



Through the Looking Glass, by Connie Liu

## AUGUST 2018 Summer Poems

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**This is Not a Poem** By Aarushi Bhardwaj

This is not a poem

and I am not a poet

when I can't find eloquent words to describe

that more blacks are incarcerated in America right now

than in apartheid South Africa

when beautiful words fail me and I can't express

the worries of the deprived through the complexity of language

that our key policy makers and leading civil servants

have never had a job outside of politics

that sixty percent of Jews identify as atheists since the holocaust

no, I am not a poet

when I can't find crafty words to illustrate the fact

that before 2008 Mandela had been on America's list

of most dangerous terrorists for more than half a century

that

massacres and genocides and partitions and conflicts

give way to erratic sensationalizing where no one can hear the cries

that when the ending is unsatisfactory

not many stick around to watch

some wax lyrical about the tragedy and the shock

about something tangible lost by something intangible

the pleasures of life lost to the end of a sharp knife

the joy of living lost in a bullet wound

but the real comedy is how some fail to acknowledge it at all

chaos befallen on them who dared to utter a syllable

lest someone knows it was their fault

the plot twist is that there is no plot twist

and I wish there was some metaphor

to lower you into this grief

but that is why this is not a poem

and I am not a poet

but it's fair to say

the heart's crafted to evermore persist

a rugged pioneer of time, relentless optimist

that sometimes it's an act of bravery even to exist

but you see

I've crossed lines, not followed traditional poetic form

failed to construct elaborate metaphors to explain

that immigration isn't a choice

that a person probably has more Muslim blood

than the people in the mosque they conspire to blast

never is survival available to all those who deserve it

and so it goes

how do I explain all this and still retain artistic worth?

the wanderers, the grievors- here they are doomed to roam

hatred boils in them and sears the world like a blazing scar

and humanity falls when tyrants are hailed

but how can one be falling, if flying feels the same?

how does man forgive himself

for all the things he did not become?

a refugee buried within suffering

for a war he cannot comprehend

but it's all done now

anger surrounds us

hate courses through us  
yet this hate is unaware  
of the humanity she births into us  
we are made of all the things that break us  
just to keep us alive  
maybe I should've just said that, but I didn't  
because  
this is not a poem  
and I am not a poet  
of things that seem out of place in today's world  
like writing a poem which isn't one

Aarushi Bhardwaj is a school student from India and has been previously published in Teen Ink Magazine and The Hindustan Times.

**Nutrition Facts** By Caitlin Saloman

I rub the neon rind

Of the juicy clementine,

A fragrant sun I cradle in my palm.

It croons of life so sweet,

And it's mighty nice to eat,

That thick-skinned ball from California's groves.

It's coated with a shine

Of chemicals that rhyme

With names of third-world countries I can't say.

I'm sure it's safe to eat,

(If no substances have leached)

Into the soil where this gem was grown.

See—the crop must have been good,

For they all look as they should,

And taste the same and share their DNA.

And since we've cloned a sheep,

(To match the people that we feed)

It's no trouble to clone a few small fruits.

Why, in only a short time

Instead of me in line,

My double will be buying this instead.

Caitlin is an English major at Grove City College who has too many half-filled journals lying around. When she's not writing, she can be found eating pizza, watching Seinfeld, or listening to music.

**House** By Lydia Friedman

These days I'm still adrift,

captain of a childhood tub

that wishes it were a skiff.

Someday I'll shipwreck & wash up

on a shore just strange

enough to do. Kneeling in foreign muck,

I'll build a house, shingle to hinge.

Like this. Four walls, each brick a word.

Slant rhymes for roof-slats, arranged

in terza rima to keep rain out. Hard

truths for muntins & panes.

Each door a creaky metaphor from cupboards

to closets. Ideas grand & mean

will waft from the beanstalk

chimney like a kitchen kettle's whine.

And in the garden, silk-

petaled inspirations will puff

& bloom with incessant talk.

Lydia Friedman is a nineteen-year-old time traveler who once went on a blind date with a marble statue in Vienna. She lives in New England and can be reached by howling into the void, or at [www.crookedbutinteresting.wordpress.com](http://www.crookedbutinteresting.wordpress.com).

**Wishing in the Wood** By Lydia Friedman

Consecrate me with dead leaves,

weave me a crown of cobwebs,

cloak my weary shoulders in mist & moss –

today is my birthday.

Tonight I am king of the forest.

My scepter is the limb of an old oak;

my ministers are poison mushrooms.

I will make war with the moon.

My coat of arms is a chrysanthemum,

the proudest of flowers.

Tonight I will unlace my harlequin's mask

and make wishes on cattails instead of candles.

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## The Gypsy By Sophia Bouzid

Sew the sun into your chest

And pull it out

When the sky is napalm

And you can't see the horizon line because it doesn't exist for you

Remember where you came from, young gypsy girl

Trace a map with your finger in the sand

And fill your pockets with granules of a past, eroded down

Plant a seed in your mind

With the dirt ontop your fathers tapered back

And water from your mothers swollen eyes

Plant your roots in a new place

A better place

Grow.

Sophia Bouzid is a Muslim-American writer of Algerian and German descent. She writes poetry for her school's literary magazine and the Bay Area Poetry Coalition. When she isn't writing, she is probably at a show rehearsal. She also enjoys searching for unconventional objects to plant flowers in.

**Portrait of Dr. Gachet, painted by Vincent van Gogh** By Nathalie Mitchell



A straw nose

struck by wanderlust,

ventures from the concerned brow.

Dr. Gachet, did you mind sitting long enough

For the painter to paint? The pedestrians

pattered by, those Parisians

with prim shoes and prim shadows, and still

you sat still,

considering your considerer as he condensed

that wandering beak in sad, staccato strokes

of ochre and oxidized bronze.

buttons down your front;

eyes in your head.

Consolation:

at least you've been noticed, yellows and seasick greens, in a

canvas the same cotton as your coat.

Nathalie M. is a rising sophomore at Lakeside Upper School in Seattle, Washington. She loves living in the Pacific Northwest, where she enjoys getting out onto its beautiful lakes. Nathalie is an avid reader and has enjoyed writing for several years now.

**Down Days** By CG Marchl

The white sweat burns, stiffens my spine,

stains white bedsheets in the shape  
of an un-motivated-bothered body.

Standing up, my eyes glazed over  
with white static, head flipped  
like an hourglass, white chemical  
sands trickle and transmit through the hour.

After each cycle of step,  
the breath in my chest is white cold;  
a vast cathedral with pitter patter hallowing tolls.

Sclera are wide open, red dead trees  
spawn against a white sunset.

The skin underneath is wrinkled  
like a white water current. Mother

rafts around me. Her speech

is delayed subtitles, white outlines

that blend into bedroom walls.

I pretend I am in control,

watching myself crawl fetal

back into bed. White light

merry-goes round me,

leaves me in the night.

The day is done and I am dirty

like fresh linen. White is the daze

that paints the inside of my head.

CG Marchl is currently sixteen years old and attends Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12 as a Literary Arts major. Besides writing, her hobbies include jewelry making, embroidery, and watching movies.

## How to Not Say Regret By Grace Zhang

When karma shot him in  
the bubble tea shop, they  
shot you too. Heart fell straight  
out of your chest, plopped across  
the bamboo floor, thrashing like a  
fish out of water. Its ugly veins  
rupturing, spitting ostensibly.  
A desiccated, carved out  
hollow. Nightmares of  
tapioca balls exiting the  
revolver, ricocheting off  
the walls, smearing all the  
love letters you traced with  
him in spilled sugar. How

to not burst whilst

rearranging burnt

bergamot orange and

darjeeling tea to call each other

“honey”. Now he bleeds

oolong like he used to

inhale it from your mouth in

between shifts, in

between the eternal spaces

where you didn't utter it

back.

Grace Zhang is a seventeen year old from Princeton High hungry to get out of the bubble and experience the world. Her work has been nationally commended by the Scholastic Art & Writing awards and is forthcoming in the National Poetry Quarterly. Some things she likes are liminal spaces, peach oolong bubble tea, and the mundane morning stars.

for Love -Mark Greenwold, 1966-1967 By Anna Weber



LOVE is a hot steamy shower after an

afternoon of sled riding.

LOVE is Dad singing U2 songs you have heard 27,000 times before  
and grilling steaks, saving the rib eye for you.

LOVE is a thin slice of vanilla cake with sugar-sweet pink icing,

LOVE is only having to pay 25 cents for a gumball,

\$5 for a thrift store orange dress,

and \$0 for a hug from your second grade best friend.

LOVE is clean linen sheets pulled tight over a medium firm mattress

and the smell of lavender,

the “click-click” of heels on tile,

blue and orange squawking macaws.

LOVE is anything that makes you feel like you are hurtling 100 miles per hour over the moon,

even when your teal-painted toes are resting firmly on the ground.

Anna Weber is a senior at North Royalton High School. She loves writing, and her work has been published in Inkwell, her school's literary magazine and she has taken the creative writing course this year. Anna will be attending Calvin College and plans on majoring in Speech-Language Pathology. She has not been previously professionally published.

**The Ocean is Breathing** By Charlie Weerts

After an afternoon

Of long talks,

And boardwalks,

I found myself at your door

Trying to change

Something I knew

I couldn't.

The ocean seemed

To pulsate behind me

Like my chest

As I took a deep breath

Before knocking on your

door.

And when you opened,

My heart stopped

And I crumpled to

dust.

Charlie Weerts is a fifteen-year old, trans boy. He is a poet who plays ukulele and enjoys wearing tropical print shirts.

**Narrow Roads** By Alexa Bocek

Our conversations have narrowed

What were once wide

And busy highways

Are now dirt country

Backroads, almost

bike paths or walking trails

They are slender streets with

Unlit lampposts

We've been reduced to talk of

Cigarette prices and

"How's your mother been?"

"Good, thanks for asking"

Sometimes I catch you on roads

We've been down before

You've asked me questions

Three or four times since

I met you and the answer hasn't

Changed. Our lanes are lacking

Soon I suppose

we will meet a dead end

But when I think of how

Our spacious streets were once

Open and endless, like we'd

Be driving forever,

I cannot stop the car.

Alexa Bocek is a young writer from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania whose work has appeared in The Claremont Review, Literary Heist, Mystic Blue Review, and Pulp Literary magazine. She's an editor and staff member of BatCat Press. She has also won several awards and honorable mentions for her poetry, fiction, and screenwriting. She's been writing for several years and attends the Lincoln Park Performing Arts school as a Literary Arts student.

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