



# Gwendolyn Brooks Youth Poetry Awards 2020



UCHICAGOArts

## Winning Entries



### KINDERGARTEN (pages: 3 - 4)

"Mama" by Hannah Ludlam – Sor Juana Elementary School, Chicago  
"You With Me?" by Asan Truss-Miller – Village Leadership Academy, Chicago

### 1ST GRADE (pages: 5 - 6)

"Ducklings" by Charlotte Chung – Chicago Free School, Chicago  
"On the Rug" by Catherine Stanislawski – Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz Elementary, Chicago

### 2ND GRADE (pages: 7 - 8)

"The Water's Daughter" by Holly Murphy – The Children's School, Berwyn  
"The Green Room" by Elise Brand – Francis W. Parker School, Chicago

### 3RD GRADE (pages: 9 - 10)

"Frenemy" by Keya Dhungana – Lyman A Budlong Elementary School, Chicago  
"Winter Stuff" by Ava Rucker – Lyman A Budlong Elementary, Chicago

### 4TH GRADE (pages: 11 - 12)

"Imagination" by Tal Margot Neiman – University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, Chicago  
"Linear Dodge in Green Leaves" by Luke Sindt – The Children's School, Oak Park

### 5TH GRADE (pages: 13 - 14)

"ONE OF THOSE DAYS" by Athena Gottlieb – Whitney Young, Chicago  
"The Ganges" by Karlina Tolksdorf – Fairview South School, Skokie, IL, Skokie

### 6TH GRADE (pages: 15 - 16)

"I Remember India" by Joaquin Lannoye – Fairview South School, Skokie, IL, Skokie  
"I was told to write a poem" by Liana Smith – The Children's School, Oak Park

For more information and to submit a poem, visit [ilhumanities.org/poetry](http://ilhumanities.org/poetry).  
If you have questions, contact Mark Hallett at [mark.hallett@ilhumanities.org](mailto:mark.hallett@ilhumanities.org).



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### 7TH GRADE (pages: 17 - 18)

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"My Grandfather's Broken Camera" by Noa Stern Frede – Ancona School, Chicago  
"I am made of mess" by Zoe Harris – Ancona School, Chicago

### 8TH GRADE (pages: 19 - 21)

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"Mixed People Poem" by Katerina Isabella Catala Krysan – Montessori Academy of Chicago, Chicago  
"2020" by Sophia Memon – Ancona School, Chicago

### 9TH GRADE (pages: 22 - 24)

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"Paper Room" by Jolin Li – Walter Payton College Prep, Chicago  
"Pandora's Box" by Anaitzel Franco – The Latin School of Chicago, Chicago

### 10TH GRADE (pages: 25 - 27)

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"My Dad" by Kaleena Vose – Oswego East High School, Oswego  
"Boys With Missing Flowers: Endangered and Growing" by Kamari Copeland – Gwendolyn Brooks College Prep, Chicago

### 11TH GRADE (pages: 28 - 30)

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"How I Use My 'Black Privilege'" by Daysha Straight – Walter Payton College Prep, Chicago  
"The Oreo LP" by Allen White – Oak Park & River Forest High School, Oak Park

### 12TH GRADE (pages: 31 - 33)

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"Fears in exile" by Sonam Yangzom Rikha – Walter Payton College Prep, Chicago  
"On Etching Your Legacy" by Aanika Pfister – Lane Tech College Prep, Chicago

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MAMA

Sitting

I see the right beside her on the couch,  
of course I touch it.  
It is soft.  
I hear the clicking needles.

It is soft.  
My MAMA is teaching me.

I'm excited for my scarf  
for my sister  
to be  
done.



you with me?  
I dream of everyone.  
I dream we are free  
Free as sparrows singing  
Beautiful songs and fly  
High all day long.

I dream with everyone  
Together we dream and work  
For freedom. The freedom  
to dream. To be. The  
freedom to breathe.

I am a Black boy  
made of dreams and joy.  
Be free / dream with  
me.

## Ducklings

Baby ducklings are a coming,  
Baby ducklings are a coming in spring.  
Baby ducklings are a singin',  
Baby ducklings are a singin' well.  
Baby ducklings' wings are yellow,  
Baby ducklings' wings are yellow and brown.  
Baby ducklings see a great blue heron,  
Baby ducklings see a great blue heron flying around.

On the Rug by Catherine Stanislowski

Safe and snug  
Warm and cozy  
All around me  
Are my friends

Teacher reads  
Us a story  
We are happy  
I miss school

## The Water's Daughter

I sit at the edge of the bay  
watching all the horses eating their hay  
I watch the water swishing in and out  
I love being the water's daughter.

I dive to the water  
I turn into a mermaid  
A beautiful tail, silver and gold  
So beautiful  
So bold

The waves rush over me, just like the wind in a tornado.  
They crash, thrash and bash over me.  
I don't feel them one bit.  
Clearly dad is mad.

## The Green Room

She must like to read  
say the bookshelves piled with books.

She must make art  
say the bag of markers in her desk and the clay bowl painted in glaze on her dresser.

She must like dogs  
say the many dog stuffed animals and the dog poster above her bed.

And she's bold  
says the green room.



## **Frenemy**

Look up at the sky, the darkness descends  
I wish that this grim boredom would just end  
The world is so overwhelmingly grey  
Time feels like it is running on delay  
Boredom makes my mind blank, like a plain sheet  
But this is the feeling that I will beat  
Sitting here staring at the dreary wall  
But I will never ever give up or fall  
Boredom will never ever be my friend  
My joy and happiness will never end  
Even the dark clouds have called it a day  
My sense of adventure whisks me away  
Everyone look at what's on arrivals  
My joy is back it is a revival

## Winter Stuff

Hot chocolate  
    in  
    my cup  
I was following  
    the  
    snowflakes  
warm blanket  
    on  
my  
    face  
    gingerbread man  
running  
    away  
ice-skates  
    covering  
my  
    feet

## *Imagination*

She swims in the air,  
Flies in the sea,  
Leaps onto the lemony drops of  
Golden rain.  
She whispers to the clouds,  
Calls to the wind,  
Reads the dents written into the  
Petals of the rainbow flowers.  
She seeks the smell  
Of burning parchment,  
Sings at the top of the redwood,  
Just over there,  
She lives where she wants,  
For imagination takes her everywhere.

By Tal Margot Neiman  
4th grade, University of Chicago  
Laboratory Schools, Chicago, IL

## Linear Dodge in Green Leaves

Bright red cardinal, sitting in a walnut tree. He's gazing serenely over the landscape.

I saw him with binoculars. Tree trunk like a tube,

It's smooth with a lot of little bumps and rough in places.

And this one is a melted candle, its bark is like shredded paper that's been pasted back on.

This old redbud with its crispy seed pods has about 500 blossoms. Here's a shady tree

Full of summery leaves even though it's only May first. Radiant, neon, this color is saying

'Linear Dodge' to me. A robin flashing through the sky, so close to my face.

This cardinal's call is like an arcade game laser gun,

*Peeeeeeew, peeeeeew, pew-pew-pew-pew-pew.*

The Norway maple has holes in its sides where branches used to be. The English Oak has

Tiny buds that look like magnets from here. I'll go back across the field. Earlier, in the winter,

There were red berries on this tree, but these little white buds are prettier. There's so much

Shade under here. The leaves are soft, not like chenille, but silkily smooth like flower petals.

This leaf smells like it looks. I'm immersed in green. I can kinda see the view, but the branches block

Out all the bad parts. Wonder what kind of bird that is, sounding expectant and annoyed,

Like it's saying, *Come on! What are you waiting for? Get that.*

## ONE OF THOSE DAYS

It's one of those days. You know the type. Air so thick it makes you sleepy. A day where temperature and anxiety fall in a blender on puree mode. A day where false warmth blankets the air, but the chill still creeps up your back. You shiver violently. It's one of those days where you open your mouth, to greedily suck up the moist air, but it leaves you more parched than before. It's one of those days where there was a storm, and the ghost of lightning hangs in the air, making your hair stand up as you walk. It's one of those days where there's no sun, but your shadow stalks you anyway. It waits for the right moment to peel up off of the ground and strangle you, yanking you down, down, down...

# *The Ganges*

The people's prayers flow through the Ganges  
like a dolphin gliding through the sea.

The river shimmers  
as the sunset glows via heavenly light  
touching all souls.

Ganga watches carelessly  
from the clouds  
as cozy as a pillow

The river of the Ganges flows as soft and silent as the  
hum of a hummingbird.

Ganga's lotus flower  
slowly floats from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal.

SPLASH!

The luminous and spiritual catfish  
dance out of the water as delicate  
as a ballerina.

The waves clash together like Shiva's hand and drum.

Ganga's spirit will  
always flow in the glistening water  
of the Ganges.

# I Remember India

I remember sunny India in December.

I remember the lush, juicy mangoes from the fruit vendors. My mom told me the vendors lived on those carts due to poverty in India. I felt so sad that night.

I remember all the cooking transpiring, one floor, another, and another, all cooking dahl and rice. I could hear the water bubbling with the flavorful dahl inside. The dahl talked to me, beckoning me to devour it, but I refused.

I remember being picky and only eating oatmeal for breakfast. Everyone wanted me to eat dahl but I refused. I was like the ugly duckling, sitting in the corner, eating oatmeal with more than enough brown sugar.

I remember talking day and night to my eager family all wanting to know about what has happened in America. I felt bored but realized how interesting life is in India.

I remember all the dogs barking as if the world was ending. My mom kept on complaining about all the dogs. People were yelling in languages I could not understand outside our house. I could hear my cousins, aunts, and uncles, praying through the night.

I was told to write a poem, for Poems in your Pocket  
It was from Ms. Smith And I knew I couldn't drop it  
I tried to write a poem While sitting in bed  
But I couldn't think of one So I tried the floor instead.  
I thought about it hard, But one didn't come to me  
So I tried to change the subject A poem about what I see.  
But I couldn't see much, Because my eyes were closed.  
And my room is kind of lame So I didn't want to be exposed.  
So then I just sat there, Wondering what to do.  
When it came to me, a poem! From a certain point of view  
A poem, Where you can see in my head,  
And I thought of that poem, The one you've already read.



Name: Noa Stern Frede

Date: 12/04/2019

Title: My Grandfather's Broken Camera

I am from my grandfather's broken camera.  
You know, the one that used to take pictures, oh so long ago?  
I am from games -- word games, and decks of cards that are never full.  
I am from the dent in the wall from when I roller skated indoors and fell.  
That dent that we have tried to patch too many times, and now it's just a lump.  
I am from discarded tiles from construction,  
Tiger lillies overflowing the backyard,  
And the bird feeder that is always emptied by squirrels.  
I am from the cafe with the chair that no one ever sits in.  
From the street corner that held so many bake sales,  
From the dry cleaners with the Guatemalan woman who always has a smile.  
From "dial it back's" and "you're at a level 10's"  
These things make me who I am.  
I am from crispy fried eggs,  
Butterscotch apple pies,  
Muffins that aren't really muffins, but we love them anyway.  
And I am from that big book of pictures that documents our lives.  
And with every freshly printed photograph, we slip it into its folds.  
As well as the pictures from my grandfather's broken camera.  
We slip those in there too.

Name: Zoe

I am made of mess,  
Of cats always underfoot  
Made of the scrape and blood  
of falling off a bike  
I am made of the little trees outside the window,  
Made of the snow mountain  
in the parking lot every winter

I am made of books I finished in a weekend  
And of never finishing movies.  
I am made of "it's too late"  
And "don't slam the door".  
I am made of soccer on the midway  
Where I would climb every tree.

I am made of obsessing over shows  
Of bootlegged websites to watch them on  
I am made of wandering the neighborhood  
Until I have to rely on my friend to get back home.  
I am made of musicals,  
Of particular songs I love  
And being brought back in time  
By things I saw or heard months ago  
I am made of games  
Of movies  
Of people  
Of places.

## Mixed People Poem

To the white boy in the back of  
the room who saw me walk up  
with my natural hair and my  
'cite black women' shirt --

I know what you're thinking.

Not another inequality poem.

Not another oppression poem.

Not another black-boy-shot-by-a-police-officer-because-he-had-his-  
Hood-up-poem.

Not another black people poem.

Well guess what.

This is a mixed people poem

[A white chocolate and dark chocolate taste better together poem]

This is a what-even-are-you poem.

This is a too-white-to-be-black  
too-black-to-be-white-poem.

And just because My skin tone is closer  
to the one on your face than the one  
on my father's, does not mean you  
can touch my hair.

Does not allow you to talk about  
my people--half of them--  
like they are nothing.  
Like they are just another page in your  
history books,

just another forgotten thought  
In your head

And I know if we were in a room full of black people I'd be the first

you'd talk to

because I look the least threatening

the least angry.

Just because I'm not the  
'angry black girl' the world  
expects, doesn't mean I  
can't be.

Doesn't mean I'm a docile animal  
you can talk to like I'm  
stupid.

I'm not  
stupid.

## 2020

If loneliness had a scent  
It would be harsh smoke and sweet roses.  
The sound of laughter from afar and  
The sight of cars driving away.  
A community of people who don't know  
Each other's names.

Trees lining the streets, as far apart as we would be  
Even without a virus to keep us that way.  
Nothing more than a  
    "Hey,  
        How are you!"  
Without a question mark at the end,  
A divided society with society to blame.

If loneliness had a taste  
It would be the meals we eat by ourselves  
When we don't have a virus to blame.  
And if you could hold loneliness in your hand  
It would be the thorns of the rose  
Scarring you with shame  
For the times you've said  
    "Hey,  
        How are you!"  
To a nameless face,  
Without a question mark at the end.

## Paper Room

You never know what you will find.  
Seated in a chair made of cowhide,  
Cold metal armrests still shiny, as if never used.  
Warm seat worn from days long spent on it.

Pens and pencils in every color.  
Dusty textbooks that line the shelves,  
Lacking creases and cracks.  
The scent of old books fills the room.

Frames, each one carrying a relative's face  
Frozen in time, forced to smile all day.  
Rain crashes into the window,  
The green of the leaves that lure you,  
And the red of the bricks that confines you

In the leathery seat, time passes quicker,  
Peace envelops me.  
At least here, no voices call to me, nagging.  
The only visitors, while infrequent, are those who come for sanctuary.

The gentle sound of computer keys being tapped,  
The sound of the pencil scratching against the paper,  
And I remember everything.

## **Pandora's Box**

Here it is.

Shiny and new.

With bundles of lace and pieces of glitter going around the side.

An amusing sight of undiscovered glory with bits of subtle accents along the rim.

What's inside?

Tell me, is it a garden of shining stars?

A collection of bouncing red VY Canis Majoris'?

Or bunches of bright blue Vegas that sparkle across long fields of constellations?

Are there different weeds of twinkly lights that grow next to Astraeus' sensational creations?

Or, do you hold the sky like a canvas with painted winds?

A synchronized pattern of stratocumulus masses with a splash of pastel cirrus clouds.

Is the sun designed with eccentric shapes,

or is it carefully traced with crayons?

Zeus, please, give me a hint.

Is this simply a senseless box?

An assortment of unanswered questions.

Am I observing hidden secrets whose truths are too hard to comprehend?

Be honest, am I holding a capsule full of empty space that you no longer need to defend?

I beg of you!

Your mystery would be kept with me.

Tell me, are there raging fires that can boil the concrete into bits of dust?

Is there an unbearable pressure that can so easily crush the drums of our ears?

Are there turbulent winds that can so easily peel off the layers of the ground?

Do you hold spirits that can silence the buzz of the streets by setting spells and casting curses?

Or, violent waves that hold creatures whose claws have scratched up the ocean floor?

Can these concealed mysteries be so bad?

What can possibly be held in this chest that you can't disclose to me?

Are there tiny nuggets of gold or a river of glistening silver?

Consider me as one of your own.

I'll deliver your mail, clean off your swords, or even dust off your throne!

Hera, reason with him.  
Tell him he's wrong.  
Athena, let me borrow your sword to crack open the latch.  
Fortuna, promise me my luck has stacked upon itself.

Flip the coin.  
Spin the wheel.  
Declare me the successor.

I am just like you.  
Don't take my curiosity as hidden animosity.  
I promise I'll share.

I just want to take a peek.  
A quick glance.  
A glimpse of the grandeur you have guarded for so long.  
I can take the weight off your shoulders.

A look inside is all I need.  
My fingers can easily grip onto the sides as if it were carved for me to hold.  
Blinding lights and shrieking cries creep underneath the tiny opening.

You said it was dangerous.  
You warned me of the danger the secrecy closed within this contraption holds.  
Well, I guess you get what you ask for.



## My Dad

My dad has the mind of an architect  
The body of a friendly giant, the spirit of a bird and the job of a handyman  
I love my dad, because of all of the sacrifices he made for me  
All the times he was there for me when he didn't have to be  
My love for my dad comes from his pain tolerance  
For saws cutting his fingers like little pricks in the back of his mind  
So he can come home and put a few more pennies in my piggy bank  
I love my dad because he ignored his aching bones after a ten hour work day  
So that I could sit on top of his shoulders and watch the fireworks on 4th of July  
My love for him comes from him rolling lemon oil on my forehead  
At 1 o'clock at night when I have a bad dream  
Even though he hasn't slept in weeks, in fear of my mom coming home and causing a scene  
He protected me from her words thrown like daggers, cut like long gashes  
The words "I hate you!" made scars, but they don't bother me now  
Because I had a dad that made up for her lack of affection or my lack of remembrance  
And when she threw a remote at the wall near my head  
he covered my ears and prayed over me  
and when things got worse and my sister became my mother, my dad supported us through it all  
Now he's older and he still pushes himself to feed him, his second family, and me  
Sometimes I wonder when his body will break down  
Like the rusted pickup truck that my dad loved, that he had to sell  
I wonder when his legs will fail him and he won't be able to go on walks with me  
And I hope he'll be able to walk me down the aisle and dance with me on my wedding day  
But I still wonder when his countless surgeries will be pointless  
And he won't be able to kayak in the Fox River because of all the weight he put on his body  
Because of all the times he took jobs that killed his shoulders and knees  
so he could pay the bills  
So he could buy me a battered teddy bear that said 'God danced the day you were born'  
So that I would know I was loved and had a purpose  
And that I wasn't doomed because of the environment I grew up in  
My dad taught me that love isn't just telling it's showing someone you love them  
Because every day that I can remember he showed me he loved me  
I wish I could take away every scar he got for me  
That he covered up with duct tape because he didn't have band-aids  
I wish I could take away every ounce of pain that he feels because of me and endure it myself  
I wish I could give him the 33 years of his life back  
So he could go on mission trips like he's dreamed of  
And as I watch him get stepped on again and again by his own customers  
Stabbed in the back too many times to feel it anymore  
I wonder if heaven is the only place he can rest

And as selfish as it is, I don't want him to rest, I don't want him to leave me  
So I wish god would recognize everything he's ever done, every obstacle he's overcome  
And reward him with the happiness he deserves  
Because there has to be a reason why he's going through all this pain  
There has to be a reason and it couldn't have been just for me, because I don't deserve it  
I think about all the money that he saved up for retirement  
That was washed away from shopping sprees, all 33 years of hard work gone  
Because she spent it on things we didn't need  
And he still tells me to this day, That he's saving up for my degree  
So that I can have a better life and not have to work like he did, at age 14

## Boys With Missing Flowers: Endangered and Growing

i'm daydreaming about gardens and flowers  
but when a girl says "like when boys get raped"  
the earthy scent disappears  
how can you have a conversation about boys being raped without a boy that was raped?  
i wonder if every male survivor heard it too  
i wonder if she knows i am here  
or if the class can feel my presence fading  
i wonder if i will get my points for being present and engaged

when the girl says "like when boys get raped"  
i don't know if i should be the living testimony or be alive at all  
i would never throw my own pity party  
or put myself in the position for the boys in class to call me weak  
i'm already gay enough

i sit there and listen  
close my eyes and try to go back to the garden but i'm taken somewhere else  
i am a little boy again  
scared and innocent and dazed and  
a virgin

i've never felt so uncomfortable in my own home  
these floorboards watched me scream  
and i wished they had done something about it  
i wish they had told me  
that my flower could be picked too  
whether i like it or not

i wish i knew other boys with flowers stolen from them  
maybe they could remind me what a full garden feels like  
take the patches left in us and make a safe haven

but when the girl says "like when boys get raped"  
i feel like an endangered species  
afraid to stand on my own two feet  
all i can say is nothing  
all i can do is replay that quote  
again and again and again  
and hope for a topic change

Imagine not using your real name on applications  
Because your name contains too many syllables  
And you're afraid your race may seep through the page  
Imagine being a minority  
Being a minority makes everything about me minuscule  
Victim turned into defendant  
Freedom of speech turned something more tasteful  
Something that you can more easily digest  
Why is my saying the n word an invitation for you to say it as well  
Is it because  
In your eyes, Saying the n word is the only privilege I have  
The one thing I can do that you can't  
So you want to take that from me as well  
Can we please have one thing to ourselves  
If this word was used to oppress my people  
Why can't I use it as a way to reunite my people  
Why can't I turn it into some more tasteful as well  
So I season this word with lemon pepper and liberation  
And cook it so hot that it burns my tongue like whips enclosed in white knuckles  
So if I choose to regurgitate the word that used to hurt like alcohol on open wounds  
Then I should have the right, Not anyone else  
My people have to dig graves deep enough to bury their black vernacular  
When you use my slang like you created it  
You just like my culture  
Or the parts that make you look good  
So you get blonde boxer braids  
And do your edges with our blood, sweat, and tears  
Can you imagine having to wear your hair in protective styles  
Because you natural hair showcases too much of your race  
Identifies too much with your hard owned roots and culture  
There's nothing in your hair that you need to protect to be get a job  
2019 looked more like 1920  
The only difference is  
You don't have to sing songs loud enough to overbear slave chants that echo in your head  
You only have to rap songs loud enough to overbear the word nigga that echoes in you head  
And questions like when it's okay to say it  
Or if it ever is and it's not  
skin beaten black and blue with this word  
So you don't have the the right to write, sing, or say the word nigga  
Unless you suffered the same fate  
Unless this word was ingrained in the scars of your ancestors  
Not engraved in the whips in the hands of your ancestors  
You cannot say it  
Not for education purposes  
Not because the kids at your old school were ignorant enough to let you say it

No, My oppression is not the punchline to your joke  
It's not the plot twist in your dark humour  
Unless this word was hung from the same tree that you were  
Never got my 40 acres, so I took a 5 letter word  
You cannot say it

### **The Oreo LP**

I never really asked for the record I was given  
Say it ain't my fault, "I was born a little different"  
Bumping to my own mixtape of mental illness(es)  
Passed down like an heirloom, and I'm just the remix

Welcome to the Allen White LP

Fun fact: play it backwards, and you'll hear all the "help mes"  
There's no satanic message just impressions of depression  
That were left from drummin fingers 'stead of listening to lessons  
Feelin nervous, lackin purpose, and my tracks are all erratic  
Prescription pills don't really fill me, they just multicolored plastic

Depression was the very first track on my album  
Learned the lyrics in 7th grade, wrapped me up and stuck like gum  
Too broke to pay attention when I started going numb  
Couldn't even count my blessings cuz my grades proved I was dumb

Attention: Deficit High Definition television  
Gets inside your mind and rots it like bananas in your kitchen  
Second song on my record, and its beat is always skipping  
It's when your brain decides your fate 'fore you give it permission

Doubt makes you feel like all your words are songs that won't be heard  
Feels like you're forging broken bars with butterfinger words  
You murmur to yourself that "tomorrow you'll get help"  
But the second you wake up, mourning hits you like a belt

You dug your dreaded roots as soon you screwed all your deadlines  
You pulled until you gentrified your scalp like it was redlined  
They found you barely breathing like a Still Great White  
Always think about that night, can never keep it off the record

Reverbing regrets like a lyrical mess,  
regressing to all your old songs  
Hit the track like a race, feel it's freezing  
embrace, as the artists of past sing along  
Say I'm a mic with no Stan, bars I spit dry as sand, tongue twist and tells me "I'm wrong"  
But my beat is defeatist, satisfactions elitist,  
tongues weakened, can't seem to grow strong

How can you drop an album and have it not feel like a flop?  
Why do I play the fall, but skip all the rising to the top?  
Every lyric that I got was a better artist's sample  
How can I ever lead if I follow by example?

## ***Fears in exile***

*Momola*, I'm afraid

Afraid that you won't be able to return to the home you left  
Where the towns once filled with *gorshey*  
Are now filled with silence and the hum of Chinese surveillance

*Momola*, I'm afraid

Afraid that the Buddhist monasteries with playful monks  
And libraries of ancient Tibetan scrolls  
Are now empty

*Momola*, I'm afraid

Afraid that the history of our people  
Our resilient, loving people  
Will be rewritten and forgotten

*Momola*, I'm afraid

Afraid that my native tongue has now turned foreign  
Where I stumble and struggle to convey simple thoughts  
In my broken Tibetan

*Momola*, I'm afraid

Afraid that when fall comes and you join your friends  
Finding new life in an never ending cycle of being  
I too, won't be able to return to your home.

\**Momola* = Grandma

\**Gorshey* = Tibetan tradition circle dance

## On Etching Your Legacy

Rip the waves and the water  
Into a spitting image of your face

Toss the chieftain into the ocean  
Make each straight palm tree bow  
So its bark gets a backache  
Crush beach rocks until they match the texture and color of your skin

Fill coconuts with sweet milk then shut them  
In beige trap  
Hard as your kneecap  
Sip from them like sherry and  
Grow strong and  
Conquer  
And do not thank them  
And begin etching your name into limestone

Sink your goddess fingernails into the sand and  
Heave up all the precious ignatius rocks humanity shall never touch  
And find, hiding in the dunes  
An oyster

You are it's righteous, heroic  
Dictator-Queen-Savior  
For how many centuries was  
Oyster talking over you?  
Tiny and Sheltered and Opinionated  
Ask it if it knows that your potential  
Pulls the current and rules the tide.

If it's ignorant and incorrect  
Abandon it at sea.  
Kick the sand into submission  
And for its insolence  
Make it stink of fish  
Fill your kingdom with loyal finned citizens  
And have each one of your decrees be so  
Revolutionary  
The seashells whisper your name for centuries

Goddess,



Etch your name into limestone  
So the sea can soak it up  
And will never forget you.