

poetry by *Oliver Rice*

Orwell In The Hebrides

He took the ferry, then, to Jura,
intense, eccentric,
journeyman author,
forty-three,
bearing the consumption and a vivid idea.

You understand, having also persevered.

Arrived at Craighouse,
a store, a church,
only inn, only pub on the island,
bearing provocations from a fatherless childhood,
Henley-on-Thames and the chambers of Eton.

You understand, having also arisen.

Set out on Long Road north,
one lane into the moors,
bearing marks of a policeman in imperial Burma,
a derelict in Paris and London,
a Loyalist fired upon in DCatalonia.

You understand, having also survived.

Walked the last miles over a stony track
to the deserted farmhouse,

a habitat for his showdown

with the totalitarians,

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hills and heather sloping to a mythic bay,
red deer roaming,

a justified man obsessed in an upstairs room

sister below,
tending his motherless son,
hunting rabbits, setting the lobster pots
in a silence after someone has just been subjugated,

harrowed,

extinguished,

waking to sun on the daffodils,
on the litter of his dreams,
on his undeniably turning life,

wifeless in his kitchen garden,

sitting with a visitor,

a squall blowing up far out,

inhabited at all hours
by a moral will shaping an ineluctable justice.

-

You understand, having borne outrage,

imtemperate,

unremitting.

Yes?

poetry by **Oliver Rice**

The Engagement of The Higher Neurons

At work, even as It sleeps,
they worry the domesticities,

the proper papers, the rain spout,
alert to Its soft parts,

Its cowlick, Its sweet tooth,
the rhythms of Its lust.

Even as It stirs the sauce,
deals the solitaire,

they hear the gray goose call,
the day roam the streets,

as It sings along
in a room full of others,

they study the faces
for terms of passage,

for anxieties, mistaken ardors,
as It has the Tuesday special,

dances Its best dance,
they receive intimations

of Saint Hilary, Tibet,
the sea caves, the stars,

the present vanishing,
the undeniable darkening,

as It drives the snow plow,
turns to the camera,

dark fables rising

from the spreading depths,
even as It rocks
at the top of the Ferris wheel.

poetry by *Oliver Rice*

Across The Plaza Sees The Manikin

It is the lunch hour in midtown.
We stray among the psycho systems,
useful persons and perpetrators.

Plato, says Harvey, hated democracy.

In the green space behind the library
they are playing dixieland,
disclosing ironies for naming the world.

Allegory, says Harvey, wishes to speak.

Through the horse chestnut trees
the statue can see the gargoyle
that across the plaza sees the manikin.

Absurdity, says Harvey, loiters on the air.

Returning, we are fragmented
in the silvered plates of the tower
where our livelihoods are determined.

poetry by **Colin Pope**

Drive-In

I used to like how the heads were
so big they were the size of Buicks
and how the picture jumped on
breezy nights like a hand
feeling under a blanket
and how the tension of the part
when the two young rebels
decided to play chicken
reached inside and made you
for a moment actually believe in youth
how you could feel everyone else
believing and reaching there
towards the dark history that didn't give
a damn and was getting farther and farther
away like a stone skipping
towards the bottom of a pond
and knowing that inside the little
boxes of cars were thrumming hearts
that pounded like naked fists on
midnight doors and driving
quietly into the distance afterward
how your smallness came back into you
how you were warm with possession
from this that you could never hold
in your hands and the smell of exhaust
wild and sad as it dispersed like
the emptiness the waterhole feels
when the animals leave it for the sun
I miss knowing that it was there
for my nights and then knowing
it was there for everyone who so wantonly
jailed inside their cars watched the world
with so many new kinds of love

poetry by **Andrew Taylor**

Medicine Bottle

Not wanting to die without telling
or seeing the Star Room
red neon over Union Square

from a 32nd floor balcony
forget little beds I want
to lounge luxuriously in cool cotton

Don't drink the medicine
The ether will drag you into
an Alaskan pipeline of addiction

red and white blood and snow

evening comforter drifter

One minute you are a statue
the next a pigeon

Always read the label

poetry by *Andrew Taylor*

Avalyn II

The cottage chimney smokes
despite lighter nights
first marital home
filled with music and hope

lanes wind through fields
hinting at green

I'm here on my own

Northern horizon changes
trees thicken
the work room view motorway
rumble of traffic

Daffodils pepper verges in need of a trim

Lingering sun fails
to heat remains of day

poetry by *Truth Thomas*

Santa Monica

I breathe her, wet & silver
saint & lover, as seagulls kite

on invisible strings catching
fries, as neon wades on wooden

legs over call & response waves.
I greet her, arch & altar, bounce

& bubble, where popcorn plays
percussion, and rods hug piers

like drunken men hug trouble.
Where candy cane lights watch

rails for kisses, they are never
disappointed. Where carousel

horses court dancing hands of
children, I am never disappointed.

Below the ocean road, Monica
reminds me, I am one of them.

poetry by **Truth Thomas**

Myrtle Beach

(After Alexis Wise)

Fourth of seven, I have come
for you, as pyrotechnics kiss
and the furnace sleeps, in the
name of the dive, the splash

and the cupping palms, in the
name of the blanket breeze and
moonstruck waves, as works
of tinted embers rise, over

sandy carpet, by a tipsy pier
sparklers become children's
hands, lovers wind the mystic
clock, gold, pink, green, jellyfish

swim the sky, as sea, a rolling
mirror, reflects the blooms of fire-
light—as sea, the salty feel good
stirs me in your twilight.

poetry by *Jeanpaul Ferro*

We Will Live...Now

Through the winter rains

the city lights began to tumble yellow
across downtown,

all the blood in the streets washes away,

small crystals, the day's red alluvium,
it freezes over our faces in disguise of the
pain,

your hand reaches back in time—
yes, I feel your hand squeezing mine
in the darkness of our old bedroom:

a thin red line where the clouds
break right over the horizon in the
spot where God always vacations,

your eyes watching the train half-disappearing
down the tracks,

today's clarity lost back somewhere in the
cold currents of time,

your body protesting as your mind and soul slowly
let go and let you slip back out to sea,

so you can finally go on and live the rest of
your life in peace.

poetry by *Howie Good*

King of Hearts

1

I hear crying. The crying goes on all night. If I didn't know better, I'd think it was a baby crying, it sounds so human in the dark. My heart tries to sleep, but can't. I watch it walk away. I watch for a long time. I watch until it's out of sight.

It never looks back. It doesn't wave. And then the street fills with bruised shoes and the invention of gunpowder.

2

My heart returns in a dark overcoat, the brim of its hat pulled low. It talks rapidly, but also with a stutter, like a Tommy Gun. The couples at the other tables look away. There are various theories as to why. My heart draws a rough map on the back of an envelope. In the piney woods a fat and bleeding sheriff is tied to a tree and crying for mercy.

3

An engine coughs to life. Startled, I look up. Defendants and their lawyers are dancing around the cannon on the little square of lawn outside the courthouse. They must believe the rain has erased any fingerprints. "But that's stupid," my heart murmurs, even if something like it happens nearly every afternoon.

4

A dot of blood where the sun should be. "I've nothing to say about it," my heart said. Trees in full leaf haunted the highway for miles, millions of dimly veined hands reaching out as if begging forgiveness, or offering it – but, of course, I've made mistaken inferences from vague gestures before. At the border the guard told me to pop the trunk. My heart rattled like a plastic bottle of small, white pills. It was then the evening arrived with two guns and started shooting.

poetry by *Jason Spear*

Confession

You can speak, my daughter, what you say
Is safe in here. I know as well as you
The dreams the dark makes up for us, the goblins
In the closet, the shadows on the floor,
(How the prayers don't seem to be enough)
And we don't want to but ask for more.
The nights are long, but they grow longer.
Still, there is a tenderness of a kind,
An imperfect bliss, obsolete of bless,
So bow your head and listen how the
Unsafe world's out there, in here is safe,
Outside the world is torn, in here is sweet
As the fat of burning candles and little prayers.
I know you must have guessed the world's on fire
And it's always burning down, but before
Fire purifies, evening comes, reed-entangled,
Cool as your gentle cheek before it burns
With roses. Daughter, before the roses bloom
And wither, they must be given in the dark
To cloying words in a doorless room.

poetry by *Jason Spear*

In Media Res

And the days are sometimes heartless,
Or lovers are, or our hearts,
And the nights are often sleepless,
Far from love, or cruel when flesh is
Close to cleave, to have and tear apart.

No, your eyes are no more of skies
Than ice, freedom is for fairy tales,
For gentle Dante and Beatrice.
I'll take you, my love, without veils,
Burning with desperate choice

Only. There is no other vow
And no other voice but yes,
Just fire to soothe aching flesh,
Just flesh to cling to, and only now.
The days and nights do not rest.

poetry by *Jason Spear*

Critic on Demand

She wanted something pithy, densely lyrical,
Something more common than roses, simple,
But at the same time private, only hers to hold;
The form should be discreet, like a ripple
Before the stone is cast, an intricate manifold
But clearly of a simple principle.

Difficulty is not the point, she said, *but*
Too much ease is plebian, crude, which is not
To say that democratic beauty does not exist
As Whitman proved or Williams proofed, but not
Quite well enough. Here she cut her list.
I smiled and kept my rose and rock and forget-me-not

And packed her up in a suitcase made of brick
And thought of simple joys while I threw it in a ditch.

poetry by **Jeannine Hall Gailey**

In Phoenix, the Heat Makes Us Follow Egrets

The ground runs with quail and scrub-brush rabbits.
We pass acres of golf course where we chase
a white egret, alien angel of swamps,
from the quiet of its water hazard.

The sand and sunlight are pink as raw skin
and mesquite wood burning on some grill
blends with sweet Empress trees reborn
from scorched roots and thorny acacias

that leans against me, arms menacing the sky.
One more dip in blue chlorine for you,
while I open the door to let out air conditioned frost
and let in a snake that curls up in your shoes.

I eat soft prickly pear candy while the mutated
severed thumbs of Saguaro cacti hallucinate
the landscape, like Dali's chess set.
They hide owls in the holes of their skin.

The white egret circles condominiums,
mini-malls, endlessly fleeing our arms
in a desert, crying for forgotten water.

Big Sister, Little Brother

I brought you back to life.
But first, I had to become you:
dress up in your clothes,
track down your enemies
and make them eat
the poisoned rice that had taken you.

poetry by **Jeannine Hall Gailey**

It wasn't the first time
I saved you from your
so-called friends; before
the deadly banquet,
there were the contests,
I made you a fan
of living bush-warblers,
a boat rowed to shore by magic clay dolls.

Over and over I saved you,
but this time, taking your place
among the shocked faces at the table,
I realized how small a thing
it would be to slip into your life:
the school, the friendships,
the easy path. For a moment,
my feet could cover more ground,
my strong fingers and jaw
were assets. I've never been jealous
of anything but this.

As I gather a thousand flowers to burn
and pray to the gods to revive you,
I will not begrudge you anything,
little brother – take the gold of my hands,
the river of my breath –
walk among the living,
with my straight eyebrows and long calves.
Be strong in a land seeking to destroy us,
and for one of us, at least,
my magic will be enough.