HOMERIC HYMN

I sing of the Earth, the eternal soil, the womb and breast of all creatures. You help and let grow all Things until they find their own end.

I sing of the Earth who gives the ground for all to walk, the Earth who gives and takes life, the Earth who pleases those whose flowers bloom. You are our home where we create as you create; universe in universe: sons who will run with the urge of their body's power of creation, daughters who will dance upon your ever-growing fields. They will dance around their ever-growing fields within.

I sing of the Earth who is Mother of all. Goodbye and thank you for this chance to sing this song, you and this will never be forgotten.

Oliver Ray
Jason comes in before we have finished. He is speckled with burnt flecks, soaking wet. We don't scold him, even when he goes to my jumps on my bed. My mother offers me a piece of pineapple, and I eat it, but I don't like the fruit; it's too sweet. I clear the table and go back to the kitchen to wash the juice from my mother's dish.

Fiona Russell
I. Our dog is gone again this morning. My mother is walking through the sugarcane fields, calling him, but he won't come home for a while. She comes back to the car, where I am waiting. We drive northeast, not to look for Jason, but to buy food for dinner from the market in Guaynabo. I think about the last time we went, when a man in burlap-patched clothes bit a chunk from a slab of raw meat hanging in the back of another man's truck, and ran away, chewing hard on the sinewy lump. I try to imagine how hungry he must be.

II. They are burning the sugarcane fields today. I see the little black flecks bouncing off the windscreen, even before I can smell the burning leaves. As we drove closer to home, the wind gets stronger; soon clouds will hide the day and it will rain. We go past our house, straight to the fields to look for Jason, trying not to think of how quickly the flames move. My mother gets out and shouts his name, but her voice is blown away in the wind. A streak of smoky flames shoot up suddenly beside her, and she yanks her skirt away from it, backing away from the field towards the car, still calling for Jason. As she climbs into the car, something sharper than pain hits my stomach. I wonder: is this hunger?

III. We have finished dinner, and I am cutting the pineapple for my mother to eat for dessert. It's raining; Jason has not come home. I promise myself to take perfect care of him if he comes back; my stomach still hurts. Even after dinner, I give my mother the pineapple, and fix a dish of ice cream for myself. We haven't said a word since we left the city.
RAIN

I wish they would lock;
Our ribs rubbing
through translucent skin.

I might fold my breasts back,
Let you bleed into me;
Your blood press through.

Like the pound of the pour
outside this this hotel room,
I listen, And I know.
The watery drum sound of your heart.

Brit Washburn
28 DAY POEM

My alarm clock screams;
A most timely banshee.
Seven o'clock.
I grin,
Because I do not have chronic halitosis,
And the sun peeks through the curtains;
A peach en flambe,
I reach for the packet of pills on the shelf,
'O Joyous morn'
And 28th day,
Down with ginseng;
That fertile friend
With this pill,
I will not wed.
O Virgin Mary,
and gallant gynecologist —
Let infertility reign
In my wombplace,
Now.

Anna Fidler
THE TRAVELS OF A PROPHET AND HIS LOVER

I come upon your body on the streets of Tel Aviv, your cheekbones are tilted towards the stars. Your body carries nothing it does not need. Your flesh encloses necessity only. I reach out my hand and help you up. We move forward, departing on a long walk. We walk to the beach speaking of freedom and giving up everything we have so we can walk forever.

The sun sets gold in Jerusalem, reflecting the holy walls and arched mosques. We sit hand in hand in the corner where we built a tent in the Arab quarter, the roof of a decaying youth hostel. PLO flags flap in the wind like the kites of march, as do the cries of the Muslims' Qu'ran. And you humming your sweet religious Reggae prayers.

Your dreadlocked glory, eyes blue like the scarabs I wear around my neck. Your Cockney accent flows from your tongue into my arms. And I hold your tender words smelling of jasmine and sandalwood as if I am feeding a baby. Your chest as a cradle, warm, soft, delicate skin like the dawn and ribs reaching all the way to Cairo.

THE KISS

Yesterday, I saw a man grab a woman in the middle of the street. He slung his arm around her shoulder, pulled her to his side, and kissed her for about fifteen seconds. He didn't stop traffic; only me. He was a good-looking man, tall and stylish with slicked black hair. Jesus Christ, why not me? He left the woman standing there in the street. In pursuit of a good hard kiss, I decided to follow him. I inched my way in front of him a few times, allowed him a good view, brushed against his coat, stepped on his heel — nothing. I even tugged at his sleeve and walked backwards in front of him, waiting for the attack. After about ten blocks, he walked into some office building. "Why didn't he kiss ME?" I screamed at the doorman. "I need to be kissed by that man!" I stomped away muttering, "Bastard." About two blocks down, I grabbed the first beautiful man I saw and planted one right on his sticky lips. I strutted away and left him standing there in the street.

I began to run through the city, dodging cars in my way until I reached the Seaport. I walked to the end of a dock, the brisk air stinging my lungs as I panted. I could feel my heart pumping fast and stared out into the grey sky, the cold wind whipping through my clothes. I tore off my coat, laid on the dock and watched the gulls circling slowly.

Hilary Heard
AFTER CRASHING MY CAR INTO ST. JOHN'S LAKE I ATTEMPT TO
SWIM BACK TOWARD MY LIFE

If you could see how the light filters and wavers down
toward the bottom, the top a shifting floating piece of fractured glass...
How silly I feel slipping down, my tie floating separate.
at bottom a slippery watersnake, balancing between limpness and a taut pull.

Down here it is dark. And cold. Time rolls by
or doesn't. I dream I see a woman, my wife, only prettier
swimming around in dark vertical circles, reminding me
of the massages she used to give, easing the tension of my body.

The peace here is deafening. When I open my eyes I am floating, still,
limbs limp as jelly. Dark long fish dart close by, chasing after specks
of plant. Weeds wander everywhere, illuminated by yellow light. The breath,
the last breath I took now sits comfortably
like a large bubble in my stomach, knowing.
I start floating up, my legs crossing under me.
The fish seem to form a spiral around me.
I stare up. Light is gathering everywhere,
and the top, closer shimmers in its breadth. I break
the surface and breathe in and out, in and out, buoyant now
for exhaling all the extra weight
I've been carrying back into dreams.

Mark Rosenberg

And with you,
like Kayyam
brown of the desert
Earth.
Sometimes when I look at you,
I feel nothing,
no longing or desire,
no god or worship,
no far off distant hope, dream,
or fantasy.
Then I know it is real.
Real, true,
ot red of a rose
but brown of the earth.
And you to color my love,
Earth.

Bedouin tents,
Cardamom flavored coffee. (sweet, although bitter
before you know just what it is you are doing.)
Sand surrounding my sandals,
in the steps of Jesus on the way to Nazareth.
The sun shines golden in your hair.

Endless hour walking in the desert,
sacred holy water from my canteen.
Now it is boiling between our parched lips.
You do not mind.
Strange,
how we did not see
the water engulfing our ankles
as we waded last week,
in the Jordan River
on slippery rocks.

Vast lands of the Earth.
Sometimes sand,
cotton fields, decaying walls of King David's palace
or bronze tattooed flesh.
Waking up to the sun that hurts my back,
more than this bag I've been carrying
for over a month now.
I laugh at the irony of us begging
on the streets for food with a friend named Ambrosia
Who,

drawing portraits of fragile featured tourists
wanting to cut themselves open
and bleed into our world.

We walk to the Sheraton Plaza,

where,

American teen tourist groups sleep restlessly
like a riddle in the back of my mind.

Stealing the bowl of mints from the lobby,

we walk back to our tent

greeted as if we bore the food of gods.

We walk past children crying,
past boys younger than you carrying machine guns,
old men chewing Bazooka gum,
Falafel stands,
stray kittens,
crowds sweat and wandering eyes,

We walk past camels and nomads.

We walk past Dahab and Sharm-el-Shiek,
we walk by the Nile.

We walk to the pyramids,

We walk to the base of the Sphinx
And look to the great oracle's eyes.

Cindy Stein

BUYING A PACK

"A pack of Marlboro Reds, please."
The cashier straightens her thick, tinted glasses. "Are you eighteen?"

Paul shifts his weight to the other foot.

"It's store policy to check I.D." she says.

He slides his wallet onto the counter, wishes it wasn't the velcroed kind. It is three years old, and still opens with the sound of ripping paper. There is a driver's permit and someone's phone number, and he fingers past them to a school I.D.

His brother had given it to him as a gag gift. "Go pick up older women with that. It gives you my adult status." A trip to Kinko's and a pair of scissors made that a fact.

The cashier takes it between her index finger and thumb, rubbing the plastic against her skin. "Did this go through the wash or something?"

He sees she is smiling. Maybe she is on his side. "Something like that." He sweats, hoping she'll hurry up and help him or tell him off, but the look on her face, the overhanging lip and exaggerated look at his identification makes him nervous. He speaks, "The laminating machine wasn't working. At school, that is. Not well working."

She rings up the total. "One sixty-eight, please."

"One sixty-eight?" He makes eye contact now, searching.

"One sixty-eight." He makes eye contact now, searching.

"Yes, One sixty-eight." Nothing.

He pulls two dollar bills from his wallet, takes his bag and change. "Have a nice day," she says, following his gaze as he back out the door. Outside, he tears open the pack, lights up, and inhales deeply. The summer sun is bright on his face, and he jingles his car keys while he realizes she kept his I.D. back in the store.

Marc Olender
III.

At night, she washes his army uniform in the kitchen sink, drapes it over the balcony to dry, and sings him Spanish lullabies in English as she lays her postcards from home on the cardboard table near the couch. The beaches of Lake Michigan, the absence of shark nets, the snow, the handwriting of her sister.

IV.

He tells her wants to name their first child Ana Maria after a beautiful woman he met at the base, she curls into a corner of the bathroom they share with roaches and cries more tears. He does not know how much she hates Panama, the stench of the people, the heat like Hell, and the solitude of their apartment at noon when the drapes are drawn, and she can't hear the waves, or the snow brushing against the windows in Michigan.

Jessica Belle Smith
How did this happen after Trotsky and Stalin and Mayakovsky and Marx? The food is from Finland, their hard currency, markkaa, and the blueprints of their yellow arches all stenciled from New York. Joint-venture, our word, then their word, a new word for this.

But I am told that the people in Finland don’t lick out the crumbs from each shell and then take it home to display. They eat slow here, leave some over, and let the cold meat chill more.

One might think Headquarters could dig tunnels connecting each McDonalds underground, and send inspectors in black suits traveling to surface everywhere and say that it all is the same.

But in Moscow the air hatchets sorrow and Lenin still crawls up the walls to peer down into the open registers as his rubles shrink to the bells of St. Basil’s, until they are nothing and the nails in his tomb sprout tiny caps of silver arches and the sun shines just long enough, hard enough to see them glitter in that new light that most call a miracle through dark, old clouds.  

John Rosenberg

I.

Panama City was hot when he took her to the shark nets, the tide swelling, the waves growing stronger, and the breeze bringing only the scent of ocean the city’s stench miles behind them. She waded in to her knees, sea salt stinging the nicks on her calves her body stiffening as a whitecap crashed over her shoulders, pulling her bikini top to her hips, barring her breasts, the nipples like small berries, and the white skin around them burned pink by the sun. She lay on the sand with no towel, the shells beneath her branding her chest with their ridges.

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My Mother and Father in Panama, 1972

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her body stiffening as a whitecap crashed
over her shoulders,
putting her bikini top to her hips,
barring her breasts, the nipples like small berries,
and the white skin around them
burned pink by the sun.
She lay on the sand with no towel,
the shells beneath her branding her chest
with their ridges.

later he brushes the beach from her breastbone,
kisses the wrinkled fingers of her right hand,
and braids sunlight into her hair.
She pulls the strands apart, blowing wild, and lets the sun burn the filth of the country from her skin.

II.

From the sidewalk below the window of their apartment,
Panamanian men raise their middle fingers like guns,
and aim at her, sitting sunburned on the sill,
tending her wilting ferns from home.
She doesn’t move when they grab the bulge beneath their pants,
purse Bacardi lips and whistle,
just plucks dead leaves from her ferns,
drops their brittle bodies out the window, and waters her plants with tears.
Disappearing, she turns up Lee Michaels on the Sony,
drowning the whines and whistles from below.
She writes letters home,
"The sun is hot," she scribbles, touching the water blisters on her breast,
"we went to the shark nets,"
"men spit on us in the streets."
How did this happen after Trotsky and Stalin and Mayakovsky and Marx? The food is from Finland, their hard currency, markkaa, and the blue-prints of their yellow arches all stenciled from New York. Joint-venture, our word, then their word, a new word for this.

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THE TRAVELS OF A PROPHET AND HIS LOVER

I come upon your body on the streets of Tel Aviv,
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Your body carries nothing it does not need.
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I reach out my hand and help you up.
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We walk to the beach
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And you
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Your Cockney accent flows from your tongue
into my arms.
And I hold your tender words smelling of jasmine and sandalwood
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Your chest as a cradle,
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THE KISS

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circling slowly.

Hilary Heard
28 DAY POEM

My alarm clock screams;
A most timely banshee.
Seven o'clock.
I grin,
Because I do not have chronic halitosis,
And the sun peeks through the curtains;
A peach en flambe,
I reach for the packet of pills on the shelf.
'O Joyous morn'
And 28th day,
Down with ginseng;
That fertile friend
With this pill,
I will not wed.
O Virgin Mary,
and gallant gynecologist -
Let infertility reign
In my womb palace,
Now.

Anna Fidler
RAIN

I wish they would lock;
Our ribs rubbing
through translucent skin.

I might fold my breasts back,
Let you bleed into me;
Your blood press through.

Like the pound of the pour
outside this this hotel room,
I listen, And I know.
The watery drum sound of your heart.

Brit Washburn

BLUE ROSE for Jenny-Meade

I reach out for her violet hands,
a watchful new moon floats above.
A seeker of mid-night starscapes and open fields.
she, my lover of darkness
beside the pine tree forests
lying among a mossy kingdom
there is light within the blackness.
A touch, delighting in caresses so soft,
like the drawing of a bow across violin strings.
A breeze amid the pine boughs
could be felt no more easily.

Saturn shines and comets answer without words,
burning past,
a shred of human existence.
The hovering moon is present through the day,
but with night there appears the hard outline of
cheekbones,
the high raised forehead, the questioning brows,
still invisible –
traced on the back of eyelids.

I see her figure beside
a blue rose in a field of white daisies.
I cannot take her.
too fragile to pick
since I know of the imaginable wilting,
the drifting petals floating to the ground,
settling around my feet
like the inevitable rise and fall of these butterflies
in my chest.

I imagine the beaches,
mist engulfing in a foggy game of hide and seek.
She waits,
tendrils of nightsmoke drifting lazily about her head,
sea mist dragging at her ankles –
back to coral beds
to stay wrapped within the arms of starfish lovers.

Follow me back to the fields of starry clover,
embrace the comforts of night.
Taste the coming dew, wet on the lush grass.
Kiss me goodbye,
I fade out,
like the stars of early mornin.

Jeremy Chamberlin
I.

Our dog is gone again this morning. My mother is walking through the sugarcane fields, calling him, but he won't come home for a while. She comes back to the car, where I am waiting. We drive northeast, not to look for Jason, but to buy food for dinner from the market in Guaynabo. I think about the last time we went, when a man in burlap-patched clothes bit a chunk from a slab of raw meat hanging in the back of another man's truck, and ran away, chewing hard on the sinewy lump. I try to imagine how hungry he must be.

II.

They are burning the sugarcane fields today. I see the little black flecks bouncing off the windscreen, even before I can smell the burning leaves. As we drove closer to home, the wind gets stronger; soon clouds will hide the day and it will rain. We go past our house, straight to the fields to look for Jason, trying not to think of how quickly the flames move. My other gets out and shouts his name, but her voice is blown away in the wind. A streak of smoky flames shoot up suddenly beside her, and she yanks her skirt away from it, backing away from the field towards the car, still calling for Jason. As she climbs into the car, something sharper than pain hits my stomach. I wonder: is this hunger?

III.

We have finished dinner, and I am cutting the pineapple for my mother to eat for dessert. It's raining; Jason has not come home. I promise myself to take perfect care of him if he comes back; my stomach still hurts, even after dinner. I give my mother the pineapple, and fix a dish of ice cream for myself. We haven't said a word since we left the city.
Jason comes in before we have finished. He is speckled with burnt flecks, soaking wet. We don't scold him, even when he goes to my jumps on my bed. My mother offers me a piece of pineapple, and I eat it, but I don't like the fruit; it's too sweet. I clear the table and go back to the kitchen to wash the juice from my mother's dish.

Fiona Russell
I sing of the Earth,  
the eternal soil,  
the womb and breast  
of all creatures. You help  
and let grow all Things until  
they find their own end.

I sing of the Earth  
who gives the ground  
for all to walk,  
the Earth who gives  
and takes life,  
the Earth who pleases  
those whose flowers bloom.  
You are our home  
where we create as you create;  
universe in universe:  
sons who will run  
with the urge of their  
body's power of creation,  
daughters who will dance  
upon your ever-growing fields.  
They will dance around their  
ever-growing fields within.

I sing of the Earth  
who is Mother of all.  
Goodbye and thank you  
for this chance to sing  
this song; you and this  
will never be forgotten.

Oliver Ray