

Daniel Whitlow, P-31994  
WordsUncaged Submission  
(Poem)

“Concordance” (2018)\* *Author’s Note: Defiance is essential. If a broken organism of faulty mechanisms continues to rend and sever the seams of justice and equality unchecked, who is to blame? Unified we stand, together we walk or nothing will survive the sickness of systemic exploitation.*

The penitent man—  
    whose face blossoms as his knees wilt—  
    rejects happiness by persuading isolation to mend his hurts, the daily aches of exclusion,  
How quick his lips defy trite trivialities;  
how sure his mind denies invisible calamities—  
    painful trauma memories force violent root in his naïve future,

Our world;  
with its axioms and clichés and slogans and constant attempts to fit the perfect words into every breath and  
    its need to sell itself, to motivate, to inspire, to advertise, to whore—  
with legs open and lazy flies buzzing quietly around an ever-exhausted honeypot of poisoned promises;

How ironic it would be if all our grandest illusions and assumptions were as empty and devoid of substance  
as ourselves?

Ignore the insistent impulse to verify your existence—  
    cut the strings trussing your branches,

Our world;  
silhouettes of statue wraiths set alight beneath the wreckage of corroded lightning;  
    oh, to ride the wind,  
to channel the air upon my keen elemental steed,  
    to breathe as deep as in our dreams (as you),  
to reach up into endless night and harvest a stellar diamond, validating each blinding, shimmering glance;

Despair cares not for revolt—  
    look into your heart;  
    does a mutinous spark stare back beaten black and blue from exile’s tomb?  
    When will our expectations compel us to act?  
It is easier to invoke fear than incite change,

Our world;  
desperation slinking by,  
cognitive shrapnel beneath our skin, lurking behind our eyes,  
flashing its panicked, frantic, feral smile, all the while pontificating lies,  
describing the intimacy of our demise from deep within its wicked disguise—  
    “Arise,” it says, “and bare witness to your awkward surprise;  
    all you need do to see clearer is gaze into the fuckin’ mirror.  
There is your answer; there lay mocking lullabies swindling sleep.  
You betray yourself and don’t realize how steep, how perverse the prize.”  
    —breathe, you fool.  
Make the meaningful sounds and assertive motions of victory.  
Unite your limbs and progress!

The dispassionate realm of reality besieging us hears the instinctive rhyme of our spirit’s zealous reinvention  
and fears us;  
it dreads us—  
we must believe in ourselves before our first step

—before we slay our monsters with sharpened spears of light—  
lest we stumble, crumble, and plummet in ruptured discord;  
Better to bear the burden of truth than the fallacy of fettered sight.  
Unite.