

Poetry by **Anish Bhalerao**

On Being

A fisherman reels in a stone
with a primordial creature etched into its skin,
bringing news from the ancient world.
But he is not an interpreter of hieroglyphs.

Spirits of fish linger beside his boat,
serenading the artificer of fate.
Their chants reach unwilling ears:
he tosses the ancient beast back into its grave.

The inaudible splash echoes in his ears.
The law of nature is realized.
Mackerels, chased by a marlin, streak past
and remind him of his mortality.

Poetry by **Matthew Dexter**

Custody Hearing

Watching my daughter walk
Away from me for the last time
 Hand in her father's
 Looking over her shoulder
Shivering
He holds her too tight
Obeys the psychiatric evaluations
Confers with the court
Greedy lawyers and his mother
Worst of all
Husband I once knew
Family we once had,
She waves as his truck
Pulls away
Into the street
Toward the factory skyline
Horizon
 And the birds they still sing
 As their words ring through my ears
Life goes on.

Poetry by **Matthew Dexter**

Waiting for Rain

He stands there in the center
Of the field every afternoon
Screaming, “Where is the rain?”
While we smile
Mother files her nails watches the horizon
As I play with my siblings
Wait for dinner
Portions smaller every week
Months without rain
We are not strong
It will not be long now
Mom has the drinks prepared
Another month
No more droughts
We will swallow
The poison and wallow in a strawberry world
Where wheat is more than
A food for mere horses
And forces Dad to realize
We shouldn’t have been farmers.

Poetry by **George Moore**

Sligo, Near the Northern Border

In a confusion of streets,
a labyrinth of one-way signs
you catch or don't as quick
rush hour madness grows
and no one now ventures out
to find the old poet's home.
Cars form barricades
like blocks in an old line
in the Black and Tan. The traffic
reconstitutes a loss of time,
a grief felt at the hundred years
of passion, now dissolved
by smog into another busy
absence of song. Then
the singing starts again at night
as pub doors open and conversations
crawl up the throat, and a hand
is poised on the walking stick,
but no one goes out to the lake,
to islands dressed in famous names.
Now the town revives,
hourly bells to the sounds

of engines, the ferment
of the moment calmed, then
stirred, and words as if in
a traffic jam replace the rhyme.

Poetry by **George Moore**

Saint Quintilla

Favored with the iron spits, the cross-beams
on a saltire cross, so sure of the path that you dropped

your name on a small French town, but then
you died a martyr in Sorrento, Italy.

Without irony, the asteroid 755 bears your name.
Discovered in 1908 by one Metcalf. Or was it

Meta-calf, the perfect cow, carrying stones rolled
once into our history. Ellipsoidal solid bodies,

all of us, no perfect spherical hope. M class
asteroids. The heavens fill with history's debris.

Were you the fifth child, named after the Roman tribe
Quintii? When your name was first Quentin.

Have you ever had a sister? Have you?

With you we see only the broken wheel, the tortures.

Of what were you so sure? Why deny or not deny?

If it were only a measure of wheat, something real,

or a quantity of grain. If it were only a weight of stone
or a section of land, or more than

or less than some thing that rests in this world.

But it was not. You're the patron saint of bombardiers,

of locksmiths, and porters. A prisoner of what remains.

And for the poor poet who searches for names

not forms, nothing more than an octosyllabic

quintet rhyme. A measure of the meanness of the world.

Poetry by **Andrew Rogers**

WAR AND POWER

Sand script paper filled
with comic book characters:

“The Incredible so-and-so!”
telling tales with past-tense

words and the -ed ending.

Educating the future

of late bloomers: Black-eyed
Susans covering the soil

with yellow fever and brown
pockets. Dark seed inside or

out spreading from the word
to the word: an inferior

platform and inadequate. Water
will make the sand into mud.

Paper bleeds like you and me.

But Athena was born from

knowledge: starving to create

war and power in a statue's form

with papier-mâché and spit.

Dust off the fields

so birds can replant what

was misplaced: in-between

the first page and the last

even Emerson said that

"language is fossil poetry."

How silly to remember things.

Poetry by **Robert Scotellaro**

Transplant

He had a heart pickled in loss and other bitter brines. Its removal was simple—like lake ice cracking. From a sternum to a well they drew from. The Bible, which replaced it, had fly wing-thin white pages.

Nights, when his wife could not sleep, she'd lay her head on his chest—listen to her favorite passages, in lieu of crickets, banging away in the dark.

Poetry by **Robert Scotellaro**

Smooth Ride

He awakes to find his prayers returned to him—scattered throughout the house. Even the meager ones (wishes really) beside the middle-of-the-nighters—squat and clunky with operatic heft. He drags them off to his garage—builds the car he's always wanted. Hops in and beeps the freckled widow next door. "Cool," she says, admiring the shiny hood ornament, squinting a bit to make it out. They breeze off down the coast.

"Smooth ride," she tells him, lowering the visor to freshen her lipstick, but it falls off in her lap; an unhinged slab of hungry whispers. He reaches over and tosses it in the back. Turns up the radio when *Born on the Bayou* rattles the door speakers—screeches along as she bangs the dash. And the chassis rocks.

On the way home the sky buckles bleak and he prays it doesn't rain. Pulls over and finds that small beseechment in the trunk; screws it on just below the shield glass—her head on his shoulder the whole way back. The only music: the blade's relentless swipes, a little squeaky, and the rain.

Poetry by **Robert Scotellaro**

Rock Wine

He drinks rock wine of an unknown vintage—sledgehammered down into manageable pieces you can swallow. From a coffee can in front of the TV, amused by the scratchy sound it makes as he swishes it against the tin.

Watches the fights—an ex-champ, back from retirement, beat down by a new prospect on a 13" screen, grateful to be seeing it in miniature. Takes another swig, listens to the accumulating *tap-tap-tap* as they land.

He used to drink at a bar that only served broken-bone whiskey. But he wanted the hard stuff, so now he drinks alone.

Poetry by **Joe Christensen**

Down South in Georgia 2009

Even here in the quiet country,
the city invades:

the farmhouse remodeled

with vaulted ceilings,
red granite countertops,
varnished wood floors,
stainless steel kitchen,

the tentacled branches of civilization's neural network,
high speed DSL.

I heard the farmer coughing in the darkness,
five thirty A.M.

(He had a heart attack in the Fall.

Six years ago a sarcoma pulled him from the fields.)

He coughed and wheezed.

His truck did the same

as it went off with him

into the darkness.

Poetry by C.K.Wells

Mint Leaves

My brother and I wind through rows
of carrots, spinach, their leaves latticed
by fat green caterpillars our mother

cannot bear to kill. Summer is thick
around us, the bees heading back
to their hives, as we growl like animals

and spring, racing over plants
numerous, colorful, even in dusk's
veiled settlement: red-berried

pyracantha like thorned sentinels,
the special patch of bluebonnets,
leafy tops of potato stalks

and the strange, artichoke-like
laddering of *crassula* moon glow.

We edge herbs waist-high—

rosemary, basil, coriander—
and shriek with equal parts

terror and glee when we see

the fluting shadow of a bat,
hunting insects in the humid
Texas night. Tomorrow

we will pick fava beans
from their vines. Shelling them,
our mother's voice will be more

insistent this time, that we don't
play and smash the beans,
that we preserve each pellet.

Then, our father in his office,
staring blankly at sheets of paper,
our mother denying us candy bars

at the gas station, a treat never
before refused. We will lose the house
and garden, move from here

Poetry by CK Walls

Shame

I'd forgotten about the onions
stored under the sink, away
from the light.

I find them one day,
soft, moldy, greenish and blue.

I mourn the loss, of having wasted.

A hot flush crawls
over my body, as if I have been
in bed with some moonless, dark
lover. What shame is this?

The shame of forgotten onions?

I toss the onions
without ceremony, even
though my face is still mottled
with heat.

*There is something unforgivable
about women.*

My uncle used to say that.

I think I have been tarnished, made foolish:
by rotting onions, by Lethe,

by some portly man,
red in the face, thinking of sex,
casting his net over womankind,
reducing them to sin, writhing
fishes in his damning lattice.

The evening cools
my heated body. You come
home, ask about dinner.
I don't mention the onions
languishing in the trash.
You cheerfully recount your day.
We eat fish—I feel as though
I am chopping up my own
sanguinary body.

That night, making love,
I smell the onions,
drifting into the bedroom
from the kitchen trash.
My cheeks stain florid
beneath your embrace—
I cannot tell if it is due to pleasure
or shame.

Poetry by **Ellen Goldsmith**

VANTAGE POINTS

Straight lines curve
at will and water flows
upstream, then downstream.

Rocks, content to stay
put, watch our
comings and goings.

A woman decides
to ask only questions
that can't be answered.

Then she fiddles with
commas – free of the earth,
free, of the earth.

She ponders silence, how
even in the stillness of no breeze,
there's a bird, a ripple, a breath.

Poetry by **Ellen Goldsmith**

BIRTHDAY POEM

In my 66th year, I aspire to not wish
for strawberries in January, to forget
about what I've misplaced, to remember
how the taste of an ordinary peach
after a reckless hike was the essence
of flavor, an ultimate satisfaction,
to enjoy my bouncy step, my willing
heart. Years ago, I would have considered
my current musings as settling, coming
to terms. Certainly, there will be coming
to terms with the body's lessening,
with its increasing requirements. But
what I'm talking about is sharper sight,
or perhaps the effect of pruning.

Poetry by Ellen Goldsmith

WHAT'S LEFT

What's best? Another request or silence?

In the face of the dark wall, I hear
Helen Trent and Our Gal Sunday,
feel in my fingers an old radio knob.

Step by step, I melt, mix, stir, fold.

Falling into the land of lost objects

I see what I've left behind.

Recipes are best when they take me
to many cabinets, many drawers.

Refusal is a dark and solid wall.

As a preparation for fullness

I think about making emptiness.

Poetry by **Jen Knox**

Relapse

Kathy, um, remember how you called the Navy for me? Well, I need you to do that for me again. Tell them that there's a package here. I need them to pick it up. This is Grandma, by the way.

Kat, it's Darlene. I haven't heard from you in a few days, and I just wanted to see how you were. You are very special and I am happy to have you in my life. Call me back anytime, day or night.

Hey girl, it's me. Thanks for calling last week. I'm fine. I was sick, but it wasn't swine flu, it was just a pain-in-the-ass cold. I think it was from all that traveling. It was good to see you though.

Hi, it's Dad. I'll be in and out of the house all day. Did you see Obama's address last night? Call me when you can. Or, I'll call you tomorrow. OK, bye.

It's Darlene, Kat. I love you. I hope you're OK.

Hello. It's your momma, just calling to tell you I love you. No news here—same shit, different day. I miss you, baby girl.

Kathy, did you get my message? This is Grandma. I really need you to call me. Please call me as soon as you can. Kathy, this is an emergency. Please. This is Grandma.

Hello, I'm calling in regards to your inquiry at our facility. You can call me back at extension 248 anytime before five. Just need insurance information and your ID number, if you have one...

Kat, I got your number from Darlene. She told me you may be having some troubles and I thought you might want to get some coffee sometime. If you are in trouble, don't worry. I can come to you if you'd like. I'm retired, so I'll be around damn-near any time of day you need me.

Hello. Um, it's Sam. I met you the other day and I was wondering if you could give some advice. I was at the meeting and you gave me your number, said I could call if I needed help, and, I think I do.

I dial. A low, almost sultry voice answers, then I hear an inhale. She is smoking a cigarette, I think, and immediately, I want one, too. Sam? I ask. What can I do for you, sweetie?

She coughs, a painful, hacking sort of cough, before saying, I just want to talk. Can we go out? Breakfast?

I agree to coffee, and as I drive toward the diner, for the first time in a few days though I still don't feel good, I *do* hear my stomach shift around like soft thunder. It's funny how hunger can leave for so long and then suddenly materialize, like a second chance.

Poetry by **Eileen Neary**

My Eclipse

My eclipse
Shelter from a sweating sun
Gravitate and moves
moves you move
to shield my eyes, carapace of my soul
and secure my hand
Astrally, I hold on back
Assertion, eclipse

A lurid galaxy pastelled
Thank you, anomaly
How did you find me?

My eclipse
Halts an agoraphobic sky
Orbit and loves
loves you love
to keep me safe, blithe ideology
and lead me along
Satellite, I follow
Relegate, my love

Celestial savior,
Seraph in my eye,
How did you know?

My eclipse
Drinks the stars and diverts them
Just for me
me you me
Dazzle the world, tenebrous
and fall in love
in softened hues, my dark artist
and save me from the rays
Fermata,

My eclipse

Our hands we hold high
And my sempiternal eclipse
Simply acquits

Poetry by **Eileen Neary**

Microcosm

Sanctity is two eyes
and home-hands.
Beauty in the eternal trend of
love and then,
the lucky song and near-tears.
Two eyes, two eyes;
my infinity is in disguise
in a pair of lips and post-fists
and those two green
[home-green]
eyes

Poetry by **Robert Laughlin**

Khalid Massoud

He knows that he will die today, at seventeen.

His father died two years ago,

shot down

because he wouldn't grow the poppies that the Students asked him for.

A few months past,

Khalid began to sow his father's field with honest crops

and soon touched metal with his foot.

Was it a mine, an unexploded shell or cluster bomb?

The thing that matters is

it left him with one leg.

Supported by his crutch,

he lingered in the village green,

collecting alms and somber looks

from able-bodied men

and nubile women that he might have thought to marry once.

The alms were not enough.

His mother sold their few possessions, one by one,

and spoke of selling off their farm

and giving four-year-old Shalaila to another family.

And then a Student, one Khalid had never seen before,

came by the farm.

The Student had a stack of freshly minted twenty-dollar bills

Khalid could touch

and he could count

all while he heard the thing he had to do to get them for his family.

It isn't wrong to kill invaders, so the Student said,

or fellow countrymen who help them out,

it says so in the Holy Book.

Khalid could not read any book,

and let the Student's argument alone.

The pack Khalid has on his back looks innocent enough.

The Students drove him thirty-five kilometers

so no one that he knows will die.

He stumps up to a checkpoint as a convoy nears,

providing targets of a dozen nationalities.

Khalid Massoud will die today.

Jihad, for him,

Is just another word for nothing left to lose.

Poetry

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