

Two Poems

Christina Pacosz

1999

The poetry of Christina Pacosz is remarkable for its insistent and deeply compassionate crossing of that deceptive boundary between what we have been tragically trained to think of as the separate domains of culture and nature. Grief, protest, nurture and celebration are woven together in a body of work that places history within the household of the natural world, promising imminent and continual renewal of the spirit.

Born and raised in Detroit, Christina has lived all over the U.S., including in Alaska and the Carolinas, and currently lives in Kansas City. Besides publishing in numerous magazines, she has published two chapbooks, *Shimmy Up to This Fine Mud* (Poets Warehouse) and *Notes from the Red Zone* (Seal Press). Her collection, *Some Winded, Wild Beast* (Black & Red) is available for \$3 from our book service (see page 20 for book ordering information).

— D.W.

1. A Commentary on Modern Existence as Noted by a Chicken on the Freeway near Columbia, South Carolina (poem)

I did not cross this road
to get to the other side,
turning chicken-hearted midway
and stopping, a stunned white blur
of feathers crouching on the broken
white line. I tumbled from a truck,
the victim of a broken latch
and freedom is a cruel joke,
my life a cruel hoax
passing before my eyes.
Life on the chicken *lager*

.
crowded up against a sea
of squawking feathers,
sawed-off beaks to keep us
from pecking at each other
and the profits, thousands
of chicken eyes staring up
at the sky, while rain pours down
and we drown, or the sun bakes us
right where we stand.

Stupid chickens, the verdict,
whatever the weather.

.
The position of the human
in the pecking order,
the rank and serial number
of our respective fates,
raises objection to the term *lager*
and all its terrible history.
Exaggeration! the counterpoint
to this lament. No matter.
Smack in the middle
of technology's awful whoosh and whizz
no one can hear the question:

.
How long does it take
a chicken to die?
Rescue is a luxury
and the safety
of a quiet coop on a backwater farm
a distant dream.
Helpless as the startled motorists
who speed by,
my only satisfaction:
this death will not
feed them.

2. Shoal Creek, Solstice (poem)

Some things are, you believe,
beyond repair—
a china gravyboat, the fledgling bob-white.
The not too distant river.

.
Your life.
What to think, then,
of the pinch of tobacco
you offer brown water?

.
How to reconcile
the palms of both hands
together? Your head
bowed before the old oak,

.
roots like entrails
girding eroded limestone,
symmetrical as a hand-
built wall.

A crow cruises overhead,
an eye out
for eternity.
Leaves whisper

.
be ready
at a moment's notice
for opportunity
to walk through the door.

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