

**2011 Roger M. Jones Poetry Contest
Honorable Mention: Catherine Fisher**

Anti-Fire

Goddess of Love, j'accuse! I know you take
Many souls and leave fire in your wake.
You feed poor icy people straight to hell.
You doubt that I could know you quite so well?
I've seen it done; I've had it done to me!
While tangled in your thorns I've watched it be
A game. You think of it as a project,
For mortals will attach to any object
Of desire, as long as it remains.
But ah, Dear Goddess! Herein lies the game:
Those lovely mortals, so icy and cold,
You steal them and teach them of things untold.
You melt them through and through, right to the core
(Since otherwise, for you it'd be a bore)
And watch them try to deal with heat and flame,
Equivalent to seeing them writhe in pain,
For ice does not know fire, nor fire ice.
And so, they are thus trapped in such a vice;
A place in Hell where no one ever wins,
Where everyone is forced to face their sins
Before their judgement day. How cruel a fate!
I cannot leave this issue for debate.
For Aphrodite, you've caused me such grief!
I've felt things far beyond any belief,
But worst of all, I've come to see you there,
Laughing and watching with a mocking stare.
And now I see the fire 'round my soul.
To see the flames that hurt and burn me so
Is quite unsettling. 'T was from the start!
And countless times you've tried to strike my heart.
I'm not so proud; I'll admit, you've succeeded.
Why? Because you knew just what I needed.
I needed Love, the power you control!
Something to let my cold demeanor go.
But now I know the truth; it's not delight
That causes you to act but thoughts of spite!
There's something in my chill and innocence
That makes you shake and quake in mortal skin.
My gentle hair and skin and mouth and eyes
All seem to you like sinful little lies,
And from familiar itch you burn the "sins".
Quickly! Before I freeze you from within.
Unfortunately, few mortals think this way.

They'd rather be directed to the fray
Where blood and sweat and tears find some purchase
In things that never turn out to be worth it.
Oh, how you laugh! And smile at us and scorn
When before you, tired and very worn,
We come to you and beg you for a drink
Of ice and dark so we can sit and think
and recollect our thoughts. But you deny,
You kick us back, ignore us when we cry.
Frost says the world will end in ice or fire.
I think he's wrong; it will end in desire
For things we cannot have; in short for Love.
And so I ask for help from far above:
Dear Guardians, shield me with strong wings from flames
That in myself I can't alone contain,
And lend me help and safety, head to toe,
For I'd rather be cold and dark alone.

Chronophobia

Time is an enemy, says th' argument.
Forgive me, but I have to disagree.
While it's unfortunate, Time idly spent,
It's not Time's fault; Time's innocent, you see.
True, Time carves and cuts away at faces,
Shapes and sculpt for sights painful and pretty,
Time changes things, people, even places.
And yet, Time does this all unconsciously.
The innocent bystander also paints
A picture of happiness, love, and joys.
Such is most of Time's work: like that of saints,
Yet we see only that which Time destroys.
Perhaps if eyes are opened carefully,
We can view what Time meant for us to see.

Melancholy

** Inspired by John Keats' Ode on Melancholy **

By your encouragement I am persuaded
Not to forget my sorrows, and, unaided,
To learn to cope with them, so that instead
Of running wild and free around my head,
I can harvest from them peace of mind.
Yet, to me your reasons are undefined.
Are death and forgetfulness remedies?
Or are they symptoms of Melancholy?
So, you argue that Joy needs some sadness
And the reverse or neither should exist.
It seems to me to be a careful balance,
Since more to one could quickly cause conflict.
Take for example the flowers and clouds:
When clouds are weeping, flowers are sustained.
But when the rain causes too gray a shroud,
A drooping flower is all that remains.
I know that Joy does not take long to die,
So I will go to Melancholy's shrine
To pray to Her, and ask Her just one thing:
While I enjoy all that Delight will bring,
I ask that She stay hidden in my mind
Until Joy and Beauty are left behind.

Nothing

I'm sitting here, trying to write about nothing.
Unfortunately, most things end up meaning something.
But why guess? Why interpret?
To me, the author, it hardly seems worth it
To sit here and stare at this page to glean
An idea of what I could possibly mean.
Should anyone think to ask me someday,
I'll look at them kindly and smile and I'll say:
"I simply meant nothing. Now, please, go away."

At Night

Night after night, I'm afraid to sleep
Because of the thoughts that crawl and creep
Across my mind when I'm awake,
And do not leave until the break
Of day when darkness disappears,
And light comes in and calms my fears.
But until then I lie awake
With just my sanity at stake.