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# THE IBIS HEAD REVIEW



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THE IBIS HEAD REVIEW

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*SEPTEMBER 2016*

*FOUNDING EDITOR*

Eli T. Mond

*MANAGING EDITOR*

Carolyn Whittico

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## *ABOUT T.I.H.R.*

*The Ibis Head Review* is a quarterly literary publication dedicated to the idea that poetry is a necessary aspect of the human experience & it should be appreciated by people of all backgrounds & interests — not just poets. We seek to honor the intellectual dignity of the reading public by publishing nothing but genuinely meaningful & high-quality content from both established & emerging writers.

## *CONTACT*

EMAIL

[theibisheadreview@gmail.com](mailto:theibisheadreview@gmail.com)

TWITTER

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

INSTAGRAM

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

FACEBOOK

[www.facebook.com/TheIbisHeadReview](https://www.facebook.com/TheIbisHeadReview)

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*PLEASE  
ENJOY!*

## ***ELI T. MOND***

ELI T. MOND is the creative alias of DAVID DAVIS, a writer, artist, and mystic from Detroit, MI. In May of 2016, he founded *The Ibis Head Review*, a digital literary magazine that publishes poetry and poetry related content on a quarterly basis. He is currently an undergraduate at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, where he studies English and Music. His primary medium of expression is poetry; however, he often dabbles in fiction, music, and visual art as well.

## A Letter from the Editor

---

Dear Reader,

Hello and Welcome to the Inaugural Issue of “The Ibis Head Review”

As I write this, I am putting the finishing touches on the first issue, and I must say that I am extremely proud of how everything is shaping up. Formatting this document, as well as the site where this poetry will also be held is a painstaking process; however, creating a fully functional literary publication is something that I’ve wanted to do for quite some time now and I’m happy that my vision is finally coming to fruition.

Before going any further, I thought that I would introduce myself so that you could have a bit more information about the guy who is offering you yet another literary magazine to read: Firstly, Eli T. Mond is a pen name. My real name is David Davis and I am currently a full-time student at the University of Michigan where I’m studying English, as well as music and possibly German — depending on how my second year of it goes. I’ve loved creative writing for as long as I can remember, constantly dabbling in a variety of different styles and genres, including fiction and songwriting. However, poetry became my main mode of expression after studying, and falling in love with, the works of Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe in high school. Some of my influences include the aforementioned writers, as well as other such as William Blake, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson.

I’ve always wanted to put myself in a position where I could help others recognize their dreams and I feel as though a professional and reputable publication goes a long way when it comes to a writer’s image. Now, I can’t necessarily speak on the reputability of this publication, as this is only the first issue and a solid track record has yet to be established. However, I do have plans of taking this magazine as far as it can possibly go and follow this issue up with an extensive archive of high-quality content that enriches the literary community both online and off. I want to see this magazine succeed and expand beyond poetry into visual art, fiction, music, and more. I want all of this not simply for myself, but for of all future contributors who have something worth sharing with the world.

Thank you to everyone who spread the word about the first issue, submitted, and to everyone who is reading this. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Eli T. Mond, Founding Editor

## The Ibis Head

---

So, why “IBIS HEAD” of all titles? Why would anyone name a literary publication after the body part of a seemingly mundane bird? That question could simply be answered by bringing up the fact that far stranger magazine names exist, however, the real answer lies in the myths of Ancient Egypt.

The Egyptians, as I’m sure you’re all well aware, worshipped a large and complex pantheon of deities; each with different stories and attributes that resonated with different people for different reasons. The god this publication is indirectly named after was known as Djehuty or Tehuti — later to be translated by the Greeks as Thoth (the ancient Greeks also related Thoth to their god Hermes). He was believed to be the god of wisdom, the moon, medicine, magic, and the inventor of writing and language.

Other than the fact that he was heavily associated with writing, often being described as the god of scribes, Djehuty’s interesting backstory is one of the things that really incited me to embark on this path of online literary publishing. Certain myths regarding Thoth’s creation claim that, instead of being Ra’s son, he actually created himself through the sheer power of [magical] language. What makes this such a powerful metaphor is the fact that Thoth existed before anything else; before existence was even a concept. This means that he not only bore the sole responsibility of manifesting his own desires, but that he also had to single-handedly invent the instruments that would allow his goals to be recognized (i.e. language, magic, etc).

The concept of literally being ‘self-made’ and elevating yourself to a higher point in life is an idea that has resonated with humanity for a very long time. To me, Thoth represents the journey out of obscurity and chaos — which can manifest itself as self-doubt, financial hardship, or any other kind of oppression — that everyone must brave in order to find their own version of success and eventually spread their newfound happiness with the world, enhancing it in the process.

This is the reason why I consider him to be such an important figure and why I believe he should be recognized and admired by everyone, even if it is only in a philosophical or a symbolic sense. I hope this symbol of creativity and transformative power speaks to you as much as it speaks to me and I hope that if you’re reading this, you’ve been inspired to make your goals of triumph a reality by utilizing tools that already exist ... or by creating your own.

O, and if you didn't figure it out by now, Thoth was almost always depicted as having the HEAD of an IBIS. He was also occasionally depicted as a baboon, but *The Baboon Review* didn't sound nearly as cool.

## ***M.B. ROBBINS***

By day, M. B. ROBBINS is a technician at a small veterinary clinic in rural Pennsylvania; by night, she likes to tell the stories of the voices in her head. You can find her online at [www.mbrobbins.com](http://www.mbrobbins.com) or on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/mbrobbinsbooks](http://www.facebook.com/mbrobbinsbooks).

## A Few Small Moments

---

### A Few Small Moments

You were the first person to talk to me.

I was dressed in Macy's black,  
new to town and life on my own  
slipping into the back row  
of folding metal chairs  
in a windowless church basement,  
invisible as always.

And yet, you saw me, sat down beside me.  
We talked for a few minutes  
and you remembered my name.

You called me talented  
in that windowless church basement  
several weeks later.

Ten people sat around small tables  
with candlelight and fresh-brewed coffee  
and I worked up the nerve to share  
a page from a story I'd written.  
You invited me to join the writers group  
that met on Tuesday afternoons  
at the Burlington Bagel Bakery.

You called me your friend  
in your wood-paneled living room  
two years later,  
the documentary about rich hotel-chain owners  
paused while you made your point  
about how wealth can't buy happiness.  
You said something faintly inconsiderate,  
took a dig at my youth and inexperience,  
and called on our friendship  
to prove that you didn't mean it.

You called me endearing  
carpooling to Lincoln

in your little blue Civic,  
a third friend sprawled  
and snoring in the back seat.  
I called myself snarky  
and you had to think for a moment.  
You said you never saw me that way  
though you agreed that I was,  
and you wondered how I managed that.

You held me as I cried.  
I didn't mean for you to see  
but you got me talking  
about the wounds my father left behind  
as he walked out the door  
without a backwards glance  
or a word of regret.  
When the tears came,  
you put your arms around me.  
Your hands were warm.

## ***ASH HUNTLEY***

ASH HUNTLEY lives in Michigan with her husband and cat. She writes novels, novellas and poetry, all inspired by dreams, nature, and of course, life. She has a poem published in *Popshot Magazine's* The Adventure Issue, and won third place in the first annual Yule Love It Lavender Farm Poetry Contest.

## Hello Friend,

---

a favorite to all.  
you were good,  
but left  
petals wilted in longing,  
grasses golden  
in death,  
thirstily  
dreaming  
of you.

When you visit,  
sneak at night,  
whisper at windowsills,  
leave shadows on  
pavement that  
disappear by day,  
so no one ever knows  
you came.

## I Don't Fish

---

I don't fish,  
scales don't cut me.  
I don't pick tiny bones  
from teeth,  
or pull cold bass  
from rivers,  
feel their mass  
in mine.

I don't pool rivers  
between palms,  
carry frogs  
from ponds in pockets,  
or watch orange flecks  
dart between weeds  
under the surface.

I don't count rings  
when wishes fall,  
don't cool my neck  
with the spray  
from waterfalls.

I don't watch  
gills gasp for breath  
in the open air.

I don't dip under  
the surface,  
drink, breathe,  
I don't move  
because  
I don't belong.

## Jump,

---

I jump from cliffs,  
from planes in clouds,  
off buildings.

I jump both feet forward,  
with everything I have,  
over ropes and cracks.

I jump off diving boards,  
docks on lakes and  
rafts in murky ponds.

I jump blindfolded,  
not knowing what's ahead,  
like the frog crossing a street.

I jump in my dreams.

## ***MOSES ABDUL***

Kenyan-born MOSES ABDUL is a graduate of Edison High School and is currently studying at Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Later, he will transfer his studies to Augsburg College where he plans on majoring in History. Other than writing, some of his other passions include books and music.

## Carmen

---

My lovely Carmen,  
Your raven tresses shine darker  
Than the darkness that hangs  
Malignantly over my soul.  
Your golden voice  
could cause the sirens  
To wander onto rocky shores;  
Your crooked smile  
Makes my crooked heart straight again.  
Your love of books rivals mine,  
Your beautiful mind has no rival.  
Too bad I never told you these things.  
Maybe when I meet you again  
In the next life, I will  
Mi amor.

## ***DENNIS UNDERWOOD***

DENNIS UNDERWOOD has been scribbling words on paper since 1963. He has worked full-time at The University of Michigan-Dearborn for over thirty years and has been adjunct faculty at Henry Ford College for over forty years. He lives with his wife, Robin, and three cats and one greyhound.

## Free

---

Chrysalis trembles  
Head cocked, bird sits on old log  
Lunch will soon be free

## Natural Logs

---

Logs stacked by the fireplace,  
Dry.  
Waiting to bring warmth to our home.  
Winter  
Has wrapped itself deep on the lawn.  
Birds  
Huddle together in bushes  
For warmth.  
The fireplace in the living room  
Brings us all near.

All of the logs once were trees,  
Cut  
Down and dragged home from the forest,  
Then split  
And stacked up for a new purpose.  
We  
Share in the gift of their burning.  
Someday  
We will remember winter days  
Around the fires.

Natural Log  $e = 2.7182818284594$

## Moving

---

The last one here,  
I walk through our home,  
alone for the very first time.  
Walking down the  
empty hallways,  
I can catch a phantom  
memory of your perfume.  
I pause one last time  
as my soul drinks it in.

Passing the kitchen,  
you are there in every corner,  
cooking, laughing, singing  
the symphony of your love.

In the living room yet  
is the chair  
where so many nights  
you sat living in another  
good book.  
You still seem to be there,  
it just needs one more  
good book.

You are enshrined in all  
that there is  
of our old home.  
Whatever happens,  
my joys in living with you  
will always be remembered  
in this house,  
this picture frame  
of our lives.

## ***KATHY DOHERTY***

KATHY DOHERTY has a Bachelor's in Creative Writing from Metropolitan State University Denver. She has published work in *airplanereading.org*, *deadhousekeeping.com*, *Metrosphere*, *Foliate Oak*, *Hot Metal Press*, and *One Million Stories Anthology*. She lives in Parker, Colorado with her amazing Siberian Forest cat, Vladimir.

## Clark Street

---

Some nights I dream I'm back there, standing on the sidewalk,  
looking up to see the building deserted. Windows forced open  
as if a bomb went off nearby, curtains waving to the street,  
screens intended to restrain them blasted away.

My sleep state offers no urban sounds  
of bus brakes, motorists honking, or ambulances screaming  
sending critical cargo to Edgewater Hospital.

Inside the familiar flat, I walk down the darkened hallway to the front room.  
No evidence of the pebble-patterned linoleum that covered the hardwood floors  
or geranium patterned wallpaper hanging in the vestibule.  
Bricks missing from the fireplace that never warmed me.  
My bedroom window still faces three brick walls,  
directs my view to a square of sky above and nothing more.  
Shattered transom in the abandoned kitchen,  
a 40's era building where its own war waged within.  
Now I stand among the remaining rubble.

## Passage

---

I lie in bed waiting  
to drift to an unconscious state

Before that, I listen  
to planes on final for Centennial airport  
to traffic on Route 83  
to neighborhood kids  
blasting their tunes down the block  
to coyotes singing to the skies  
to the rising whine  
of a motorcycle or street racing car.

Hoping not to hear  
squeals of brakes, horns blasting  
or the explosion of sirens after the fact.

It's been called Bloody 83 for years  
this main drag through town  
The fast lane for Ponderosa and Legend High School students  
finding a way past suburban boredom  
heading to Aurora, Denver  
or east toward rural towns  
for the parties and raves  
freedom to drink and smoke  
away from their parents' conservative life  
testing the lifestyles of risk takers.

Adventurers and rebels  
who won't necessarily be in church on Sunday  
picketing Planned Parenthood next week  
or raising money for their senior trip  
Tearing down Inspiration Drive

Where

If you drive fast enough

your car can become airborne  
and its hangtime seems an eternity  
before the wheels touch the ground again  
amid the screams and shrieks inside  
thrilled to have landed.

Able to brag about it tomorrow and years later.  
Not everyone's been so lucky  
but tonight you survive  
another rite of passage.

## Evolution

---

Elevator shafts rising from new construction  
looking like Stonehenge in their vertical reach.

A crane arches over in the early morning sky  
like a pterodactyl feeding its chicks.

Amber chevrons flash to guide  
early commuters around the site activity  
where horses were once boarded  
next to the RV storage lot  
and prairies dogs built  
their own construction underground.

Until an unmarked vehicle arrived  
shoving hoses into the subterranean entrances  
spraying toxic fumes beneath the surface  
not unlike Dachau or Bergen-Belsen.

Only one chattering survivor  
emerges from this final solution  
finding none of his kind left  
to answer his barks.

Eventually he blinks, turns and waddles  
toward the tidy greenbelt area  
which runs along the man-made creek  
starting over alone.

There is no place for prairies dogs, coyotes,  
foxes, mountain lions or black bears  
in this master-planned, subsidized development  
approved to widen the tax base  
and give the developer what he required  
to construct urban-style lofts  
in the center of suburban living.

## Interview with Kathy Doherty

---

THE IBIS HEAD REVIEW: When did you start writing and what made you want to start?

KATHY DOHERTY: It really started in high school. I daydreamed as a kid about going to California and being discovered as the next Grammy-winning singer. I wrote stories about how this would all happen – along with becoming a 747 captain for the airlines (my day job to support my singing career). There was a group of girls I hung out with in high school who also wrote what is called fan fiction today. Our method was writing stories about the bands we loved (Paul Revere and the Raiders, Monkees, Dave Clark 5, etc.) and interject ourselves into touring and performing with them when we weren't out making our own hits. We would write the latest episodes during our classes and then exchange notebooks while we were passing each other in the halls.

T.I.H.R: What is the greatest joy of writing for you?

KATHY DOHERTY: To connect to my readers emotionally. When I can make that connection and have someone say “I was right there in that place you described – I could see it” or “I laughed/cried out loud” then I have fused a link between myself and the reader.

T.I.H.R: Many, if not all, writers have either suffered from or are currently suffering from the "tyranny of the blank page" — how do you even begin to write a piece when the words seem to elude you AND/OR what inspires you to write?

KATHY DOHERTY: I look to writers and stories who inspire or interest me to provide a response and a jolt to get me to sit down and work. This craft is a conversation we're having and I participate by adding my voice.

T.I.H.R: What about the poems in this issue are special and what made you write them?

KATHY DOHERTY: I wrote these to bring awareness to readers things they may miss in the daily race. It's become cliché to slam social media as a time-sucking vampire but it is only part of the daily distraction which decreases our power of observation. Television, traffic, gossip, social activities – they all divert our consciousness of what occurs in our everyday lives. I had a wonderful poetry professor who said we need to notice six various things every day. It's a difficult habit to get into but quite revealing when you attain it.

Each of these poems resulted from a story, dream, or event I noticed and then took them further, asking what is important about that, what does that remind me of. William Carlos Williams was a great observer of life, jotting poetry on his prescription slips – I love his attention to life as it was occurring around him; how he took even a few minutes to jot something down to hold it in remembrance.

‘Evolution’ is a result of an article in my town’s newspaper about the mysterious gassing of an entire prairie dog village – only one dog survived. Town hall and business owners had no idea who ordered the extermination since it had been open space for years (it still is). It reminded me of how as humans how we want things – even animals - to be like we are (enter Walt Disney and the human characteristics of the animals in his films). When it isn’t as we want it, we change the outcome. Humans weren’t here first but at the rate we’re going we will be the only ones in existence at the end.

T.I.H.R: Who/what are some of your favorite poets/poems?

KATHY DOHERTY: Carolyn Forche's The Colonel – her descriptions and the story woven within has stayed with me for years. I grew up in Illinois so Carl Sandburg has a special place in my heart. Richard Blanco made me sob over – and then share with everyone I could grab - Mother Country and One Today.

T.I.H.R: What are you currently reading?

KATHY DOHERTY: I’m rereading Elizabeth Alexander’s The Light of the World. It’s a memoir that reads like poetry. I just started David Leeming’s biography of James Baldwin as well.

***LINDA ZALLEN***

LINDA ZALLEN is a psychotherapist and writer, living in Northern California. She's written stories, poems, and songs, and is currently working on two novel drafts.

## Her Heart's Home

---

She walked the path, the same one she'd always walked. Sweater in one hand, cane in the other. The sheep baahed and the breeze tasted of grass.

The cane had been new for her hand, but she'd adjusted.

A crow flew overhead, screaming its call,  
As trotting sounded in the distance, clip clop.

No galloping for this one. He was getting old, like her

She could have moved in with Jack after Stanley died. It was sweet of him.  
But she said "no."

Wildflowers burst through the fields in a heady mix. And two squirrels chased one another, chattering.

But she was alone. It's always a tradeoff.  
The wind grazed her cheek, as it grabbed for her hat.

This is where her heart grew up. Where her memories were stored.

This is what cooled her during the day, and warmed her during the night.

This is her heart's home. It has no other.

***E.R. YOUNG***

ELLEN ROBERTS YOUNG is a member of the writing community in Las Cruces, New Mexico. She has published two chapbooks with *Finishing Line Press*, *Accidents* (2004) and *The Map of Longing* (2009). Her first full-length book of poetry is *Made and Remade*, (*WordTech Editions*, 2014). She is co-editor of *Sin Fronteras/Writers Without Borders Journal*.

## Burned

---

My young neighbor  
calls the leaves on a carrot  
“sweeps,” wiping the air.

The day divorce sweeps  
into her life, she sits on my step,  
repeating “the worst day of my life.”

No tears rinse off her pain,  
no brush sweeps it under the rug  
an adult would reach for

to conceal it, as we covered  
the hole in our living room floor  
after ashes were put aside too hot.

She sits very still  
to keep from falling through the hole  
her parents’ anger has burned.

## Pulled

---

Tulips are intractable, the wedding florist says. “They bend as they please, don’t use them.” The bride acquiesces, the wedding flowers are traditional, the photos pleasing to review as he and she furnish their first house. Years later she plants tulip bulbs, gift from her mother, and a clump of mint along the walk from kitchen to back yard. The tulips blow from bent stems as she passes with the laundry. I guess tulips would have been a bad omen, she thinks. He, standing at the grill turning hamburgers, doesn’t notice them. He leans away, tugged by work, she bends to give him space: his chair, his drink, no children’s fights before dinner. Unable to tell what’s straight anymore they don’t notice the wall of the house, old when they bought it, is bowing out. She replaces the tulips with sage, thyme; the mint spreads. There’s less laundry to hang, only his and hers. Fingerprints washed from door sills, the wall reattached to the flooring, she discovers they bend toward each other.

## Congruent

---

“So little is fixed anymore,” she says,  
as if rocks could get up and walk,  
as if she were not married.  
She’s pleased with this notion,  
its sound and sense, undecided  
which matters more. She has been  
walking on desert sand too long,  
avoiding the firmness of sidewalks.  
No rock has tripped her. A cough  
comes occasionally, at no perceived  
occasion, another randomness.  
There is evening and there is morning,  
waking beside the warm, loved body,  
but “so little is fixed,” she says,  
because God has escaped her latest  
definition, because the stock market  
falls and rises and the beggars  
have different faces. “So little is fixed,”  
repeats her inconstant mind.

## ***TAYLOR HAN***

TAYLOR HAN is a senior at California State University San Marcos, studying literature and writing. His work has appeared in *Zaum*, *Crack the Spine*, and is forthcoming in *Breadcrumbs* mag. He curates his own lit journal at *visceralbusiness.wordpress.com*, which is currently dying of starvation.

## The Sucker-Punch Line

---

Suppose I beheaded the aesthetic and rolled it down some stone steps then could I join your fraternity?

Did I mispronounce that correctly?

All the best writing is borderline unreadable and the fence isn't that high, so here I am. Look at all these gross finger puppet governments good God give me roasted grotesque over your gluten free bullshit.

I'm in the business of ink blasting business majors before I have to work for one, t-minus twenty-six units.

You're cute ma.

Maybe I could butter you up with this potential introspection before I toast my lack of confidence.

Check out my chapbook fam.

Does it ever get any easier? Yes, but so do you.

Ah fuck me, but fuck you too. The difference between being preemptively pretentious and actually interesting will get you laid.

Housing prices are skyrocketing in the middle ground, let's gentrify the gray area and make a quick buck off the hipsters before they figure out where they are.

Strong armed by the armoire, CHARLATAN! I'm positive I'm in the middle of the spectrum. Poetry seems to make me so fucking angry, but I'm actually soft.

Whatever.

Back up Cracker Jack as I battle-rap these anti-heroes cheered on by toothless eunuchs. I could get used to this. I used to believe in fiction, then I heard poetry. I used to believe in poetry but then I read alt-lit and now it's just too cool to be cubist and I lost my religion as a byproduct.

If any of this had a point I'd impale myself on it.

That faith looks good on you, but I'm already single. Look man I just want to sit at this café and be ironic. We could talk about Jesus, but I already don't believe in a lot of things I don't care about.

Don't stare at it too long you'll start covering up all the loopholes.

I could go on like this forever but I'll probably die first.

Fuck the plan we'll go on foot!

Oh sorry I forgot who I was to you for a minute there.

The train of thought was hijacked by environmentalists trying to earn enough tickets for a midlife crisis.

If I told you that you had a nice body, would you call me a misogynist?

The brooding isn't cute and it makes you seem obtuse and those pants make your hips look huge.

Yo you smoke weed?

Yo you got any more self-serving questions?

A feminist and a chauvinist walk into a bar...this joke doesn't have an ending, because it's not a fucking joke.

But this poem might be.

Trampled by an amphitheater of mannequins who came to watch you dance—I'll just sit on the steps. You move like a grassroots campaign darling, and I'm going as an oppressive regime for Halloween because abstractions turn me on.

I confidently put the barrel in my mouth. What's the plan captain? "Full frontal...nudity," he replied, then he laughed until he cried.

She finally said “fuck this, I’ll be a teacher” and got down off the pole. My plagiarism is too authentic but seeing it that way hardly makes me original.

It’s funnier if you’re drunk I think but I don’t drink unless I absolutely don’t have to.

The End.

But only if you want. “The trick with poetry is not to care about it in the first place.” Check.

I must insist that you cease and desist my cisgender sisters. I’m in a cremated dreamscape, dark and undiscovered like the back half of this mixtape trying to escape black hats and six shooters filled with the void and mechanical men bent with age.

Existential questions give my life meaning.

Sick-ass tats man.

I mean, sick ass-tats man.

I mean, sick tats asshole.

Fuck me.

Paunch(ed) out swollen nuance you gutless easel carrying reject. Lucidly illuminate but rumored to be the stupidest of the groupies you fucking floozy college kids love you, you give it up easy like loose leaf.

Excuse me?

Moscato bubbles stuck in staccato rumbles this Tommy-gun bowtie disparity is reducing my card castle to rubble.

Get hurt get burned get murdered by words, bitter like lemons and curs but I can’t go back to the way things were. I incurred the wrath of these bubble bath savages, fuck out of here with that sub-par batting average.

Crises in the water like: oh God what if this is it; makes me think I should spit something real quick like /talk shit get bit/ by the itty bitty lit majors/ push click Bic. Gimme gimme no

gimmicks swallow no wait don't, swish spit rinse and then finish. The surface shimmers but could you plumb the depths of the glitz and the glimmer and the glam like "mom, what the fuck does it mean to be a man?"

\*glances at watch

Oh shit I'm late for my internal conflict.

i iit it ititit it's fine just enunciate your stutter and step one have an aside like (poetry me is a dick!)

But this can't be right? Like it's so much easier to be clever than it is to be good could I ride that distinction to a publication or would my conscious drive me into the ground? You want to write but not every day and you want everyone to listen but won't let anyone read, you go to readings but hold a contempt for poetry.

Maybe a grad degree and old age will mellow me out so that I can write about fucking sunsets and say dumb shit like "meter is the revolution."

And I'll recite to blank faces and all the college kids who came out to listen to me read from a chapbook that shouldn't have been published in the first place will clap politely when I'm finished. All the guys are hiding hard-ons and all the girls' eyes are glazed over. And as I pack up my bag the quiet kid in the back will raise his hand with a stock question that he pulled out of his ass and ask me where I find the inspiration to write. I'll bite my lip for a split second before saying "thank you for asking, that's a good question."

Because it is. Even though I used to think that it wasn't.

Is this what it means to be a writer?

Is it?

Because if so...

Sign me up.

## Purgatory is Full of Standup Comedians

---

Purgatory is full of standup comedians bitterly inhaling carcinogens and taking advantages of the medium.

Applause breaks (I'm finding) do not coagulate busted guts and are a poor method of cauterization.

This is a nation state of would be greets and eyepatches, bald spots with poorly trimmed mustaches and I can halfway assure you my inability to swallow is not linked to my lack of self-awareness.

Would I bear my soul to the mic and be laid bare by lemon-coated childhood memories split thrice by blinding limelight?

Who's to say it wasn't necessary to run in place for the sake of blisters or bang bass for the color white, and born-again Christians?

Ritualistic nihilism-

-campfire songs about things we never even used to talk about before and are now long gone.

You're on the front lines of the back nine digging up tin cups from the green earth to shake on street corners where all the lights have gone out.

I'm not proud of the whispering in back alleys that turned into heckles from the cheap seats, and sleepless nights spent on my knees or back blasting nothing but unholy sitcom soundtracks.

-dead laughs-

I'm not saying I wouldn't have spent the time stuck to the underworld bubble-gum stretched out on the folding chair rack, but I could never knit the noose and then actually pull the lever.

Maybe there's no difference between telling jokes and being one.

Or maybe they were just an excuse to gauge how much stage fright would be acceptable before a page might save my life...right?

Either way I think I needed to start in a place of sweaty armpits and social ties and be ridiculed for trying to scratch an itch with a style I didn't like even before I knew it didn't exist.

So let's tip our waitresses and get the fuck on with it,

I don't know where I'm going to end up

but I don't think it's anything like this.

## The Introspection or Fuck Me and Fuck Last Summer

---

I had a date with destiny but I think she got lost on the way to the restaurant.

Get back bootlegger your false eloquence disturbs me but it's cool, I was in love once too.

Get feathered by ardor father,

hey girl I'm cymbal minded: my thoughts are big brass and only make sound when they clash together and only certain people like the way that they sound, so you want to get a drink sometime?

Cool me neither.

Oh my God tell me more about cultural appropriation while I nay-nay and pray for rain and there's no escape from the 2-3 necessary heartbreaks but you'll have to pay the price when my love is at stake.

I'm trying to master poetical proficiency but I feel like a blind man trying to unlock a deadbolt with car keys.

Speak of the devil, and he shall appear but

all this talking about God and I don't see anyone here and I'll choose incorrectly at every fork in the road from puberty to that special kind of old man hubris.

I need Siri to show me where the cartographer lives.

Let me get a slow clap and a side of fries for the fucking new kid.

It all comes down to a dice-roll viceroy, I wish our pathologies were as painfully opaque as they are to everyone else, but then again we see what we want to see. All these muses might be useful as a future reference but right now all I see are colored spots black dots and rearranged cupboards.

You would dare challenge the viscosity of my intentions on the eve of my engagement, boy?

I will be a father someday and then, then I will know better than you and all this anger will be understood but even more so it will be justified in the creation of life, we drunkenly fuck the straight edge and the celibate.

I paid a fiver for an old lady to give me a heads up about my impending plunge into obscurity.

We're not so different, you and I...

said that one guy to the other guy in that movie that one time.

I feel like macaroni and anagrams

were that these problems not unique in any conceptualized context, maybe this is all just a singularity event. But even still--

I ain't no punk-ass fuckboy son,

more of a pen pal really and

my New Year's Eve resolution is to start adding more things to my bucket list but chalk is cheap and outlines are the stuff of revolutionaries, you dig? So let us pray:

in the name of the Father, the Son, and Practical Application, amen. I'm looking for cobblestones, and dusty sunlight. Have you seen this girl brown hair yay high looks like she might be the love of my life?

Rivers and toads till I reach you: planes trains and bauble mobiles I need a clean sweep from the feat of dreadnought jigsaws so you down for a reading?

Sweeeeeeeet.

Then I'll see you at three. Bring the black not the blue ink and to be honest I think poetry is kind of silly when it's not half busy being the truth but what the fuck do I know I only have half a lit degree and in dog years I'm way older than twenty-two; my faith got blocked on the basis of no id, I think the ego's been bruised, don't swallow just spit the husk out after its been used.

Could you go ahead and show me how to court martial the art of house rules maestro? I really need to start being more deliberately unintentional. This vernacular ladder is insufficient to scale the language barrier and the higher I go the (badder) I seem to get at English.

If I wake up and find out this was all based on some petri-dish-proximity I'm going to be so upset.

But right now I'm just begging God to stay back before I'm forced to bust pen caps and introspect; that isn't why I came here: overseas, or so it seems, blowing trees/sewing seeds/writing all this poetry/ pen-strokes are like silverware, fork and knives I just need to eat. I'm scraping grape jelly off the ribs in the belly of the beast no bread and butter is being smothered by my brothers at the feast--getting high going under but I'm not covered in the least.

Maaaaaan. This surrogacy thing is beat but it's all I've got for the time being while I try and convince myself I got a shade darker and a little bit farther than a knee deep summer fling. You feel me?

Of course not my love, you've omitted all feeling and I swear to God I'm going to war with fathers as soon as I figure out the controls on this damn thing.

Take me upstairs oh blonde-haired being, play the guitar or the banjo or just string me up by the sink left running by the man dressed halfway convincingly as a lady.

Bottle my lips

I have a little bit more to learn before I'm done with this twenty-something shit. Piecemeal or mincemeat, I'm not a freak I just want to kiss your hands as soon as the room stops spinning but by then it will be half past and too late to consider myself on the right side of winning your heart, or your affection, whichever is available to me first because...

oh you hadn't heard?

I'm kind of desperate.

## ***OLUTAYO IRANTIOLA***

OLUTAYO IRANTIOLA is a Public Relations professional at all times; a creative writer, performer poetry book reviewer on the move, a counselor at every slight opportunity, an avid blogger and a compere at events. His artistry has produced two books; a biography titled *TRUE CALLING: LIFE AND TIMES OF REVD J.A OKESII, JP* and an anthology published in English and Yoruba languages titled; *THOUGHT PATTERNS: FUSION OF AGES*. He is a performer poet alongside a dramatist. Some of his writings have featured in prominent Nigerian newspapers.

## In This Adventure

---

I won't let you slip,  
I will grab you through my pen,  
As a memorial,  
Holding you for ere!

Average life till date,  
Ample opportunity through labour,  
Engraved on the heart,  
Domestic it is tagged.

From departure till arrival,  
Announcements unlimited,  
With my gaze outside,  
Likened to a hungry commuter  
Beckoning at the hawker.

With three spikes on your wing,  
Seems you prick the air,  
Outstretched wings like an Eagle,  
Soaring and balancing in the air.

A cloak separates business from economy,  
A wall separates biz and cockpit,  
Seeing all from a distance,  
Let's read as you soar,  
Opening up my personal vent,  
May my luggage not fall on me.

You said it all, lady  
From air pressure to life vest,  
From emergency exit to seat belt,  
Serving refreshment,  
Ushering as the journey last,  
Working as if you are at home,  
Life's job with hands thrown in disgust.

At the first, I conformed,  
At the second I begged through,  
At the third, it's much better,  
Now thinking beyond domestic,  
NAHCO brings me to your door,  
Then, I gain speed before altitude.

In this altitude,  
It seems a land exist close by,  
Like a planet where others reside,  
Cloud or waterbed?  
The sky itself is far away touching,  
Like the water and earth far away touches.  
It jerks,  
Not for fault,  
But for nature,  
Nature's idea to man is gigantic.

Do you rush into the cloud?  
Do you crush the cloud?  
Have I seen the cloud?  
Waiting to see Heaven?  
My eyes got filled with air.

I see the world,  
Where mansions are like cubicles,  
Cars are like sugar ants,  
Rivers like snakes,  
I see like google maps,  
In this beautiful adventure.

The tray of Air Italy,  
In Aero Contractor,  
Colour has changed brand,  
Why won't it?  
Tokunbo way of life.

Similar interior like luxury bus,  
The hostess moving on board

Like attachment does,  
Delighted to recount this tale.

*Aboard Aero Contractor, Port Harcourt to Lagos, Nigeria.*

## Sambisa Not Shangisha

---

Same story,  
Gory tales,  
Hands on deck,  
Lives being hung,  
Men dying,  
Girls missing,  
Women wailing,  
We would overcome,  
Streaming tears,  
Endless meetings,  
Daily mob congregation,  
Not sighted solution,  
Sambisa not Shangisha,  
#GiveUsOurGirls

*The height of terrorism in Nigeria with the kidnapping of the Chibok Girls since 2014. Sambisa Forest is in Borno State while Shangisha is in Lagos, Nigeria*

## ***FRANK VARELA***

Brooklyn-born poet FRANK VARELA is the author of three books of poetry. *The Riverside Publishing Company* and *Arte Public Press* have published his children's stories. His poetry has appeared in numerous journals and magazines around the United States. A former administrator with the Chicago Public Library, he is one of the founders of that library's annual poetry festival. A fourth book, *Diaspora: Selected and New Poem*, will be published by *Arte Publico Press*. He currently resides, with his wife, in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

## The Potter's Art

---

*"I watched my aunt Nicolasa ... Nicolasa is—was—one of the best potters of all."*

*"And did she teach you?"*

*"She didn't teach," Maria says carefully. "Nobody teaches pottery."*

*Susan Peterson, The Living Tradition of Maria Martinez*

The potter's art is music transformed into porcelain,  
or into a knickknack horse gathering dust  
on the top of my grandmother's dresser,  
or useful pieces shaped by skillful hands  
into bowls and platters painted Venetian red, cobalt blue,  
or into urns with scenes of corybantic dancers,  
dancing ecstatically.

Consider the potter's art as rain.  
Consider the permanence of earth and fire.  
Consider the archeologist,  
who brushes with care  
pieces of shattered history.

Clay was the Creator's medium  
when Adam emerged, with halting steps,  
from a womb of earth and water.

## The Monument of an Anonymous Passerby

---

*The Monument of an Anonymous Passerby, located in Wroclaw, Poland, is the work of sculptor Jerzy Kalina, which is dedicated to all of those lost, imprisoned or otherwise harmed by the Communist regime.*

General Jaruzelski gave Solidarity its two-week notice,  
sent anonymous thousands to prisons, detention centers.  
We watched stunned as the water cannons  
disperse the anonymous thousands.

Now ponder a monument that isn't a monument,  
but a fist that bursts its shackles, leaving exit wounds.  
Fourteen sculptures of anonymous men, women and children,  
some sinking into the pavement,  
others rising from the earth like Lazarus,  
taken from their homes by the secret police,  
by the army, by the anonymous bureaucrats  
in their cubicles of unadorned concrete.  
Over their bronze faces, our anonymous faces  
appear like Marley's ghost, and, for a moment,  
we become the statues.

In Wroclaw, passersby trudge to work or shop,  
walk past the bronzes without a glimpse or a thought.  
An anonymous mother jogs with her child  
strapped in a Graco stroller.  
Her husband, also anonymous, carries home flowers,  
worries about his company's merger.  
I, too, am anonymous,  
writing this letter to you,  
and you, in turn, read it.  
Alone.

## Writing in a Bakery in Old San Juan on the First Day of Advent

---

The streets are abandoned as if by decree,  
deserted except for the presence of a pink dog,  
me, and a family of Swedes.  
I should be writing,  
but the page is a field of snow,  
waiting for a miracle,  
a Cecile B. DeMille moment,  
like the parting of the Red Sea.

A baker friend offers  
the family samples of macaroons,  
who chew thoughtfully  
and realize they're eating ambrosia.

I'm Simon of the Desert,  
waiting for my second espresso  
on the first day of Advent.

Suddenly, an interesting face appears,  
then another, another still,  
pilgrims hungry from their journey,  
straight off a canvas by El Greco.

Clouds gather; the heavens open.  
Words flow like ink pumped from a well,  
slowly at first, then gathering speed,  
force, more speed, until—  
my hand glides across the page.

## Interview with Frank Varela

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THE IBIS HEAD REVIEW: When did you start writing and what made you want to start?

FRANK VARELA: I started writing in the seventh grade in New York. Queens specifically. It was an exciting era. The Beatles were becoming big in the states, and I was touched by that magic. I suddenly wanted to write rock lyrics. Become a songwriter, perhaps write a hit for The Beatles. Unfortunately, I didn't have a knowledge of the history of music or how to play a musical instrument. Fortunately, ignorance does have a positive side. It can make you either very brave or very foolish. On the positive side, I found myself free to express what I felt about love or any other poetic subject without worrying about any limitations or forms or rules. so I tried my hand at writing lyrics and produced several lines of what I thought was a song. I asked my English teacher to critique my effort. She said that she couldn't say if I had written decent rock lyrics, but what she did find interesting was that I writing in heroic couplets. I didn't know what the hell was a heroic couplet? But she had piqued my interest. She went on to explain who was Alexander Pope and how he used heroic couplets in his poetry. That conversation spurred my "career" in poetry, and I've been writing it ever since. At the time, I didn't know or pretend to know about Pope's poetics, but her explanation, given so patiently, kicked me off to read other poets. I started with my class's literature textbook and went on from there. By the way, I developed an affinity for the poetry of Alfred Noyes.

T.I.H.R: What is the greatest joy of writing for you?

FRANK VARELA: I like the mental satisfaction I get when I'm in the middle of a poem and know that I'm writing well, that I'm connecting with my subject matter. Connecting is critical to the success of any piece that I'm writing. In the past, I've used the history, legends, and literature of Puerto Rico as wells of inspiration. I'm a Boricua on both sides of my family. My first three books of poetry were almost exclusively about my relationship to the island and the Puerto Ricans of the Diaspora, which by the way is the title of my fourth book, a book of selected and new poems that will be released by Arte Publico Press in late September. The poems I sent to The Ibis Head Review move me away from that experience, which brings me to another joy — the discovery of new territories for my writing.

Right now, I'm gathering information about the great jazz bassist Jaco Pastorius. I intend to write a "bio" poem about him, so I'm reading or gathering books and articles about his life, listening to his music, realizing that he was a phenomenal talent and tragic figure one as well. I also have a personal connection to him. He was diagnosed as being a manic depressive in the late 70s or early 80s. I was first diagnosed with the same condition in 1976, but foolishly refused treatment

and I didn't seek help for my condition until 2009 when my life was totally out of control. You know seeking treatment and finally controlling the disorder are two different sides of the same problem. It wasn't until 2014 that I could say that I had finally gotten under control my manic depression. By under control, I mean I still experience the craziness of my condition, but I no longer impulsively act upon that craziness.

T.I.H.R: Many, if not all, writers have either suffered from or are currently suffering from the "tyranny of the blank page" — how do you even begin to write a piece when the words seem to elude you AND/OR what inspires you to write?

FRANK VARELA: The process of writing is something like coming down with pneumonia. When I feel the urge to write, and haven't a clue as to what I want to write, what I have learned to do over the years is not to force the issue but to let the "inspiration" come naturally. It's like hearing a knock on a door and waiting for someone to let me in. I'm currently in the research phase of writing a poem about Jaco Pastorius. Researching his life allows me to indirectly inhabit my subject's skin. Of course, it's all speculation, but it's also important to do your subject right.

I've also suffered "the tyranny of the blank page." Specifically, in my mid-twenties, in my thirties, in my fifties. What freezes me is the dissatisfaction of knowing that I'm not breaking new ground, that I'm stuck in a transitional phase and I have no idea how to get out of it. It's like the process of healing. My attitude is to focus on other interests in my life, e.g., professional, personal or social. I was a freelance fundraiser, a kind of technical writer for hire — "Have gun, will travel" sort of thing or taking care of my son or spending time with my friends. The critical thing was to have other interest to recharge your mind. That's the best advice I can give anyone.

T.I.H.R: What about the poems in this issue are special and what made you write them?

FRANK VARELA: What makes the poems I've contributed to The Ibis Head Review special? They represent new areas of inquiry. I find the interaction of a subject within the setting of a poem compelling. It's a construct, totally of my own creation. It's a way of playing God without being blasphemous. At least not like Satan in Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*. *The Potter's Art* started off as a "bio" about Maria Martinez, the famous Native American pottery artist. Instead, it took me into considering the process of and the inspiration behind creating a work of art, from not only a modern perspective but also into the mythic. Writing *The Potter's Art* made rethink my ideas of what makes writing, or any other art form, unique. Can creativity be taught? No. You can learn ways in which to make work more compelling, etc. The poem gave the opportunity to rethink my life as a writer. For example, should I have entered an MFA program, as I had planned? My undergraduate professors weren't very keen on the idea. They thought I should take a traditional Ph.D. in literature and subordinate my interest in writing

within that framework. I resolved that dilemma by going with my Plan C — of living life and drawing upon my life experiences to create art. I write for personal satisfaction.

The Monument of an Anonymous Passerby is my attempt to bring in a global perspective on the subject of individual liberty versus the dangers of State-sponsored terrorism. That same framework can be employed in exploring questions of faith. Questions posed by our social institutions. Or should the individual surrender his liberty for the security of the Welfare State? I had never done this type of writing, and it has proven liberating. I advise everyone to Google information about “The Monument of an Anonymous Passerby”. It's a very powerful visual statement.

Writing in a Bakery in Old San Juan on the First Day of Advent is a meditation, again, about the creative process. The genesis of the poem came about from my reading of Ted Hughes's The Thought-Fox in 1975. I always wanted to write a similar poem with the same feeling. The trouble with this approach is that I tend to end up writing second-rate Eliot or Emily Dickinson or any other writer who captures my fancy. I'm assuming that Hughes set his poem on an English moor in Devon or one that inhabits his mind. I'm Puerto Rican, so I know anything English moors. Instead, I set my poem in one of my favorite places on Earth--Old San Juan. The ending was also important to create the same feeling that Hughes created in "The Thought-Fox." I wanted the same feeling but not the same words.

T.I.H.R: Who/what are some of your favorite poets/poems?

FRANK VARELA: I have many influences from Beowulf to The Waste Land to Howl. Yeats, Eliot, Julia de Burgos, Nicanor Parra, and Pound influenced me. Mid-century poets like Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, and John Berryman have also been critical in my development as a writer. Books of poetry I admire include but not limited to 77 Dream Songs (John Berryman), For the Union Dead (Robert Lowell), and Golden State (Frank Bidart). Contemporary poets include Patricia Lockwood (her "Rape Poem" is astonishing), Roberto Bolano, Martin Espada, etc.

T.I.H.R: What are you currently reading?

FRANK VARELA: I read a variety of books, e.g., The Grain Brain by Dr. David Perlmutter, a book about diet and brain disorder; So What, a biography about Miles Davis; Asberry: Collected Poems 1956-1987; Poems: 1962-2012 (Louise Gluck) etc. Internet research projects that are ongoing include Jaco Pastorius and Ezra Pound.

## ***DONNA MORK REED***

DONNA MORK REED grew up in the Ozarks and resides in St. Charles with Dave, her husband, and dogs, Buster and China. She authored an inspirational true story published in *Joys of Christmas 2015*, a Guidepost Publication, and is a 2015 President's Prose winner through *Saturday Writers*. She holds an M.L.S., and a B.S. in biology and works as a librarian. She won awards for her photography at the 2015 and 2016 Douglas County Fair.

## Dandelion—Final Act

---

The curtain rises.  
Enter Dandelion  
Dressed all in tulle.  
Her golden dress now  
Hanging in some  
Forgotten costume  
closet. The Final Act.  
All eyes turn and watch.  
Enter the wind, stage left.  
Dandelion sways, dances  
Then throws off her garment  
Piece by piece wind-blown  
Exits stage right.  
Dandelion, bared sole  
Stands naked and complete.  
The curtain descends.

## Mother's Hanky

---

A lump up her sleeve  
Mother would magically  
Produce a handkerchief  
At the slightest symptom  
Of a snuffle or a tear,  
With a magician's flourish,  
The hanky would appear.  
Presto-cadavera,  
She'd wipe you ear to ear.

## *KATELYNN JASPER*

KATELYNN JASPER is an English Major who is currently in her last year at Sonoma State University. If there is one thing that she is more passionate about than cats, tea, and books, it is writing. She loves traveling around the world and hopes that one day her words will have traveled the world too.

## Hide and Seek

---

I thought I had hidden my feelings for you  
From my seeking heart.  
But behind every new day  
And between my dreams and reality,  
I find you there,  
In the tea swirling cold in my cup,  
The empty side of the bed,  
The untouched skin of my waist,  
The silence in the air,  
The letters on this page.

## Childish

---

Question, sweet child,

Decide what is going to be.

Never forget that you are free.

Dream, sweet child,

Choose the world you want.

Write your story in your own faunt.

Care, sweet child,

For those who have no voice.

They are never given a fair choice.

Change, sweet child,

You are the key to it.

Choose a cause and keep your candle lit.

## We the People

---

“Hate begets hate”

Is what my Mother always said.

We only listen closely

When it’s whispered from the dead.

Given by the hands of the media

We gobble up what we’ve been fed.

Only care about the blue and white

While the rest of us bleed, red.

## ***GEORGE MAT***

GEORGE MAT has a love for all things music and poetry. He's been writing for near on 5 years. Inspired by life experience of love & loss and a passionate regard for family, he continues to pour it all on paper through an eager pen.

His favorite poet, Charles Bukowski, he hopes would be proud!

More of his work can be found on his Twitter @gsmm67

## My Constant

---

not knowing what to make  
my drug of choice  
was the biggest decision I've ever had to make.  
I wanted to be an addict.  
I needed to feel how to die repeatedly,  
every day,  
in the presence of the ghosts  
that kept me warm  
and the lack of courage  
to face the beckoning storms.  
It wasn't my sanity that cried.  
It was my conscience that bled.  
It was my voice that became silent.  
And the little boy trapped inside  
couldn't wait  
to catch the express train home,  
for he was no longer able to recognize his own reflection  
in the paranoid dreams that became his friend.  
I became an addict  
I died a thousand times over  
Once would never be enough  
And in each of those lives the ache was my constant.  
My body survived.  
Nothing else stood a chance.

## Ashes

---

often I sit alone in a dimly lit room  
looking down at my weathered hands  
remembering all they've touched  
tired of keeping the company of ghosts  
tired of ghosts peering through the windows  
tired of hearing footsteps & screams  
once upon a day I used to say  
but the sun never shone on that day  
once upon a day  
we dreamt of filling an empty nest  
but that remains the empty shell  
of a fruitless forest  
my heart did burn  
together with the ashes I spread  
over the ocean

## Swan Song

---

I felt the needle penetrate deeper  
remembering the thoughts going through  
my head as I lay there slowly dying  
my swan song was a graceless dive  
from a ten story building  
voices haunting, shadows taunting  
as I recounted every waking nightmare  
that found me spiraling down to earth  
what was this disaster I conjured  
& where were the angels with this stardust  
I had to become my own savior  
for the broken threads twined the needle  
that made me strong enough to accept  
& I remember thinking  
fuck this is a long way down  
did I deserve to make it out of this

*THANK  
YOU  
FOR  
READING!*