

Texts of the Four Prize-Winning Poems, Reuben Rose Competition, 2007

1st. Prize: "Fish Eye" by Zvi A. Sesling, USA

Once, in the home of a Filipino, I was
served soup with the head of a fish
floating in the middle, the eye staring
up, the same as in a pile of the dead at
Auschwitz, the center of the eye forming
a question mark asking, Why me? Why am
I here? What have I done to earn this infamous
plight? The eye doesn't see, yet it tells
of surprise, shock, fear, anguish and pain,
not love, happiness or humor.
The eye has seen too much, not enough.
Questions are answered, question remain.
In the end humanity
consumes fish, consumes humanity.

2nd. Prize: “Paris Unsaid” by Celia Merlin

I sent my boys off to Paris today.
Twenty-two and twenty,
the same age as I,
when captured by
the Seine's rainbow twinkle,
Elysees' grandeur.
They are cynically young, from
press keys and wires,
with gadgets literally
out of their ears.
They will turn the same corners,
eat the same bread;
their boundless dreams,
though well-hidden,
as green as mine at that time.
Anxiously I wait to see how they fared
away from their text message world.
Will they feel autumn slide through
the narrow back alleys?
Will they smell lovers' sighs in small dim cafes?
Will their sneakered feet remember
the cobblestone, worn and uneven
from horses past and sports cars present?
Will they tell of glances and blushing
and wet autumn leaves and cool white marble,
of ponds, round and shallow with toy boats that float
as children jump past with their plaid woven scarves and
their small yapping dogs?
I have walked them to school-
these two young men.
I have taught them to swim and to drive.
But I can't help but wonder and worry a bit-
have I taught them to hear what's unsaid?

3rd. Prize: “72 VIRGINS” by Reuven Goldfarb

— an arrow in the heart of the Intifada —

*“Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
a paradise for a sect....”*
Keats, *“The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream”*

When you complete your mission
and arrive in the place of Judgment,
you will be greeted
by seventy-two beautiful virgins
who won't like you.

They'll talk only to each other,
form hostile little cabals,
engage in whispering campaigns
to discuss your every earthly peccadillo,
and, most of all, mock your ambition
to be honored as a martyr.

No martyr, they will say, ever won his crown
by murdering innocent people
You lost your life in vain.

4th. Prize: “Passions” by Wendy Blumfield

The music teacher said sing silently
And not to let my voice's passion soar to the sky
A voice that held no tune.
The dancing teacher said go home you are a waste of space
As in passion arms reach to the sky
And my plump overweight little legs march on.
My grandfather gave me a little wooden desk
And I wrote my passions in ink
That stained my fingers and spilt down my white school blouse.
God gave me four children
And I fed them with passion
From those plump overweight breasts
Sang them to sleep with the passion
Of my voice that held no tune
And danced with them with passion
through the autumn leaves
And the joy of the windswept beach.