

the underground

the space where we cultivate what we create  
that which fills the universe and spills over.  
And where we remember it  
no one can see.  
It rages cries in the hidden places of our minds.

Art enlightens civilization and broadens the mind. Keep the arts alive.  
Submissions open February 1-November 30.  
<http://geocities.com/kajmahkah/>  
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Kaj-Mahkah 1

*Kaj-Mahkah: Earth of Earth* is a refereed literary and arts journal that unearths art, prose, poetry, and drama annually. Based in St. Louis, we look for fresh, original cultivations showcasing the human psyche within boundaries of propriety that enlighten and delight the mind. This non-profit effort to proliferate the arts targets an audience of all ages, backgrounds, races, and genders. For more information, see the website at <http://geocities.com/kajmahkah/>.

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## Submitted Biographies

**John Grey** is an Australian born poet, playwright, and musician. His latest book is *What Else Is There* from Main Street Rag. Mr. Grey has been recently published in *Through Spider's Eyes*, *Inland* and *Phantasmagoria*.

**Theodore Karpowicz** has been using what he calls “empty bands” to string words and symbols together in a fashion that, when they are combined, develop exponentially altering forms of meaning. He has been practicing this “nothing art” since he was eighteen and forgot how to be himself every morning by remembering which facial movements came after which sentence structures.

Individual entries on **Richard Kostelanetz's** work in several fields appear in various editions of *A Readers Guide to Twentieth-Century Writers*, *Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature*, *Contemporary Poets*, *Contemporary Novelists*, *Postmodern Fiction*, *Webster's Dictionary of American Writers*, *The HarperCollins Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*, *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, *Directory of American Scholars*, *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in the World*, *Who's Who in American Art*, NNDB.com, and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, among other distinguished directories. Nonetheless, he still needs two bucks (US) to get on a New York City subway.

**Malobi Sinha** spent the early years of her childhood in the freedom and vastness that was and is Kenya, and then her family migrated to Australia where she completed her schooling and went on to do further studies, completing a Bachelors in Engineering from Monash University. She has had other poetical works published in various e-zines and hopes to publish a book sometime soon. She lives in Victoria, Australia, with her husband.

**David Thornbrugh** is a ring of fire poet who is currently living in Krakow, Poland, teaching English and absorbing images for poems. He runs a bimonthly open-mic in an English-language bookstore situated at the intersection of Felicity Avenue and the Street of God's Mercy, which is the shortest street in Krakow.

Poetry by John Grey

**Biography**

Look up my life  
in my burning diaries  
if you insist  
where crippled poems recite  
their odes to charcoal  
and real-life lovers  
run off with the flame.  
I am there  
where the paper recedes  
and chemicals churn and swirl  
in that instant wind  
and the words tumble over each other  
in a bid to escape  
their embarrassing fate.  
What turns to ashes  
is a kind of vacation for me really,  
the importance shallow  
in the rolls of your palm,  
almost amusing.  
Fan the flames  
until there's nothing left of me.  
Keep me in mind  
when I have no mind.

### **New Leaf**

i stay out of bars these days  
the women are too cheap  
and the conversation  
you could buy for even less  
if it weren't given away  
and i don't like the downbeat mood  
that bottoms out the laughter  
or the shadows in the corner  
playing invisible poker  
or the broken juke-box  
or the jangle-y video games  
and the pool table that has more balls than pockets  
i walk by the flashing liquor signs  
peer in between the broken angles  
of the sickly green shades  
see the glistening rail around  
the fake leather bar  
some stools  
some backs  
some phony hair  
swig on my abstinence for a moment  
as i walk harder faster  
spit it into the gutter  
watch it curl around  
slap at me in phony anger  
before shrinking down the drain  
and i'm drunk like i've  
never been before  
head spinning  
eyes bulging  
drunk on will-power  
unable to resist it

### **Electric Garden**

explaining my brain  
in terms of electricity  
to a woman whose heart  
is entirely composed of flowers...  
my lightning bolts,  
her sentimental sniffs,  
my flashing sparks,  
her sigh...  
my flesh-burdened bones  
rotate on their ball-bearings,  
fold around her one more dance,  
supple digits dissect her corsage...  
in hushed low motor moans,  
I draw on memory  
of motel neon, strip club diorama, -  
busted street-lamp crackling  
through muggy rain...  
she floats up on an ocean of  
hyacinth, chrysanthemums,  
a kiss so sweet, I could taste  
the tendrils, the stem...  
under low tech moon,  
I study the effect  
of a synthetic flower ball  
deep inside her startled esophagus...  
in dandelion dreams,  
she is happily  
pruning the gardens of doomsday.

Poetry by Marion Lawrence

**Storm**

It's gray outside.  
The rain pours down  
mimicking my tears,  
Thunder rolls  
as my sobs cry out,  
Lightening strikes  
as my heart shatters,  
The grief inside my storm.

**Thoughts**

Thoughts run through  
jumbled in my mind  
too crammed to think

A great void  
my head crashing without sound  
no escape

Isolation so great  
reality can't be formed  
emotions  
are to far to reach  
Locked away safe and secure  
never reaching the surface  
to face the harsh reality of life

I don't need to turn on the lights when I enter the front door--I know my house.  
-Richard Kostelanetz

Poetry by Malobi Sinha

**Soft Petal**

In moonlit slumber  
I lie,  
my eyes closed,  
softly breathing.  
Sweet dreams  
cover me.  
In the night,  
he steals into my room,  
to stand and look at me  
sleeping.  
Gently,  
he steals a kiss  
upon my cheek,  
then is gone  
in the blink  
of an eye;  
and I awake to feel  
his stolen kiss still  
upon my cheek  
like a soft petal  
from a newborn rose  
that blesses the ground  
it lies upon.

**Sunset**

Through my veins,  
reality  
eats into my soul.  
Conglomerates merging,  
re-developing  
where once were blue-green pastures,  
where one could wander  
disconsolately through life...  
where the buffalo once dined  
in harmony with Mao-Mao Pygmy bushmen.

But oh!  
What a lovely sunset  
On the plains.

Poetry by Raud Kennedy

**Picture Frame**

Reflections in the mirror  
don't leave stains  
like a cut on the face  
leaves a scar.  
Torn tissue never to return  
as it was.  
Pedaling my bicycle  
through my errors.  
Of judgment, choices.  
Who is my friend.  
Who isn't.

**Bruised Fruit**

The fragility of our bodies  
goes forgotten until injured.  
A deep cut, a broken bone,  
and then the healing.  
Can a smile repair  
a sneer's damage?  
Fragility is the common  
Denominator.  
Even steel melts.  
Planets die, suns implode,  
and we are as gnats  
on a floating plum.

**Together**

Campfire smoke,  
smoldering driftwood,  
faded jeans and sneakers.  
I toss a stick on the fire,  
you watch it burn.  
I watch its burning reflection  
in your eyes, moist,  
still stinging from the smoke.

Poetry by David Thornbrugh

**Path to Dungeness Spit**

That rainy day the path to the beach though cypress trees  
was thick with salamanders  
We tried not to smash any but  
neither of us looked very closely.  
A rainy day is dark day  
and a salamander is a slow thought to dodge.  
We could have gotten back in the car  
and driven away, but we didn't.  
We walked downhill to the beach  
stepping like fancy horses in a parade,  
except no one was watching;  
and the huge eyes of the salamanders were useless to see us coming.  
On the beach, waves chewed at the sand,  
like giant saw teeth.

**In Evening's Slanted Light**

Between sidewalk and street,  
speech rings like tiny silver bells.  
Young girl tilts her head, shifts  
sideways rich chocolate hair,  
laughs into warm air  
gusting from traffic.  
Passing by, I am caught  
without time to adjust my mask;  
but even the clumsiest sparrow  
bursts from the hedge  
in a flurry of wings,  
shaking new oleander leaves  
like spilled wine on pool table green.

**After the Rain**

All of this has washed away before.  
Not a single raindrop knows its number.  
The sky forms fists and pounds the earth.  
Mountains fade, cities vanish,  
forests, fields disappear  
from their distant positions.  
Memory wipes its brow  
with forgetful fingers.  
All that we have built  
will wash away  
again.

Though I consider myself rich, owning everything I can afford to purchase, certain desires remind me of the truth that I'm still poor.

-Richard Kostelanetz

Poetry by Manav Sachdeva

**LXXVII**

On why I remain tense...

some days it's you  
some days it's memories of you  
some days it's the thought of you warming your husband's bed  
some days it's knowing that I love you more now than when we were we  
some days it's keeping to myself my love for you so you may love him sans grains or rue  
some days it's waiting with love to meet and greet and sit with you, yet keeping you true  
some days it's ruining any fling or flutter so the heart stays true to you  
some days it's knowing and doing all this for you yet feeling lonely too...

and some days it just isn't you

some days it's just knowing you, and me, and not knowing why it isn't you and me...

**CIX**

cold winds blew, tents gave away  
the sheltered selves lay barren, cold

a huge sign, snack bar, a cup of Joe  
another acquired it to be a the kiss of hidden lips

tarps flying away, shirts clinging to bods  
contours flaunt blushes darning inner dams

frosty, chilly sparsely surrounded, couldn't care  
more or less, our ties selling as soft cakes

not hot ones delicious ones bought once a lunar  
breathing, taking out the green, carrying his visage

so we sit a while, calm, collected;  
others freeze, entertain, complain, even copulate;  
not us, not at all Pap & I cool sold two, go home proud to mom

**CCXLVI**

O Dear the Light of Smiles

a couplet in your service, to your beatific smile

O affaire de coeur, your sparkling smile besets me so  
in a single glance of amour in o what knots you through

Joon, I want to admit to you that you have lit up my life. I find you incredible. Joon, I cannot tell if your feelings are there and will sustain but I have no fear in telling you I treasure you as a beautiful sunflower, and so I will let you be completely as you are.

I know where I am and where we are, so I will not take your name ever lest it ever be  
taken in vain.

I want you to know I will be the same friendly, professional presence in the office.

With this I close to you my dear  
to one who is both far and near  
in hopes to love unceasingly new  
one who never in my eyes will wear

Nothing saddens a child more than a merry-go-round that is slowing down and an adult more than  
a marriage that is winding down.  
-Richard Kostelanetz

Poetry by Sharran WindWalker

**Voices from the Heart**

These are voices from the heart,  
the sounds of life given and nurtured;  
the vibrations, which support my being  
in space and time, the music  
which accompanies my body  
causing the seed to grow,  
strong, wise and loving in all of life  
until the day I return again to her womb  
to be reborn and to repeat  
the endless cycle of life engendered  
within my mother: the earth  
and thus I honour her in her labours  
by listening and loving:

I hear the call of a great horned owl  
on the high branch of an old spruce;  
the soft patter of snow-shoe hares  
circling a haystack in harsh moonlight;  
the crackling of the northern lights  
flashing fiery waves of coloured lights;  
the song of frogs on the edge of a pond  
on a clear spring night reflecting stars.  
The gentle ripple of wavelets  
bouncing against a half-submerged log;  
the laughter of coyotes in distant fields  
mocking the bark of the farmer's dog.

Yes, these are the voices  
that forever echoes in my mind  
that forever remind  
of my passage on planet Earth.

**Northern Lights**  
(remind me)

I watch in wonder  
as northern lights  
dance among the stars  
tonight

I ponder the passages  
that forms my life  
thinking  
I could have  
walked here unaware  
never glimpsing  
the simple  
the precious  
tucked away  
not always neatly  
among nature's treasure trove

I could have failed to see  
just one tiny shooting star  
crossing the distant horizon  
a cloud passing over the moon  
or the leaves falling  
and blowing in the wind  
today

I could have  
but these northern lights remind me  
there is more to life  
than mere survival

Poetry by Theodore Karpowicz

**Now and Then**

No more reckoning  
when or why  
flows the serene fist  
from the sky;  
Beckoning  
to whom unknown  
but knowing  
rain the flowers come.

**A Cascade**

I'm dying, dreaming  
Held at the crest of a river  
is a child, fading

Aren't we all human?  
burning a fire too long  
animals  
at the heart  
a fire  
on the earth a stone.

In her husband she saw all the years that had been taken from her.  
-Richard Kostelanetz

Poetry by Geoffrey Jackson

**Dear Helen,**

You opened up a window for me  
But the window was grimy.  
A bird sang outside but the room was  
Filled with cooking smells.  
Among the pans, we talked of many things,  
Of recipes and sealing wax, of cabbages & kings.

Rising from the cauldrons  
The smell of freedom was almost lost  
- Maybe it was in the salt water -  
Like little lakes, they simmered.  
And the bird whistled and chirped  
In false tones outside the window,  
Which was only open for the steam.

**Late to Catch the Day**

My morning started late.  
I only just got up in time to catch it.  
As it went out the door, I followed.

A gap opened between me and my fellows.  
I put my feet on the table, laid my head in my arms.  
I protested – crisis.

Later

Cashing two checks, paying a parking fine  
(reluctantly)  
And on to poetry.  
It beat in my blood, pulsed out of my fingers  
And throbbed onto the keyboard: last year's poetry came to life,  
Last week's poetry looked to be just as fresh.

**In the Dreamtime**

The warriors dance, naked feet on the bare earth,  
Around the fire. Sparks flashing  
Thick smoke pluming up.  
They worshipped the sky and earth,  
The beautiful moon and the fierce eye of the sun.  
On and on they danced, caught up in the rhythms,  
They danced to life and the hunt, to death and the last journey.

The warriors' eyes flashed white, white also the stripes on their bodies.  
Sweat flowed, and blood flowed dark,  
Where they were cut with their flints.  
The young boys cast more wood on the fire,  
The dancers' naked bodies spun and whirled.  
Crazed and drunken, they would dance until dawn,  
Communing with the spirit world  
Linking with the spirit world, in the Dreamtime.

One truth not to be forgotten is that fiction is largely false.  
-Richard Kostelanetz

Fiction by Bridget Batterson  
**To whom it may concern,**

We sit and watch movies, and i wonder what i would be doing without him... i wouldn't have a TV to watch or a VCR to play movies on, and i'd call on old friends and then coolly turn them down- its just another drunk fest; and so i would be sitting in a room with no TV, no movies, no him, i'd be alone and stuck in this room; ah, what would i do? i have many books i haven't read, i might pick one up and maybe get interested... or maybe i would draw, assuming i had any inspiration to draw on, i'd look at my stereo, which i couldn't use to listen to music with, cause i don't have any speakers, so maybe i would longingly look at all my favorite records and imagine the music with my mind- but that would just be sad, so maybe, i should get out of the house, and its cold outside, so that's a deterrent, but i know that there are people hanging out on grand or delmar- i could take the bus- where are my bus schedules at? no, the whole idea is preposterous- as soon as i get there, i'll only have an hour to spend and then i'll have to catch the bus home again or else i'll be stuck there, i mean i don't have any money for cab fare, every dollar i make i spend on this empty apartment and bills... hardly any food here, oh i dream of saving for a car, but there is no extra money to put away and save, i'm just not trying hard enough. i could call on shannon, maybe she would come over, but what if she just wants to go to a party, or visit all those drunk people... ughhhh, torn between loneliness or being compromised... i hate to be at the mercy of the friend driving the car, its like okay, i'll take you home after we stop by jen's house, then becca's, and we'll have to go to ronnie's to get that one guy's address... i just wanted to watch a movie, no- not gladiator, no- i don't want to see mel gibson's latest, lets rent this old documentary on ella fitzgerald, no... you don't want to, what about this - its a classic, a philadelphia story, with katherine hepburn and jimmy stewart, and cary grant... screw this, we don't agree on anything- just take me home, okay, but first we have to...

god, i miss him. so hunh, i guess i'll just stay home. the only furniture i have is an old 50's kitchen table and chairs set... i sit here a lot and watch candles burn, or stare out the window into the dark alley, sometimes i see people walking through, but, mostly... i think about what to do with myself,, this is only temporary, slowly but surely i'll attain the things that make life more comfortable.. and once i'm comfortable? i'm sleeping on some blankets on the floor in what is normally refereed to as a bedroom, but seeing as there is no bed in there, it's just a room, where i sleep. i know i know it looks like a dude's house, but i don't have any money to buy any stuff, and all these years i had been living with him, we shared stuff, i never thought i had to buy anything like furniture, or knickknacks, where would i have stored them? oh, i'd be embarrassed to invite anyone over here, please have a seat, they would look around in vain for a chair, while i sat my butt on the floor...

i work in an office now, not many prospective friends there.... they all have wives and husbands and kids, and dogs, and houses and stuff... i'm too nervous to let them in on the secrets of my inner freak, so i keep my mouth shut.... i doubt they could tell you anything about me, other than the generic 'she's nice, a good worker'... (sigh.)...i am such a bum, i've almost quit smoking, cause i can't afford it, but i bum them whenever i have the chance...i can't wait till it gets warm again, then i won't be so trapped. how did this happen? i'm lonely, i'm restless- i don't know what i'm here for, i don't have anyone to talk to or care about me, or anyone to care for, sometimes i do aerobics in my empty front room, to the sound of my breathing, sometimes i play

guitar; its sad, sad music though; i never learn anything happy...i go to the library and print out chords and lyrics off the internet... i'm getting a little better, but there is no one to hear my progress- how did this happen? i know i did it to myself- i can trace the history- causes and effects and causes have effects that caused this- i'm looking forward to going back to school, i can't wait, but i have to wait; my job will pay for it after i've been here two years... hopefully they won't can me on my twenty-third month on the job: we're sorry, but if you stay with us we'll have to pay for your education HAHAHA!... I don't have anyone or much of anything...

i could be at peter's right now, hangin with him through the ups and downs- its cold there too- but at least there is food and smoke and smokes and movies and music, and most importantly he's there- the funniest man in the world, even if i lived surrounded by clowns my entire life, i would never be so humorously inspired. Why did i leave? i can barely remember... it's only been six months, and he had been calling me, but recently he hasn't, and it's my fault i never picked up the phone, my pride wouldn't let me, i curse my pride! i want to hear his voice; it's a most luxurious voice, sweet, intelligent voice, i want so badly to know how he is,... i am wretched, i am loathsomeness- this is ten times more pathetic then i was when i was with him, and that idea is what i think drove me to make this wretched move... he must be dating someone else, or maybe he's moved away- would he move away without making sure that i knew? no... he must have moved on, at least, maybe i should call him... No! i won't interrupt him, i chose this, i must ride out the storm that's all... why is this taking so long... six months... i know why i left; some notion that i would find myself... who did i expect to find? it's just me- the same old me- i still can't think of anything to do, gets incredibly sad and angry me, paralyzed by self consciousness and blues me, the same self loathing me... somehow i thought some long dormant secret talent, or idea, or instinctual urge would wake up and prod me into action,

actions that would fill me up and replace despair with fulfillment, it has yet to happen. i wonder if he has been more creative these past six months... maybe i should give him a call... oh these have been the longest days of my life, where is the light? what's the word? give me a sign.

i used to think. i was smart. now, i am numb. dumb. tomorrow is another day, that used to console me, but now it only means going to tedium and work, and then come home to this all over again, what are we going to do tonight, i mean what am i going to do tonight? i've isolated myself, and this is not the genius hermit's creative and productive retreat, this is not enlightening, this is sad, boring zerosville, and yet i still have the will to live- i have a plan see... i'm gonna... i mean first i'll..., and then... it goes like... it will, i know if, it sounds crazy but i think i'll be happier when\if... that would happen once i,... i mean... i could travel, see... after i save some money for... it would just take a little...

I haven't got anything to lose.