to be friends with a rabid rhinoceros.

To those who want it, I wish you the best.

See you in the next life!

JAMES NICOLA

COOL FRIENDSHIP

Cool friendship with someone who fills you up

with thought

delightful yet unbearable

and feeling ranging from lukewarm to bold

and hot

may start to fill a loving cup

but tea that's old and iced tastes terrible

with every sip as stale as it is cold

JAMES NICOLA

REUNIONS

When we went to our twenty-fifth reunion the bipeds there were not the ones we knew: their molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles had been replaced by new ones. Memories were transferred to new cells that hold memory banks, so Fred could say, “Hey, Karl, it’s good to see you. What’ve you been up to lately?” to Karl. But a few old friends mistook Karl for Bill, you, or me. At my fiftieth I plan on pretending to be someone else, just to see what happens.

Where have the molecules that made us up gone to? We know where the new influx comes from: air, food, water. Outflux: exhaling, perspiring, and so forth. (I won’t be vulgar.) And other folks have breathed our atoms in or drunk us, as have animals and plants, as we have breathed and drunk and eaten them. That’s why, when I pretend to be someone I’m not—or rather someone I was not, I won’t exactly be lying.

CITHARA PATRA

LAVENDER

Breathe in, breathe out
I take in the scent radiating
Off petals and bury my face
Into the bouquet
Wrapped in purple and white ribbons
I lay them before you
Breathe in, breathe out
My throat tightens as I choke out
Sobs I've held in for years
Once dry eyes welling up again
My heart breaks over the wish
To put this bouquet in your hands
Instead of laying them down on you

HELEN RANA

KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

I am the knowledge keeper.

The expert in this field
From a prestigious museum
I know more than anyone
About this artefact

It's a stick from a primitive tribe
From somewhere, made sometime
For someone, maybe someones
Possibly probably spiritual

Collected in Africa
By a rich Englishman
An explorer, seeker of natives
Imposer of meaning

Most visitors rush past it
To take selfies
With the fertility god
They find amusing close by

Our people have French names
Legacy of the Belgians
Who succeeded the Germans
Shattering us into pieces of empire

HELEN RANA

KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

This stolen staff holds knowledge
Culture, memories, skills
Far from its life force
Its purpose dissipating

Out of context, place and time
Rudely shown to anyone
Not just those who have
Taken oaths and sacred rites

Its power seeps away
Diminishing to a stick
It hungers to be recharged
Beseeching for rescue

Our lost knowledge keeper.

HIBAH SHABKHEZ

STRIKER

I am hurtling against the walls
Of the powder-lined board
Gaining strength from each collision
To hound hapless pieces
Into holes. Each that falls
Is quickly extracted and scored:
Black, ten points; white, twenty. No one,
Except me, ever asks
Why.

SEUNGMIN KIM

TO ASK OF LIFE

What should I do in this life?

I cannot ask this to my mother, who sits on the bed
For she would stroke my hair with soft fingers
And whisper in my ear that I am far too young
To be asking such difficult questions

What should I do in this life?

I have tried asking my father, who is in the kitchen now
Waiting for the cookies to bake and the milk to warm
So that he might come in with an armful of happiness
And beam as he pours upon us buckets full of joy

What should I do in this life?

Sister might know the answer to this, for she is older than I
And seems to have asked all the questions that I
Have heard the birds sing to their children in their sleep
But she is far, far, far away from me, and I cannot reach her
tonight

What should I do in this life?

I should try to ask Grandmother, for she'd surely tell me
Especially on nights that I might curl up in her arms
Beside the fireplace that illuminates the room
In hues of stunning sunsets and unforgettable simplicity

DONGEON KIM

THE BOAT

A loud horn spread through the air
Rumbling the world
Attracting everyone,
To the boat

The ships leaving right now,
With the people
waving up their hands,
Screaming goodbye to the ones left

There runs a man
In a black suit,
Running and running,
Yet the engine starts as the man sighs

The others peak their face out,
Waving goodbye,
To the fellows that are left behind
Hoping for a day to see them again
The boat swooshes,

Through the sea
Vanishing in sight
In a blink

DONGEON KIM

THE BOAT

The sound of the waves,
Starting to vanish,
With the people left behind
Sighing with a walk back

The boat filled with pleasure
Sound of happiness and delight
The laughter and giggles
filling up the boat.

JIAN YEO

THE KOREAN FLOWER

Her glass drops reflect the eyes
she once had sown,
as she sinks into the innocence that never
drifted away

A soft breeze swirls her silver hair as she
slowly collapse

 her wrinkled eyes,
brim her lips
 with the last water,
cascades of them
 she last colored,
kisses of sun bleeds through her body

Petals she collected in her vase,
withered too soon before goodbye—their
picturesque shades soak the
great emerald beauty, floating
Roses of Sharon on its gentle shivers,
and how she watch her fingers slip away from those
fading memories and the blooms

Gentle laughter of her children echoe like wind chimes,
each mellow tune harmonizing in her ears

and then she saw—
her daughter's warm tears trickling down, her
trembling hands cradling the weathered palms
that once taught her how to hold the world

JIAN YEO

THE KOREAN FLOWER

With her last breath, the mother whispers one final lullaby for her daughter:

*when mother leaves to pick oysters in the shadows of the island,
the baby stays behind alone, watching over the house
then, to the lullaby sung by the sea,
slowly and gently, the baby falls asleep,*

hoping that her daughter would marvel at the
ephemeral Nature and one day realize
how petals perish
beautifully.

ANNE EYRIES

A BRIEF HISTORY

from a warm tropical sea,
Wellsville Mountains
uplift steep and narrow
bearing fossils

freshwater lakes, Bear River
beavers, traders, trappers,
pelts stashed in caves,
hidden: caché

Cache Valley temperatures
rising – record highs,
water levels falling –
record lows

Great Salt Lake shrinking,
American white pelicans
abandon breeding sites,
coyotes blamed

cache-cache: hide and seek,
easier to hide than seek
truth; the short story of
extinction

THE QUASAR REVIEW

AUTHOR BIOS

*“Be who you are and say what you feel,
because those who mind don't matter, and
those who matter don't mind.”*

— Bernard M. Baruch

EMILY KLEDZIK

Emily (she/her) is an undergraduate student studying Creative Writing. She is a queer woman in Appalachia devoted to understanding humanity. Her writing pays tribute to the people around her, the divinity and slight humanity she sees within her surrounding nature, and the great writers that come before her. She can be found on instagram at the handle emilykledzik.

ERIN JAMIESON

Erin Jamieson's writing has been published in over eighty literary magazines, including two Pushcart Prize nominations. She is the author of four poetry chapbooks, including *Fairytales* (Bottle Cap Press). Her debut novel (*Sky of Ashes, Land of Dreams*) was published by Type Eighteen Books. X @erin_simmer

GERARD SARNAT

Gerard Sarnat's a multiple Pushcart/Best of Net Award nominee. His work's been widely published; including four collections; by Rattle, Brooklyn Review, Tokyo Poetry Journal, Gargoyle, New Delta Review, Buddhist Review, New York Times, Oberlin, Northwestern, Yale, Pomona, Harvard, Stanford, Dartmouth, Penn, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, NYU, Brown, North Dakota, McMaster, Maine, British Columbia/Toronto/Chicago and Virginia university presses. He's a Harvard Medical School-trained physician, Stanford professor, healthcare CEO. Currently, he's devoting energy and resources to dealing with climate justice, serving on Climate Action Now's board. Gerry's married since 1969, has three kids, six grandsons — and looks forward to future granddaughters. gerardsarnat.com

DONGEON KIM

Dongeon is currently in 7th grade and attends an international school in Vietnam. He likes to read both graphic novels and chapter books. He also likes to play games and socialize with his friends.

WILLIAM DORESKI

William Doreski lives in Peterborough, New Hampshire. He has taught at several colleges and universities. (2024). He has published three critical studies, including Robert Lowell's *Shifting Colors*. His essays, poetry, fiction, and reviews have appeared in various journals. IG @williamdoreski

DS MAOLALAI

DS Maolalai has been described by one editor as "a cosmopolitan poet" and another as "prolific, bordering on incontinent". His work has been nominated thirteen times for BOTN, ten for the Pushcart and once for the Forward Prize, and released in three collections; "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016), "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019) and "Noble Rot" (Turas Press, 2022). IG @dsmaolalai Email diarmo90@gmail.com

KIMUTAI KEMBOI ALLAN

Kimutai Kemboi Allan is a Kenyan writer residing in Nairobi. His works have been published or are forthcoming in *The Polaris*, *Empty Stars Review*, *Bitter Melon Review*, *ManicWorld Magazine*, *Eulogy Press*, *The Stray Branch*, *Crescent Currents*, *Soul Poetry*, *Prose & Arts Magazine*, *The Wayfarer Art and Literary Journal*, *Everscribe Magazine*, *the RIC Journal*, *DoubleSpeak Magazine*, *MEN: An International Anthology of African and Latin American Writers*, *the Redefining Poetry Anthology by Litterateur RW magazine*, *the "Best New African Poets 2023 Anthology"*, "Our Stories Redefined Anthology for African Writing 2023 (Poetry Edition)", *The Piker Press*, *Prodigy Magazine*, *Our Poetry Archive*, *the INK Babies Literary Magazine*, *Written Tales*, *African Global Networks (AGN)*, *Ake Review*, *The Active Muse*, *The Writer's Space Africa*, *The Kalahari Review*, *The Naluubale Review*, *Writers Resist and Havik's 2020 Anthology (Homeward)*. He is currently working on a Collection of Poems.

JAMES B. NICOLA

James B. Nicola is the author of eight collections of poetry, the latest three being *Fires of Heaven: Poems of Faith and Sense*, *Turns & Twists*, and *Natural Tendencies*. His nonfiction book *Playing the Audience: The Practical Actor's Guide to Live Performance* won a Choice magazine award. He has received a Dana Literary Award, two Willow Review awards, Storyteller's People's Choice award, one Best of Net, one Rhysling, and eleven Pushcart nominations—for which he feels stunned and grateful. A graduate of Yale, James hosts the Writers' Roundtable at his library branch in Manhattan: walk-ins are always welcome.

CITHARA PATRA

Cithara Patra currently lives in NC with their family, traveling between there and Texas. They spend much of their time writing and studying languages. They're fond of reading all kinds of things, from romance to horror. . They're also a big fan of things from the ocean, dachshunds, and making brand new meals. In their spare time, they travel with their family around the city and check out brand new restaurants and places to eat.

HELEN RANA

Helen Rana is a member of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain, was a Creative Writing Associate at Bath Spa University in 2017-21, has a BA (Hons) in Communication & Media Production, and an MA in TV & Film Studies. Her short stories have been published in anthologies, and her eight feature and eight short screenplays have all been selected for film festivals or won awards. She lives in Bristol, England.

SEUNGMIN KIM

Seungmin Kim is a diligent scholar enrolled in an international school in Hong Kong. He is meticulously curating his compilation of written works to fortify his candidacy for admission to esteemed academic institutions.

HIBAH SHABKHEZ

Hibah Shabkhez is a writer and photographer from Lahore, Pakistan. Her work has previously appeared in Harpur Palate, Stirring, Forevermore, Empyrean Literary Magazine, Good River Review, and a number of other literary magazines. Studying life, languages, and literature from a comparative perspective across linguistic and cultural boundaries holds a particular fascination for her.

O.P JHA

O.P. Jha's works appeared in more than one hundred journals including Rigorous, Mantis, Punt Volat, Discretionary Love, In Parentheses, Shot Glass, Lothlorien Poetry, Kelp, The Cry Lounge, The Odessa Collective, Backchannels, Homer's Odyssey, The Indian Literature, The Broken Teacup, Poetry Pacific, Five Fleas-Itchy Poetry, By the Beach, miniMag, Iceblink, Infinite Scroll, The Rome Review, The Tiger Leaping Review, The Accendo, Aloka, Ghudsavar, Panorama, Gabby and Min's Review, Hoot, Vocivia, The Marbled Sigh, Balestra, Forevermore, and others. His poems appeared in anthologies "We were Seeds" and "We are Resilient". He holds Ph.D. in "Translation Studies". X: @OPJha17

JIAN YEO

Jian Yeo is a student of poetry based in Massachusetts, where the changing seasons and scenic landscapes serve as a constant source of inspiration for her work. She is currently a student, balancing her academic pursuits with her passion for writing.

ANNE EYRIES

Anne Eyries has poetry in *Amsterdam Quarterly*, *Consilience*, *Dream Catcher*, *Dust*, *Feral*, *Green Ink*, *Hyacinth Review*, *London Grip New Poetry*, *Moss Puppy*, *Piker Press*, and others. She lives in France.