

Poetry by **Peter Branson**

*WEST*

*County Kerry*

Picture it now, through milky mist and silk  
soft rain: "Fifteen per cent off when it's wet."  
A sign on Finn McCool's shop window tempts  
you in to buy. Death by a thousand cuts  
or dazzling enterprise, where Thomas Ashe  
was bred, his lust for freedom synthesised?  
A Rising star, the brand immortalised;  
in Mountjoy, brute force-feeding martyred him  
all right. To stand against all odds is sweet,  
to strive, defy oppression, God on side.  
Take blight, add greedy English landlords, State  
indifference: it's emigrate or die.  
The famine ship archive spells out our shame,  
in black and white, with every mark and name.

Poetry by **Peter Branson**

*Icon*

The photo re-appears,  
a centre-piece,  
reframed, enshrined,  
as radiant as the day  
immortalised, though more  
than ten years' past.  
Petite, her shy  
smile bracketed by long  
blond hair, he mentions her  
occasionally: "Soul mates."  
Soon after it begins  
(they click at work:  
she's forty-three  
and married, grown up kids,  
he's childless and divorced),  
she has a mammogram,  
routine. He drives her round  
to hear the news.  
Later he waits outside  
the ward until  
her family has been.  
He soldiers on,  
as people do, gets by,  
yet knows the man  
he was, twenty again,  
invincible, when she  
was his, has died.

Poetry by **Linda King**

*the afterlife of metaphor*

none of these words hold water  
and yet you stay with the blue when the story ends  
narrate yourself tell them your true name  
take the blame  
language holds the ghost of each word  
reaches down to the core of things  
to that singular point  
charged with gravity  
the music lingers close your eyes  
listen to the chorus  
hear how they address the audience  
this is not business as usual  
you must be hardwired  
for such blessed communion  
messages continue to come in  
like watered-down whiskey  
take a step back  
compose yourself  
unkind forgetting  
is part of the plot

Poetry by **Linda King**

*childhood's alphabet*

memories feed on everything  
all the same nightmares crimes confessed  
being lucky or not

there is treachery in these stories  
childhood's alphabet of boats and dragons  
angels and fated love a snow globe blizzard  
slippers made of glass poisoned apples

you have no reference for such unraveling beauty  
overtaken by foreign geography always thirsty  
you tell lies about everything afternoon music  
burning flowers the way that darkness  
copies your rush to sleep

you don't regret the loss of gratitude  
or history's elaborate excuses  
on the outskirts of small towns  
rental houses sour taste of whiskey  
the tumble-down seediness of it all  
a change of tense never noticed  
motionless like an arrow in flight

Poetry by **Clarence Wolfshohl**

*DREAM OF PINTO PONIES*

They come in fives and sixes  
so bunched one cannot count  
or tell one pony from another  
or from the boys. They move

as one, the boys adhered  
to the flanks of one with reins  
of another in their hands  
weaving through the wattled

chutes. The boys assume  
the bearing of the ponies, heads  
bowed into the dust of desert wind.  
These incised jewels set along

the fenceline necklace  
in hills of overcast green  
with roofs of houses dew damp  
black as midnight soil.

Poetry by **Clarence Wolfshohl**

*SCAVENGER EAGLE*

An undefined speck  
at a quarter mile, maybe a buzzard  
or stray dog rolling in a carcass,  
belly full,

it filled the windshield  
when it rose off the highway,  
bald eagle chased from roadkill  
by tire whine.

Wings spanned the roadway  
as it launched onto an air current,  
oblique to its wishes,  
trailing hunks of hide  
in its claws.

Poetry by **Ron Yazinski**

*Hotel Room*

In this cheap hotel room in Austin,  
Below the overpass that leads the traffic south to San Antonio,  
I feel as unwanted as a stain.  
And though we talk several times a day by phone,  
It's not the same.

Loneliness powers my dreams.  
I awake to the pressure of someone sitting at the foot of my bed.  
And I can feel the woman's tremors as she sobs,  
As if she holds a letter from her husband's mistress,  
Listing times and dates and promises,  
All for her own good.

For my own good, I stare at the blanket on my feet.  
Still, I feel the weight and the shivering.  
I sit up in the darkness.  
If I were an artist, I'd turn on the light, and with an ink pen,  
Draw this ghostly presence on the wall,  
As a warning for the next guest to consider,  
As the last one should have done for me;  
But I don't care about strangers that much.

Instead I lie in the dark,  
Composing this poem in my mind,  
That the next time you tell me that my silence scares you,  
I can tell you about it.

Poetry by **Ryan Kelly**

*Concentrated Karma*

An orange  
is cultivated and picked  
by a farmer's hand,  
its peel used  
as a widow's cooking zest,  
its pith and pulp preserved  
in jams and marmalade,  
its seeds spread  
to create new groves.

These thrifty hands  
carry with them  
the same sweet scent,  
the same aroma  
as mine  
when I squeeze the fruit dry  
for a single serving  
and throw the peel in the disposal.

Poetry by **Sethu Nair**

*for me. and. for you.*

curlicueing here, along a wispy, whimsy course  
through the deep black  
of my waves

while there, as gale gusting  
through the tightly twined threads  
of your shirt

today, this breeze  
is for me.  
and.  
for you.

Poetry by **Sethu Nair**

*an ode, a road to the Poets House*

rememberings, reveries and ruminations  
riding on the waves of  
rhymes, rhythms, periodicities and pulse  
sky-shaping clouds  
made of polymers, protractions, poinsettias, oleanders

take me there once again, my friend  
to those books, that chair, that air  
where breathing is easiest  
being is breeziest  
loving sheer zeal

take me my love  
till my love takes me  
to the Poets House!

Poetry by **Nahshon Cook**

*Smile, You're Beautiful*

I was coming home  
from the Starz Film Center  
down Speer Blvd.  
yesterday evening,  
when I drove by a traffic light pole  
where there was a barefoot,  
young-looking guy  
dressed in a pair  
of grey, washed out,  
unironed chinos  
and a red, thin cotton,  
sweaty armpit stained T-shirt  
who was standing on the corner  
like a beggar with a cardboard sign  
that had "*Smile, you're beautiful!*"  
written on it in big black  
permanent marker letters  
for everyone (slowly inching by him  
in the rush hour gridlock) to see.

Poetry by **Omar Azam**

*Quantum*

Opposites attract  
But they are not really opposites

Because in our world  
there is no such thing

Only degrees of a continuum

You watch me tap my fingers incessantly

My anxious cry of freedom  
in the crowded space of  
our public acquaintance.

You are reserved. You watch me  
and you know a little bit of  
what I'm feeling --

I'm sick of these stone-faced  
people acting like  
it's completely normal to  
be canned up like sardines  
in a streetcar

But you don't quite feel it like I do.  
We're on the same continuum  
Not opposites

Though we attract like them.



Poetry by **P. K. Padhy**

*Intense*

Miraculously  
The world is beautiful and dynamic:  
full of youthful atoms.  
There is nothing to define vacuum  
Or independent of itself.

Poetry by **Richard J. O'Brien**

*Illumination*

In the dark, children are not swayed  
by the glamour of gravity. Their wings  
lift them toward  
what is illuminated.

For the old, there is no peace between  
the night and the soul.

Children know this,  
and where we cower

they dream.

Poetry by **Richard J. O'Brien**

*News Flash From Hades*

Traffic hit a snag today  
when the Styx River Ferry

capsized more than half-way  
to Hades from the Earth side.

It is not known how many  
souls are still missing.

Charon appeared visibly distraught  
when he told reporters: In all these years,  
I've never had an accident.

Tonight, the search  
continues for the missing dead.

Poetry by **John Williams**

*A Strange Place*

A festival begins at our arrival.  
What are they celebrating?  
Vampiric masks, naked children,  
heavy crosses hoisted upon shoulders  
cleaving the crowded sky with naked  
human saviors.

We smile for a different reason.  
The primal drums, the animalistic chants.  
The mysteries have matured beyond written word.  
The rites of gods smell of charred lamb.  
We don't eat meat yet praise the slaughter  
and its desperate bleating all the more,  
like a delicious secret dream  
realizing all we disbelieve.

And when we wake?

O the joy of rubbing shoulders with another's evil  
or good. The apple we stole from a neighbor's tree  
and blamed another.

For what are we really hungry?

Tomorrow I will return to the logic of home,  
pilfered items in my pocket, uneaten.  
I will dust and polish them like old books  
and brag and laugh with friends.  
I will not divulge my fear  
it is the apple and the apple only  
that can undue or save me.

Poetry by **John Williams**

*Reykjavik*

Slight white houses evading  
unsuccessfully a comparison  
to the tired warehouse shoreline.

Streets silent come October  
of even comforting dog howls.  
But the wind as dog,  
teething from the sea,  
propels the scant hangers-on  
into fish-gut and Brennevin pubs.  
Still, from outside  
the heavy wooden door  
a thousand lisping screams  
squeeze around the iron frame,  
seeking out the thousand infinitesimal  
cracks in every wall.

A corner table is laughing  
in the ecstatic way of newlyweds,  
but the rest dead drunk  
staring into their hands  
question where flew summer,  
if the brief flirts of naked sun  
and foreign currency and victuals  
befell the dream version  
of themselves.

And the sea continues to drill  
a thousand fjords inland,  
reflecting as we wash our boots  
clean of where we've been  
the crafted lines on our brows.

The sea with eyes  
like a Delphi oracle  
rolling into and out of  
permanence, time,  
asks us through its teeth and beard:  
"is this what is left  
of youth?"