

Poetry is the
rhythmical
creation of
beauty in words.
-Edgar Allan Poe



VESSEL - First Place Open

By Shelley Stocken

This birth-beaten body is mine.
These walk-weary bones and these stockingbag stones.
This inching, unflinching decline.
These blar-bordered eyes and this puckered disguise.
This creaking contortion of dust.
These pin-pestered nerves and these destitute curves.
This spot-stippled, care-furrowed crust.
These grease-battered clots and these gristle-bound knots.
This birth-beaten body is mine.

This scar-spattered soul is at peace.
Each entry of grief on each pain-peppered leaf,
Each splendid, rage-rendered release,
Each flame-frosted cake and each paper-plate wake,
Each fizzing ignition of bliss,
Each love-lousy ode and each moral bestowed,
Each gamble, each gut punch, each kiss,
Each appetite stirred and each page-guzzled word,
This scar-spattered soul is at peace.



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RAINBOW BUDDAH - Second Place Open

By Catherine Dunk

Peace, *pax*, *la paix*

It's an absence—
a gap

that space
without a breath

that calm
outside the act

It's a mother
suckling her child
a stirring deep
subtle, hidden

And it's all of us, together—
community
nonbinary

It's in the continuum;
and it's by degree

It's who we are
beneath, or who

we *were*
and long
to be again



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NIGHTWATCH - Third Place Open

By Gail Beard

Night flows softly
Behind the eyes
of sleepers
Like billowing silk
A kaleidoscope of colours

I sit beside my mother
Her frail hand in mine.
For some,
the night holds fears
of things to come

I whisper to her closed eyes
Unseeing, but not unknowing
What images appear?
Of a life well-lived? Well-loved?
Oh please let that be so

You are going to a beautiful place
I say
To a face that loses all the years
As the night
Slips silently away

We mark the hours
A kiss, caress
To let her know
As she wanders those last dark corridors
That she is not alone

Time to reflect
In those quiet times
Of things we did
And those we loved.
And will I soon be here?
To roam those same dark places
Of the soul

As dawn seeps through open doors
The breathing slows
Enough to say
Let go my love
Let go

As with one great sighing breath
She passes into realms
Of everlasting peace



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Full Moon over Avoca Beach - Highly Commended Open By Brian Purcell

You there,
moon
fixed bulb
hovering
impassively
above the waves
whitening my feet

I stretch
my arms out
in the growing
dark
you wax
and fill them
with your glow

bright face
yet I know
those dry seas
sweeping your surface
are scarred
pock-marked by meteors
that will never wash away

no matter
how far
I stretch out
my arms
you stay on your path
coming
no closer

stay here
one hour longer
then go
on your way
and vanish
in the light
of an ordinary day



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