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**HSTQ: SUMMER 2022**

**Talk About Poetry**  
**Daniel S. Irwin**

Aw, man, not again.  
I don't wanna  
Talk about poetry.  
Read it/don't read it.  
Get it/don't get it.  
You don't need to  
Wrap your life around it.  
I don't give a shit how  
Iambic your pentameter is  
Or if the point was boldly  
Blatant or cleverly hidden.  
It's like a piece of art.  
It hits you without  
The need to dissect it.  
You want profound?  
Your world moved?  
A religious experience?  
Get on the highway,  
Turn off your headlights,  
Drive in the oncoming lane.

**On the Way Up**  
**John D Robinson**

When I last saw him  
he told me he was  
climbing to the stars,  
that he was living the  
dream, that paradise  
was in every breath  
and that love could  
never be defined  
but he was ascending  
a stairwell toward a  
higher understanding  
of being  
and he was found  
dead in his  
lonely room,  
with lonely photographs  
and lonely possessions  
and lonely memories,  
just like the breeze,  
belonging to no one  
but touching us  
all even  
just for that pure  
instant disappearing  
moment of  
truth.

**The Clothed Truth**  
**Jay Maria Simpson**

Something bad just happened to me  
and I really threw myself into it

It was the day before yesterday  
probably a Sunday  
the sky remembered to write to the moon  
in fairy floss across the sky  
like crimson ribbons floating away  
wondering why

The moon seemed happy  
whistling a tuneless lullaby  
to the remembered future  
the forgotten past

To me, it all looked rather joyful, hopeful  
The sky doing its thing,  
hanging out with the contented moon  
I walked home, found you there  
UNINVITED

I can still hear your pleading prophecy  
whispering with your déjà vu  
come write with me and be my love  
and we will all the pleasures prove  
try the elixir  
suck my blood  
I'll devour your  
DISSONANCE

Music will paint our murals  
writing will feed our sacraments  
fucking will excite the loving hurting healing  
PROWLING

Fly your kite into the abyss  
WRITE YOUR NAME IN THE MUD

**Hemingway's Shotgun**  
**John Tustin**

I need Hemingway's shotgun.  
I need Dylan Thomas' shot glass  
Filled to the brim.  
I need Bukowski's leukemia,  
I need Anne Sexton to leave the car running.  
I need a stein filled with heart attacks,  
Strokes, aneurisms,  
A robbery gone awry.

I need birds streaking across the sky  
As I fall to the earth with a dull thud.  
I need wolves tearing at my empty flesh  
As the carrion-devourers  
Await their turn.  
I need my words tossed unnoticed  
Into a dumpster  
When the sad little estate sale is over.

I need them to cry,  
To think about me a decade later.  
I need you to never recover from such a loss  
Although you already dismissed me  
Like a General too old, wise and senile  
To lead more children into battle.

I need the affliction that would end me.  
My hands are too shaky,  
My mind too disabled  
To load a shotgun  
And aim.

**what sissies want**  
**John Yohe**

I want a little black dress  
to be forced to wear in public  
to the mall  
so everyone will know  
that I'm not a real man

I want a little black dress  
w/long sleeves  
to make my arms look thinner  
hem so short  
you can tell  
what kind of hosiery  
I'm wearing  
bend me over  
easily assert your dominance

I want a little black dress  
tight to show off my best asset  
w/plunging backline  
so everyone can see  
my padded bra strap  
which is also black  
because bad girls wear black bras  
and I want to be bad

I want a little black dress  
w/high heels  
to wear to a bar  
full of strong brown-eyed men  
so they will know  
what a slut I am  
and treat me accordingly

I want a little black dress  
to be the woman I want to fuck  
as a way to attract the attention of women  
because I still want women  
in little black dresses of their own  
to talk to me  
take me home  
we could lay in bed  
creating a fantasy  
kissing  
rubbing nyloned legs  
together  
making a wish

**They should have left me there**  
**Nadja Moore**

They should have left me there  
To rot. The dog and I watched tv,  
Looked outside the window,  
Pretended to be mother and son,  
Got bored and found ourselves  
Covered in a thick blanket,  
Indenting that warm spot  
on the mattress.  
What they thought a ten-year-old  
Girl would do with herself  
I do not know.  
I might have eaten an entire box  
Of chocolate fingers, stolen  
A few gulps of wine with my eyes  
Glued to the doorknob.  
I've done it all and revel still  
In the taste of liquor.  
But I was hopeful then,  
That's the difference.

**Sublimation**  
**Laszlo Aranyi**

He thought he heard  
some kind of muffled hiss  
like the pop of a carp's swim-bladder

He fell nine stories  
smeared upon the asphalt  
without so much as  
a 'holy shit'

Passers-by formed  
in an orderly circle  
staring down at the sight

Ice-cream cone like the holy grail  
in the hand of a big-assed woman  
greedy licks with elongated tongue  
heavy with the plaque of decay

At such times  
the wrecked remains  
are abandoned beyond  
all perception

The departing cool is pale  
light as the breath  
that fades from  
pink to white

Piss trickles down  
from under her skirt  
wrapped around  
broken thigh bone

Bicycle tires  
and shoe prints  
strange jewels  
in a pool of blood

**The Sewing Circle**  
**Andy Seven**

There was a three-story house in the old town burg  
sewing machines in the windows  
none of them worked  
Men of all types rolled up the stairs  
Madame Lombard's blind whorehouse  
all the ladies were blind  
white, black, yellow  
mostly young, very young girls  
some older ladies who had no place to go  
women the wind forgot  
forgotten by the sea  
forgotten by the burning sun

The blind ladies in waiting  
egg timers by the nightstand  
ring ring your hour's up pay up

Sightless girls  
smelling and hearing  
sweaty fat men  
grunting and belching  
putting it in drunk and bleary  
skinny nervous men  
apologizing, cursing, sometimes crying  
"No, you can't kiss me"  
this one's really small  
this one's way too big  
small and thick with the bullfrog blues  
men without a past  
men without a future  
all dancing a swirly little dance  
until the big bad wolf  
burned their house in

**A Misconstrued Kindness**  
**Omar Alexandre**

the big red muscle is on sabbatical  
it took another dig at an empty human  
a tainted canvas with damaging emerald eyes  
pulling the trigger has always been easy  
aiming is the problem and there's only  
so many times that i can blow my brains out  
before i actually blow my brains out  
but i'm not there yet so instead  
i'll splatter my brain on to the page  
and write about how cruel you were  
and title it after something stupid you said like  
a misconstrued kindness  
i guess i don't know anything anymore  
maybe i really have lost my mind  
i've grown too old and  
the heart isn't what it used to be  
the orchestra has been replaced by a dj  
and now there is nothing left but rot and bones  
a bad copy of the original barely crippling by  
just trying to forget  
and trying to remember how to do it all over again  
because the truth is little is known  
why a small thought of you  
amounts to a drastic night filled  
with bad poetry

**To My Aborted Fetus**  
**Willow Croft**

I was a child, myself,  
but I knew enough  
to choose  
not to give you life  
not to bring you into a world  
that would abuse you like I was abused,  
a place where I wouldn't be able to feed you, or  
where the food is poisoned  
as is the water  
and the air there is to breathe.  
On top of all that  
I might not have been able to keep you safe  
at your schools  
where every day of learning  
means knowing how to barricade  
the door to your classroom  
and count up to a hundred while you  
wait for the time  
you'll watch your classmates die  
you'll watch yourself die  
from over a hundred bullets  
from the guns that are loved more  
than children

I promise you,  
it's no consolation  
knowing that you  
might get used to death,  
that you could cope  
because every day  
you'd be forced to watch the world die  
from greed and pollution  
and environmental destruction  
and the animals that are extinct  
by the time you turn their page  
in your picture book.  
It's not a life I want to live  
even with all my greed  
but somehow I keep going  
and the only state of grace I have  
in this mad, mad world  
is that you aren't here  
to witness my heartbreak  
at seeing you die  
a thousand small deaths  
every day.

**Wild**  
**Gene Goldfarb**

Dance with me, baby.  
Make me big.  
Let's reconjugate the verbs  
of life.  
Start a whole new grammar  
of joy and abandon.  
Put it all up against me—  
I'll do the same for you.  
Let's be naked  
and dressed to the nines  
all at the same time.  
Let's go where we want  
right now and forever  
and fly, roll, bounce  
to the music of our pulse.  
Let everyone else gawk,  
cluck judgments and choke.  
They can go back to dust—  
and we can give Hell a run  
for its blazing money.

**Gotta Get Back to LA**  
**Brice Fisher**

I gotta get back to LA  
With my new old car,  
Rust of empty beer cans  
And dentine wrappers  
Stuck inside paperback  
Shakespeare third acts of  
Endless stabbings of villains  
And fatally flawed heroes,  
Losing its whiskey-soaked  
Pages in the back seat under  
Dusty memories of what I  
Should have been,

Where I was drunk in sober life,  
Longing for a buzz  
At Bukowski's San Pedro  
Dream house, writing his mad  
And beat poems till the end  
Of no unglad post office pension  
And cat lover mysticism, in his  
Punch drunk of barfly skid row  
Flop house craziness, undone  
By death but never dying,

Where the clarity of smog  
Induced Sunset Blvd call girl  
Lust sings sweetly of soft  
Inner thigh promise, where  
Miracle mile tattooed legs in  
Thought are cold in the youth  
Of Echo Parks murky water,  
Rowing Chinatown boats to  
Groovy back lots at Paramount,  
Before rushing to the next  
Sexual conquest, trying to  
Find the perfect end line for  
My new spy novel,



When purple evenings  
And mid August moons  
Woke me to cobblestone  
Depression remedies with vodka  
Inspired early morning shots  
Of Silver Lake blue dawns  
Before shooting scenes  
With the ghost of sad and stoic  
Clara Bow, angel now of  
No time silent film heaven  
And my invisible love on  
Nights when the streets  
Were empty of women,

Where Chavez Ravine  
Evictions and cries of no home  
Latino heart of Holy Mary  
Became my drunken home  
Team fan's dodging of old  
Sadness with ball park beer,  
Cheering riot of blue until  
Fernando came with his  
Mythic screwball, throwing  
No hitter pop ups, shutting out  
All hate of gringo heart with  
His quiet ways,  
Seeing the lie of countries,  
Like a vision suddenly widened,

Where I couldn't be a hippie  
And pet a stray dog's lonesome  
Head without crying for eternity,  
And tears of noble failings drifting  
In high places, letting go  
Of ancient hate, but  
Haunting my own living body,  
Seeking forgiveness from whores  
And whiskey and penance  
In hangover mornings not  
Knowing where I was or how  
I got there.

I gotta get back to LA  
To remember the song of the  
Prophets who sang to me  
During all lost years of drunken  
Fucking in the cheap hotels  
Of Santa Monica Blvd doom  
Washing ashore on the fancy  
Beaches of Marina del Rey  
Where angels kept me warm,  
Wrapped in wings of love,  
Whispering softly that I was  
An angel too, fallen but not  
Forgotten, for LA is the city of  
Angels in truth and only angels  
Are there living, breathing, walking  
The streets, making movies  
And playing baseball,  
Selling tacos downtown,  
The best you can eat  
This side of heaven.

**Romance Today**  
**Brian Rosenberger**

Romance today  
has too many questions  
come here often  
married (optional)  
have you been tested  
did you come  
call me  
and no kind answers

Romance today  
is all bullshit and fancy dances  
like fencing minus the foils  
parries and feints and counters  
to say nothing of the thrusts  
It's boxing with a different type of glove  
in a different type of ring  
you feel the blows  
you feel the ache  
you want the release  
you know you do

Romance today is  
fingers locking  
loins pounding  
bodies arching  
letting the fluids fly  
which brings us to the wet spot  
not comfortable is it  
you're there, I'm there, we're there  
faces of need in an ocean of need  
drowning  
or wishing you were

Romance today is a game  
care to play

**Choose Venus**  
**Vivian Pollak**

Pink swirl tattoo  
the skin of Venus.  
Her arms and heart and legs  
open wider  
than Nefertiti, Aphrodite and Hera,  
those mean girls.

When my conjured flowers  
need to feed  
I boast they are damned  
strong  
and impervious to absorb ammonia.  
Don't be afraid.

My pipe smoke rises  
from phoenix fires.  
Rain is not made of foolish tears,  
desire  
and disaster season this water –  
no salt here.

I churn and flare mighty  
like a constant glowing liar,  
a hot green house fire.  
Venus shows herself  
to be the truthful  
God of Love.

**Parable of Displeasure**  
**Matt Dennison**

He puked and he puked until he  
thought now surely I must die, surely  
there can be no more. He had brought  
up the water, the coffee, the orange  
juice, the whiskey, the wine, the  
vodka, pasta, snails and love, but still  
it kept coming. He was into the bodily  
fluids now, and it would, later, scare  
him. Now all he could do was watch.  
And smell. Yellow, foul tasting stuff  
that made him bite the back of his  
tongue. Then green, then clear again.  
Then brown. Then smudge, was all he  
could call it, looking at the last grey  
layer floating. Smudge. Yes. And  
flat oil slicks, tiny fishes, nuts and  
bolts, telephone lines, cardboard boxes,  
file cabinets, tax forms, old photos,  
death announcements. Then, eyes  
bulging, bursting red, gasping like a  
gored fish, he passed it, or, rather, it  
passed itself, wiggling out into the sick  
grease on top of it all only to grow  
and grow and grow until it, in turn,  
puked him out, after the water, the  
coffee, the orange juice, the whiskey, the wine,  
the vodka, pasta, snails and love,  
but still it kept coming.

**Give it here**  
**James Diaz**

For you  
the extra mile  
the long talk  
the last sip  
all I have  
and then some

mountains  
move em

forget the world  
here is a hand  
that knows  
the dirt  
the blood  
lost to blood

for you  
the very last mile  
bullets from every direction  
the hardest part  
the very last bite  
the other shoe

this back; climb  
on

I hear them down below  
sayin; *just jump already*  
they don't even live in  
the same world as us

whatever it is  
give it here  
I've got you

whoever you are  
reading this  
right now

when your night is long  
and you can't shorten the distance  
between your hand and your heart  
I'll do what I can  
to see you through it

I want to see you through it.

**Grasp**  
**Jodie Baeyens**

You, who came to my bed  
With just a book of Shakespeare  
And took me as your lover  
And read me sonnets  
As your hands caressed  
My naked body

You, who came to my bed  
And took me as your lover  
With such false confidence  
That I believed each word you said  
When you explored my body  
And read me Baudelaire

You, who took a girl as a lover  
Who you thought was a woman  
You, who I thought was a man  
When you were still a boy  
Your hands tracing the skin above my hips  
And read me the poetry you wrote

You, who took me as your lover  
Come back to my bed  
You, now a man with softly graying hair  
Take me as I am  
Leave the poetry on the bedside table  
You've nothing left to prove

**One More Road**  
**Jonathan Baker**

Ephemeral,  
intangible,  
spiritual,  
like that night with the whiskey glass  
and it wouldn't work,  
and we tried,  
and we tried,  
and we tried.  
I was hurt,  
and his license plates were expired.  
She and I,  
we held each other  
through the puffs of smoke.  
We were enthusiastic failures.  
We were ecclesiastic quitters.  
And the broken glass,  
not from the whiskey glass,  
but from the windshield  
cut my feet on the pavement  
as I showed how I could  
walk tall and proud for the officer,  
and he told me  
to turn around and return,  
but I wanted to keep walking forever  
until I returned to her.  
First to the ground  
that drank her blood,  
and then to the sky  
that ate her spirit.

**The Poet**  
**Dan Flore III**

there is no room for the poet to sit  
he is in the standing room only section  
even though there's 3 people there for the reading

the poet looks at nothing in particular  
and sees everything  
he is the disease  
and he orgasms the cure

the poet is at his strongest  
right after reading the masters  
he bows knighted into dust  
and from the dust he shall rise

this poet thought it would take a lot more cigarettes  
to finish this piece  
he will smoke the rest later  
when the decent line eludes him  
and he daydreams of sex instead

the poet dies in the end  
he can tell by his book sales  
there is no place for him  
other than to chase elusive beauty  
like a stripper that talks to him  
even though she knows he has no money

the poet will follow her to a beanbag chair  
back at her place where there is no lighting  
and cry on her nipples  
and she will rub them in her pink  
till they are castles dripping with holy oil  
she wore her cross  
and she liked it when he nailed her

the poet will go off topic  
to devote a few lines to a stripper  
and find his way back to the subject  
when the loneliness of the blank page passes  
and his wife stops snoring

see the poet is drowning  
and all he wants to do is  
pull you under with him  
with a few metaphor meteors  
simile smiles  
and altercations of alliteration

has he placed a pleasing offering on the altar of beauty?  
he can only wonder  
and the poet is not talking about a facebook thumb up the ass  
he is speaking of that dark cavern  
where beauty fornicates with beauty  
and a connection of light illuminates  
the poet's beard catches fire  
when phantasms such as this occur

the poet has lost his athleticism  
his tan  
even his torso  
all to make a stand  
when everyone else was sitting  
he is a gunslinger  
a cat whisperer  
a lover in black and white movies  
you've seen him a million times  
but it feels like you are just now getting acquainted

the poet has killed his muses  
he's captured them like lightning bugs  
has kissed them goodbye  
has written them long unanswered letters

the poet has no generation  
he is of the family of God  
he is not of this world

shhh it's time to go  
Jesus said "a prophet is never welcome in his hometown"  
will you run with the poet to his car  
with the old upholstery  
dusty dashboard  
and change in the ashtray brightly smiling  
where he will lull you to sleep with the turns of the wheel?

the poet knows lullabies  
and prayers before bed  
will you follow him to the cloud of the next town  
to give a reading to gnats and pestilence?

has he taken you this far  
only to leave you on the side of the road  
or the end of the poem?

no

the poet's eyes  
are your own lonesome eyes  
reflected in a pool of words