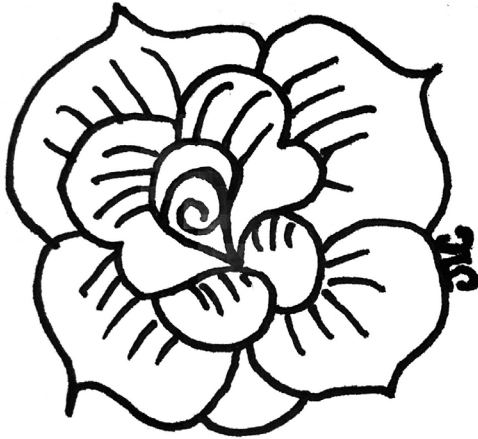


POWER IN POETRY

VOL. 12

2021-2022



POETRY BY THE WOMEN AND MEN
OF
BLAINE STREET
AND
RE-ENTRY AND REHABILITATION

WE DEDICATE THIS VOLUME TO
THE MEMORY OF
POET AND FRIEND
ROBERT SWARD, 1933-2022.
MAY HE LIVE ON THROUGH HIS
WORDS.

The Santa Cruz Poetry Project/Poetry in the Jails began as the legacy project of Ellen Bass while she was Poet Laureate of Santa Cruz County. Over the years, the program has facilitated workshops throughout the county, and with your support will continue changing the lives of justice-involved men and women one word, one poem at a time.

In the second and third years of COVID protocols, we've been leading paper-based and remote video classes with the men's Re-Entry and Rehabilitation facility, and the Blaine Street women's facility. We've decided to include writing from both of these classes, collected in one anthology. It's been a challenge to conduct our classes remotely, but with our students' help, we've made it work! We are so proud of them and their creativity.

Our website, poetryinthejails.org, will keep you updated on recent and future events. Please visit the site, and remember, your donations help keep us in dictionaries, composition books, and other supplies; and help make anthologies like this one possible for ALL our classes. We extend our sincere thanks to all our donors.

Special thanks to Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department, Kristie Clemmons, Edward Greene, Lisa Zack, and the officers and staff at Main Jail, Blaine Street, and Re-Entry and Rehabilitation.

The William James Association, a 501c3 non-profit, is the fiscal sponsor of The Santa Cruz Poetry Project.

Poetry

by Justin Marc

For me, it's as simple
as writing down my thoughts.
I don't have a great vocabulary,
but I do have lots of heart.

I don't read well,
and I can barely spell,
but I got what it takes
to give you the shakes.

My words are real,
what I say is what I feel --
it may not be for you
but to some it appeals.

A release for me
can be just what you need.

So read what I say,
it can change your whole day.

Poetry is power,
power to move me
and power to move you.

I thank you, Spoken Word,
I've now found the nerve.

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* "Mavericks" by Bennett Healy, "Ocean" by Richard Walsh, and "Westside Local" by Justin Marc were selected to be performed during *For the 7th Generation Ocean Festival* at the Elisabeth Jones Art Center in Lincoln City, OR, July 2021.

Untitled

By Maia Cahill

I cannot feel the turning of the year in here.

These cement walls
allow for no nature.

We are lucky if we are outside long enough
to tell what kind of weather the day possesses
or if it rained.

It's winter,

but I wouldn't know by the way they are
keeping us

locked away with only 2 or 3 hours a day
to be outside

in a courtyard

looking at a postage-stamp square of sky
through the razor wire.

We stay up all night now reading
so we can sleep through our morning entrapment,
unable to move through space at all.

Our whole biology has had to change.

Turning of the season
has been reduced

to the anticipation of a turning of the key.

We remain locked up
as a prison video

blares through our cell doors loudly
informing us of all our rights... Δ

Memories

By Julia Cabibi

Memories crash all around me
like the tide at my feet
trying to pull me under.

I find myself dancing with
these memories like a child
playing tag with the waves.

If only the same innocence prevailed.

These are not the same playful memories
of a childhood game.

These are the memories of pain
and regret,
of innocence stolen
and of lies told.

I let the swell of them reach my toes
only for a moment
before I retreat from the shore,
from victim
to survivor. Δ

The Weight

I remember the weight of his hand
holding me down
like bricks piled on my chest,
the bright lights quickly began to dull
on the edges of my vision.
How easy it would have been
to just let go
just give in.

But you taught me otherwise.
I could hear your voice in my head.
I could hear you telling me
to never give up,
that I was stronger than this.
That I could get through anything.

You gave me life and then once again
helped me live.
I made it through the storm that night
and finally left later that week --
only after it got worse,
but I left, nonetheless --
because of the strength I inherited
from you,
I chose life. Δ

Untitled

By Julia Cabibi

Your story has not
been written in stone;
it can be changed.

The paper can be shredded
and your story written new,
it's up to you.

Your past does not represent
all that you are
all that you ever have been
or will be.

Things change.
People grow.
Your direction in life
may do a 180.

You are writing your story
as you go
and it's up to you
what kind of story you sew. Δ

The Next Thing

By Julia Cabibi

Anxiety floods my body.
Waves crash between my ears
the lights shatter my vision.
Anticipation is a killer.
It is a burden, a drag.
I've known the day was coming
but I *feel* it now.
It's gonna be sooner than later:
change,
always scary.
I've grown so used to this place,
all of its creature comforts.
Try and dance with the positive:
better amenities,
more opportunities to learn,
one step closer to home.
Home.
That is the finish line.
Home is calling me.
I try and comfort myself.
It's just one step closer. Δ

Spring Has Sprung

By Julia Cabibi

The day has come.
Now that spring has sprung
it's time to turn a new leaf. >

Yesterday is gone
so rid yourself of the sad old song
that kept you on your knees.

Your future is here.
there is nothing left to fear.
Your days will be warm and bright.

When you are free from the past
the changes will come fast
and you will be reborn
into your brand new life. Δ

Words

By Julia Cabibi

Words cut deeper
than any knife.
A single sentence
can singlehandedly
destroy or create
an entire world,
to build up or break down
so easily.
Most of the time we don't
realize
the simplicity of it,
the complexity of it.
Our words. Δ

Heaven's Music

By Tina Sharon Roybal

Sound, be too little, yet found.

Look at this project, definite rebound;

sitting all about, moving like a spring-heeded willow, yes it's true:

I've seen birds fall out of leaves and fall

into being leaves.

The trees stand still and watch silent - blissful they are, yet

we wonder how far the bird-leaves drop.

I know it's not just a prop -- oops, belly flop!

Now the bird-leaf uses a spring spiraling down

watching heaven's host sing,

listening to the bell twine

wanting bird-leaf to intertwine.

Do not rewind, this is just a kind reminder

of the best moments being brighter.

You lived through this, though from a dream.

Put simply, the spring, it

turns a leaf, a bird

into spring!

The light shines through, the buds blossom today.

I love spring, say the birds --

Poetic hymn to the sounds of Heaven's music. Δ

The Winged Heart

By Tina Sharon Roybal

Walking through the hallway dry-winged
I'll step through clouds of glass upon the exit route.
These glass clouds are loud & wet, things that I haven't imagined
yet, so simple, these unimaginable scenery sets. Up towards
the middle there is a heart, a pounding heart, winged, inset.
A set of old, a set of new, the wings were never held on with
glue. They are natural, sopping wet wings, colorful as
daisies set out for spring. The glass clouds, too, they
glimmer and gleam, beautifully sewn at their seam.
Upon a dream in the maker's chair, I wonder if
anyone notices the air? The air starts to dry, the
glass clouds part, and like a rainbow the sun reaches
out, like art you could never set out to part from
a scene like this, more beautiful than an arch. This art
so rare, it isn't fair that this art in itself was never
even there. Just imagination upon a winged heart,
hoping we shall never part.
Now, that's a work of art. Δ

**For Papi Joker,
Love, Leilani**

By Leilani Allen

Being alone with you
it's quiet and comfortable.
No words need to be spoken.
We can feel the love we share.
We both hate being alone,
but love to be alone together.
Our quiet is never too quiet.
We hold each other close,
we will never feel that alone again.
You got me and I got you,
always and forever, together or apart. Δ

Untitled

By Susanna Luna

Life changes ready or not, don't worry so much,
stop your screaming, please hush!
Open up, the struggle is creating Fear.
So loud, the ringing in my ears distracts
from the task at hand.
I can't control it, so don't get mad - your anger
makes me sad, why can't you understand?
I may be going deaf,
so get that through your head.
It's not an act, I don't pretend -
I know you think I just don't listen.
I desperately need hearing assistance. Δ

Green Little Lines

By Michelle A. Moreno

The lime green love
To the brown complexion
In the roots that overcast our veins of gold,
That probably run deeper than blood.
The shining angel-rays that gleam down
Upon all of us, provide neither you nor I
With our misled wrong and our God-forbidden rights,
Have only directed us in life
To a possibility of endless creativity
That has formed this immortal life. Δ

Growth

By Julia Burnes

You thought you got me.
You thought you won,
but you got down on one knee
you thought it was so fun.
You said no one had made you happier,
you begged me not to go.
You still cry at the thought of me,
you still beg for me to take you back.

But the hurt you caused could
never be forgiven.
You took advantage of the love
that was given. Now >

I will make sure your life
ain't worth livin'.

And I warned you
so stop bitchin'.

Thank you for re-awakening
my inner demons.
You were the only reason I pushed through.
now when I push, it's going to be you.

Beauty came from this thorn that was grown,
cuz I'm not the one that stayed alone.
I'm happily in love with quite a few,
but never truly love
because of you.

Fuck love. That shit don't belong here. Δ

***Mine* Up Close**

By Lana Dutra-Pena

The mist of a personalized scent
The image of crushed ice plant
Purple visions...stars, sparkle, pendant
Pale pink in the canons of three.
Welt he wore as he looked just above me.
Love and friendship,
Deep red I've seen in the canons of two
Dear to me. Δ

The Truth

By Yanna Giutienez

Meeting in the night

Passing time, opening doors, and foolishly acting ourselves.

Parting hours past the sunrise

Wandering the streets

Wondering if strangers ever meet again.

Just before dawn

Crossing paths on the way to the bridge

Past the mountain

Sharing tasty minutes with no words passed

Walking the same way for a spell. Δ

B.F.

By Yanna Giutienez

Different reflections

Different struggles

Similar fights

Same ideas of freedom

Same resistance to conformity

Different minds

Different voices

Same compassions

Same open door

Similar hearts. Δ

A Golden Shovel After Anais Nin

By Yanna Giutienez

You take a chance and
The experience leaves an impression, then
You see the
Impact on yourself and one day
It came
To express itself in another, when
You noticed the
Change in the risk
That came to
Pass, you remain
Wound up tight
No one seeing in.
But there is a
Darkness in a bud.
No one can overlook what was
An empty patch now blooming into more.
The change is painful
But it gets better than
You see, more of the
Way the change puts you at risk
Of being more than it
Seemed would be, and it took
Years to
Learn you could only bloom when the dead blossom. Δ

A Way

By Yanna Giutienez

Bills are paid

House is altered to comfort

Marriage is consistent

Jobs maintained

Though there is no joy.

Happiness is fleeting in everything that should welcome it.

Time for a change

A new purpose

A new way

Never the same

Not always pretty

Very rarely

Welcoming

But in wandering lost, peace is found

And finding peace in wandering lost. Δ

No Name

By Yanna Giutienez

Smoke rings linger rising ever higher

As the chaos settles from the Big Argument.

Never realizing what was reborn from the dust

Or knowing the damage was done by what survived.

Trying to get everywhere

Anywhere but now.

And, trying to move from where you reach

To anywhere you're not >

Never quite making it
Though you never fail to go.
Waking as the moon rise over-
Powers any sunrise ever known
Sending you to walk through your nightmares.
Leading you to run past dreams
Trying to get anywhere
Without realizing how far you've actually gone
From what led you into flight.
As your bearings realign after the storm
Always learning only that which you can share
May you know you are always where you are supposed to be. Δ

Kali

By Taralyn McKay

She ran next to me
with the purest of loyalty.

That girl,
the one who smells like home
with the slit olive eyes
how I miss her so.

That girl,
the one with the kink in her tail
she would purr the fiercest purr
you'd ever felt. >

But that's when I knew
she loved me the most
and I would hug her tighter,
I would never let her go.

Now she lives on in my heart
and I know
we will never truly be apart. Δ

Do You Ever Think About It?

By Taralyn McKay

Do you lie awake at night,
Like I did in fright?
Seeing my lips quivering,
Did you realize that day
All my trust was just withering away?
Away...
But I am still here
And I no longer live in fear
Because I forgave you
With all my heart.
It's what saved us,
My forgiveness...
It saved our relationship
From turning to dust.
And finally,
I can say I am proud of you.
Finally,
I've made you proud of me, too. Δ

River Runs

By Taralyn McKay

The smell of pine in the air
The fire burning a red glow
I listen to the river behind my home.

Hoads of rain dropping fiercely
Piercing
The rapid water.

The river is gushing
Behind every home
Into the next town
Into our city.

Those treacherous waves
Now dissipate to nothing
As they reach the ocean's cruelty.

While my river runs,
I lie fireside
With the scent of pine
And a glass of wine. Δ

Misguided

By Taralyn McKay

My moral compass
is becoming jaded
in here. >

These women locked
behind a door
23 hours a day,
and I don't so much
as glance their way.

I feel so misguided
even lost at times.

I need to be true to myself
and remember my kind heart.

But this place,
it breeds criminals and cruelty;
like the time
someone used the n-word
and I yelled
and flipped her the bird.

But these women
locked away
for the entirety of their stay,
they need compassion, too.

In other words, my kindness comes naturally.

But what do I do,
when this stress
is leaving my heart a mess? Δ

Journeys

By Taralyn McKay

I dream of school and a career
and getting the hell out of here.

I dream of fur babies and real babies,
a life with my love, and all the possibilities.

I dream of a home built to fit that life
and I dream of him making me a wife.

I dream of our adventures and our travels
and watching this journey unravel.

For what a beautiful ride it's been
and what an extraordinary journey
is about to begin. Δ

Concrete Cage

By Taralyn McKay

The last of the leaves have fallen
and I'm trying not to slip
on those pasted to the ground.

The river is high
and the mulch is wet,
caked to my knees.

I look up
and the first to go off
are those two beautiful magnolia trees. >

At least that's how I remember it,
the changing of the year.
A tiny sliver of sunlight
on a concrete cage
is all I can see in here. Δ

Of Myself I Choose

By Taralyn McKay

There is an energy in my mind.
A power that allows me to overcome the worst parts
 of myself
And breathe into life one that
 I choose. Δ

Here

By Taralyn McKay

Here,
I have to hang my feelings
at the door,
shed them off
like an overused coat,
furry and cozy with comfort;
and trade them in
for a hardened,
but thin and brittle shell,
like a crab's. >

Home,
I can wear those feelings,
and when I do,
my cat will curl up in my lap
and tell me it's alright
with a simple shine
of her eyes;
when I do,
my partner will take a crack at that shell
with his hammer of empathy,
and pull me in to feel his coat of warmth and love,
radiating off him
and into my being;
when I do,
I can pull myself
up and out
of that restless entity,
because when I look around me
I've got everything,
love and drive
and a willingness to succeed.

But here,
here I am alone
and as much as
I want to cling
to that safety net
to pull me up
when I'm drowning,
I realize
the hand that's guiding me
is my own. Δ

Today I Want to Resolve Nothing

By Crystal Ross

Today I want to resolve nothing...
My mind is calm, no racing thoughts.
Acceptance has taken over.

I've been in this bind, this whirlwind,
Flooded with anxiety, heavy breathing,
The thought of time getting away from me.

I've been sad, crying hysterically.
The lump in my throat was there for weeks.
I felt failure, I felt despair.

Today I wanted to resolve nothing.
My heart is light, my feelings are feeling,
No rushing this, slowing of the fast pace.

Today, I want to resolve nothing! Δ

Poetry

By Crystal Ross

I have thought for a long time
 I've lost myself.
Thoughts and feelings
 Have clouded myself.
Things that only last for a minute or two
 Deluded thyself. >

Where can I go to find

Myself?

It's time to change

I need to find myself.

Open those wounds that

Control myself.

Let it all go...

Myself. Δ

Don't Be A Hostage to Your Past

By Crystal Ross

Many years I've held on to a
judgemental view of self.

My image of Not Good Enough!

Characterized by my past...

guilty, shameful, lost!

Don't be a hostage to your past.

Crawl out of the lonely despair.

Year after year, never gave up,
soaking in the knowledge to get Unstuck.

Be aware of the light, it's not too bright --

Don't be a hostage to your past! Δ

The Yellow Gate

By Crystal Ross

A long drive through the mountains,
but wait!

Stop at the yellow gate.

Get off the truck, grab your things, >

cross the yellow gate.
Breathe in the sweet outdoors.
Glorious lighting bouncing off the trees,
still-burnt bark from fire years ago.
Hiking up and down through thick woods,
sounds of trickling water going by.
Finally, my rock -- have a seat,
breathing rapidly, rest and let it slow:
 A waterfall! Δ

Reflection

By Crystal Ross

Have you ever looked deep in
someone's eyes...
 Do you see the glare?
 Do you see the shine?
It's like looking into the back of a mirror.
 Do you see the softening glow?
 Do you see the objects to and fro?
It's Acceptance.
It's Clean.
 It's the clarity of your own view. Δ

Inside

By Crystal Ross

How do you feel?
Do you see the fight the person
 has in themself? >

The anxious to the unknown
craziness....

Are you on-point?

Do you have the awareness of
what's in front of you?

What challenges does that animal
control that's inside you?

Animals don't care; do you?

Your perception is smart and crafty.

Don't be fooled by what's around you. Δ

From a Rainbow

by Mitch Swienton

From a Rainbow

I watch the Seven Spectral Rays

fly across the Astral Plane

as she walks to the swingset

and looks at the slide

and ice cream drips down her

4 year old hand...

A squirrel runs by

She smiles outside...

I see her send her eye smile

to the rainbow above... >

then watch as she picks up
a blossom...
white and golden and pink inside...
and holds it a mile away
from her eyes.
Her arms outstretch as
she smiles again
and...
slowly says
Look, Mama..."Love"... Δ

Time's Thief

by Mitch Swienton

Night and Day and Day and night
Light and dark and dark and light
When they become one and blend into
forever
The crime of time (tyme) lasts for Never.
For tyme is cold
and my excuses old.
So is my empty freedom's space --
lost, alone and out of place;
in a world of concrete, steel
and arrested tyme.
Me, the deserter of my prime --
entrenched in failure of tyme long gone
deceiving myself and lying about where I belong.
For I long to see tyme's face
and take her hand
and Never lose sight of her again. >

Perish the days I let slip away
from the hearts of family bent;
Spent as a fool and cruel to those
 whose love disappeared and left.
Plaguing my mind and inflicting my soul
 to the stained and lost time's toll.

Only a shade who took my light
out of the days;
and brought cold to my soul's night.
Sickening the sleep
where loneliness and grief creep
stealing the rest and peace
stolen by this thief...

 "Tyme."

As day turns to darkness and
light simmers and dims,
I spend my hopes in tyme's
 eternal cage...
locked up in the prisons of
 my mind,
lost to my family, nature and
 love's line...
Cast in shadow because of my crime.
Chemicals, drugs, loneliness and
 then, Hope.
Time is a thief and I
 long to hold her hand
while I live in the social
 outcasts' land --
Jail and prison and lost Times. >

I stand

Alone and lonely, forgotten...lost...Awen,
Remember me forever -- for I am Time. Δ

I Hate

by Mitch Swienton

Time buries time
as Rage buries Love.
Anger and pain and the coldness of Life explained
at birth with the cold slap of a hand
on our small, innocent back.

Time buries time
and love buries pain.
Anger turns to rage as the Go Kart of Life
Moves slowly through time and decides to muddy
our soul.

The skies reflect darkness better than light.
Darkness and stars are easier to see than
rainbows that shine.
Strife runs fallow of love's shallow gain.
Quietly, I stand in the endless turmoil of
spiritual pain.
Rain and the pollution of society disdain and entwine
my essence.
The long-lost love of Nature and Natural Raine
brings --- Anger.
I hate you --- Anger, Pain, Hopelessness, Disdain
I hate you from the darkness of my Essence.... Δ

Happy Thanksgiving (Being Grateful in Confinement)

By Juan Jose Carmona Torres

Spending time in jail
is a real eye opener
especially during the
Holidays.

I keep busy, mostly by
sitting my ass in
front of the television.

Abundance seems the norm
as commercials boast
of gadgets, gizmos,
toys and fashion
to enrich my life.

These images of families
or individuals giving off
a grandiose sense
of enjoyment are deceptive.

A false sense of reality.

Will these items bring true
happiness or satisfy my
appetite to consume?

Maybe.

Maybe not.

The portrayal of smiling
happy faces in these
fairy tale ads >

remind me of
my true wealth.
My family.
The falsehood within
the advertisements brings
clarity to my real world.
As I waste away
imprisoned, a sense
of gratitude fills my
heart and soul.
I am thankful
and grateful
for all of
Life's lessons.
Jail isn't so bad
after all. Δ

Untitled

By Kylan Moreland

When I'm asked how I started writing
I tell them it's a passion to tell a tale.
Pen marks the white paper and holds
Meaning only to be desired by
The reader as they hungrily eat each page
Memorizing each part of each story. I write
For that reader who finds my imagination tasty,
And keeps turning, appetites swelling as
The story flips on. Δ

Two

By Doug Cheesman

i

Gorilla biscuits

Silk shirt fix it

Then a mustache ride

Safe at home inside

ii

Steel bells ring.

The dog, he sings.

My path is set.

Party over yet? Δ

The Rules

By Bennett Healy

What are the rules?

No rules! my spirit screams! At least

Until you think on it, a bit --

Some rules...

There's no instruction book

For you, for me,

When we're born. I don't remember there being any, when

They unwrapped me...

At first, it's their rules --

Our parents, our guardians. >

You'll remember
The very first rule -- oh! you forgot?
"You" can't leave the crib!
"Their" rule!
What, you don't remember the bars?
And how far down there "they" put you
You can't climb out!
Yep, their rule...

Life just gets messier, in a hurry,
As you get older, and a bit bolder,
A whole lotta rules on top of more
Rules...

It always seems the latest rule
Always follows the newest things...
As you get old, you know the rules,
That's why all the kids tell you you're no fun!
I guess it's just a rule! Δ

You Are Appreciated

By Bennett Healy

Every time that I sneak a peek
At the window during the day
You are appreciated.

Every time I step outside
For the mail, for water needs,
To meet a visitor...
You are appreciated. >

For all the times I needed
You to shine, you did!
You are appreciated.

For all times when the water
Was a mite cold, or the day windy,
You warmed me...

You are appreciated. Δ

Mavericks *

By Bennett Healy

A well-chosen name
For a local beach
Known the world over --

When I was a kid
"It" was an urban legend

full of Mystic and Forbidden
(you know, the good kind)
of a hidden, nudie
beach! Ah, now that I have
everyone back from their
daydream, I was speaking/writing
of Mavericks of my youth. >

Then it was still an open
beach, meaning those in
authority hadn't closed it to public access
as it is quite dangerous, and for good measure.
The large waves are known the world over
by progressive surfers, savvy and energetic dolphins,
and the ever-present photo shutterbugs.

Mavericks waves are a
"thing" all their own
and when they crash,
thunderously!

As a youth prone to peer pressure,
I was goaded one day to follow my friends
on a dare to ride a Mavericks towering wave.

At first there was no time for fear,
just the rush of finding your way among the cliffs
to the spot where we all dropped into the surf
and made our way out to the sea
to get where others were lined up,
"man card" in hand - where you commit
to carving your board into the face of a wave
the size of a three-story office building!
Then it happens.
You're riding down the face of a legend,
losing fear, filled with awe. >

Mother Nature at its finest,
you can hardly believe it's nearly over
as you glide back to the top
and over, safely back with my friends.
My first day at Mavericks. Δ

Why I Hate the Hot Sun

By Bennett Healy

Most love a warm sunny day!
Me, I like warm, and I surely
Love the sun...
It's just I don't fancy HOT.
You know, the burning kind,
The no-wind kind of day
Where the broiling sun relentlessly beats
Upon your skin.
All along, you know you're reddening!
I didn't wear the right stuff for this kind of day.
No SPF anything.
Just you and hot, blistering sun,
Beating down on you.

I often wonder what they did,
100 years ago or so,
No sunglasses, fancy hats,
Or thin thin thin clothing materials
No water bottles or flip flops, seemingly! Δ

At My Best

By Bennett Healy

I feel as alive as I can
At my best.
I always think of my parents
At my best
I always smile
At my best
I want everyone I love
To be with me
At my best
I surely hope I take a great picture! Δ

August Morning Saturdays!

By Bennett Healy

First up! Or so I thought.
Mom already out in the gardens
Breakfast laid aplenty.
Hurrying as always
To get to my area of gardening chores.
I can't leave to my girlfriend's
Until my lot is finished.

Next I hear my dad
Out on the first lawn, mower breaking
The August morning bird menagerie
And reminding me work
Double quick. >

Lastly, my brother is seen
Coffee still at hand
But I know from experience
He'll pass me by, pile by pile
To have his garden area done
Before me!

As soon as it's noon
All shall be done and I'll be away
With my girlfriend and a garden
cleaned!. Δ

Why Am I Here?

By Bennett Healy

Because it interests me...
--- That is what I've always said!
--- It still holds true - though no one
I've ever met has truly
Understood.

At first, something to do with "time" itself... "Freedom" "Time" is
always
Constricted, fleeting, short, experiential, limited, demanding,
valuable, short-lived,
Abrupt, "I'll give you five minutes!" "You have one minute left!"
On restricted time, rare moments in time, not often, seldom,
infrequent, a bit of time,
The "freedom kind" is always ticking, and everyone is quite aware.
You cannot take up one's time, as you can in here... >

Those of little patience are a constant thorn of mine, but if I deem
Important - even they will make the time, after I cast an arrow
making it so...

I would so wish to share with my father, if I could,
What I have done, many times over, with fractions of time,
Micro-seconds of time. Some have said, close to me,
That I live in those tiny moments of time.

My father would be amazed at what I have done,
Continue to do, in the half- and quarter-seconds
Of time. Only here can I still proclaim "Because it interests me..."

It's all a matter of time, truly! Δ

America

By Bennett Healy

Once a land so freeeeee
Ripe with fullness
Aplenty in all things!

Now, nothing is free.
They say you're free to
Move around but you'll
Soon trespass...

The water -- so pure
By any standard in days gone by, >

Was free to drink
A cup, a canteen, or bottle!

I bid you try that now.

In all the states before our rampant
Industrialization, the air
We breathe was the best it can be.
Now in all the land
The air is tainted, but at last check,
Is still FREE at least! Δ

Rattlesnake Pit

By Bennett Healy

It may be best, to rest,
in a rattlesnake den;
to think a moment
before your next move...

If one isn't careful
and is taken off guard
by a rattle made by
a "gardener," one could
be deceived into
striking, jumping, or
reacting, in any kind
of way...

Causing the "real
rattlesnake's" instinctive >

lunge, with fangs, mid-strike,
all because you didn't take a moment
to see what is "real,"
or what was merely being "reeled" in! Δ

The Power of Forgiveness

By Bennett Healy

The power of forgiveness
allows us to heal.

The power of forgiveness
gives rise to compassion.

The power of forgiveness
sets us free from the event!

The power of forgiveness
remains a gift to the forgiven
long after we've forgotten. Δ

Okay, I Rise

By Bennett Healy

I rise from sleep
anew.

I rise from sleep
ready to do...

I rise from sleep
fearing the sounds >

all around me...
I rise from sleep
waiting to continue
my very next move... Δ

Being Kind

By Bennett Healy

Being kind is a way of life
A way in which we all would
envision every one of our encounters with others,
be it man, woman, or child.

It's a gracious manner.

If you can be merciful, compassionate,
sympathetic, courteous, warmhearted,
humane, tender, good-hearted, pleasant,
forbearing, considerate, nice, thoughtful,
and magnanimous, then --

You'll receive grace...
the best of kindness...
the humane in humanism...
a way of being
is to be as kind as you can! Δ

What Is Broken

By Bennett Healy

The first thing I do
when I come back home
is to see what is broken.

The vase by the door.
The lace in my left shoe.
The lowest magnet on the fridge.
the cord on the front window blind.

And it's only noon!
When I return again, I
find a chewed up sock,
a torn newspaper,
a broken rabbit ear...

In the evening, it is the worst!

The chair by the fire has
a broken leg...
a new small crack at the bottom of the door;
and a pillow has a smallish leak.

As you've guessed by now,
my dog, Sam, knows how to make
himself known, even when I am away! Δ

I Did - Didn't

By Bennett Healy

I did make a bike.

I did ride it.

I didn't make it up!

I did know the answer.

I did not give a clue.

I didn't say it aloud!

I did play the game.

I did win the championship.

I didn't take it seriously!

I did somewhere make a difference.

I did sometimes do foolish things.

I didn't forget!

I did make a promise.

I didn't want to break it.

I didn't know for sure if I could keep it.

I did know the stakes.

I didn't break it!

I did see someone was in need.

I did go ahead and get it.

I didn't ever let on it was me.

I did have a crush.

I did get to know her, well...

I didn't tell her.

I did lose my nerve! Δ

The Thing Is...

By Bennett Healy

To have a wonderful life,
always strive to be happy,
No matter what life may dish out.
Yes, there are these times
where one must conform to
the mood of the moment...

 a cemetery visit
 hearing bad news
 a loved one passing
 the list goes on.

But one should, after reflection,
return to happiness - thinking of positive
things, guiding you back to a happier state.

No one likes a grouch!

No one wants to be a Debbie Downer.

You'll soon find out those around you
will seek your company out, rather than feel
a constant personal darkness.

Being happy warms your spirit, like a
cup of hot cocoa on a cold, snowy day.

Feeling happy allows for a satisfying
contentment inside...

a way to lead a Wonderful Life! Δ

Everybody's Dream

By Gabriel A. Urciaga

As I take a deep breath, my mind and heart clears,
I can see the waves as the sun hits the ocean. I feel
alive and amazed. I glance to my left at the birds
flying to the right. I smile for the shine to accept it's
a brighter day. I can smell the salty water as
tears tumble down my cheek, every thought of my mom.
My heart stops for a beat and I breathe again for her.
Every step in life doesn't have to be a risk, it can be a lesson;
and every lesson can be a brighter day. Mom, am I valuable
to you as my mind can relate, the shine of the light
arises in the sky. I can't deny what reality gave me
but I'll shine better than in the past. Capitola Beach
is everybody's dream. The way the salty water
hit my face and the sand between my toes, the smell of sea-
food rumbled my diet. As the night hit, smiles and laughter,
emotions from people with spirits in the ocean amazed my
heart. Zelda's on the Beach is where I reside
as a cook. I glance at the restaurant, put my mood up right.
As I walk a couple of feet, my mind hits different emotions.
It's everybody's dream. A delicious taste of wine,
cheese & crackers yummy. Capitola Beach, where it
shines day and night. As I feel a need to shed
a tear, I hold it back. Details on life, standards and
precious moments I'll never fall back. Strive for my sense
of Being and Condition. I was fragile once, realize I'm never
soft on the the regular. These words are as real
as it gets, humble and dignified.

Everybody's Dream!! Δ

I Cannot & Then I Can

By Richard Walsh

I cannot:

follow my old path.

I cannot:

waste my time talking
about and judging others.

I cannot:

take what doesn't belong
to me.

I cannot:

treat others badly
and expect good results.

I cannot:

dwell on the past and
go forward easy.

I cannot:

stay stagnant and waste
precious time.

Then I can:

push vices away with
no problems.

Then I can:

invest in knowledge which
pays greater interest. >

Then I can:
live life more comfortably.
Then I can.
It's so much easier than
what I cannot. Δ

Ocean *

By Richard Walsh

As I sit on a cliff by the ocean
Wonderment of the
Vast spanse of H₂O
Miles and miles of space
Void of objects along
The surface as far as my eyes
Can see.
No boats or pollution, huge
ripples, reflection of the
Sky above.
I relax on these cliffs
Called Steamers' Lane.
A feeling of peace
Surrounds me, I'm
Found in the serenity
In the silence of
The waves below me!
Not crashing against
The cliff below me!
It's as if the ocean
Feels the calming effect
Of itself upon

Me, I am one
With the vast chasm
Of water
I sit in front of!
I am humbled by the Ocean
In its peaceful serenity!

I Cry A Lie

By Zachary Morgenroth Roop

I go to the ocean to listen to the waves
come and go.

I try so hard to push tears back, but like a river
they flow and flow.

Something about the sound of the sea, it makes it so easy
to just let it all go.

After a while the tears slow down, and I begin
to see:

I'm not alone, I'm not the only one that has fears
of what could be. Δ

No Way Out

By Zachary Morgenroth Roop

No windows no doors no light a little bit of fright
What kind of room can this be?
No light but some days it's oh so bright.
No windows no doors how can we be free?
A little bit of fright but also knowing everything will be alright.
Once you know where you're at, you'll be fine.
I'm talking about being inside a human mind.
Inside your mind, you know you'll find
No Way Out. Δ

We Be Cool

By Zachary Morgenroth Roop

I say I'm cool
They say I'm a tool.
I say I rule
They say I'm a fool.
I say that's not cool.
They are quick to judge
my bald head like Elmer Fudge.
Oh wait, I messed up.
If I can start over, I got the stuff.
I meant to say "Elmer Fudd" --
Now wait a minute, this poem's a dud. Δ

Back From Crack

By Justin Marc

Anger, love, sorrow, and guilt, I'm so thankful to be alive and feel.
I was absent to my reality, that I wasn't the man I had been
raised to be - crack was the only thing that mattered to me.
I needed to surrender to my higher power.
I needed to understand what was happening to my brain,
with addiction so bad I couldn't maintain.
Drugs and work, life of a functional addict,
loss of everything I used to love. The food lost its flavor,
the music didn't inspire, I hid from my faith,
and worst of all
I was an absent father, son, brother, and friend.
I was so ashamed, I needed it to end.
I put in the work, I wanted to get back, I wanted
to be better than who I was on crack.
My prayers were answered and I want to give back.
I'm thankful for all those who helped me quit crack. Δ

Westside Local *

By Justin Marc

I've lived in Santa Cruz all my life.
I have to live in a place where I can escape from strife.
I believe Steamer's Lane is the most beautiful place on earth.
I could throw a Frisbee from my front door and reach the sand.
Beach side living can be quite grand.
I went to Marelo High School on West Cliff Drive
so close to Steamer's Lane, I didn't need to drive. >

We would cut class after lunch
ride until it was late.
Not only students, but teachers did, too.
I once got cut off from a wave I was on.
It was Principal Carey with a tan golden bronze.
Steamer's is the locale of the White Water Classic.
The best surfers in the world come.
The scene is quite manic.
The view of Municipal Wharf
with the Boardwalk behind,
a beautiful sunset
that would blow your mind.

We'd pick up our trash
because we cared about the beach we left behind
not just for us, but
for all the generations
who will love and live for the grind.

The place God cut out of the world,
a place forever in my mind. Δ

From Rountree, a Poet is Born

By Justin Marc

Glory be! it's finally that time, I paid my debt
for a moronic crime. After years of hard work on myself
I thank God for my lessons and my health.
I've learned it's about character and not about wealth.
I've also made a lifelong friend that I will cherish
til my end, I never thought poetry would become >

that friend, but through poetry I've learned to mend.
They say the Lord uses anyone or anything to show His love.
I got through remorse, and that was painful, of course!
I wrote it down, and got it out, it made me cry and even shout.
Later I dealt with grief, loss of my mentors, people I loved,
writing about it gave me relief, a way to say goodbye.
And once again it made me cry.
Poetry is also a way to vent, I write about unfairness
and for me it's time well-spent.
My poetry can inform or make you laugh.
I wrote some tongue twisters, just to see if I could,
and as it turns out, they were pretty good!
Soon I'll return to freedom,
and it's important for me to say,
"I thank you spoken word!" My love for you will stay. Δ

(I dedicate this poem to the Power in Poetry class, its instructors,
and all that inspired me to write!)

Foods of the Fair

By Justin Marc

Pretzels, cotton candy, eggroll on a stick,
I've waited all month to make this list.
It's that time of the year, everyone, let's meet at the Santa Cruz
County Fair.
Some go for the livestock, some for the rides, some for the blue
ribbon prize.
Some go just to play games, and some go just to meet dames.
Myself, I go for things I can't find on my shelf, >

it tastes delicious, but not good for my health.
Fair food, every dish a treat:
last year, funnel cake was my favorite thing to eat.
I had three corn-on-the-cobs, and for apples I would bob,
a chance to break from the summer heat,
and on the Ferris wheel I kissed my sweet.
Deep fried alligator and twinkies!
I had my face painted like a clown,
then a bread bowl of chowder I put down.
By the end of the day, I must've gained twenty pounds.
In an alien-shaped cup, I washed the food down
with raspberry lemonade, then I sat in the shade
to watch the pygmy parade.
I missed the expo of crafts and art,
when I come back tomorrow, that's where I'll start.
I'll come back early now I know where to park.
As the sun goes down, the fair takes on a whole new appeal,
the sounds of emotions make my heart feel.
Dinner tacos, I'll take four,
'cause I like to pig out, and for dessert
a chocolate-covered banana, no doubt!
It's getting to be that time,
for the concert, I better get in line.
I danced til I was ready to drop, but one more snack --
I just couldn't stop:
steamy, salted, dry-roasted peanuts for the ride home.
What a great night!
Leaving brings sorrow, so I'll get up early
and start over tomorrow. Δ

On Zoom, Teacher Time

By Justin Marc

Oh thank heavens, as I stare at two lemons,
I wish I could pitch like Roger Clemens (but he used juice
with shots in his caboose, an enhancement
I don't want to use). >
I look and see sunflowers three, they're beautiful to see,
and remind me of Aunt Bonnie.
Every class I do stare at your portrait of a chair,
and I wish I was there.
To be black and white, I think out of sight,
all I see is the day, but not the night.
I see your green and blue glass, too --
what would we do without poetry and you!
I left alone the picture of the two,
because that could be
too personal to you. Δ

It's A Matter of Life Or Death

By Justin Marc

The decisions I make each day I wake,
it's a matter of life or death.
It's up to me, who I'm going to be,
it's a matter of life or death.
The choice is mine whether to rise and shine,
it's a matter of life or death.
Crack, booze, and meth -- if I choose these, I choose death.
Love, laughter, family, and Christ -- if I choose these, then I choose
life. >

My decision is clear, no more turmoil, no more fear,
no more letting the devil get near.

I don't wanna die, and make my loved ones cry.

It's a matter of life or death.

Making life, bringing life, living in the light,
no more strife, my goal is eternal life.

It's a matter of life or death.

It's a matter of life or death! Δ

The Top of the Mountain

By Justin Marc

The view from the top of the mountain is wonderful
because you can see all the steps it took
to get you there.

the mountain is the challenge, it's a journey:
you stumble, and have set-backs, but you persevere
and keep moving forward.

This is true in many things in life,
the higher you go
the thinner the air
the more risk of falling further.

So take one step at a time,
don't go too far ahead of yourself
or step where you shouldn't.

Life can be a trip to the top of the mountain,
the journey is the lesson -- and remember:
there is always another mountain to conquer,
but focus on the one you're on.

Have a good climb! Δ

To Be Alive

By Justin Marc

What it's like to run like a cat.

What it's like to be obesely fat.

What it's like to have the world at your sleeve.

What it's like to cry on your knees.

What it's like to take a life.

What it's like to to live without strife.

What it's like to be frozen in fear.

What it's like to to know you are here.

What it's like to be completely lost.

What it's like to be the boss.

What it's like to bury your dad.

What it's like to no longer be mad.

What it's like to be losing your health.

What it's like achieving your wealth.

What it's like to sink or swim.

What it's like to lose or win.

What it's like to be alive. What it's like to be alive. Δ

Brain Power

By Justin Marc

Why is the brain use so incomplete?

Is it because of this we can't compete?

Over and over, we're doomed to repeat.

If we used 20% more,

what miracles would we have in store?

Science, art, math and reading, we should >

spend more time learning, and less time breeding.
There must be a good reason why such a small percent is used,
I'm baffled, I'm stumped, I'm very confused.
It may be a blessing, we're not ready,
look what we've done to this Earth.
Man has been destructive since the very first birth.
I think after all it's for our planet's best --
global warming, the ozone layer, we should be in this mess! Δ

I'm Free Now

By Justin Marc

Freedom to me means sobriety.
I did have the right to choose at first,
then I was ensnared, a slave, cursed.
I lost my mind and didn't realize I gave it away.
I lost years and everything I owned.
I did this to me, not you, or they. Damn!
Crack, I feel the whip crack -- I'm scared,
my mind was bent, I willed it back.
It took several years, a million dollars and >
a million tears.
I did it to myself, I'm no longer a victim,
I found my self-worth.
I'm free, I'm back, no longer perverse. Δ

A Full Meal

By Justin Marc

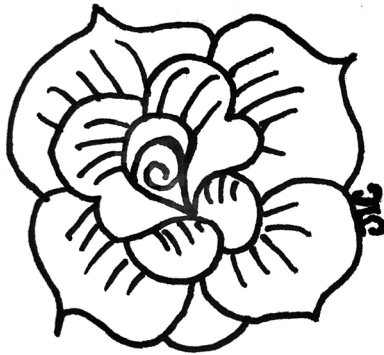
Today I will take Grace with my breakfast.

I'll snack on my Joyful Memories.

At lunch, I'll eat a big Love sandwich,
and wash it down with Hope.

I look forward to my main meal, Faith.

I've been saving Serenity for my midnight snack. △



Hello, It's Me!

By Crystal Ross

I've been so confused...

uncertain, unclear

My composure disturbed,

bewildered, disoriented, perplexed

puzzled, embarrassed, flustered

disordered, mixed-up

When have I had the time to look up!

drugging & drinking, stupefied, faded

straight, fucked-up, intoxicated

impaired, inebriated, soak sot soused

Up - down, looking around

unsteady, lurching, shocked sober

incarcerated, not drunk, upright disposition

clear-headed, dry, straight, gravity

Still having triggers and cravings!

intentness, seriousness, imprisonment,

confinement, addiction, recovery,

thoughts, feelings, cognitive distortions

Not everyone will understand your journey...

experimental techniques, twisted thinking,

all-or-nothing, overgeneralization,

personalization, blame guilt shame

Thoughts are precious! Δ

Thank you to the poets who made this book. And thanks to those who attended and participated in class, but whose work does not appear. Please know that you were heard and appreciated

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Copies of this and other anthologies are available at
poetryinthejails.org

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