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**THE CRITERION**

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## Remembrance

**Uzoечи Nwagbara**  
Wales, United Kingdom

Journeying from a sense  
Thoroughly overawed  
By frittered earth & clobbered space,  
Streaming from memory –  
Draped with incendiary shells by SHELL:  
By the unsolicited foragers of our heaven,  
And –  
Invoking a panoply of mnemonic snapshots  
Melancholically sated  
With the cruel hangman's snare & noose,  
  
Our space  
Reminds all of the generational war  
Between good & evil;  
The freshness of the dairy  
Is crowded out by clabber;  
The field is barren  
From the globalists' handiwork,  
His alibi for evil is  
Like the priest',  
Preached behind the pulpit of "boundryless" earth;  
A metonymy for brigandage!

Our earth  
Spins the yarn of might & 'weakness';  
The alluvium is barricaded thickly  
By the explorers' wrath:  
The pluvial record  
Mediates a million testicles  
Not germinating the earth,  
His dear mistress  
In dire straits of insemination!

Our sanctuary  
Is hewed down  
By nationalist maniacs,  
Who banished  
Our primeval neighbours –  
In the time past, our staple:  
A reminder of our unspoiled universe!  
They will pay for this!

## Park Avenue

Ron Starbuck  
Texas, USA

Here, I am with my  
begging bowl in hand,  
that only I can see.

I am in the heart of Manhattan,  
dressed in a Canali double breasted suit  
walking from St. Bart's to the

Waldorf, it's only one block and  
a world away from home. A young  
lady passes by, smiles and that is all it

takes you know, one solitary smile, and  
my begging bowl is full once more.  
Such riches come rarely, such joy

is known as Shantideva teaches, by  
wishing joy to others first. Did you know?  
That a single smile, like this one, can

save ten thousand worlds, across ten  
thousand universes, as if the first light  
of creation has turned back upon the world.

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## Silent Witnesses

**Kushal Poddar**  
West Bengal, India

Two old men sit at my beginning and my end,  
closed eyed, descending down their blind staircase.

What does blindness mean if they do not see me  
staring into their eyes, salvaging the moment they saw-  
my mother tilting her head toward my father's shoulder  
as her water broke then and there at our steps?

At the beginning.

At the end.

Every day.

There, the banyan tree sprawled over the old heads  
and an elephant cloud disturbs the new building tips.

I dig; dig until I am born again,  
a part of me deciding to come and another to return unborn.

## Oh Paladin

**Thomas Pelto**  
Connecticut, USA

Golden tresses tumble  
From beneath the shimmering helm  
Chiseled chin barely visible  
behind the visor  
Above which peer a pair of  
steel grey eyes that see right through  
Piercing any man's armor

Like flash of blade  
sharp and true, mirrored  
In her polished panoply  
Commanding presence  
A stunning charisma  
not one can resist

Fierce warrior  
Battling ever on  
Demons, dragons, any enemy  
Vanquished, dispatched  
but more than that

A gentle healer too  
Protector by virtue  
of both  
knowledge and magic  
Binding wounds, restoring strength  
To ride and fight again

Adventure with me  
Oh Paladin  
Let us share in the spoils of  
our journey  
Filled with treasures and glory  
and pleasures untold  
While we create this legend  
Our story...

## An Orchestra

**K Pankajam**  
Tamil Nadu, India

Breeze blows music  
sift itself  
through the bamboo shoots.  
While trees rustle their harps,  
the earth starts to sing.  
Watching the leaves playful  
tufted feathers of thistles  
take to dancing.  
In the ensemble  
ambiance exulted  
A conglomeration  
Symphony perfect.  
I realize  
I have become  
a song in the concert

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**a rondel.....but not for you....**

{ variant form of a rondel }

**Mamta Madhavan**

i wanted to write a rondel for you  
but my mind is in one of those blank halls  
where sounds of solitude bounce from the walls

my penumbra has always been in view  
charcoal dart ricochets askew and falls

i wanted to write a rondel for you  
but my mind is in one of those blank halls

seduced in the cobwebbed lanes that i drew  
muffled voices sigh in the vacuous stalls  
the echo aching trails out and crawls

i wanted to write a rondel for you  
but my mind is in one of those blank halls  
where sounds of solitude bounce from the walls



## Memorization

**Michael Dickel**  
Jerusalem, Israel

Clove memory lingers,  
jasmine overwhelms,  
the half moon in a blue sky falls  
and a hot sun rises.  
You stand over by the railing;  
jazz musicians play.  
I stand watching a river  
through a camera;  
hikers stream by.  
A rainbow over the highway  
holds a flock of storks in its arch;  
our hands touch. And touch again.  
We read a book, watch a movie.  
From these, we braid  
a narrative thread:  
You and I live.

Agate remembers light,  
limestone recalls salt,  
anemones represent red  
and lemons recollect rain.  
My coat slips over your  
shoulder; we sit to listen.  
Your timbre warms  
the lens' view;  
our feet grow tired.  
The dissolution of now  
re-deems its essence  
when haunting memory;  
our hands touch. And touch again.  
We watch a movie, read a book.  
From these, we weave a cloak  
of identity: we are.

## Untitled

**Peivand Zandi**  
Malaysia

The moon is down

Iran

I breathe the last days

To the breaking relation

Let's hang the self

Contained earth...

Let's swallow the growing silence...

I can feel the cold faith of a warm skin

The shallow deep desire of mine

Counting steps to the bright destination.

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