

The
**TOE TREE
JOURNAL**

**A SEASONAL REPOSITORY
OF RATIONALIST POETRY**



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**HERE
COMES
THE
SONNET.**

The Toe Tree Journal

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Issue #4

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Letter From the Editor

Nothing stirs the human heart like hot weather, and it is to all of heat's attendant joys and melancholies that this issue is dedicated. If poetry, as some have said, is a burning, then summer should be the most poetic time of year. Truth is, of course, good weather can sometimes be the enemy of self-examination. But if that's the case, summer should be the time to read and reflect the examinations of others. We hope you do so here. Take in the best of the sun's energy with a cool beverage, a beach chair and this compendium of burning wit and incendiary insights. Apply directly to your forehead.

Sincerely yours,

Oliver Benjamin, *Editor*

THE TOE TREE JOURNAL AND THE TEMPLE OF EARTH

THE TOE TREE JOURNAL is a magazine of original poetry that aims to celebrate and uncover rational aspects in our lives and in poetry itself. True to our expectations, there are a lot of talented poets out there who don't find rationality and poesy incompatible. The popular assumption that poetry is chiefly a "right-brain" phenomena is given a serious challenge in the creations of these gifted contributors. We hope you find this "poetry for the left side of the brain" as inspiring and meaningful as we do.

The Toe Tree Journal is a publication of the Temple of Earth, the world's first "non-religious religion," a religion (if you will) that exalts pure rationality. Please visit its website at www.templeofearth.com to see what

it's all about. Ordain as a minister for free, enjoy the site, and all the organization has to offer.

Poets featured in this journal are not necessarily adherents to the Temple of Earth philosophy, nor are they necessarily members of the organization. They are simply artists whose work we believe helps elucidate our contention that rationality can be poetic. Moreover, rationality can display aspects normally considered part and parcel of the emotional and intuitive spheres of existence: i.e. beauty, joy, transcendence and wisdom.

Thanks for reading. If you feel like contributing any original work, please send submissions to: toetree@templeofearth.com.



“Poetry is nearer to vital truth
than history.”

Plato

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CRAIG BROAD

Virginity, Have You Lost Your Way?

Chasity,
Why has your belt worn down?
And those eyes that blew me away,
Oh I could of sworn that was love on the backseat,
I could have sworn there's blood on the backseat,
Maybe there's some form of tact, advice,
Maybe you're turning grey for me....

So baby pass me your hand luggage,
I promise to hold it up high,
Or maybe hand me your bloody heart,
Trust me, I'll hold it real tight.

This isn't feeding time at the Zoo

This isn't feeding time at the Zoo
Family is a place mat,
Abandoned within a pool of doubt,
A table of cold fries,
And the salt shaker sideways,
Edging its way from the tearaway kids,
feeling like an avalanche is pushing down,
And it just doesn't have the energy to get back up,
Well now that's not fair,
You never see the barbeque sauce
Picking on the ketchup,
You never see the waitress,
Tell than customer that his tips aren't good enough,
But then the customer is always right,
Especially when commenting on the bill,
Well i'm not a customer at your café,
I'm not the ketchup covering your dinner plate,
I'm not the grain of salt tumbling away,
I am the child that's saying,
Blood's thinner than water.

UMESH GHOSH DASTIDER

Untitled

Always there is an aperture in mind,
From where hopes would pass:
To continue the pace of our lives...

TONELIUS OLIVER

Untitled 1

I want all the animals
out of the cages
Immediately!
How would you like it
If you were taken out of your habitat
and stared at by tourists?
That tiger is not smiling by the way
So put your camera away
Nothing wrong with zoology
Something wrong with the philosophy
of capturing wildlife
Aren't we all mammals
just minding our own business
Knowing the tiger swallowed the gazelle
but that dispute went back along way
Something of which you know nothing about
It's called nature
I want all the animals
out of the cages
Pronto!

Untitled 2

The sun is so bright that we can't see
The remotest stars are so gloomy that we can't watch
Ever are things are most being easy to be.
To be the worst is as hard to be the best
Similar to be shortest or highest for endless
The sun which rises in the east daily what is the difference?
Difference is in the eyes and its nature
But always there is some confusion though baseless
Not understandable complexes of mind
Is the main culprit behind everything we see.
Though it is obvious that's end and over
A question makes a question and so on.
But the circumference can be drawn by axioms
However still we are hoary confusions are there
Our prosperity deeply affects whereon.

WILLIAM RUBEY

Roll

Another day tumbles back into our restless wake
And night's sickly sliver of a smile,
Looms to greet our hurried arrival
Like the shadow of a wave poised to break.
Glancing back, we rush forward
Along feet-beaten streets that steam and pulse-
Our engines glow so red and pretty.
A new day is coming for us
With night's poor crooked smile bearing down
Like a storm that's bound to break through the shutters.
We are charged with progress;
A slow procession under the stars.
We are fighting a force that isn't even there.
Time, and the way it rolled back,
And how it will roll forward again.

Illumination

I was at the shore awaiting the sun.
Slow and full my eyes brightened
As the harmonious vista of a new world
Burst forth and lay beaming before me.
The first settlers awoke to this innocent vision,
Though its pristine beauty had long since withered
In the glassy eyes of silent natives.
Now the remnants of a sabotaged ascension
Hover over this barren coast
As whispers and wispy shadows of an interrupted dream.
The ebb and flow of blind explorations;
All their brave hope and ambition came to bear
The bitter wisdom and sad fear of a new generation.
So I watch the rhythm of the sun and waves
Wondrously refulgent, made to endlessly rise and fall.
And they seem to stare back, as if to ask of me
How so many eyes could look and not see.

Vital Signs

Watch

This train comes once only

Fiercely revolving, with momentous determination

Listen

This bell's sounded its last toll

Whispers will drown it once and for all

Wonder

No answer should ever stand

To end the question entirely

Live

If it's the last thing you do

Live to watch, listen, and wonder

LOUIE CREW

Great Land o' Goshen!

Then God said, "I'm lonely still.
I think I'll make me a friend.
Kneading clay fetched from the upper Nile,
God worked a full day fashioning the creature
to look exactly like God--strong, agile, graceful.
And when it was evening, God breathed
into the creature the breath of life,
and the creature became a living soul.
Later, as the two supped under moonlight
by the ocean, God snapped two fingers,
and a male servant appeared.
"We would like more wine," God said.
"Yessum," he muttered as he left the pair in peace.

MICHAEL LEVY

Untitled 1

Now you see me
now you don't
waving to particles.

Untitled 2

In a child's mind
hearing negative expressions
sound tying notes.

In an Old Home

He lets out a hiss
from the corner of his mouth
it sounds like air
escaping from a blocked radiator
this is something he does on
regular intervals
eighty-seven years on earth
has taken its toll
now locked safely away from family
in an old peoples home
he reads all the negative news
then suddenly he
hisses himself from earthly erroneousness
traveling far away
to a better place
soon the hissing will stop forever

The Somber Dweller

He was a momentous professor
ennobled by the queen,
She knighted him, Sir Draytor,
although he was seldom seen,
His demeanor was cranky and sour,
living up high, locked away,
in an intellectual ivory tower,
They couldn't sing, he's a jolly fella
so they droned, he's a real somber dweller,
No time for laughter, merriment, not one bit,
until his dying day,
his brain congested ... with serious grit

A Tailored Life

There ain't no
point,
in getting angry 'n sour,
schlepping doldrums with you,
through each 'n every hour,
For sure, it'll solve diddley squat,
You know, I've noticed, you do get in a mood
quite a lot,
You may well take worry as your hero,
but if you do, all your dreams
will amount to zero,
When you tailor negative emotions,
into your racket,
you'll more 'n likely end your days
in a very straightened jacket.

FRANCIS MASAT

“Indifferent”

Minus ten
below zero tonight -
forty mile-per-hour wind.
High drifts and howls
bring shivers
to my skin -
and deeper.

Technology
is little help:
Nature ignores us all -
can erase us in an instant,
uncaring,
moving on,
indifferent.

“Flowers It Will Seep”

- I29, north of Fargo, ND

“What is that you’re holding
in your hands
so tightly squeezed?”
Opening them with care,
I show fresh dirt
from beneath our feet.

“Concrete will form a road
here, tomorrow,
and dirt like this will no longer be
of use to our seed or eye.
I will save this handful,
a token of what used to be,
and spread it on my garden.
There, with rain and light,
into my flowers it will seep
for all of us to see.”

“Lagoon Jellies”

pulsing, rising, pulsing, ...

All soft and gooey
looking, yet clear
as the water all around.

pulsing, gliding, pulsing, ...

Crystal mushrooms
with tentacle roots
all filigree and gauze.

pulsing, falling, pulsing, ...

Ignoring us and moving
as if alive ... but not?
At what point, then,

pulsing, gliding, pulsing, ...

in time's pace
will we get to know
each other's view?

pulsing, pulsing, pulsing, ...

D U R E N D A

you promised letters

i am the woman whose twigs
you do not snap on approach
i am the woman whose current defies gravity
and washes out your thoughts of her
i am the woman lilith left lucifer for

so, where are my letters?

neptune can't save you either

there is a sea creature who is impregnated and trapped by its mate in a
den too far from even a hungry predator to be lured by its shrieking as
its unborn offspring eat her from the inside out and are birthed when
there is nothing left to hold them in for just a shell remains
my mother says she relates

AMBER FLAIZ

Danaus plexippus

Liquid skin, nail, and scar;
folds the wings into the jar.
Symmetry, in spine the same;
pin them down in book and frame.
Lit upon the petal snows,
priceless, perfect, sunless pose.
Stars derail; the sky dissect
outstretched palms in genuflect.

EDWARD SALEM

Where I Did With the Ashes

people often dump them
in the wind, in the ocean
a faded smoke-like spreading
waste of a ritual

what I did with my dead was
(despite keeping her toothbrush
her wilted purple dress)
I poured her ashes
into a bowl and with a spoon
ate them, a dry chewing
I guzzled warm water
and finished my meal
not with consolation
but with resolve

oh, her ashes
went to the ocean
anyway

Stop Pretending

I think besides
all the other forms of God
there is one form where the
God-body is disgusting
like hamburger
pellet-marks, dusty buzzing scabs
many breasts and many penises.
But I must control the image
push it into pity
lead it out of lust
and the desire to be in bed with God.
Women stretched by an imitated aggression
mauling the purple lips of a holy child.
It's a zoo in God
and I want to see how their hands move.

God doesn't stop pretending, so when I
stop pretending
I lose God.
To believe is to surrender to the venom;
that's the way life is
best lived
within the viper.

Art Stunt

White young woman
as an attempt at art I
think successful walked into a coffee
shop wearing trendy everything: bronze purse
gorgeous turquoise blouse and white silk something
underneath, a slanted half-inch of it.

The attempt at art was her denim miniskirt
her prim, clean genitals touching open air
a denim belt, really, high on her waist
two inches thick, the shade of near
a clean, dark pink blemishless and
brave I think all
us men ate our
hearts in grief when in
ancient, even a century ago
if this stunt had
we would have been
'in the right' to have
all of us.

KEITH WITTINGSLOW

Cascade

The mind's web-like linguistico-semantic interpenetrations successively elude the brain's tendency towards entropically driven downward-spiraling neuro-hormonal/electro-chemical decay.

Moreover, the will to comprehend endures and thus redirects *both* inherently chaotic ever-recurring substantive (objective) quanta *and* ever-evolving (subjective) sentient qualia.

Dimensionaloid events project glyphically and dynamically as factions of creature constituted creations (fictions) while struggling to resist untold tautological "apparent world" articles of faith.

Within psychologically prejudiced and presupposed perspectives (to the extent that they are consciously and/or unconsciously stipulated) lie implicitly embedded translational interpretations.

Causa efficiens calculably exist alongside submerged pathos, sensually deprived/depraved sufferings, and occasionally emerging (yet formulaicly formed) functional forces.

Mere semeiotics and unreal (unknown and unproven) theories stultify even the most precise and careful human attempts to systematically arrange a union of essences, ideas, effects, affects, moments, and meanings.

Each event-horizon seemingly seeks all progressively and distally driven hypotheses.

Each *causa finalis* is a multiverse of many maps relationally and contextually flooding the already supersaturated sensation-warped subject.

As we strive toward a measure of stability and light, we must consequently conceive a conditional yet climactic *simulacra* in which equilibrium *flows* willfully and representationally (though symbiotically) *with* an intentionally inspired and conspired cascade of comprehension.

RAUD KENNEDY

The Summit

Our breath lingers
in front of our faces
as we exhale
the mountain air
and look down
at the powder dusted valley.
Floating in the moment
between dangers passed
and the descent to come,
we laugh at our fear
of slipping and falling,
of being left alone
without the other.

JAMES B. NICOLA

Empties

So many empties
turned in for coin
saved from the abandoned beach
or stenchy gutter
only to be scoured, reissued, and
in time land
on the beach again
or topple in a gutter to become
so many empties
turned in for coin
and so on
until broken

So many bottles live filled, drunk, discarded,
redeemed So many pocket all that change.

Sisyphus Rises

It's not bad boulders up steep hills
of hell but goopy granules here,
beard grains, a morning ritual's
remains, rinsed clear
but only till tomorrow when
I'll toss and turn again, then wake
and shave and all of that, and then
the bed, re-make.
Some days I think I'll skip a day
to liven up the deathly pace
with an omission; if the way
is not a race
I should be able to, and can,
but don't like messes, so my drum
beats on as nearly any man
collected, some.
Vacations come and go but still
whatever foreign part I haunt

I rise and shave and fade—and will,
until I can't.

Nothing

There are two kinds.
One's o'erbesot by strokes of busy-ness
and issues haunting in a swirling round
like too much of a storm or a good thing
tugging soul, mind, and limbs—your heart, perhaps,
though not a lover's, necessarily.
There under fardels, failures' expectations
accelerating their acute demands,
you find all of a sudden, in the eye
of the hurricane, a stillness or a peace,
short-circuited from action, possibly,
but alternately
a well-deserved black blankness of the mind,
appropriate tranquility, respite.
The second kind's the same without the storm
and gentler. It's much harder to attain.
Either Nothing is quite like everything:
the Black Hole, heavy, packed, that birthed the universe;
the pause cast by a person on a verge.

Untitled

If you think you see God by day
it might
be merely light.
But if you spot a deity
at night
you must be right!

GLEN NORRIS

sudden Reflexive Assumption of Me

Entities are not to be multiplied without necessity.

or

*The relationship of God and life and man
before I fell asleep and hoped
I would remember in the morning.*

soap-shaving off my growth,
my former self, my gore,
a sudden reflec-
so delighted i remembered Ockham
from the restless night before!

“always keep a marker”
in the vacant toothbrush slot.
wrote this on clean glass
while the razor was hot:

*1 people create, and, 2 people like
to create things like them, not the rest.
3 the simplest explanation
is usually the best.*

we create things like ourselves,
things like we who are making,
making things like we, who are.
who are making things like we?

like creating things that
creating things that like
we create liking things
like we were created.

i was made like i was.
so will i make like a man.

the creature i cut
from the mirror gives a nod.

friends, it is likely,
you are very much like God.

God who like me
must too wonder who
made you,

the eventual question
is who made who?
at the end of the answers: I.
Love,
You.

CAMERON SCOTT CONAWAY II

Suicide Sighting

“Sometimes you just get so tired of being tired
and you just need to sleep.”

~ *Message on the man's suicide note,*
May 26th 2006.

Newspapers, TV dinners,
soup cans and cobwebs
decorate the trailer's entrails.
Eau de dog shit
with worn wrestling mat
balm the room.
There he is.
Slouched on the couch
watching television
without eyes.
Single-shot shotgun
still clutched in his hands
like a remote control.
Maggots and blood
like rice pilaf
and spaghetti sauce
sit atop the roots
of his neck.

DAVID KESSEL

Monsoon

Monsoon
It will be here soon,
With just one another twisting of the Moon.

The skies
Will once again capsize,
As tears of vapor moisten Nature's eyes.

And heat,
By sudden wetness beat,
Will sound a shameful, hurried retreat,

And thus
The rain will fall on us,
Monsoon is here; there's nothing to discuss.

Southern Snow

Beyond the waters, way below,
Lie shiny caps of Southern snow.
Beneath the songs of Southern Seas,
Reside its blinding mysteries.

How could it be that past the palms,
The hoolahs, and Pacific calms,
There could exist a cold abyss
Of dazzling white in starry bliss?

Us, Arctic folks cannot believe,
That Southern skies can coldness weave,
That just behind the Tonga chiefs
And warm and fruitful coral reefs,

There lies again another chill
Of glossy hoar in eerie still.

The Sea

The sea...
Its purpose is to be
A sea.

For you to go and observe
And see

Its sundry moods
Its gentle calm
Or shaggy rage,

Sometimes, its bashful youth
The sea denudes,
Sometimes, its wise old age.

It doesn't judge
It doesn't blame,
It just exists,

In being 'it'
It always revels
And persists,

And if you feel
Your life is dull
And has no glee,

Come spend some time
Alone
Beside the grand old sea.

Absorb its greatness
And its endless scope,
And let it fill
Your life
With fresh, new hope.

While friends and lovers
May just come and go
At will,

To you, its mission
It will never fail
To fulfill.

The sea
Will always be

Your faithful friend

That doesn't lie, or nagger
Or pretend.

It understands you fully
Yes, siree!
You can rely
Upon
The friendship
Of the sea.

The Gorge

Oh, how gorgeous is the gorge
With jagged insides, and a leprose underside,
Whose dried-up river bed would always search
An exit to to release its non-existent slide.

Beneath the low-lying clouds, the kites
Would swoop inside its topsy-turvy arc,
And soar again from its rough bottom to its heights,
Each one rapacious like some winged shark.

The lonely cacti on its craggy walls
Across its spaces to each other nod
As brazen winds inside its limits squall,
Their whooshing flights so harum-scarum and roughshod.

And pasty fogs within its furrow gad
Each morning when the sun is hiding still
To later melt inside the gemstone-clad
And rocky fold, when noon dissolves their chill.

What wrinkled frown of the ages past
Could crease the surface of the Earth like this?
A stony scowl that would later last
Millennia in its cacophonous abyss.

So harsh and yet, so gorgeous is the gorge;
Its grey-toothed edges smiling at the stars
That 'twixt the rocks its craggy pride would forge,
Its bouldered bottom filled with timeless scars.

RAGHAB NEPAL

Cigarette

I burn your legs,
Bite your head
Suck your soul
And inhale straight.
I crush you beneath
My dirty feet,
Throw you lonely
To your merciless fate.
Been no friend, for so long
Living in my blood, in my lungs
I hate living, you help me die
I puff you out into the sky
Still you call me as a friend
And I rush, to get your smell.
You are the only true friend of mine
In my lonely and ugly times
None had been so close, so dear
To my heart and to my lungs,
Love in my heart, still lies for you
And I don't care about your bitter truth.

PETER SCHWARTZ

what wasn't (ode to an atheist)

I am the nostrum
and the suffering...

crossed out too many times,
a few symbols left drying
on the clothesline

till the next storm
next to a patient list of losses
by a bottle of vodka

I am a living epitaph in dis-
agreement with the fixed
psychology of my own shadow

a creature with a tapeworm
too terrible to trust
marching with invoices

down to the cafe for yet
another drink off the wheelbarrow
of common sense

OLIVER BENJAMIN

Past Teach

“We will bury you” said the Chief of Crews,
“Like the Hitman did to all them Jews
Like the mower on his workman’s moor
Plowed chinamankind into manure.”

“Not so fast,” said Spotted Dick,
“Our sleeves are filled with stones and sticks,
We’re on our way up to the sky
Where we’ll crap on you from way up high.”

And drop our do we did so well,
Like angels eating Taco Bell,
Hurling bombs into their eyes,
As they searched for peprole’s paradise.

Gorbasplotch had this to say,
“If we join you will you go away?
Men oppress men or the other way round --
We’d mastered that before you clowns.”

Now the Czars are back and they’re wearing Armani,
Crime is the king and the criminals Commie,
The streets are all Porsched and the prolix is parried,
But the rich still eat borscht and the poor still get buried.

feelin' so logical!



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