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1999 GRAND PRIZE WINNER

eggs for the other tentacle, solificatio
a pocket full of volcanic misery and carbonated laughter
refracted light wandering over the surface of the embryonic universe
a spherical sigh greets an elastic grimace
whirlpool of florescence
anthropoid
arthroklippoth
shattered hypersphere of neonatal alphabet
celestial r../\-/ burrowing through the sun
shivering extragluticanthar____seuuuuu
khza thza chsa a a
molding a shadow with three hands
stark clarity disembodies atonal mist
doldrum minus negative explosion plus smile
lifting the river to the consciousness canopy, dropping
libidhammapada and liIGHTNING
inflationary thoughts-->inflateinflateinflateBANG
.nonlife sound.
Kyle Edwards, OH, St Ignatius HS

1999 HONORABLE MENTION WINNERS

Mama’s gardening glove
hangs above the old spade
which bleeds rust
around its sharp edges
Stacy Kestenbaum, OH, Sylvania Northview HS

Sunset

Perched owls cast away
falling light of purple dusk,
welcoming darkness.
Jessica Wolfley, WI, Shorewood HS
2000 GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Tong Ough (Starved in Chinese)

*inspired by Edward Hopper’s painting “Chop Suey”*

tangerine drab walls
empty blue pitiful cups on tag-board tables
thirsting for genuine Chinese herbal tea
glassy-glazed green-eyed gentries
sunken in their dull-liveried garb
gazing at each others’
dumb-dulled expressionless painted faces
the room reeked of fish
but nothing was ever cooked
no fried rice, no beef and broccoli
especially no chop suey in a Chop Suey restaurant
the fishy stench sank into the walls,
seeped into the costumes, the hair,
the school of scaly skin
drowning in their shallow conversations
mannequin eyes yen for abalone shine
tight-lipped smiles hungry for lemon-gingery snap
it lacked authenticity, languished for real Chinese soul food
but the Chinese-white depleted restaurant flourished
and flooded with colorless dry fish

_Ayzza Camacho, CA, Samuel Morse High School_

2000 HONORABLE MENTION WINNER

Geisha’s Fan

Painted paper buds
blood-red blossoms burning bright
weightless vacant air

Rice paper streaked red
branches reaching to the end
whispering willow

Geisha’s modest fan
batting eyes to hide behind
the painted garden

_Erica L. DePompeo, VA, King William HS_
FIRST PLACE WINNER FALL 2001

itchy silence
interrupted by my father’s
vain attempt at jokes
bleary eyes
try swallowing me
over half empty
soda glasses

he hands me a crisp fifty
worth less
than my mom’s wrinkled, worn five
in my back pocket

the table between us
stretches for miles
Jessica Wang, NY, Townsend Harris HS

SECOND PLACE WINNER SPRING 2001

Sonnet I

Let not life's tides draw thee from lover's shore,
Though tasks of day and dreams of night do pull;
But think on treasures that the heart doth store-
Sweet times remembrance, like the shining jewel.

Oft weighted anchor may have loose a hold,
Secure once- rigging worn, thy sail unfurled;
Through boundless sea, o'er waters deep and cold,
Adrift, life's journey shows to thee the world.

When thundrous voice of tempest thus hath spake,
And winds of doubtful change do 'round you spin,
Then beacons of Love's light shall safe thee make-
And beams shine forth to gently bring you in.

My love, a compass ever unto thee:
Thy open port for all eternity~
Emily Furey, PA, Seton- LaSalle Regional High School
LIFE AFTER

Florence Nightingale breathes through tarry-lungs and potato chip-arteries. "It was positive."

Cult member from birth -- conformity with violent-tendencies -- just a lobotomy, the part cut out, a toddler fleeing TV genocide, until

That moment on my jejune bed, in a jejune apartment, in a jejune nowhere, I didn't really know that ruin could actually happen. He held me under water and quivered behind my bent back. Plath's bell jar laved me while I reckoned the tiled ceiling through a looking-glass wave. I wanted death almost as much as I needed it.

His face downswings beneath my feet in my dreams as my dreams become realities. Affix tobacco-stained hands over his lolling face before the hands are fists and the face crunches.

Do you remember this?

His hyoid smashed upwards, looks now like a gravestone.

I remember this night with perfect clarity, and my scabs stretched too tightly over a bloody socket.

18.8 million have died from AIDS. 33 million live with HIV. We call it being positive. We are only as significant as we are underestimated.

*Max Siegel, AZ, Skyline High School*
At Sundown

His bare feet gently slap the wooden floor as he slips into their family room. Having just returned from the mosque, he takes the leather Koran from under his arm and reverently spills it open to a favored passage. Feeling the soft paper, he smiles as his eyes take in the burning sunset. She will enjoy this verse.

She conducts the orchestra of dinner, each pot bubbling the harmony of a kosher fugue. While humming to herself a long-forgotten praise of Adonai, she sees the setting sun imbue the small golden menuzah on the left wall with a burnished glint. Remembering that he gave it to her for their first anniversary, fierce love swells in her heart for this man.

The meal prepared, they walk outside and sit on the back step of their adobe home. The sun surrenders trails of yellow, scarlet, and burnt orange fire. Casting eyes at the miracle before them, the sun whispers of peace to interwoven olive and cream hands. Whispers of a peace that has existed, it seems, for centuries.

Preston Copeland, MD, Carver Center for the Arts and Technology

SECOND PLACE WINNER 2002-2003

Snow White Escapes

The dark-haired damsel, lost in the forest, Pursues paths that are endless roads. Her red-glazed lips glisten in shafts of sunlight, Just kissed by his cruel, violent lips, Blood-red gates to his soul. Her boots crush new crops Of green, three-fingered poison ivy. She'd use it to smear on his skin Till it itched and burned. She stops and plucks deadly nightshade And fingers it frantically. She'd like to force-feed it to him. Now she gathers speed -- and resolve, Rushing towards the unknown. Better this dark, June forest Than some dumb, too-pretty prince, Or seven stupid dwarves To clean and cook for all day.

Jenny Lockerby, NJ, Moorestown Friends School
Eulogy of Dreams

We walked on the edge of an empty field, malicious life flowing through dreams' torrid memory. The sky was dull red, the color of dried blood. I ran my hand along a broken paintless fence, afraid or unsure of your eyes. We passed a small bird struggling against shattered wings to fly; you said it was like me and dismissed it with a glance. I reached for your hand, and our footsteps faded with the tears of flowers.

Across a dark whispering river we saw the gray sun, bleeding into a pale distant sea like melting snow. I lowered my head and watched dead shoots pass beneath me, wondering if they had seen the stars fall. The strangled breeze carried the soft fingers of dandelions, and they clawed at my legs like a terrified child. We paused and you looked at me, expressionless, as my shadow grew wings.

I heard the solitary voice of the Nightshade, and found you in my arms. You were colder than the bleeding sky as you wept into my chest. I said, "Starlight is only the breath of dreams," and the dim sun surrendered to a sightless night. We shared a desperate, lasting kiss as we felt the world disintegrate. I held your shaking form to me while the rusty field fell around us into the sepulcher of galaxies like rain.

There we remained, above the pit, encircled by wings.

I asked if you remembered the night we burned, and you kissed my tears.

I was truly happy when you said

Always.

Sarah Vitone, CA, Chatsworth High
A Smooth Tomorrow

If tomorrow the sea went smooth,
may I hold one more shell up to my ear
and hear one final soothing rumble.
If tomorrow the sea went smooth,
may I grasp one last hand of coarse, warm sand;
it will never feel the same again.
If tomorrow the sea went smooth,
may I finally find the perfect pebble
and throw it back to the dying sea.
If tomorrow the sea went smooth,
may I run my fingers over one more piece of driftwood;
tomorrow it will be a rarity.

If tomorrow the sea went smooth,
may I forget all of the yesterdays,
for tomorrow our ways will come to an end.

If tomorrow the sea went smooth,

may I be there to watch the last wave
fight its way to the shore,

then both our hearts shall stop,

and all will be smooth.

Carol A. Daviscourt, OR, South Medford High School
In The Garden

With disdain he watched her through his bedroom window as she worked in the overgrown garden. With a pick axe, she persistently attempted to penetrate the petrified red clay soil. Beads of perspiration upon her brow glimmered in the early fall sunlight as sweat leached through her dingy denim work shirt. Her need to cultivate something was overwhelming. Thoughts of their last encounter sprouted memories of better times as she toiled. “You’re not going”… were her last spoken words. Dejected and frustrated she abruptly ended their quarrel. Angrily he turned and hastily climbed the stairway leading to his bedroom. Solace was found in his juvenile belief that she never understood him. Each rhythmic blow of the pick brought him contemptible satisfaction as the unyielding earth would not open for her. Bored at relishing in her failure to break ground, he allowed himself to reflect on happier times. Memories of them planting that garden intoxicated his mind and moved him to stagger down the stairs and exit the house to the garden. As she labored, his presence was felt behind her. No words that could be heard were said as he gently removed the pick from her blistered hands and began to chop away at the hardened ground that separated them. 

Austin M. Watson, GA, Sprayberry High School
The Dictators  
  after Pablo Neruda

A granite fountain stands in the center of an open plaza,  
paved with gold. The trickling of water fills the empty  
square and floats to carved stone steps, to heavy iron doors.  
Shadows fall from razor peaks darkening the grand palace.  
Splashing water journeys up blue tiled walls, above  
the flag pole. The banner sings to the fountain,  
telling of the suffering of its people.

Eight boys shot for daring to laugh; fathers executed  
in the soccer stadium; children jailed, children burned.  
Mist swallows their stories as it ascends, rising  
past snowy mountains that gouge the sky, rising  
to a cool sun. Beyond even cloud, where sky  
fades from blue to black, mist whispers to the night,

wind listens and hardens into a fist, rolling and spinning,  
crashing down upon the land in a torrent of rain. Streams churn  
to brown rivers, swell, rampaging across the barren desert.  
Dams burst, concrete and steel ruptured, flung into oily water  
like copper casings from a machine gun. This spreading fury  
engulfs the land, parting only for mud homes, toppling the city.  
*Steven Fredericks, MT, Big Sky High School*
In which we walk

Curry burns the back of my nose as my feet brush Nicollet pavement. I look to the right and see an old man climbing an ear of corn, but it is only a poster. I remember us in the grasp of this man on kernels.

Glass is winking high around me. Mangoes and sticky rice swirl inside my belly, pressing against my naval. And all at once there are your kisses, laced with metal and a veil of flesh, pressing too close for comfort. I look up to see if you are waving from the top a skyscraper,

But only a goose, frothing from his beak, passes overhead.
My pants feel heavy and it is a moment before I realize there is bamboo and coconut milk in the cuffs of my jeans. Through the cracks in the buildings I see cars blurring by, their constant vibration crawls into the hum of every molecule.

A woman by the side of the road pushes back her thinning hair before offering dill and tomatoes through her teeth.

I am still walking, passing Hennepin on my left, the road Cloud Man built as the congealing of his desperation pushed snow into his lungs. I see you in the corner of my eye, but before I can catch you in my eyelashes I am distracted.

Distracted by the goose shrieking in the air, his frothing saliva burning holes into the sidewalk as a heart falls from my forehead

Danielle Miller, MN, PCAE Arts High School
Coordination

Lips tremble, the night beats, the jungle breathes.
Allow me to journey into the night of your arms,
in the moisture of your eyes cast a boat and listen to the tale of a pearl.
Allow me to suspend time in the tangles of your hair.

The wind shatters into a thousand mirrors as it searches your face. A distant pennyroyal cries.
The fountain of your lips turns time into dust.
The sun ceases to bleed.
Darkness comes like the breaking of a leaf, like the smell of the sea.
You look at the jungle’s roof, starlight runs through our veins.
The string of mystery trembles when you smile.
You feel closer to me than moisture to grass, than warmth to a bird’s nest.

You ask me how long it takes for grapes to mature. I have no answer.

The brook is near.
Let’s take off our shoes.
Let’s understand the dimensions of sand.
Let’s place heaven between the two syllables of water,
And allow the fragrance of solitude to dwell under the bush.

The jungle ceases to breathe.

A twig breaks beneath us and the juices of herbs flow toward eternity.

Sepehr Rejai, CA, Rodriguz High School
Morning

You smiled a laugh and bit back the giggles spilling like secrets
from each side of your mouth
handing back the wicker basket trimmed in bright plaid
you whispered it’s a surprise and only winked a quick wink.
and even when you bent down and twirled me around,
citrus skirt swinging like forties jazz and the tips of my heels clattering
down the pavement like carousel horses and when even blind men
could see the red rose prints in lipstick that trailed all down your cheek,
you only grinned, and chuckled, e’ una sorpresa, carina,
and waltzed me down the cobblestones, the sway of the picnic basket a beat behind,
and so we skipped and hop scotched and flirted with salacious tango
down the streets all slicked with lost raindrops.
and this until you sealed each eyelid with a kiss and shut my mouth with the taste of
stale coffee and dark bitter chocolate, and slipped a Look! into my ear.
under a dripping tree lay the city, that grand old dame,
but you nodded away from the arches and columns, up through the leaves, and said,
imagine that, victorious again against shooting stars and the eternal city, cara – but
make a wish make a wish before the sky falls down and we wake up, this must be a dream
and when the sunshine knocked politely on the pillow I grinned
and lapped up the taste of stale coffee and bitter chocolate.
Judith Barr, MD, Holton-Arms School
The Risen Day Settles

The luminous star enclosed the world in a veil of beauty
Semi-translucent, like running water dripping between fingertips
Into the rock-strewn bottom of a clear running stream
The aesthetic image twisted and aslant as departing wind
Sent with an empyrean message and he, zealous to perceive it
Shadows of ghostly forms collected at the edges of the windowpane
Sinking into mirth and rising into light, mournful deaths with joyous life
Continuously drawing strength from the eternal source
Perpetually, a windmill grasping existence from a cursive river
With its bent and crooked fingers, churning endlessly
Gathering bits of woven air and holding it in an embrace
His hands rested upon the windowsill, dust coated paned glass
The paint having cracked and fallen away with burdening age
The walls of the house sighing in seniority
All staring at the ruinous asphalt with its weather-worn trees
 Lightning strings dancing amid tangled sinewy branches
Resplendent sage dressed leaves adorning
Paltry arteries and veins along each sustaining torso
With the calm ease of one contented in passing sleep
As the pleading sun falls by the hand of encroaching night

Rachel Pong, NJ, Clifton High School
Rapunzel

Speak to me in a language I can savor,
Ride the waves of pleasure until we can rest no more
On the cliffs of emerald,
Washed with shiny diamonds
As the nymphs could no longer sing their praises
Savor the un-enchanted glory
And pain infused with absinthe
Buttressed by the filaments and filibusters
Frantically seeking a mirage on the moon
Feel the truth,
Bite into it,
Crave the sweetened fruits that basked before your birth
The sun never knew the light,
Children frighten away their innocence.
He laughed,
The truth we poured out
Of the chicory flasks blessed by Shamans and shakers
Weaving flaxes of organza and orgiastic wonder
The graceful swans of forever highlighting in
Their Grimm tales what cannot be.

Ariela Silberstein, NY, Hunter College HS
I'm Explaining Our Life

You have asked me: where have the skies stopped producing the mixture of light and spirits?

I'll tell you all the locales.

I lived in a state of mind, full of slumber poppies, with rainbows, and birds, and joy.
From my heart you could feel Apollo's penetrating heat: an iron love.

Is it that you recall from the great good above
those August nights when our bodies woke by the dance of the fireflies?

Friend, now my foe!

And one afternoon your spine was sliced,
one afternoon the bones of the living dead marched together--
and from then on we burned separately.

Serpents that serpents would despise; monsters that the monsters would abominate!

Side by side with you I have watched the waves climb and climb into a tsunami
meant to deafen you from the outside screams of my pain and strife!

Hungry bandits:
hear my dead body fall, listen for the murder of my friend:
from every heart poison leaks instead of harmonious love,
from every pore of my body another being emerges,
empowering me as I slither round your throat.

And you have asked: why wasn't her life made of frolicking and dance?

Put down your gun! we're already dead.

_Natalie Turturro, FL, Spruce Creek High School_
Spilled Tea

The sound you made was a yelp of pure jazz. A mouth distorted as if a caricature by some sidewalk artist; a testament to the art of kneading, or needing. It was skin sore with fire, a bite of my caustic wit, a tea bag vacillating like a pendulum between the juggernaut of thumb and forefinger. Tea dripping into a saucer like rain or tears.

Burned by Earl Grey; lemon-sour fingertips to rosy lips; love spurns the pain. I told you so, I told you so. The profound confounds us, tumbles despotically like a teacup, fractured on the floor. Hot liquid dripping from the counter like rain or tears. Palms red with fragile porcelain, garbed in fictional blue gardenias. Smooth lifelines turned to jagged edges or abrupt cliffs, flesh plunging into mounds of granulated sugar and glass. We cackled at the cracks until they cut us to the core.

Your jazzy yelp closed in my grip, smelling of danger and despair, a shaking warmth between my forearms. Small consolations dripping from my lips onto your earlobe, like rain or tears. 

Yuliya Benina, PA, Council Rock High School South
to a farm girl

we were born at the end; yellow ankles, minds--buried in steel
in mechanized meat, in bank accounts
no veil as toxic, mother earth it's easy to say this

and gilded streets of lonesome crowded west--ward bound
what safety valve? what golden country?
what world and dream to rape when ankles stagnant meet the water?
what direction, but down?

we woke this morning, and fell a little further
into generations forth--nothing to claim but hollow chests and empty pockets
born with inward marble pupils, open us to find no instincts
slam us shut to abandon: we are backwards scrambling blind

true-artist-seer, do you figure do you wonder why modern hands
bear no semblance to applause? we know, we know!
ask us to wrench a bit of world, feel and taste, triple, throw it in the air
and what do we find except that our hands are dirty

ask us to wrench ourselves from machinery
in reply we hit the salted sea on knees, beg for mercy, deny a source
repent for their sins, what instinct
what applause?
Ivy Phan, CA, Armijo High School
Dear World,

If I were a doctor, 
Sapient and bearing, 
A prominence my good name would sustain, 
And within the walls of hospitals, luminous limelight shines where 
So dexterous would I lacerate the harbingers of pain, and still 
Would juxtapose my gallantry with subtlety and unassuming grace; 
With ivory overcoat that sways so cavalier 
As I would stride composed down the corridor that is determinant-- 
Life 'round one bend, Death contaminating the other. 
I would capture all the seeming of omnipotence, 
And still so chaste would hone a pewter-bay mien, 
Oh, the pastures I would pace that dress in cool white silkiness, 
And shed warm bastions o'er seas infectious and overgrown. 
If I were a doctor, 
Boundless glory of celestial reach would forever reverberate, 
Greatness through fidelity my soul would sweetly sate. But not so--

For I am but antimatter

Which the good doctor-- unconcerned-- did annihilate

Before I came to be.

*James P. Elliott, NY, Maine-Endwell Senior High*
Instrument Allegiant

Shadows dance with dust throughout the hall,
Filled with shattered remnants of long strife.
Arrows, spears and shields line every wall,
Few remaining whole 'midst wreckage rife.
I have been a broken sword re-forged.

Tall and pale, a tower stands alone,
Girded 'round with ruins once as proud.
Darkness rages loud about the stone,
Seeking its white pillar to enshroud.
I have been a watcher at the door.

Rainclouds sweep across a withered moor,
Battling with the night and shrieking wind.
Black storms furnish all they can conjure,
Unchecked in their wrath, undisciplined.
I have been a fiercely blazing torch.

Sword and watcher, bravely-flaming brand,
Must accomplish their appointed task:
Guarding all the strongholds of the land
'Til the one they watch for comes at last.
I will be rewarded evermore.

Helen Primozic, NM, Tyndale Academy of Engaging Scholars
SECOND PLACE WINNER
SPRING – SUMMER 2006

Silhouettes in Saigon

Impoverished, soiled hands of poverty
amidst a dust-filled third world country I used to know
shattered into a scene of oxen sauntering
through thick rice paddies and stork-like
silhouettes gracefully hovering ao dai dresses
above copper-red mud

Regrets faded into Polaroids of cherished moments;
hardships thawed into a cup of lavender tea
at my favorite café.

A world played in slow motion,
slowly identifying pieces of the
Technicolor mosaic of my life:

the bohemian stepping on the cracks of asphalt sidewalks
in the metropolitan twilight--drawn to nothing but the
neon-lit scatter of moving vehicles.

the architect of new ideas on the gently-swaying swing sets—
plastered in front of a backdrop of rustling autumn leaves.

the shadow of a thinker sitting on an ancient fire escape—
contemplating the significance of Baroque art and
waiting for something more out of this kaleidoscopic life

Tri Chiem, TX, Langham Creek High School
Eternal Decay

Desecrated, stripped, torn bodies standing tall
Alone, but with each other, ripped from their home
The smell, that smell, perfumes the room
    Sickly sweet, rotting, and strong
As though upon this ground, a battle was fought
    And all the dead left for the carrion birds

Most limbs have been hacked or fallen away
    Their faces peeled to roast in the sun
All the rest taken and crushed with a stone
If ever they were beautiful, none could tell now

Green, dried, brittle bones staring at a wall
    They came from the fields to die in a jar
Departing from the land they loved for the joy of few
Leaving behind and after death, a scent of spring and must
    That hovers with those memories
Clouding all dreams that pass through their tomb

Stiff books of the warriors open with a sigh
Released with their own stories are the remains
Pressed petals that were stolen, fall upon the floor
Mourning lost stems, that held them up as roses
    Sarah Stitt, GA, Starr’s Mill High School
SECOND PLACE WINNERS
FALL - WINTER 2006

Season Change, Wounded Heart (a triptych)

MEET—
Mister Sunshine fell upon my brow in the form of refreshing laughter.
I doubt I’ll ever know how to be such a narcissist as he, for he wanders about the looking glass—
And yet his light only recoils from the mirror to strike him in the pupils.
He turns away and looks to me, his broken iris shedding starlight onto my shoes.
I flick the glitter off the patent leather and my lips curl towards the apples of my cheeks.
“Would you like to share with me?” He says.

GREET—
This night is dipped in gold and dripping of class, and we could be ever youthful, together—
“Could I osculate the words that are dripping from your lips?” I ask.
“Would you justify them otherwise?” He replies.
A quarter-moon floats politely above the urban decay, spilling itself into a smoker’s filmy smile.
I am so charmed by the screaming beams of brilliance that I fail to identify the change in climate.
My stare is tugging hard on the mocking creases of his mouth when it starts to fade.

DECEIT—
Sunshine, he sank down and tugged on my heartstrings as he kissed my lashes—
My eyelids pulled away from each other to find him missing, the starlight sipped from my shoes.
The ants crawled away to hibernation and cackled amongst themselves, smirking in my direction.
Time seems to melt itself away, charring the faces of first dates and swallowing them whole.
I was so inspired I thought I knew myself, but I only know my mistakes
Suzanne Exposito, FL, Douglas Anderson School of the Arts

FALL - WINTER 2008

Brazen

It would be brazen of me to announce that
I have finally and completely reached a decision
on the color lukewarm chartreuse.

Lukewarm chartreuse reminds me (and probably you)
of Russia, among other things like Wednesday 2 P.M.
or even the one time you sat alone, cried, and finally thought
of pickles— an image which successfully ruined
the solemnity you had worked so hard to produce.

It's brazen though, really.

David Martorana, HI, Iolani School
SECOND PLACE WINNERS
2006 - 2007

If only we knew
My body is the housing
that facilitates the muscle
of your desire. The object
of pining seems but miles away
in an unattainable refuge.
But what you don’t know is
that every ounce pumped
through these arteries
is a liter of love
devoted to you.
May soon we shall confess
our parallel affection.
I pray this levee of interim
collapses to deluge admirers
with empathy—enabling us
to embrace one another,
clinch for eternity.
Beneath the skies, welkin
shall let us breathe
the same breath.
Kyle Kress, IN, Heritage Hills HS

The Fruits of War

loading guns with apple bullets automatic,
biting into decimated unripe flesh.
swollen plum stains
spreading on jaws and hips as bones are broken.
strawberry eyes, dried and burning, gaze
at orange-slice flames in window boxes and doorframes.
black cherry bombs burst and discolor the sky,
shattering and raining knotted stems and pits
left strewn upon the raspberry-soaked corpses
living and dead;
across the blueberry ocean
mindless masses imagine shiny wax victory.
Allyson Galle, MI, Berkley High School
EASTERDAY POETRY AWARD WINNER
2006 - 2007

Late the Hour I Ask For Thee

Reason, beckon I to thee,
Bequeath this night your sanity.
Ensnare my wild heart to know
Order and peace, somehow lo
To challenge now these flames of fire
That feast in torrents of desire
On word, oh thought, to hope, and dream,
To desecrate this soft serene
Like flares of icy cold bestow
A stinging bitterness below.

Only her, pure lips of red,
An image born of fiery stead,
Yet ‘tis enough, perfection’s face,
To pierce this heart, control, encase.
Ahh, but time has kept you free
Not more than human eye can’t see.
And late the hour I ask for thee.
And late the hour I ask for thee.
Kevin Smith, NY, Bishop Grimes Jr./Sr. HS

SECOND PLACE WINNER SPRING – SUMMER 2008

Septic of Lost Dreams

There once was life within the septic tank,
Its firm resolve was matched by none around,
But through the years, it slowly died and sank.
It went unnoticed, gone without a sound.

The signs of death fermented in its core.
Within this soup, sweet dreams were turned to waste.
Externally it looked just as before,
But filled with such a foul smelling paste.

It did not realize its futures bleak,
But let its innards fall to nature's scorn.
Escape from its grave tomb it did not seek,
But doom it found, and that which made it mourn.
And ignorance became its fortitude. Alone at last, lost in its solitude.
Storm Shriver, MI, Crawford AuSable HS
Ice Maiden

In snow up to my waist I watched as he turned to trod home, passed with choppy gait beneath the oaks that dwarfed even his frame. When the sled he towed disappeared into the wood, and the forest swallowed all sound, I too, turned homeward but found no reason or wish to continue.

The pasture: a soundless dome of grey sky and grey snow that for all my clement spring days spent among these cow paths and the peasant hosannas of hawthorn blossoms, memory could claim none of. Snow fell, rolled off my shoulders, and then didn't. Snow fell, and fell, and I melted into the hillside as what washes ashore is swallowed by sand.

Had you not turned back?

Well, then…I don't know but tomorrow, Will, if we go, walk me home. I fear I believe too strongly that the fitful winds of time should fill my few and wayward footprints more quickly than any snowfall, and I can't help but give in to the unchanging snows, as when talk tires at last of its offices and the dark-eyed boy whose charms I swore to transcend asks for just one kiss.

_Hannah B. Lincoln, VT, Harwood Union High School_
Forms of Interruption

We met in spacious summerland hotel-park, 
the middle of a fuchsia summer. 
I am in a crowd of droning bees. 
You are clutching the hem of your teeshirt, 
sparrowsonging a passing cat.

You foot the sand between your toes. 
You smile at my hands braced against the fence. 
This moment, as small 
as ten ants in a jar, as wondrous as 
a stone woman holding a clay jar of water—

You palmed cerulean sky as it dripped from 
my hair, on your face the glow of mahogany evening. 
I saw the firelight draw down your eyes to tears.

When you smiled at me, your face lit in verdant leafshadow, 
your eyes green pebbles, your small 
fingers clutching the dirt as though the wind would rend you 
as a spiderweb to the hand of a passerby, 
when you smiled, 
the clay jar fell from my hands. 
Caitlin Parker-Arnett, WA, Snohomish High School
HOME : In Memory of Dr. Stephen Glosecki

While the carcinogenic monster ravaged your physical body, like a child clutching his sweet mother’s hand, you caged your heart and fortified your soul. your spirit gleamed, the shield behind an infinite love for life— your sword. And from behind the hospital curtains, we heard the valiant battle, the clash of armor, mingled with reeking formaldehyde.

I want to kiss the strange, unsullied beauty in comfort. the cold slithers in through the cracks, and another’s hearth becomes my cradle.

On a lonesome, dimly lit subway, we strangers stand two feet apart. eyes shift from the once shiny floor to the jagged glass lights above. One cries for the past, one yearns for the future. with hands in pockets, gripping an outdated map, he says, I’m going home. I say, I’ll see you there.

*Cynthia Huynh, AL, The Altamont School*
Artifacts

I.

Patches of sepia lay scattered across my bedroom floor in pigments of faded birthday cards and greetings from Peru – in brownish gray hues of what once was, and what could have been -- for me -- had not the cannon balls been fired through the windows

These are the remnants of the days before secession.

There are poodle skirts and Go-Go boots and plastic-shrouded sofas, there are Christmas trees and coffee cakes and Sunday raviolis, and there is merriment, so abundant, that not even the most discerning of ears could perceive the advancing rebel armies above the clatter of the wine.

II.

With each uncovered layer, dust is lifted, is liberated off lampshades – off tablecloths and China cabinets

With each inverted revolution, color saturates, it permeates the walls – colors condense and unify

With each back flip of sand, shattered fragments of glass now crystallize, lucid, the Renaissance.

And this is my Enlightenment: An Eightfold Path obstructed through a film of black and white – Impalpable, intangible – to me.

III.

Torrents of sepia are gushing from the floor, and the walls bear no asylum, as each crevice has borne witness to the wedding invitations: sent, received, R.S.V.P.-ed by all

(Before the postal routes were severed)

I hear the shots heard 'round the table that forced my would-be comrades to disperse
I scrub the blood stains off the floor to no avail.

IV.

And now the walls have paled, the seats have cleared – glass is broken once again. The blinds are shut, the doors are locked – it's safe to say – we're in the Dark Ages.

Marcella Kocolatos, NY, Archbishop Molloy High School
Meeting Poetry

I have been lucky. Fed certain slants of light with bottles of milk,
I listened to hoofbeats of Revere’s horse
    to assuage the slippery terrors of darkness
and spent snowy evenings lingering in the woods

But I had not really met it yet

For one day it caught me, a thing of the swamp,
that creature you always feared would clasp its slimy hand about your tender ankle.

And it did – and down, down, into the darkness, catching glimpses all the way

Hair like sawgrass

    taloned feet

clear blue eyes

    blowhole nestled between shoulder blades
    light now gone

    but smell it: rotting fish

    hear water woosh

    slower… drifting

    another carcass, belly up?

No. I developed gills of my own. I can see in the dim light, now.

There are sharks, too.
I am swimming out to meet them.
Hannah Cyrus, ME, Orono High School
Thou Art Rophe

she sat with her head bent in a dreary
garden enclaved with snow
her dress, unstained in pure white
had it not been for the hair of her dark curls
her frame would have been completely invisible

if one were to step so delicately close and quietly
the eternity of one tear slip its way down her soft cheek

and inside her heart beat with turmoil
of thoughts of he and the way he cried
the way he saw every single part
of everything she was

upon a rock a few feet away
or possibly hundreds upon thousands of years past
sat one lone man, his head bent
his appearance poor and disheveled
he sobbed into his weathered hands
so completely heaven and earth could be heard in tears
could this be my Rabboni?

oh God, if it be so to Thee
please let this cup pass from me
Rachel Brandon, MN, Hillcrest Lutheran Academy
Now He’s Eating the Dollar

for Orkief, who did it to his lunch money

No matter how you looked at it, torn is torn, yet-- how to explain. The shreds didn't exactly flutter achingly to the ground, catching the sunlight all the while like some skeins of flying fish; afterwards,

there was to be no full moon hanging above the Italian rooftops like a note of music following your green coup, no bark uncurling itself from the noses of trees and falling in scrolls about your feet. Who would shear the bark

as from some horny, wooden sheep, anyway?
No, there was no post-coital cigarette after hours of marionetting in a hotel with soundproof walls.
If you did things impulsively, then that was okay, fine, even. The sun still set

like a tasty piece of roadkill on the windshield.
Pebbles still winked at you, sledgehammers still hurt.
Everything was fine, and the young man, having burned his fortune, could retire contentedly. And the “meaning”

was crawling away already while we spoke it so that we had to stare after it leaving its trail on the grass like somewhere water has just run.
Qing Zhang, NJ, Tenafly High School
SECOND PLACE WINNER
FALL – WINTER 2008

Life as the City

The day wraps around itself - graying petals raise the walls of a secret garden around the sun, baring their water-plump underbellies to the world. The sky tips back in tremors of laughter, water draining from its eaves, spreading the city over a lightless sky and dousing it in shades of gray.

A puddle of silver satin sheets squirms beneath me. Knees rolled into my chest, arms draped around them, my eyes averted past the tear-stained windows. A tube of beer-battered light tunnels from the streetlamp, the edges siphoned away, leaving a haze where warmth meets damp night.

The sheets follow my feet to the floor -- they don't make it past the bedroom. A bellow of thunder greets my hand at the front door. Night and rain replace my skin in folds. I am the city. I taste the perspiration fill my lungs, feel thousands of lights embed themselves in my body, hear rippling voices tuck the kids away from the storm. The cool rain drips through thick fingers of tar into my veins, and my heart beats erratically, in sync with a million others.

Tangerine wicker claws at the back of my legs, and I'm drawn back away from the world. The wicker chair is new, not broken in yet - like this Minneapolis life. It needs to be tested, sculpted, softened. A private smile creeps out into the city; and I let the people do the breathing for me.

Allison Malecha, MN, The Blake School