

The House of Poetry

Poetry Reading Session

2010

Linda Susan Amos

Etchings

You have embedded yourself
So deeply into my heart
And into my consciousness
So much so,
That if you had been a chemist
And had chosen to use a vial of acid
To etch your name
Upon the granite slab
Of my soul
It could not have been made
More permanent
Nor more indelible.
Inspired by A. J. Scott

Linda Susan Amos

Destiny

If I had never met you
I would have conjured you up
Out of dreams and pixie dust
Because we were destined
To meet, to fall in love,
And, unfortunately,
To part!

Linda Susan Amos

Amoret

I fear
It will require
More than
A love knot
To tie
Your heart
To mine.

At The Blue Heron B&B

In the pale light of late afternoon
the view from the Country Room
blurs to a watercolor scene:
An old wooden boat is anchored
at the end of a rough-planked dock;
shimmering water slaps softly
against the boat's peeling hull.

Veiled in fog suspended above the river,
trees on the distant bank teem with the shriek
and swoop of cormorants and ospreys,
provide backdrop for dive-fishing splash
and wing-drizzle rise to nests.

A lone heron stands in the muddy shallow.

As the sky deepens to twilight, a soft breeze
sails in from the ocean and tugs the fog upriver.
Black brushstrokes obliterate the scene,
blind the observer standing at the window.
A sharp stab of loss bleeds into the dark room.

Communion

Early, before anyone else is up,
the farmer walks his corrugated fields,
sensing the subtle shifts of growth.
His body signals a response
in a language
others do not understand.

Except his son.
Who sleeps, ignores the voice
he, too, can hear,
but covers his ears with dreams
that spin like webs around him,
bind him to his bed.
He is still young.

The father is content,
knowing that someday
his son will take his place
and walk these rows,
conversing with the earth.

Getting a Handle on Things
(for WD)

Grandpa always said if God wanted folks to hold onto money, he would have put handles on it. I laughed every time at that old joke, but was really pleased when he dug into his frayed pants pocket for his loose change, which he slipped into my outstretched, grimy palm. After he died, I found a few coins in his dresser drawer. I guess God put handles on those so Grandpa had a little something to leave behind that made me smile in spite of my tears.

Roberta Pipes Bowman

Grandfather's Clock

When I was small and spent the night
at grandparents, Grandma shared her bed.
She covered me with downy quilt.
In another room an old clock,
painted bird on nest, marked time.
I waked when the clock chimed
at night and heard the windmill creak
and groan as it drew up loads of water.
How cool it sounded sloshing in the tank.
My parched mouth craved a sip.
I longed for dawn's quick return.

The clock was silent in wee hours.
At four it began its daily chore.
Then Grandpa rose and built a fire.
I would fall asleep until coffee
and frying bacon aromas drifted
like angels urging me to wake.

The bird is faded on that clock
but chimes roll back the years.
I long for a sip of that cool water
as I wait for dawning light.
I remember leaping out of bed,
spending hours and hours at play,
no shuffling step or nagging pain.

Roberta Pipes Bowman

The River Ark

...she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch...and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

Exodus 2.3

This basket weaver's shop is filled
with wares he makes for varied use.
A woman moves along the shelves
then asks if he might have an ark
of rushes like a crib with domed lid
that fastens down and safely floats.
The owner smiles, "I have a few,
but kept inside another room.
These are arks for Hebrew sons
condemned to death by Pharaoh's law.
The sentries watch for river arks.
This one is lined with down and linen.
Daub it with slime and pitch so that
the crocodiles will let it pass
while floating slowly down the Nile.
I'll bring it after dark and you
will need to launch the ark before
the dawn, then let it drift along
toward that royal bathing cove
where the widowed princess bathes."

The mother bows before the basket
and prays, "Great One, whose holy name
I do not know, protect my child."

Today I seek that basket adorned
with a cross to keep this little one
from deceptive crocodiles of life
and grow protected by the King.

Summer Camp in Maine 2008

Copyright by Cassy Burleson

That which she has always been,
Has now found everlasting newness
All white and delicate, like Queen Anne's Lace -
Foresaking substance to grasp the shadows
As the future peeks out from the next rainbow.
And she lies down in dandelion dreams
Making wishes for the happiness of others.

She's found her nirvana
Listening to the water's whispered tides,
Coming in and out, then out and in again
To rest along the grassweed marsh below,
Pushing out from rocks along the shore
And rowing past the curves like a push broom
Through overhanging trees and into sunlight.

Something there is now is like that which has never been,
Nor ever would or could be, but always was, for at last she sees ... the joy of is.

Never Fully Here or There, But Clearly Beyond

Copyright by Cassy Burleson

Written in 2007

Life's all about the pauses, the small causes between the words ... the phone call punctuations.
And tonight, I'm all about the silence and the language in between, even the clichés or lack of them.
Tonight I'm all about the peace between the life and death of love immortal and all the stuff that follows
Us even into death. Death is a crisp four-letter word that wears starched shirts and scratches our skin.

And then there's such a longer pause ... overall and afterward. Such a long, long pause so far away.
We're not bilingual yet with death. We're young and making enemies faster than we can kill them.
Dear God, today is Lent. Make this a day of longer pauses in between. Create a space for me.
Invent a day of fewer enemies, such as former husbands ... who want to be my friend forever.

My oh- so-conditional love has its limits. Love can be gone in five months, five years or five lines.
Gone to the quick and the dead. Please don't forget that, God. Give more not less of this slow bliss,
My true love is with me first again, my love lost once and now so ever found. Keep us safe this time.
Lest we forget all that was and all that's yet to be and all of it so clearly more in the blue abyss ahead.

For touching him is all I know of heaven,
And lack of him is all I want to know of hell.

A Poet Is Never Alone or Lonely, Even Somewhere Way Out Here or There

If you'd been here in Bastrop, I wouldn't have slept so well last night or been this still.
Or watched the dandelion seeds floating to the porch this morning, perfectly content.
Wouldn't have heard the locusts mating or the dogs barking in the distance somewhere
Out there across the Colorado River as wheels rumbled over that 1940s silver bridge.

Your noise is never noise to me but does block out some silent things best heard alone,
You're a river rushing forward, charming every light and heavy thing that comes its way.
Observing such a force, one needs to be a stethoscope occasionally, the dog asleep afoot,
Tuning in to silence juxtaposed against the steady rhythm of this still self-sufficient heart.

Take the time to see a morning glory's lilac face below, the sunflowers leaning into sun,
Vines intertwining rough, unpainted railings between this Sunday miracle of idleness...
And that green view spilling out below cloudy skies in a time of too much rain ... a time
Too much of all things, except the slow eloquent drawl of God and honeybees buzzing.

"Wildflowers at work here," "Ship's come in" and all that jazz along this tranquil path.
Somewhere out there, a world waits, poised to take me up again and squash this quiet.
But I'll be ready for it this time 'round, steeling my broken places against this sacred joy,
Renewed to bolster friends with cancer, parents whose own dark fears outweigh my own.

Yes, once I wash away all the dirt of anything but me in that big claw foot tub inside,
I'll leave this bed unmade, four pillows sleepily arranged against the window's sun,
My single cup unwashed, my trash and worries in the sink, and pack the pretty clothes I Brought but didn't wear,
then move along more thankfully - because you were not there.

THE TATER REBELLION

By Shirley Carmichael

It began very quietly one fine spring day;
 The seed taters slept snuggled deep in the hay;
Then the farmer came in and cut them in half;
 This tickled the taters, with glee they did laugh,
For they knew they'd be planted in the warm, moist earth;
 That soon they would sprout and have a new birth.

So the taters were dropped in row after row,
 And their eyes turned to sprouts, and started to grow.
They grew and they grew, and wriggled around;
 They grew toward the sun, and popped out of the ground;
But, the sun made their baldy heads burn and ache,
 So they sprouted some leaves, lovely shade they did make.

Then the sun gave them warmth, and the rain gave them drink;
 How lovely to be born in this world they did think.
They rustled with pride at the way they were growing,
 And the farmer was happy and started in hoeing.
He chopped all the weeds and stirred up the earth,
 And the taters were glad they'd been given new birth.

Then one day they decided that it was the season,
 And their roots sprouted toes for this very reason.
The toes were so many, they grew big as bowls.
 The farmer said, "They're ready", and he dug up the rows;
So the taters were happy for that's why they grew;
 And, now, there were millions, or at least, quite a few.

They farmer had names for the sizes they grew,
 The big ones were bakers and the little ones new.
So he took them to market one warm summer day,
 Except for the seed taters he put away.
These he would save til next year's spring day;
 So he tucked these taters down under the hay.

But, the taters that sold were not properly eaten,
 By baking, or boiling, and properly beaten.
They were very embarrassed, for they did have their pride;
 And they started to shrivel in an effort to hide;
For the people that bought them peeled off their skin,
 And cut them in slices entirely too thin.

They fried them right crisp and sprinkled on salt,
 And the taters cried, "No, this must come to a halt."
Look what you have done without our permission.
 You have cooked us so long, we have lost our nutrition.
That's why we were planted, row after row,
 For children to eat us, to help make them grow.

Continued – The Tater Rebellion

So, if, this is the thanks for our toils and our labors,
 Then we're not really helping to be good to our neighbors.
And one brave, young tater told it around;
 And the word spread quite quickly through country and town,
The taters decided unanimously,
 That, until all the people, decided to see –

The folly of grown-ups who let children snack;
 Then they would stop growing, and that is a fact.
They talked to the sunshine, and to the rain,
 And slept in their seed-beds til spring came again.
So when they were cut up and dropped in the ground,
 They just lay there quietly and made not a sound.

The farmer grew worried and he wondered why
 The taters weren't sprouting and he looked at the sky;
And the sun wouldn't shine when it should have been glowing,
 And, instead of it raining, the rain started snowing;
Then the farmer remembered to whom he had sold them,
 He went to the field and with gladness, he told them,

That never again would he sell his taters
 To people who certainly must be children-haters.
The taters were happy and shouted with glee,
 For, at last, they could grow into what they should be.
So, remember, dear people, when snacks you are selling,
 You might start one more, all the taters rebelling.

In Judgment

By Shirley Carmichael

**I sat like a judge in court
And with burning, stinging voice
Maligned the character of one.
who seemed the Devil's choice.**

**I reviewed her past and present life
And debated on her future.
With relish, I found the worst,
My deepening hate to nurture;**

**And, in my mind, her evil grew
Until my soul was covered
By demon rage and thought corrupt;
Then, through God's Word, discovered**

**That He would find, come Judgment Day
The time to judge my living
By the measure which I judged
This one, no mercy giving.**

CHRIST, THE LAST ADAM

By Shirley Carmichael

**When Adam sinned in the garden,
God sentenced all mankind to die;
In punishment for his disobeying
As dust in the ground, he would lie.**

**God cast Adam out of the garden
Never more to look on His face;
Judged guilty by God for His sinning,
God had cursed the whole human race.**

**But, God made to Eve, a great promise,
That her seed would win over sin;
For a virgin would conceive of The Spirit
And That Child bring the curse to an end.**

**When Christ came, He gave His life freely
On the cross, "It is finished," He said;
Then death was defeated forever,
For the third day He rose from the dead.**

**So friend, if you know Christ as Savior
Then the old carnal life is a loss;
Yes, the first Adam's curse was lifted,
By the Last Adam's death on the cross.**

Marilyn Marshall Clark

THE GIFT OF COLOR

The purple silk blouse you gave me,
the precise blend of blue and red
to lead me royalty. The bouquet in
Thelma's room, white gladioli in a clear
glass bowl, fanned out like a cosmic
explosion, the leaf spears and tips
of green buds headed for infinity.
Showing Meagan how to swirl
her brush to form petals. Dyeing
Easter eggs with kids. The lonely
Chinese neighbor stopped by
as you worked in your flower bed,
held up her thumbs and smiled.
Your doorway arch of Carolina Jasmine
Greets house finches and even guests
with attitude like relatives and cats.

For Debra, February 14, 2008

Marilyn Marshall Clark

ABDULLAH GAH, WINTER 2002

The children are dying for lack of an ass
to climb the roadless passes with bags of wheat,
and babies drink gruel of water and grass
Three years, the rains have failed to come in time

to fill the cracked fields with dancing (swaying) wheat.
Grass baked with a trace of barley tastes mud cake dry.
Each day big-bellied children run out of time
while rags that bind the bloating give small relief.

The breasts of grass-fed mothers too soon run dry;
still they cradle the young in their arms
and wait. Cold huts give small relief.
Where a road exists that a truck might climb a hill,

a warlord's men, in wait, cradle their arms,
the babies drink gruel of water and grass,
the road becomes a no-man's land on that hill,
and children are dying because of an ass.

WHAT I PRAY FOR

*People ask what I pray for, and I tell them:
“New drugs and a miracle”.*

I stand at the kitchen counter
And drop pills into a little blue plastic box.
Into each section,
Marked by a day of the week,
I place--
 4 *Clozapine*
 3 *Stelazine*
 1 *Wellbutrin* tablet

and on bad nights,
when panic attacks,
a *Xanax* or two.

More art than science, they say.
And the alchemy of Sandoz, Roxane, & Teva
Pharmaceuticals
Reroutes my son's neural networking--
Coats the raw edges,
Smooths the tattered wires,
The frayed cables.

Quiets the hounding voices
And rapping knuckles
That knock at his door
Day and night.

Last month it was
Seroquel and *Lamictal*.
And in one failed attempt,
Lithium Carbonate.
Before that, before the clinical diagnosis,
It was *Haldol* and *Benztropine*--
The drooling twins of the early days,
Cousins of *Thorazine*,
The “shut ‘em up and lock ‘em up” drug
Of *The Cuckoo's Nest*.

Now they're only brought out for first timers,
Or the ones who forget, forego, or fail,
Fall back into the black hole
And ride into the Psych Ward
In the back of an ambulance,
Accompanied by a local sheriff,
Or a cop.

Once attended to,
Most graduate to the atypicals--
The New & Improved antipsychotics,
And are mended,
Sort of,
If they stay around long enough,
Take their meds,
Get their blood tested,
Get to the pharmacy,
Every week, or month,
Under doctor's orders,

Or, leave,
Get lost, live
Under bridges
Or inside boxes,
For the rest of their lives.

Nancy Carpenter Czerw
5/2/2009

ALCHEMY

(Overheard at night in Bay Yard
Farm: Singing by Breman and
the barn cats..." *We are Celanese
if you please...*")

Nan's a chemist. Breman's green.
They've just been crowned the King & Queen
Of the Adult Amateur Hunter scene.

Such rapid rise is rarely seen--
Now Sherlock Holmes is on the scene.

Nan's a chemist at Celanese;
She handles chemicals with ease.

But what exactly does she do?
Make plants grow bigger? Invent new glue?

Or is she back there with machines,
Splitting atoms, splicing genes?

Putting horse hide on a frame,
Adding ears, a tail, a mane?

Is her horse the real McCoy,
Or just an equine proto-toy?

Now Watson offers commentary--
As usual, more elementary:

Positing another view
(As all good sleuth's assistants do):

"Breman's green, not phosphorescent,
And Nan's as fit as an adolescent.

Consider the possibility,
The truth is *really* what we see--

Outstanding training, and of course,
A wonderful rider and marvelous horse!"

Nancy Carpenter Czerw
June 7, 2009

ANIMAL

My cat
Does not like to be held,
Will not sleep on a bed,
Disdains cuddling and kissing.

But when my son's mind
Turned inward, and he
Fell into fear,

She crawled under the sheets,
And slept with him,
All night.

Nancy Carpenter Czerw
8/1/09

UPSTATE AUTUMN

This season of gold and fire will never end.
On a tree in a quadrangle of a college campus,
Yellow leaves cling to the uppermost branches,
Like little Tibetan prayer flags.
The rest have been torn away;
Pages of summer's bloody ending
Lie in sheaves at my feet.
But so long as these yellow leaves hold on,
I too shall hold fast--
Despite the fury of wind and weather,
Despite all odds of probability,
I shall hold the flame of this Autumn's gold--
The fire of this season,
Burning in my heart.

Nancy Carpenter Czerw
11/18/09

Peggy Zuleika Lynch

In Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Why today do we gather here
to honor one
whom we may only have admired
did not catch his fire
at the moment his meteor was soaring?

Now we know while it was burning
it lighted lights.

It rose, glorious,
winding through
the dark of night.

It soared above the strife.

Non-violence it was
and went to its end
burning out in our hemisphere.

Those whom it helped
to raise in its flight
may be here, there, everywhere
because he is now
in the breeze that blows,
in the flower that blooms,
in the brilliance of a star
beckoning on those
who caught the vision
of his meteor
and carries it on afar.

Yes, today we honor

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JUNIOR
in his absence on his birthday
as we go forth
carrying his vision
forward
because
he has become a star!

Benjamin Matlock

Out of This Atmosphere

I am desperate
to get out of this atmosphere
I see space from here
As I ascend I still feel you itch

I am reminded that I will
always need our air
There was something special
about your blue eyes
Roaming the smallness of earth
could never erase there effect, there memory

I was never counted
during the hurricanes and tsunamis
I finally grasp that
in your spring fury

The tornadoes were not meant for me
but for her and all the others
Now if you chose to care, to blow me around
I will not let you stop me

Because I am desperate
to get out of this hot atmosphere
The air I breath is not relevant
as you constantly point out
stoically bidding me goodbye.

Goodbye!

Indicators

Wanting to ward off more doctors
and sick at heart after your eulogy,
I take out an apple, cut it in half,
open it like a sympathy card.
On television, closed captioning
lets me know the perky news anchor
is reporting on the health of the economy.
Her hair is the color yours used to be.
Even with the sound on *mute*,
I can tell the news is bad.
Like your internist who always knew
too much, the news is abrupt
and undeniable as chiseled stone.
Still wearing my black
skirt and tissue-smearred mascara,
I watch the young woman on TV
slowly open and close her thick lashes,
lower her eyes, soften her gaze,
wanting to let us know how sorry she is
for what she must report:
that with leading indexes still falling,
the situation looks bleaker than ever.
As I consider the country's condition
and that of your children
and the man who loved you
and all those you left behind,
the newscaster brightens into a smile
as astounding as the star inside my apple.
The scrolling ribbon says she is happy
to tell us that despite the way things feel now,
some analysts are hopeful, given the indicators,
that by next year, we may be well
on the road to recovery.

Before You Marry

Drive together out past the places
of mailboxes and mowing.
Cross a wooden bridge
whose metal straps strain, clang,
sing like an old woman finally in love.

Slow around a rutted curve.
Pull up to a clapboard chapel
whose patterned windows strain
dyes of ancient hallowed light.
Stop. Say nothing.

Wander the wrought iron churchyard
in the company of velvet-headed oaks
who mourn decades of dead
laid in mounded pairs,
their taken names chiseled in stone.

Lip-whisper verses. Shiver in the sun.
Listen for the shush of the low wind.
Called by the coming day, look up
and down the empty road.
Feel lost. Feel found. Feel proud.

Turn for home together
wanting your way in the world
to always be as good
as this sainted gospel chorus
of how it is to live and die in love.

Round

Iron stone, storm-worn
into the capped shape
of an acorn. A giant acorn
collected from the apron
of a century oak.
Water oak hardened
into petrified wood.

Collector and curator,
she houses her exhibit
in the display case
of an antique glass-top table:
a collage of the natural
history of fifty years
on six acres of sugar sand.
For visitors, she narrates
a life's work, catalogues her finds:
A cicada husk. A tortoise shell.
The cup spun by a hummingbird.

When asked her favorite,
she admits her hope
diamond is a special hen's egg
found on an empty day
when she almost stopped
believing in miracles.
Defying the ovulate, it is
round and delicate as a puff ball.
Perfect. Sacred. Impossible.
Proof, she holds now,
lifting her gaze to meet yours,
that anything, anything can happen.

The Unexpected

*It's the unexpected in life -
those intrusions
that jolt us out of every day complacency -
one such as this - Wilna's story,
one so unbelievable you know it must be true.*

*It begins with silence . . .
In a moment's intuition, Wilna knows something
isn't quite right.
"Amanda! Amanda! Where are you?"
Then to herself she says, "Maybe Amanda's in the bedroom."
As Wilna opens the bedroom door, she finds Amanda
playing in ashes, covered from eyelashes to ankles.
A small urn lies empty on the floor beside her.*

*Both are transfixed.
Then gasps and shrieks of disbelief follow -
"Amanda, what have you done?"*

*Just at that moment, the phone rings.
Crying hysterically as a close friend listens,
Wilna says, "You won't believe what just happened!"*

*No words of sympathy or disbelief follow -
just laughter.*

Then catching her breath, she says,

*"Wilna, it's Joe's way of playing with his little grand daughter
one more time!"**

It's the unexpected in life,

awakening our knowledge of that sacred moment -

a moment held by a magical particle of dust,

calling us to resurrection.

**true story as told by Wilna Neil*

The Answer

*Call Manhattan for answers - call Lisa -
pay in advance ,
words that stuck in her heart and mind.
"Just call her , " a friend urged - "she'll tell you everything you want to know. "*

*For weeks the uneasy feeling was with her -
a feeling of homesickness sweeping over her heart -
that yearning to talk to her father and yet thinking,
"How can anyone - a mere mortal like me-
divine the mysteries of what is beyond . . .
speak with the spirits of those who've passed over to the other realm of reality?
How . . . is it possible . . . or am I chasing a phantom ... "*

*Then finally -
The psychic's voice came through clear -
It was all so casual - they could be having coffee, sitting at her breakfast table.
But they weren't.
The psychic was in New York, Veena was in L.A.*

*"I'm so glad you called.
Your father has been pestering me.
These are the words in his message to you. "*

"Veena, I want to apologize to you for dying when you were only nine.

*But please know this, my darling - only a thin veil is all that separates us,
a veil that most are not aware of."*

*"Your father knows everything about you, Veena,
from all the boy friends you've ever had to the one you have now.
He even knows about the tattoo on your left hip."*

*"Oh, no, it's only when I'm in the shower you can see that!"
Veena screamed.*

*"He knows you love animals,
and that you're trying to decide whether to have a horse farm,
or to become a veterinarian.
He says to tell you that whatever you decide, you'll be wonderful at it.*

*"He's coming through very clearly to me
because you are in tune with the spiritual dimension of life.*

*And again Veena wonders
"Is this a phantom of dark shadows pursuing me . . . is this real . . .
or is it a dream begging to be born . . ."*

*Early in life Veena became aware of the spiritual -
a gift passed on to her from her father, Shiva -
through his Indian heritage.*

*Once looking deep into his young daughter's eyes, he said,
"Veena, my life might be short because of my heart."*

*"Daddy, will you let us know you're alright after you're gone?
And let us know when you're in heaven.?"*

*Then in the autumn of Shiva's last year, attending a retreat,
everyone was asked before leaving to write something
they feel about the future -
to slip it in an envelope, put it in the barrel in the center of the group,
addressed.*

*On New Year's Eve,
Shiva died.*

*Then one early Spring morning,
Veena's hand reached inside the mailbox.
There it was - the letter she had been looking for.*

*"Dear Veena,
I know whatever God wills will be fine.
I have faith and I'm happy.
I know God's will is the best.
My love,
Your Dad*

*"Daddy wrote to me from heaven!"
There was never a doubt in her mind.
His letter had come. **

*Memories . . . fantasies . . . dreams . . .
swirl through Veena's soul . . .
like a subterranean river racing unseen, silently through the desert,
passing through many waters** - then past the birth pangs of new life . . .
breaking through to the thrill of Love's light . . .
to ride on the wings of the wind.****

** true story as told by Sharyn Petersen*

***Psalms 18:16 "You drew me out of many waters."*

****Psalms 18:10 "You ride on the wings of the wind."*

BULLDOZED
(Fry Street, Denton, Texas)

Our 'sold-out' block, damned, barren, beggared, bulldozed bare,
Looks back blind, holds out its pocked, bent cup, begs with a vacant stare;
Seeks the clink of the golden coin of long-haired youth again,
the wild merriment, mercies, the red edge of being once spent there.
Instead sits this sad, stripped, scrawny, scruffy sod.
The crumpled, caved-in chain-link fence cannot confine, contain
The sigh of loss keening through that cruel, cold, commercial noose of wire - GOD
Only hears the faint imprints of our primal howls, which still sustain, remain.
Here WindChildren were and went, spirits sped, gifts spread;
Seeds sent breeze-bourne to bring, begin, bear again in tomorrow's poorer beds.

How March winds blow and whirl the current co/eds by
Into their joyful piles and blowzy, supple scatterings,
But What can they know of such ancient, olden orderings?
"Peace Man!" Through that old arch the smiles, screams, the sometimes stoned
and ardent highs,
The quick Presences seen where nothing now abides,
The brimming days springing yet within these wintered, well-wandered eyes...

So becomes our sacred space, a quiet, emptied place;
The long, separate apart, the lonely, cold, stilled, zeroed heart
bereft of any warm embrace - that desolate, unsayable waste -

Alone ...

Communion ...
(Aware)

Waiting
(Want)

Waxing Moon
Gibbous hour
Silence
Brimming
Beautiful
Before dawn.

Spread
Coverless
Unclothed
Moonlit
Bedside window
Open.

I know ...
'We'
Are
Impossible.

Yet ...
Still
I linger ...
Wanting
You.

Exquisite wrap -
Ardent air
Eager skin
Moonlight
Touching
Lingering
Poured
Together
Twined.

Perfect lovers -
Blent
You
The Other
One ...
Aware.

Waterfall Words

Flow thrilling waterfall of words,
Deep spills, pure and pouring,
Subsume, submerge me in strange spells.
Let us be carried through glad cataracts;
Christened in chasms and cascades;
Tumbled through taut torrents;
Roiled, roused, run down rapid gauntlets;
Rushed, gushed, careened downstream;
Spun by bright, brisk, swift swirls;
Doused in a deluge of downpours.
Wet me wild over your steep rims;
Drown dross in dazzle, a seethe of currents.
Drench and refresh this dry, parched plain.
Float forever by from an ardent ark
Held in an arc and flow of arms,
Covered as fine, fluid raiment
By the saving promise of your rainbows,
The perfect wrap of rapt whirlpools.
Sent sighs, symphonies of soulsounds,
The music cast by throbbing, fetching falls.
Swish away drab, dull history.
Claim, cleanse, consume us in clear corridors;
Sweep all stale breath to fresh.
Revive, renew, an eager heart;
Bathe, bewitch, bubble an addled brain.
Resuscitate, resurrect This life;
Quench every quest and thirst.
WaterFall Me !

A Suitcase of Woe

The dream was as easy as counting.
It could drop in at any eye closing
no matter where I was flying
no matter whom I met
no matter what I was doing
always the same concern
at any corner at any turn
I lost my purse.

Sometimes I stepped outside looked down
counseled myself
*Don't worry you will wake up
it won't matter.*
But the frantic search
the heavy feet I hauled
along like loaded baskets
while strange doors wouldn't open.

I just wanted my purse.

Finally I called myself awake, grateful
for something that didn't happen.

Then two weeks ago
at last after a lifetime
of losing and tracing and closed doors
and locked rooms in a dream
I moved a book and my purse
was there.

Oh the joy.

For days I told everyone I knew
I would never have that dream
again. I was convinced
a new era a new plateau. Yes
for days I could burst into sleep
and not take my purse.
But today I am one blink from tears.
Last night I lost my suitcase
my purse was in it.

Naomi Stroud Simmons 2001
Published in PST YEARBOOK, 2002

Travel Forecast

New Years,
like a new car,
I drive it carefully,
avoid January pot holes,
bad roads.

By spring
all systems tuned,
interior still clean,
open roads, countrysides in bloom,
beckon.

No map
to guide my days.
By June a dent or two
does not dampen expectations.
I cruise

into
autumn vistas,
all caution signs ignored,
a scratch or two along the way.
I near

year's end,
model changes.
When the crystal ball drops,
I'll be on time unless I have
a flat.

Naomi Stroud Simmons

Published: PST BOOK OF THE YEAR 2009

Dark Emotions

Deep within his heart coursed the blood of his ancestors
liquid fires raging unchecked, unfettered, blazing
with burning desires to conquer, to be conquistadors.

Dark eyes smolder lock to dark eyes
then to his corazon, his heart, his senorita,
he passes the epitome of the Spaniard's true love
the rarest of nature's gifts, one black rose

■ Jeannette L. Strother

tarrant county texas

purple

whispers night in warm color
softly brushed... somewhere
between midnight and indigo

purple

hides the moon in the dark March sky
and I...pull my covers close
against the sharp spring chill

purple

slowly washes darkening space
huge orange globe sinks somewhere
between air and land

purple

spring winds rustle
large shadowed fronds
mesquite's fanning bristles

purple

electric slashes the sky
distant rumbles roll and echo
soft rain trickles down

purple

songs as passing trains
hoot and whistle...through
sleeping towns

purple

discordant harmony
chorused by wakening birds
break of morning light

purple

a state of rest
just before summer
rises on waning spring

■ Jeannette L. Strother

In The Old Ways

Mama taught me about gardening, cooking, canning and sewing. I guess these were things people survived with back in her day. Mama baked big, fat, white sugar cookies every week. I thought it was just to use up the milk going sour. It wasn't until years later, I remember the children from 'The Slope' (a non-working mining camp) seemed to always be at our back door.

No one saw much of Mama's temper except the family. She smiled at most of the town when we walked to do our chores. She didn't drive, so our feet took us everywhere we needed to go. If we saw someone older than her doing chores, we took the time to see them home. Then she would fuss like a bandy rooster about how some families "just don't care."

Some people saw it as vanity when Mama carried the biggest pot or the most pies to church for funerals or special events. She just liked to cook and wanted people to have plenty. No one complained when the mill was on strike and Miss Loretta always had a little extra in her kitchen.

When my Daddy's wife didn't want me, Mama covered my back. Papa's sister got sick and moved in. She was too weak to do for herself. Mama fed, bathed and nursed her back to health. "Hushed-mouthed" she work hard. She told me a secret once, "you'll get your reward in heaven."

On warm summer evenings we would sit on the porch, rocking the squeaky, metal glider. Sweet honeysuckle entwined the lattice grill behind heads; we spent the evening battling away sweet bees. Family or neighbors passing on the "lower road" would either stop and chat or throw up a hand and holler "hello".

When we put our flannels, Mama would reach for her dog-eared Bible and read a book each night. She taught me to always kneel at the end of the day.

The Long Drive Home

When I received the call to come home,
my feelings ran the gamut of sadness
and fragility. Why can death not be defeated
or subdued until we mortals are prepared.

I traveled the highways, my brain on
overload...busy cataloguing and collecting
thoughts of the canvas we called home.
A little two-story, white frame house
sitting at the base of gentle, rolling Ohio hills.

I shivered at the jostled memories scrambling
round and round inside my head; forsythia
bush switches for my errant legs; loving kisses
on my little accidents and enough embraces
to shame a bear.

I remember, flower gardens created by Mama's
knowing hands; a tall productive quince
that stood alone; ground-kissing apple trees
which gently dropped their loads; the ancient
arbor abundant with sagging vines of white
and purple concord grapes.

I raced those hills as a hooligan. Her
yard was my childhood palace. I sailed
on the single-board hemp swing
and hid beneath the arbor vines.

My mind tastes hot, tart applesauce
on homemade, buttered bread.
Do they still remember calling out
her name...all the stray children
she once fed.

I know I have Mama's forgiveness
for not coming sooner.
It was such a long drive home.

■ Jeannette L. Strother

Charles B. Taylor, Jr.

IMAGINE

for John Lennon

Imagine you're standing next
to Russian genius novelist
Fyodor Dostoyevsky with the
other members of the
radical Petrashevsky group, about

to be shot by
fellow soldiers from your
own former military units.
You're pissing in your
pants, standing in the

December cold, shackled and
hooded; the priest, carrying
Bible and Cross, has
given God's blessing on
your death, the sentences

have been read, the
golden spire of some
church nearby has gleamed
in the clear sunlight,
Dostoyevsky has whispered "We

will be with Christ,"
and his friend Speshnev
has replied "A handful
of dust," The soldiers
take aim from fifteen

steps away from the
scaffolding, "I understood nothing
before I kissed the
cross," Dostoyevsky later said.
"They could not bring

themselves to trifle with
the cross." He remembers
Zola's The Last Day
of a Condemned Man,
and feels a profound

indifference to both life
or death. He thinks
how if he is
spared life would seem,
every second, endless, and

that would be unbearable.
Suddenly someone appears waving

a white cloth and
the soldiers lower their rifles.
A carriage clatters into

Semenovsky square, and a
sealed envelope from Adjutant
General Sumarkov is presented
and read. It is
the Czar's pardon. The

joke is over. When
they untie Grigoryev, they
find he has gone
mad. The rest of
the prisoners feel nothing.

"They could just as
well as have shot
us" says Durov. Petrashevsky
demands not to be
touched, to put on

his own chains. He's
placed in a troika
and sent into a
life of endless exile.
Dostoyevsky gets four years

in a Siberian prison
and then must be,
till death, a soldier.
Later he is pardoned
and we have this

gift to the hearts
of all who love
to read and seek
wisdom. Imagine, when your
poor heart feels like

torn tarpaper; Imagine, when
you hear the killing
and torture; imagine and
learn to live in
hope not yet born

and imagine what Jack
wrote to Joyce from
the Slovenia headed for
Tangiers. The ship nearly
floundered in mountainous waves

five hundred miles out.
Jack discovered inside a
luminous calm and wrote:
EVERYTHING IS GOD, NOTHING
EVER HAPPENED EXCEPT GOD

MARTIN LUTHER KING

It was in that voice,
you can get a sense
of it listening to recordings.

It was in his voice--
a wavering, a deep sense
of heart that wrung all

hearts in the same aria
of soulful suffering and joy.
The timbre of that voice,

a sound that carried his
soul, a soul of such
depth that the deep good

buried in the forgotten places
of our hearts rose up.
I'll tell you one story,

one tale that I believe
can bring back to all
what is in us like

that voice that so lifted
the air setting us afire
with hope for change. You

know Selma, you know the
Washington march and what he
said of the dream, but

the story I have to
tell is when he was
a child, when he was

playing with his brother Alfred
downstairs in their home, and
Alfred slid down the banister

and accidentally knocked his grandmother
down. She lay on the
floor without moving and Martin

grew distraught as he stood
immobilized thinking his dear "Mama"
dead and then the boy

ran upstairs and threw himself
out the window, falling twelve
feet, laying motionless as his

family called his name. Both
were bruised but fine. Martin
grew up to give us

the dream and the redemptive
hope, that caring still singing
in our sometimes wavering hearts.

All one needs is to
heed his words, listen to
the timbre of his voice

■ Charles B. Taylor, Jr.

The Way of Virtue

Old Lao Tzu looked to Nature
for illustrations with life,
writing that nameless eternity
cannot be told or written.

Blueness of the sky
allows clouds whiteness.
Green Spring yields Fall brown.
Evil makes realization of Good.

Mysterious manifestations build
the gateway to desire, because
darkness appears as a spring
of emptiness for fulfillment.

A stream seeks basic lowliness
through each turn of desire,
embraces being and nothingness
in cycles of passion and light.

Mountain spirit lives in man,
and in the primal woman, valley
spirit centers for the river of life
to flow low as its highest good.

Passion evoking spontaneity,
mountains wash into valleys
arousing lush fertility for life,
radiant need in vital fruition.

We bear shaped vessels of skin,
filled with the essence of God
and daily charged to propagate
ascending mastery by our souls.

Angel Slides

Puffy clouds, a bit of haze
sun behind the parting ways
rails break through in golden rays
worth the gaze and praise.

The Sanctuary

Nature's spirit flows—
 like holy water
 from a baptismal
 font—
to build

temples of seven pillars
on foundations inscribed
with the circle of heaven.

Her fountain
stirs a deeper wood—
 laid in the hills,
kissed by the sea,
 fed living waters
sprung from above.

Here grows a shining
 inner shrine,
God's haven built
 of human curtain—
a dwelling for faith
 in the heart.

Trucking and Tripping

We bring little, born into life
needing help, guidance and love.
If lucky, our burdens grow
to give gifts as we pass along,
handing out that which we ourselves receive.

We carry more away from life
than we bring to it, much more.
If lucky, we travel light,
leaving behind a trail of love,
a gentle path blazed through the wilderness.

Point of View

That patchwork sky, this morning pink,
gives reason for tired eyes to rise
and rush to see through windowed view
that scene—that glory colored wink
of life with grace, God's given guise—
granted all men, seen by too few.

Enthralled being, I sit and write
determined here to open eyes,
to show mankind a regal hue,
that gift of God's creative light—
ours to imbue.

Lightness of Being

Whatever shades of light
may stay my eyes to pause in trance
one image cannot miss the point—
a rainbow seen by chance.

Self Image

As we delve deeply
into ourselves
looking for self

at the center we find
God in control—
a blessing, grace

which we need
to experience in order
to find our selves.

Made in God's image,
God is the center
of ours.

In our experiences
God lives.

Our last blackberry morning.....

© by June Zaner, February 11, 2008

On mornings like these I miss my father
though I was not the daughter he had wished for,
especially in that last long year.

Old men, old daddies, have special needs,
different from the young. Their toenails grow long and they
curve under and become thick as rope and they are yellow.

The hair grows from their ears in curls, earlobes swell and crease.
Chest hair goes grey and chest muscles relax into the belly
over sticks of legs and knees that stiffen and crack.

Sitting on your deck that last day before you took to your bed,
I could not see your feet and did not notice that they no longer
held your fragile weight.

We talked of how much fruit the
pear tree held and how it bent
the limbs almost to the ground and
how the tree would suffer if we didn't
pick the fruit or trim the branches.

We talked of how big the Brazos berries must
be now, down at the fence line, the ones we picked
and brought back to the house last summer, stink bugs, dirt and all
washed them at the sink and filled our bowls full then
sprinkled sugar on top of them....

All glistening and swollen and black with
juice and smelling of summer and sand.
I recall how our tongues turned dark
red and our teeth looked strange when
we smiled at each other, father and daughter,
enjoying the way we looked to each other.

■ June Zaner

...as the world ends...

©by June Zaner, February 26, 2010

He told me in so many words that
I was his homecoming queen, that
As the ashes fell and steel melted that
He would jump into the fire for me,
That he would grab my hand and hold on
And not let go as the edges crackled, or,
At least that edge we found ourselves on....
Long years ago, when we could out-run clouds.

He'd shake a cigarette from his pack, rolled up
Neatly in his shirt sleeve and light it, eyes
Lowered, and let the smoke rise, like a blue
Fog between us. It was so charming, so vogue,
Then I would grow faint and take that same
Smoke into my lungs, sharing it, warming it with
My own breath, until it hung between us like some
Offering, some omen, some witchy thing, a promise.

He cast a spell with his eyes, his smoke curling,
Brown eyes mirroring my own. We liked the
Reflection of each other, so much like love, and
Thought it real, not shadows, not just nature, not
Just what everyone saw in each other when they looked.
Oh, well, it didn't last, it never does, and as the last
Flame lept about my feet, I knew that he had not braved
The fire for me, as the world ended, sizzle, pop, gone.....

■ June Zaner

A little tune-up....

© by June Zaner, June 18, 2008

May Jean needed a little tune-up

For years the red had been leaking from her hair,
First at the tips and then the roots,
A bleeding out in flames, so to speak, of her youth
Until now she sat, at age eighty six, in her yellow
Fiesta dress, all swirled in rick-rack and pleats,
In the hall of the hospital.

May Jean was checking in.

She'd brought a few things along to amuse her,
Some video tapes of John Wayne's western movies,
The latest large print Reader's Digest, her Metamucil,
Several packs of Lifesavers, a tube of Tangee lipstick,
Photographs of her grown children and, despite their
Objections, her framed DAR certificate.

It was her life, after all....May Jean's life.

Powder had caked in the creases between her eyes and
Eyeglasses, like a shelf, and made it difficult for her to blink
When the nurse touched her shoulder, to tell her she must leave her
Jewelry with her daughter, the rings, the bracelets, pins and necklaces
She'd used to enhance her dress, her beauty.....all gifts given her
By the man who had forced motherhood upon her and then walked away.

The jewels were May Jean's sparking annuities.

The years had been kind and she still went to teas and lunch and church with
Friends, most of them on walkers and canes, without a man to hold their
Elbows and help them off the curb. They had become a club almost, sending
Cards and giving morning calls to check to see if they'd made it through
Another night...those long, unforgiving nights when death came calling,
The nights one did not wake from, in their eighties.

May Jean had vowed not to check out in the dark
She had just checked in now, for a little tune-up.

■ June Zaner

1. To an Observer, Medically Inclined

To an observer, medically inclined,
the corpse is barely different from the cart that bears it:

No breast nor thighs, no supine life:
 only always corpse, cadaver
 just so and never neither less nor more
Than all those brittle, brilliant particles
 that somehow make that metal gleam.

■ Richard Zaner

2. In dozens of airy rooms

listening with vacant eyes
 and hollow ears, as

the jubilant computers of another time
keep track and track
 and tape on tape
recording with redundant regularity
 (all that noiseless pulse and push,
 buttoned key-like press
 which no finger now need do)
 for nowhere now is not:

There is no time
 no time at all
nor word softly used to ease
the pain and lonely of such
common things as milk and squeeze,
 green and lips, sand
 rain, shade, shadow, dark —
nor you, nor we, not I
 nowhere now is not nor we who
 give it constant birth, wanting
 in a lonely anguish not to be

the cutting irony of being human:

which, Faulkner's herald reveals,
weeping on funereal wood,
is-not, is, not is, not even was;

and yearns,

curious as cunning,

for what ought to be —

then leaves such matters

to the dozen vacant rooms

connecting halls of hollow-eyed

and hallowed digital devices,

logically busy:

so we will not have

to hear nor touch nor see

our own asking, while,

perhaps,

self-automated we move

a cunning bit of steel about

here and there

cross-hatching (here and there) a face,

here and there

and digitized inscriptions flawlessly record

with eyeless track on track,

as traced records etch

that there is no time

no time at all

nor flesh at all

to age —

nor grow older with me.

3. On Hearing of a Death, By Drowning, in Molasses, of a Man, 26

December 21, 1968:

Slight oozings of the stuff,
then more, the tanker bursting
(in New Jersey) chock-a-block with
This thick and sweet volcanic syrup
(like literal *en soi*), and a man,
the papers said, died in this viscose tomb.

But then,

Why not?)

Despite the eagle eye and
hawkish mind, eager
for news to stupefy and charm us;
it was reported as “utterly bizarre”

—flawless icon of bedlam, this,
the shifty mention,
slyly celebrating
like sheer pornography.

and through it all, the quiet irony:
when born, we are old enough to die,
and death by any other means is just as queer
(and unrehearsed

■ Richard Zaner

Tony Zurlo

Notes on Quantum Music

I: Traditional Theory

Like most music students I learned keys and scales, flats and sharps, through mnemonics: "Father Charles Goes Down And Ends Battle" gives the order of sharps (FCGDAEB).

"Battle Ends And Down Goes Charles' Father" gives us the flats (BEADGCF). The notes on the bass clef lines in order are "Good Boys Deserve Fun Always" (GBDFA). It's all very logical.

For example, we memorize ACEG for the spaces between the lines: "All Cows Eat Grass." So if all cows eat grass, and I eat grass (cereals), I must be a cow, according to my finely trained Aristotelian brain.

II: Add Quantum Theory

Everything in the Universe is made up of Energy called Quanta; Music is one of the Things in the Universe; Therefore all Music is made up of quanta. Quantum theory helps clarify all of this.

Believe it or not, I'm neither a theoretical physicist nor a logician, but quantum theory has inspired Stephen Hawking and other geniuses in their quest for the Theory of Everything (TOE), so I tried it.

But I found quantum theory and classical logic to be incompatible. Melody, harmony, and rhythm are silenced during the mortal combat between Aristotle's syllogisms and the Heisenberg's uncertainty principle.

III: Back to Basics

The word FACE or "Furry Animals Cook Excellently" tells me the notes in the spaces between the lines. "I cook excellently. Therefore, I'm a furry animal. Quantum theory insists that what I am depends on the observer.

If we simply switched the mnemonic FACE to past tense, we'd have this: "Furry Animals Cooked Excellently." Now that could be a menu item. And add a pinch of quantum theory and Schrodinger's cat goes missing.

For now I'm skipping both quantum and logic, and sticking with mnemonics. I remember my guitar strings, EADGBE, by repeating, "Every Acid Dealer Gets Busted Eventually." And I tune my guitar, singing merrily: "My Dog Has Fleas."

■ Tony Zurlo

The Magnificent Unified Theory of History

Meditation I:

The Expanding Universe Theory of History

Wouldn't it be comforting to know you could
recreate yourself if you ever became obsolete?
Avoid the fate of anti-history sucked into
a giant wormhole--destination unknown?

Your heartbeat achieves Warp-10, and the siren sounds,
and above you dangling plastic tubes and needles
fuse time and sound and space in your mind, and soon
you become a nomad adrift in an expanding universe.

Meditation II:

The Multiple You Theory of History

On the other hand, if there are parallel worlds out there,
maybe you could find evidence that you still exist, even
if you vanish from here. But would you recognize another
you out there? What if you were a bald-headed new born?

What if you have yet to be born in those parallel worlds?
Or maybe you have died in one or more of those worlds
and shall never reappear? Would all opportunities be lost
for you to become the champion of your imagination?

Meditation III:

The Magnificent Unified Theory of History

If self-awareness can be willed into existence,
why not will your own scripts into being, create
histories you once only dreamed, endless epics
starring your other selves from parallel worlds.

Why not unify history with your magnum opus
drawing multiples of persons from parallel worlds
to crown you Ruler of the Imagination, Creator
of The Magnificent Unified Theory of History.

Tony Zurlo

Shove it up a wormhole

I exist in *The Twilight Zone*, a parallel universe where no one blogs, and Faves are outlawed. And "MySpace" means a person's secret hide-out from the world.

And the only berries I handle there are the blackberries and strawberries and raspberries and other berries that I pick and eat with cream and sugar.

I don't iPod, p-Pod, or poo-Pod. In short-- Y-Pod? The only Pods I know are those in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and I'd prefer they not know where I live.

I do read a lot, and to do that I have to "Face the book," so I'm confused by all this nonsense about Facebook. Often when I'm lost in another world reading,

my cell phone rings and a voice says I need to buy a PodSpaceBerry or a some other kind of berry. I tell them to "Shove it up a wormhole," and hang up.