Cultural Daily
Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Cultural Weekly Poetry Contest Winners

Cultural Daily · Wednesday, November 13th, 2013

The first ever Cultural Weekly Open Submissions Period was a huge success. We received over three hundred and fifty poems from one hundred and twenty poets, poets from Malaysia, Ireland, Europe, Africa and Japan. Poets from all over the US and Canada. They sent haiku, free verse, elegies, political poems; one or two poets defiantly sent poems that rhymed.

All poems were read “blind,” i.e., all identifying information about the poet was stripped from the entries before they were read. All poems were read in their entirety.

In the end, we choose ten poetry contest finalists, what we considered to be the best of the best. Today we’re publishing five of them: the poem we liked best, and the first four of nine finalists, in no particular order. The remaining five poems will be published in our next edition.

The first place poet and nine finalists are:

Fatimah Zainal (first place, pictured above)
Lisa Segal
John Grochalski
Yuri Kageyama
Diana Darby
Doireann Ni Ghriofa
Shauna Osborn
Stewart Mintzer
Peter Neil Carroll
Anita Pulier

I hope you enjoy reading these first five poems as much as I did. Expect the next five, next issue. Comments welcome.

Alexis Rhone Fancher
Poetry Editor
Cultural Weekly

Supine by Fatimah Zainal

Day 1
I wake up. I am me
without you. There is a
witch’s tears on my pillow; a matutinal
glow outside my window.
Day 2
I wake up. I am me

without you. I look in the
mirror. My mouth is sewn shut. I am
silent as a star.
Day 3
I wake up. I am me
without you. My footsteps pound
the pavements. I look at the floor. I am
only half a shadow.
Day 4
I wake up. I am me
without you. All day I watch
people’s lips moving. I could not
understand a single word.
Day 0
I wake up. I saw you inside
my mirror. And before you left me to
take the wrong way home,
I clasped you tight to my body.
All the night I lie supine;
watching your reflection receding
from the mirror
into the ebony night.

Fatimah Zainal is a 20 year old journalism student currently at her sophomore year in International Islamic University Malaysia. She has been mining the dark vein of poetry since a young age and her works had been published in several international poetry magazines. (Fatimah is pictured above)

How the Clothes Get Worn by Lisa Segal

is that they get sat in
rubbed against
lain in
laid on
spilled upon
walked on
splattered upon
stepped on
cried upon
thrown-up on
dragged
stuffed into small places
agitated
scrubbed
thrown in a basket
or a hamper
or the trunk of a car.
How the clothes get worn is
they don’t land soft.
Well, they do land soft,

but on something sharp.
They get snagged in the garden
by a nail,
snagged by a hook,
snagged by a claw.
They get stored in the off-season
and eaten by moths.
Someone pulls a thread.
How the clothes get worn is
the sun shines on them.
The rain, the hail, the sleet,
the snow, the wind.
Something always batters them.
They march in parades,
they go to work.
They play baseball and slide into first.
They participate in massacres,
revolutions and coups d'états.
They become someone's favorite
and get worn out.
They become no one's favorite
and die of broken threads,
crawling into a corner,
saying someone's name,
someone who will rescue me –
I mean them, the clothes,
this shirt, these jeans, this sweater.
We understand each other.
We are worn
and worn out
by men who turn us inside out,
who rip our sleeves,
who tug and pull at us,
stretch us out of shape,
who cut us into rags
to wash their cars.

Lisa Segal

Lisa Segal lives in Los Angeles with her husband Raymond. She studies art with Tom Wudl, writing with Jack Grapes, and dance with Gena Hoshihara. She has shown in various galleries around Los Angeles, including most recently at the Arena Gallery in Santa Monica. She has poetry forthcoming in ONTHEBUS, as well as a Catalog/Art Manifesto for her recent series of sculptures. She received her degree in Library and Information Science from UCLA. www.lisasegal.com

and he says (part two) by John Grochalski

and he says
you know the chinese

are taking over everything, right?
they basically own nicaragua
they love them there
the nicaraguans are letting the chinese
build a canal
so no one has to use ours anymore
and i say nothing
africa loves the chinese too
you know why don’t you?
diamonds, i guess
and he says
ivory
the chinese can’t get enough of that shit
and i say
right, right, all of the dead elephants
the chinese are killing them
or else they’re paying someone to
and he says
look around your country
the chinese are taking over america too
crowding our private schools
and our good universities
we have good universities in america? i say
and he says
what are you nuts?
a communist?
america has the best education system in the world
and the chinese are taking it over
because they want to rule the world
and i look at my co-worker who is chinese
she’s twenty-one years-old
she lost her dad when she was a kid
her mom just died back in february
she goes to school full-time
and every bit of money that she gets from this job
goes in the pocket of the insomniac grandmother
who keeps her up all night
she’s not trying to rule anything
but just get by like your average american
and he says
pretty soon they’ll be so many of them
that poor white kids will have to marry some chinese
it’ll be like an arranged marriage
everyone will be melted together
and you won’t be able to tell chinese from white
from black from indian from nobody
and i think
i know more chinese people and black people

than i do white people at this point in my life
the only people who've ever been cruel to me
were white people
so i don't care if we all end up blue
with silver antennas
and he says
but look up that thing on nicaragua
some time when you get the chance
use the internet, kid
if you know how
because that's where i get my information from.

John Grochalski

John Grochalski is the author of The Noose Doesn't Get Any Looser After You Punch Out (Six Gallery Press 2008), Glass City (Low Ghost Press, 2010), and the forthcoming novel, The Librarian. Grochalski currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, where he constantly worries about the high cost of everything.

No Gift of the Magi by Yuri Kageyama

we were poor
not dirt poor but poor
me a reporter at the local rag
you a stay-at-home dad and part-time English teacher
and so when i opened that velveteen box
you handed me oh so casually on
Christmas eve
palpitating
anticipation about a
gem or jewel or sparkle
that other girls get
and saw a plain black fountain
pen
the kind no one uses anymore
mont blanc or some other brand requiring finger-smudging
ink,
i was angry
"why did you buy this and
waste money?"
and then you
suddenly
moved
and i thought you were going to hit me
and you took the pen
and broke it in half
hot with something
that was beyond

the anger i felt
sour-tasting disappointment
a feeling of not being
loved
not like that O. Henry story
where the comb unwanted, the watch band unwanted
were simple
priceless proofs of
true love
undeniable,
not that dumb purchase filled with
hate,
and you looked up
and said what I didn’t
think of and what you didn’t
want to say
at all,
“I bought you a pen
because you are
a writer
and that’s what writers use
_ a pen.”

Yuri Kageyama

Yuri Kageyama is the author of “The New and Selected Yuri: Writing From Peeling Till Now” (Ishmael Reed Publishing, 2011). Her poetry band Yuricane features Eric Kamau Gravatt, Isaku Kageyama, Hirokazu Suyama and other multicultural musicians. She is collaborating with Carla Blank on a performance piece. She lives in Tokyo.

Brown Rice and Bologna by Diana Darby

It’s noon.
And I have thrown away three poems.
I sat here and read them
and re-read them
and then I threw them away.
I have vacuumed the floors,
eaten brown rice,
and talked with my mother.
Yes,
she is still crazy.
I have read Bukowski
and wished he were here.
If he were,
he would sit beside me and tell me
not to be so literary.
He would put his hand on my thigh
and tell me about some fine wine he drank years ago

and how I should let go
and fuck more often.
He would tell me
I should sit in the sun
and let my white skin brown
and not bathe
and not wash my sheets until they are as dirty as my skin.
He would put his arms around me
and whisper words in my ear,
like ‘circus’
and ‘horses’
and ‘dollar rooms’.
Later he would pull down his pants
and masturbate in the corner
and when he was finished
he would tell me he’s hungry.
And I would make him a bologna sandwich.
Then he’d sit on the porch
and play ball with my dog
and tell me I’m thinking too hard
and that the three poems I threw away
were much better
than this one.

Diana Darby

Diana Darby is a poet, singer/songwriter and storyteller. Her work has appeared in Rattle, Spillways, and ONTHEBUS. She received an M.F.A. from USC in writing and directing and a B.A. in Theater. She has released four albums and performed throughout the U.S. and Europe. Her latest album, l V (intravenous), was released last summer. dianadarby.com

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