

poetry by *Ray Succre*

In the Poetry Festival

How the lops with lines took off an ear, there was a black read,
in such that color was absent to heap some messages,
relieving the day of pancreatic smarts, fish to the air.
There was a stash above, where time passed and pissed Oregon atop us,
and a slush below, where the stillbugs pilled beneath clotted ground,
and like them we nudged meals off the carcasses, readmitting, casting,
before we startled and bled out our dull fronts like promoters.

When and in a twilight battering the day spun atop us,
was there poetry from peotry, writing from scratches,
or was there but eyesight in a line of hills, an achromatic grade?

No matter, we knew then what the cash devoured, the message,
then how the cash knew us, spouters and pointers,
but the pillow revivalists of an imprecise reasoning.

Poetry.

Poetry.

There was a fanciness already gone in the moment it was uttered.

poetry by *Ray Succre*

A Referable Account

The first morning of June becomes a partridge
having broken its neck between birdcage wires,
now risking an afterlife on the cage floor.

The last instant of May had recoiled,
saturated in tarmac minutes,
Gregorian time with its guard up,
and then I slept, entering the monthly switch
in the manner of all things comatose.

Now, the first night of June
has crawled into my knees and shocked me
upright, out front, with a look upwards.
It is the same look and front,
the same tarmac and partridge.

This is my newest second alive, I think.
Should I blink, remiss to blind it even once
before the next?

poetry by *Ray Succre*

Out

No rife street leads home at eight.
I've gone out, townward as thousand cars,
but there is no pave I bed,
no road-as-door— I am lost on streets that don't go straight.
I am underground atop them, a swimmer scarlet pilgrim;
I have charted the intersections
and their hyperbolized tails, I have counted footfalls
and kept bird and beast from breadcrumbs.

The streets are fraudulent— neither earth
nor sky, but sources of painfully descript gushes of tar.

I can't find my house. It is wounded on a river of black,
cooling on the amplification deluxe.

The moon begins to gorge on a trim dark,
as my seisms commence, felt only by lamp-lit moths.
It keeps getting later. Apprehension has curled over me,
and I walk, I leave behind more and more motleyed streets,
a descent into the scissures of ever-foreign hills.

poetry by **Jimmy Gieselman**

Jimmy's Song

Startled fox in April,
We've come upon each other in
Death throes
Of season's change.

Scared and starved,
I am happily
The invader.

Occupying
My wood shed,
Your tail is thin, and
My heart soon, too.

For this food,
in my palm and
Lump, in my
Chest, and I've this
Ring in my pocket and this
Fear, in my heart and -

You may be
Rabid, but you may be
Dying so
I'd be pleased to
Take
A chance.

poetry by **Joe Christensen**

Coyotes in the Cul De Sac

Coyotes
gray as ghosts
roam nocturnal
the backyards
of Kenstone Close
in spaces
barely touched
by the lights
from our fine houses.

I have seen their shadows
form
along the little
patch of backyard grass
I thought I owned,
a patch
that in the night
was and is
and will be
theirs.

In the light of morning
I find the litter
from their feasts,
and bag it,
but now at night
I keep the deck lights out,
and the curtains closed.

poetry by *Aline Soules*

Apart

I've given you away.
I don't know who got
your lungs or eyes or
bones, but your heart
went to a young woman
with two small children.
She wrote to say that it will
slowly give way to her body's
disease, but not before
she sees her children grow.

Are you breathing in the chest
of a man just down the street?
Do you look at a lake
through the eyes of a boy
who has only known
the sound of its lapping waves
or the chill of his first
plunge of summer?
Can you climb a mountain
in the now-sturdy legs
of a woman on the other side
of the country?

The more those legs
take you away from me
and your heart pumps in another,
the more you breathe
to a different rhythm
and each of us sees people and places
the other will never know,
the more my empty heart
wonders if we have met again,
neither of us able to recognize
that we are together still.

poetry by **Simon Perchik**

*

The same *Krupp?* this coffee mill
arm and neck
on orders and German engineering
and now each morning
the way marrow darkens
fresh ground from smoke and seawater

--who can drink from such a place
can touch this switch as if the trains
would stop, back up without expecting clouds
that have my nose, my eyes, my lips
sit down at the table, ask what's new.

The clerk in back the counter
is next, wants me to know
these playful mills are made
only black or white
photographer unknown
exhibit at Nuremberg trial
--talks from behind some valve
he's opening, sticks a little --a few seconds
is all it takes --I can't make out the words

--even at home, hour after hour
I listen to its motor --no water, no beans
just the blades over and over
like a plane trying to get it right.

poetry by **Simon Perchik**

*

These rusting wires whose hooks
without any bait --even in sunlight
already a net trying to shake loose
from its water and Spring too is bleeding

--every season is born in water
in two rivers that seem to be measuring
this abandoned schoolyard, frozen windows

--I too was born in water
from two mothers --both my mothers
had cold hair, four arms dressed me
as though I had a twin somewhere

--even as a child, before I could walk
I would talk to a cloud, word by word
warming it till finally my mothers came
only as snow --all around me
and I'd yell, *There! In there!*

Finally I started to climb
arm over arm as if this barbed wire fence
was filling with sea water
was holding me impaled on its blossoms
its vines that never close. Or open.

poetry by *Simon Perchik*

*

Of course with your eyes closed.
It's how the net is gripped
then triggered, spun out
bringing down the lake.

Well, it's the same with housework
--you boil water, the pot
dented, grimy, not to stand out
--the sun will think you're blind

not hunting --let it splash
cover the floor till you hear
an emptiness --with only your wrists
pull up! you've caught the sun

and your eyes back --inspect
where the struggle took place
--wipe your mouth with your hands.
Try to hide this great strength

you have --save it for the mop
tied end to end with ropes
the way comets still go down
on fire --with every muscle

twist the water from your hair
and from your room its bottom sand
till the air gradually dries, the pot
stained blue by the flames.

poetry by **Larry D. Thomas**

Earthworms

Even when bisected
by a shovel
slicing through humus
for a fisherman's bait
and abandoned

as fatally injured,
their halves heal
and flourish,
each with hearts
still to spare.

Dropped on concrete
in full sun,
they writhe like demons
choked by angels
of air and light,

content to live out
their dark purple lives
gorging decay
and nutrients of earth,
undulate as thread

pulled by phantom
seamstresses
through the black,
silken fabric
of the grave.

poetry by *Larry D. Thomas*

White Vultures

The sounds of war
grate the drums of ears
resonant with Beethoven.

A painter, simply because
he has to, drags a brush
gelatinous with his last

drop of blood, across
a canvas stark as a sky
absent every hue of blue

or nacre, the ghastly white
we gaze into sweating
beneath masks of courage,

dying hard and game.

poetry by **Larry D. Thomas**

Unicyclist

His cycle's spokes flash
like a giant sparkler.
He pedals its lone wheel
back and forth in jerks
for Balance, his jealous Deity,
in Whom his faith is absolute,
his blind faith a split-second
lapse of which but the coins
of death could compensate,
this acrobat and his one-
wheeled cycle, its handlebar
and other wheel remote
in the sky as the aching,
phantom limbs of an amputee.

poetry by *Lyn Lifshin*

Lemon Pie

slow afternoons in my
grandmother's kitchen,
a freeze frame I'd include
from things that glow
in the past. The house
smelled of flowers and
lemons. Roses on white
porcelain spice jars,
exotic to me as the
stained glass shade and
how the room was
transformed by light thru
plum and guava and
raspberry. Chocolate
jelly roll every Friday,
white cakes with fudge
or a dark cake with
snow frosting. If only
the days had seemed
as sweet. If only the jars
I adored would now
seem lovely, wrapped
in newspaper in my
garage. If only the rare
moment there and then
not there didn't close
over like the eyes of a
plastic doll

poetry by *Lyn Lifshin*

If I Could Dance The Blue Out Of Me

shatter darkness
under thin green silk
on the belly dancer,
a shimmy of light,
skin glistening.
If her DNA could
seep into my winter
skin, let me be
there in my bare feet,
my heart as bare,
If I could keep the
dark still. Just move
what would hypnotize,
a snake gliding across
the floor, finger
cymbals and their
hieroglyphs, be the
drug you can't resist

poetry by *Lyn Lifshin*

Maybe Venus De Milo Wasn't Happy With Hers

So with one gone,
at least, she could
pose not showing
what was no longer
what it was. Arms.
You lift weights,
stay thin but then
suddenly it's as if
earth's kiss was so
strong and they
were too vulnerable,
didn't have it in
them to resist. May
be pushing more
men off would have
helped. Or pulling
what seemed so
resistant closer,
working the burn,
terrified of being
burnt and not giving
my arms over to the
sun when he backed
away from them
and never slicing a
wrist or arm off
like Venus as if with
out him adoring
perfect skin, there
wasn't anything
worth holding

poetry by **Kenneth P. Gurney**

Venus of Willendorf

The Great Mother has no face -
no one, everyone. She may lie
in the bed next to you, stand
on the metro platform headed for work,
ride the swings at the playground
not yet grown into herself.

The Great Mother's back aches
from the weight of her swollen breasts,
yet she stands straight, hands behind her,
as if she offers to nourish the world
with her milk, with her long curves,
with the round of her belly
that bears a promise for the future.

The Great Mother has no feet.
She cannot paint her toenails red
or dance disco in some retro bar
or run from her responsibilities.

The Great Mother has no mouth.
She cannot scold you for leaving
your socks under the coffee table,
tell you when to be home at night,
or say *I love you* except by
drawing you into her ample hug.

The Great Mother is made of stone,
and you tie the leather thong
that dangles from your neck about her throat,
but this figurine is no prize, no trophy,
only a fetish, a talisman.

Her spirit cannot be tethered
or enclosed by your fist.

poetry by *Joan Colby*

Destination

We've traveled miles of labyrinth
Mounted the secret stairs
Walked empty streets repeating the password
To warehouses storing up darkness.

Coming up blind
To a dead end, at last
The hidden door swings:
We're here
In a madhouse ruled
By a jeweled old whore
Who says my hair is tidy
Her narrow smile like an eel in a crevice.

I shake it loose
In the drawing room where
The birdwoman
Menacing and frail
Paints the nature of disease.

A woman at the oarlocks
Wears a clown's gaudy hat,
A man in grey pajamas
Speaks the language of velveteen.

I look at you
Why did we end up here
After all that effort
With our reasons for everything.

On the lawn, the crazy people
Are launching their wooden boats
Into a lake misty as Japanese watercolor
While attendants wring their hands
And tell us not to go.

poetry by *Joan Colby*

Peonies

Peonies are a benison
Of big untidy craniums
Shaggy with fixation.

Their sunrise colored shawls
Tremble, feathered on heavy
Bulbous cores,
Fat dowagers in multitudes of
Inappropriate ruffles.

Without the iron cauls
To set them upright in dissent
Knowledge falters,
Simplifications fail
As they always have under the spotlight
Of common sense—mosaic of instinct and perversity. Common,
They are still eloquent
As calligraphy. Oriental
Yet rudimentary as cabbage.

A symbiosis with red ants ensures
Their bloom, otherwise foliage
Outstays their resolution.

If peonies can be a metaphor
They are at once ponderous and premature
Enjambed unskulled brains
Unaided by wickets
Succumbing to rot,
The sluggish seductive edge
Of petals coruscating
Like true believers
Stalked by doubt.

poetry by **Mark Cunningham**

Canes Venatici

One moment the words on the back of the truck read "Clerical Driver Need." The next moment, they read "Critical Driver Needed." Enormous changes are afoot; they take place right under my nose. There—even in a cliché, I've shot from the base of my body to the top. It can be fixed. My nose, I mean. And by "fixed," I mean "changed for the better." The body's always getting caught up. One moment, everything's fine; the next, a cell changes, and you've got kidney cancer. I saw a palm frond leaning over a balcony rail. I looked away, looked back, and I saw a body leaning over a balcony rail. I didn't look again. Some things can't be fixed. And by "fixed," I mean "stopped from changing for the worse." I lied about my nose. When I was three, my uncle pulled it off my face. Everybody tried to tell me that it was just my uncle's thumb tucked between his fingers. Maybe it was his thumb the second time. But since that first time, my sense of smell has never been very sharp.

poetry by **Mark Cunningham**

Celestial Drift

Myra and I got to where we couldn't play hangman. One of us drew seven spaces and the other looked and said "airmail" and that was that. When she started talking to me through the bathroom door, I realized we'd crossed another boundary. I've never seen the southern star Chamaeleontis, or any of the southern constellations. Sometimes, watching the stars I do see, I make a wish—I'd like to see those other stars. To invent a spider web, look through a glaring window, then into a dim corner. Close your eyes. Open them. Look back into the glare, into the corner, close your eyes, open them. A little light hangs. Holds. Begins to build.

poetry by **Mark Cunningham**

Little Night Owl

Kimberly's grandfather would lay with his eyes open until he fell asleep. What comfort: he, a piece of the world, laying in a piece of the world (the bed), surrounded by other pieces of the world, sure that sleep would include him in the world's rest. Not me: I have to close my eyes. I have to create my own night. Sounds easy, but I have to stand around for hours or take a long walk before I reach the proper level of physical readiness, the right pitch of concentration and mood, so that I get the best kind of night. Often I have to wear one of those masks that look like you'd wear to a formal costume ball, except the eye-holes haven't been cut out, the kind of mask country club women put on after taking sleeping pills in 1950s melodramas. And after this, there's no follow through: I wake up in an ordinary day. I can't even create my own. "Let there be light", I want to say, but I'm not up to it. Maybe when I'm more rested.

poetry by *Matson Tew*

Spring

Mountain winds blow
free
the late spring
snow
once clinging
to forested branches.
Just yesterday how
they were petrified
beneath newly white cloaks.

The sun rests brilliantly
upon luminescent needles
as the laden snow thunders
its release
nourishing the floor
and the roots within.

I'm moving again
she says
It's Spring
when the soul becomes
nourished
when we all can grow.
as our branches free
to blow with spring's wind

I reflect.
Arching upward as the sun
releases limbs
from heavy burdens,
Will we withstand?
Twisted as the trees
framing the mountaintop
Embraced
while winter's torrent
strips back

nurturing branches.

Hold on

hold on

whispers within

the wind

Wrap me in your warmth

until

Spring.

poetry by **Val Gryphin**

Eulogy for Life

prologue:

the colors of the ferris wheel glow
and reflect on the ocean

the sand beneath my feet is smooth
the San Diego city flows around me

the road
sings me to sleep

this life makes me think
it will never end.

section I, part i

silly me
this was supposed to be
the end of my old
and
the beginning of my new

instead
it is the end
of my beginning

part ii

bathroom smells
people snore
track lights gleam
wheels rumble

my mind wanders
into the holes

part iii

if you say to me
I love you
and I do not say it back
it is because I don't

what lives in your mind
does not live in mine
I have no desire to share
what you think we have

section II, part i

the courtyard grass is green
the bus station floor was cold
the cleaning crew's radio
played sad saxophone
jazz

but here, the sun is warm
I sleep

part ii

I thought about flying
when running was not enough

the problem though with flying
is that once you find a way
there is no way
to stop

part iii

distance may make your heart
grow fonder
but mine, it just grows

no longer are you with me
I forget you

section III, part i

burned dirt skies
tumbleweeds cluster at the doorsteps
we are far from Reno

I wonder what it would be like to walk away from here
not to just step in the hot sun, from the cool bus
to stretch and buy a sloppy burger

but to start walking, in this little town
and keep going

part ii

you, I cannot run from
you are part of me, and
I....am part of you

to leave I must rip you
and bleed
I don't mind blood

part iii

we are going to visit my future
or what I hope
will be one

I'm stretched out now
curling around the bus seat arms
the windows are tinted
so are my eyes

part iv

the voices on the phone
were not the voices of angels

the voices inside my head
are not the voices of demons

the voices all around me
are not the voices of reason

for reason, like any other recipe,
requires ingredients from one source or another

and instructions
and measuring tools

all I have is a bit of starter
and no recipe book

section IV, part i

across from a bus station in Boise
a mission
no one lingers outside
no smokers, no idlers

I wonder if they take people in
or if they just begrudge them a bed
for the night

I like shelters
I am safe among the other forgotten
anonymous

I think about just not getting back on the bus
to go and sleep
but it is a men's mission
so I board

part ii

end of the line
I think I could hide on the bus
never any roots, no real life

comforting

but
I gather my things
and step on the pavement
in the dark

epilogue

you and *you*
were once part of the same
but *you* are gone
and

you

are

still

here

poetry by *Flavia Cosma*

Finding You Again

You,
As much unknown to me,
As falling raindrops on blue flowers,
You,
As necessary to me,
As the pure air, seeping into my lungs,
You,
As much precious to me,
As golden light gliding through stained glass panes
Over hands clasped together in prayer,
Invoking peace, forgiveness,
And above all
Love,

You,
One day you will cross the sea and all the forests,
Weary, you'll stop in front of my gates,
And I'll welcome you, seized by a holy shiver,
My eyes filled with tears, and my soul a nest
To belated, mellow loves.
Oh, beggar..

poetry by **Flavia Cosma**

Passing Through Fire

The child was laid low in the hospital;
He passed through fire and no one
Could take the fire away
From his shoulders.

The child died in the hospital.
The sun trickled
Drop by drop into the sea.

In the end –
When all of these went down –
I saw the child on the other side.
He wasn't a child any more,
But wasn't himself either:
It was somebody who had passed through fire.
And he was alone.