

1<sup>ST</sup>



# POETRY

CHALLENGE-TO-COLLAB

READERS'  
CHOICE

WEEK 2

# VIS A VIS by Mamyaw Gajito

I look into my sunken eyes  
Bloodshot and watery  
A curse bubbles in my throat  
The offspring of misery  
Hate is such a weak word  
For the disdain I feel  
For this poor excuse of flesh  
crushed by life's heel  
The expletives come in a torrent  
Wild and unruly and dangerous  
I take it all in without a word  
Until I screamed myself raw  
I look at myself in pity  
And speak in a gentle whisper  
From the dredges of my psyche  
A light shines in the muck  
As heavy as the lashes  
I gave myself in shame  
These pure pearls of benevolence  
Weigh far heavier  
I balk at their brilliance  
Denying their existence  
In this moment of disbelief  
I finally embrace myself  
Cocooned in the warmth  
I never felt before  
I accept my shadow  
I accept my light  
I am far from complete  
But I am less fragmented now  
With each piece I find  
I soon will be whole





# KAPAYAPAAN

by Mamyaw Gajito

samyo ng hanging banayad  
haplos ng damo sa palad  
ningning ng kalul'wang hubad  
pusong walang hinahangad  
silay ng araw sa dahon  
tinig mong mahinahon  
alaala ng kahapon  
di alintana ng ngayon  
walang galit, walang lungkot  
bukas ay aking nilimot  
damdaming masalimuot  
iniunat bawat lukot  
sa saliw ng piping awit  
at damdaming di mabanggit  
sa tanda ng 'sang kudlit  
kapayapaa'y nakamit





# MY WEYR by Mamyaw Gajito

I return to my weyr  
Bogged down with all of today's cares  
My nest is a welcoming sight  
my hoard gleaming in the dim light  
Ages have passed since  
I hatched from my dam's sins  
Growing up within this mountain  
What once were hers, I have now begotten  
Along the walls of this lair  
I have laid brilliant gems bare  
Each one twinkling before my eyes  
Each one worth a thousand kingdoms' price  
I lay on my nest covered in furs  
Yet it does not fit me as before  
I push against its rim  
Making sure I'm cosy within  
The nest cracks and breaks  
A part of me starts to ache  
Yet this must be done, true  
The old must give way to the new  
Once more, I rearrange my bedding  
Making sure it is to my liking  
I look around my lair  
And taste the warm air  
Some creatures await outside  
My heart skips, I want to hide  
I catch myself, and I chide  
This is my weyr! I decide who comes inside  
With trepidation, I walk to the entrance  
At my sight, some dragonets begin to dance  
Their flights' beauty has me enthralled  
And to them, I gently called  
"Come into my weyr, tiny siblings!  
I pray that it is to your liking.  
Share my nest, my gems, and my hoard  
Let us live in peaceful accord."  
As one they filled the air with trills  
My draconic heart was filled  
Never has my lair been so alive  
Maybe now, my heart will thrive





# TIGER STRIPES

by Mamyaw Gajito

thin slivers of skin  
lighter than the ones surrounding it  
raised to the touch  
braille etched on flesh  
self-inflicted blemishes  
each denoting a personal shortcoming  
tiny crosses which I bear  
winched on each other like a veil  
wordlessly they accuse me  
of pride, of sloth  
of gluttony, of greed  
of folly, of blindness  
of deafness, of apathy  
my face is a rictus of repugnance  
at the sight of these tiger stripes  
the more I try to erase them  
my shame makes them angrier  
yet, there are a precious few  
who take in my disfigurements  
and see them not as just scars  
but as trophies of a mind at war  
now I see my brandings in a new light  
stories carved upon my own flesh  
reminders of moments at my lowest  
propelling me to reach my highest  
I am my scars  
my scars are me  
within my warm embrace  
I thrive; I am free





# STEVE by Mamyaw Gajito

once when I  
was walking in the woods  
I came upon a kitten  
just newly born  
I looked all around  
it's mother was gone  
and through its piteous yawns  
I decided to take it home  
I fed it, I kept it warm  
I cradled it in my arms  
I thought, "Finally, a cat of my own!"  
thus I named the kitten Steve  
day by day Steve grew  
getting stronger, getting bigger  
getting livelier, getting bigger  
getting sweeter, getting bigger  
I then realised that Steve  
was actually female  
and that she wasn't a cat  
she was a cougar!  
I didn't know what to do  
I was scared when I knew  
but Steve would rub her head on my leg  
things didn't matter then  
I love Steve, and she is fond of me  
that's all there is to it  
I am Steve, and Steve is me  
one and the same, caring for each other  
everyday I am learning still  
to accept my wild, unruly self  
embracing all facets that are me and Steve  
living in chaotic harmony  
Steve is a gift I never asked for  
but I will never trade her for the world

