

Summer of '61

It was during the days of Camelot in D.C., an era
of youthful leadership and young followers
who sought answers to the challenge,
*Ask not what your country can do for you,
but ask what you can do for your country.*

For a college student, a summer job on Capitol Hill
filled gaps flanked by youth and adulthood,
leaving home and learning about new things,
gaining experience and knowing how to use it.

It was a time for learning responsibility, having money
to spend and needing to save, of meeting new people
and being cautious of strangers, of experiencing romance,
heartbreak, laughter and tears, holding on, letting go.

Words enlarged the world. Correspondence between
Congress and constituents, House and Senate debates,
speeches by foreign leaders—all prompted conversations,
considerations, and the formulation of personal opinions.

On July 4th, fireworks framed Washington Monument
while a military band played Stars and Stripes Forever.
As red, white, and blue flares lit-up the sky, that moment
epitomized the entire summer, when patriotism became
more than a hand-over-heart pledge of allegiance.

Linda Banks

That Day

(November 22, 1963)

As if we need to be reminded, we are reminded
anyway, of that day. Everyone old enough
to remember, remembers well, details etched
in every window looking back.

A college senior, I walked across the campus,
my penny loafers stirring up dusty leaves.
I barely noticed, lost in dreams of the future.
And while I dreamed, the world went haywire,
and nothing, nothing would ever be the same.

Inside my dorm, girls huddled in small groups.
Many cried; others stood in silence near TVs,
while newscasters repeated the horrific details
over and over... President Kennedy had been shot!
Disbelief was etched on everyone's face.
How could this happen? And right here in Texas?
Here, where our dreams were about to come true.

My first afternoon class was Business Statistics,
a requisite for graduation, the only reason I endured
endless meaningless discussions of means, averages,
and medians. But that day we talked about the news.
There was nothing to say, but nothing else to talk about,
until our instructor answered a soft knock at the door.
He returned to tell us that our President was dead.

For a long moment, the room filled with silence.
I stared through a long row of windows, trees
outside still spilling their leaves, as if nothing
had changed. From the day's shock and sorrow,
we were thrust into a realm of callous reality,
stunned by our professor's mocking rhetoric,
"I wonder what will happen to the stock market?"

Barbara L. Berry

JANUARY MOON

Enormous orange moon
hovers on the horizon
contemplating
his ascent to stardom.
I want to leap out
touch the surface
join his orbit of Earth.
I want to bathe in bubbles
gurgling from the Galaxy,
observe my reflection
from the light of Venus,
free-float among the planets.
I want to search the Moon's
surface for remnants of history,
find the footprints of Buzz Aldrin,
listen for sounds of water and life.
I want to breathe in Creation, and
at curtain call, I want my spirit
flung out among the universe,
a new star just waiting
to be discovered.

*Barbara Lewie Berry©
June, 2010*

Published in Moon, The Eighth Continent, An Anthology of Space Poetry, 2011

Barbara L. Berry

ANCIENT VOICES

Deep within the darkness
of this mysterious rusty land
we wait, Kavita and Koco,
lone survivors of the ancient
floodwaters that once covered
the terrain, carved the craters,
sculpted the carbonate canyons,
then receded into a frozen sea.

One by one the missions come –
sophisticated scientific machines
bearing names like Spirit,
Opportunity and Curiosity –
seeking answers; these dedicated
explorations fueled by infinite
ideologies and personal passions.

Each expedition comes closer,
diligently harvesting new clues,
measuring, probing, reasoning,
while we – trapped in the debris
of this hollow exiled life-form –
wait patiently for our redemption.

Persistent Earthling intellect holds
the key that will eventually unlock
the secret to our fossilized existence.
Whatever is – has already been...
what will be has been before;
and therein lies the solution to
a new world and a new society.

Barbara Lewie Berry©
July 30, 2012

(Quote from Ecclesiastes 3:15)

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WHAT LIES BEYOND

The box is heavy – filled with keys to doors of our past,
doors that define who we were and where we have been.

Keys that unlocked doors to a childhood home, our first
apartment, and homes we sadly sold after our parents died.

Keys to doors of the buildings that housed our careers,
stored our excesses, protected our RV and boat.

Keys to doors of vehicles we drove – Volkswagens,
Cadillacs, Dodge trucks, and Ford station wagons.

Keys to doors of hotels – Rooms 333, 805, 123 –
from forgotten locations in unremembered years.

These many keys represent doors through which we have
entered and eventually left. Now, in these retirement years,
what lies beyond the revolving door of aging and infirmity?

Is there a key that will unlock the door of memory loss
and open the door of happiness and joy we once had?

Surely – here in this heavy box – there is one
slender golden key that will open the precious door
of your mind and allow me to see the real you again.

Barbara Lewie Berry©
April 30, 2012

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The Price of Principle

The curdle of blackening bloodshed filled the room.
The tang of rotten iron struck her nose.
She could have stayed behind, but, No, she chose
To enter the abattoir, rank with gloom:
“I’m honor-bound to see what I consume.”
The noxious reek infected all her clothes.
The curdle of blackening bloodshed filled the room.
The tang of rotten iron struck her nose.
It clung, as breath from some malignant tomb.
She couldn’t blot its stench by chanting “rose,”
Or “fresh-baked bread,” “new snow,” or “baby’s toes.”
As she recalled the slaughter house, its lowing and its spume,
The curdle of blackened bloodshed blossomed in every room.

A Thank You Note for a Box of Berries

Holy objects: when placed upon the tongue
And crushed, berries yield up all their savors.
Our mouths respond as if sliced by razors.
We sip at wines like those a press has wrung,
taste both mature reds, whites, sparkling and young.
We parse the proffered sweet meats for their flavors:
(Holy objects, when placed upon the tongue).
When crushed, berries yield up all their savors,
And purple marks each mouth the fruit has stung
With its sharp sizzle and its sweet quavers.
Thank you for the kindness of this favor
We shared your treat with those we live among:
Holy objects, when placed upon the tongue.

Silk

Silk swathes my body in sensation.
Silk embraces, slithers, grazes, sings.
It infiltrates the places perfume clings.
It tempts, then conquers hesitation,
It licks me with anticipation.
Again it whispers its flirtation.
Silk swathes my body in sensation.
Silk embraces, slithers, grazes, sings.
Though it may call for conflagration,
As the burn of yearning stings and stings,
And leaves my hopes but scorched, unraveled strings
As I beg for immolation,
Silk swathes my body in sensation.

Donna Bowling

Window View, Chisos Basin, a.m.

Weighted by stillness, cool, clear air caressed me.
Even the birds seemed to hold their breath
when God offered a morning rose
as clouds above the mountains.

Silence seeped into my soul
like rain into the parched, Texas landscape.
The quiet lifted my spirits on wings of hope,
as I breathed peace deep into my spirit,

respite from life's blows,
time to catch my breath and regain my balance.
Kairos time, holy time, Sabbath,
set apart from daily demands,

time to remember whose I am,
face the unknown future,
renew my strength and gather myself
to soar with eagles.

Window View, Chisos Basin, p.m.

The mountains listen, contemplate eternity in wordless prayer.
Even the breeze passes without sound, a sigh too deep for words.
My heart stills, breathes. Without words, I do not know myself.

I return to the time before speech,
when I communed with God without effort,
my heart beating in tune with the center

of the universe.
My pulse slows,
finds its original rhythm.

In the Window of the Chisos Mountains,
I recognize God's gap-toothed grin,
And my heart responds with joy.

November 6, 2012

Donna Bowling

Dust to Dust

“For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.” Psalm 103:14

A star implodes. Debris scatters through time
across vastness of universe and space.
Dust to coalesce into enzyme,
amoeba, and fish in a dance of grace.

Dispersed by God, clouds of holy stardust
are building blocks to fuel life’s creation.
Spoken into being, we are then thrust
into a race to discover our salvation.

Though we will return to dust, we are yet
a reflection of God, creatures of light,
light we forget in our life’s daily sweat
until the moment our souls take flight.

We sparkle on high and shine with the stars,
to live with God in a heaven made ours.

October 8, 2013

Cassy Burleson

ON BUILDING AND REMODELING

I want a house with windows everywhere
So we can reach out and touch each other
Whenever we want to. So I can feel
As close to air and earth and water as I do to you.
And as close to sky as I want you to feel with me.

A place where, when I really want to be myself,
I can be myself in the same space with you and not have to hide in closets
To find solitude. And as for other rooms, a burst of emerald green there
Where sun can blaze on me like the wizard of "ahs" you are,
Light strong and pure, with fuel for health and hope and moonshine.

And as for doors, I've always wanted
Enough doors to escape when I felt like it,
And enough exits so you can leave me
If you wish. Here. Or there. Either way,
You will always have a worn and cozy spot in my heart's fireplace.

And as for floors, I want the floors to be
As warm to my touch in winter as you could be --
And as light to my touch as you are in a summer creek --
And half as soft as silk will do as well ...
With tiles laid in as beautiful a pattern as I am in your arms.

And as for paint on walls,
I want no walls between us,
And paint
Is such a simple thing
As can be left to taste.

Cassy Burleson

Time Travelers

Lime and salt in our wounds
Tends to purify us, overall,
Tears are the molten metal
That makes us pure

Or more pure than we would have been,
Overall, given just bliss, as far as I can tell,
Having only been here and suffered only so much,
Only so briefly ... so far. But it's nearly killed me ... overall.

And so far, it's clear I've learned so little about that stuff which purifies,
But you, my treasured friend, have been instrumental in my education
This year, so I am ever-grateful for heroes such as you
Who have *really* suffered and can still talk about it.

I talk little, squirming in my self-absorption, trying to be more than this,
Rebellious – but fist rising – and hoping for a better tomorrow for us all while
Thinking about rain on a tin roof from a Gulf squall, the sound of the surf rising ...
And erasing the rest ... as best we can.

Cassy Burleson

Transfiguration (i.e., a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual shape)

Probably was still drunk on lust ... but never started out with prayers. Especially just after midnight.
Yes, everything happens for a reason ... your sunrise prayer toward the east like blue mist rising over water.
Landing like butterfly kisses on my Cherokee soul that good morning after. Never, ever ... This awakening ...
And you may never be predictable, *Peter Pan. Smarter, deeper, overall. But always my Neverland Man.*

Don't misunderstand. It's still my personal stuff, my own idolatries. MY PERSONAL SPACE ... that's sacred.
And I've been carving out my secret inner landscapes and digging in with more precision lately, overall.
Secure in God's question marks. My best friend already lives in the Other World. She'll pull me though if I
Need her to. I don't know if I could do that for you. But I'll be on your side here, forevermore ...

Bold prophet, oil and flour never running out, giver of life. Do you have a mathematical equation for that?
Relevant research? I'm ... logical, which I never reveal because life hasn't been fair or predictable,
Even when I've tried to figure it out mathematically. This must make you a little bit crazy some days.
And when we're beyond now into that naked core beyond us all, well, there we are – back to square one.

But I liked it when you said: "What do you want? We shower together? ... I shower first? ... You shower first?
How do you want to do this?" You're much more confident than I am with your artificially bronzed body, and
You have an incredible ... aura. But that question, which may be routine questioning sequence, made me laugh.
And it made all the difference between you ... and the also-rans ... with their patented international pedigrees.

I like having choices and remained in our Gordian knot, watching your eyelashes flutter and feeling deep down still.
And those quiet nuances helped me understand our big differences are first-world questions beyond our prayers .
Your prayers are old and light years before us and Elijah, evermore. Our souls were pasted on before we were born.
And this earth is infinitely old – but still evolving – and that sometimes – most days – scares the Jezebel out of me.

And given our histories, we both may be a "draw," given the power of prayer, even if we don't agree, just loving God's
Charity, me ever so grateful for your strange and translucent Noahide ways and your morning prayers. Because without
Hearing those prayers, I might have tiptoed away. But after that, if God doesn't love you, then I'm giving up on God
Because God is only one shuffle of the deck away on any good Monday morning after with you. (Win, lose or draw.)

Paul Chaplo

Like the Panhandle Roadside

I think we could grow old here
Together
Watch the days go slow
Like the Panhandle roadside
In a little town with
A silver water tower
And a short name.

Retirement Plans

My retirement will be a third career
Maybe I will be a greeter or a
meter-reader
Or stay home in a fluffy robe and
slippers
And put Bailey's in my coffee

Play old country music too loud
Until my neighbors call the police
And I tell the officer "I'm hard of
hearing"

Or maybe I will take my amp
And a generator to the beach
And play blues lead lines
Out over the lake

Travel around the world
On cheap airline tickets
That I buy with a credit card
That I'll never pay off

And live so
That when I die
Even the undertaker
Will cry.

How I Learned to Dance

"Put your hand on my shoulder,"
"Don't look at your feet,"
Now we're dancing together
You're smilin' at me

That's how I learned to dance
With your hand in my mine
I fell in love with you
Once upon a time

"Don't run after her,"
"Don't push him away,"
Now we're movin' together
To the music we sway

That's how I learned to dance
With your heart near mine
I fell in love with you
Once upon a time

Now we're spinnin' together
In three-quarters time
And I'm countin' the steps
Till I make you mine

That's how I learned to dance
Once upon a time
I fell in love with you
Under a Texas moon.

Jane Cheatham

Come Walk With Me

Come walk with me as I make my way,
Come walk with me as I fill my day.
Let me share with you the wonders I see,
Let me open your eyes to things that can be,
I can guide you in ways to make yourself whole,
I can guide you in finding peace for your soul.
Come walk with me.

Come walk with me, let me lean on you.
Come walk with me, oh my friend so true.
Listen to me, stay for a while.
Talk with me, bring back my smile.
Dry my tears,
Quiet my fears
Come walk with me.

The Shouting Wind

I have chased the shouting wind around my hill
And down into the darkness of the valley
Where it came to rest in the trees.
Will he share that rest with me?
Is there room in his haven for another soul?

I have followed the lonely crow in his solitary quest,
From where?....
And to where?....
What unknown goal is he seeking?
Where does he wish to go?
I know his quest. It is my quest.
Can he share his answers with me?
Am I worthy?

Jane Cheatham

Darkness

The sun is setting, the darkness is coming.
Quietly, softly surrounding my world.
Covering the ugliness, hiding the grief,
Slowly, silently, comforting the earth.
Bringing peace to all people,
Stealing away their troubles.
Night--a most accomplished thief.

The dusk creeps over me.
Fitting like a warm cocoon.
Wrapping my being in complete bliss.
Whispering, crooning, the darkness envelopes me.
Speaking to me of the past,
Promising dreams of the future.
I can sleep like this.

Marie Berry Dixon

Larger Than Life

It takes little to impress me
Just pencil sketch your dreams
With cookie cutter clarity
Punctuate time and space
To hollow out the universe
In precise little pieces
Hence you humble my existence
Laser in to sign the times
Pull clouds from their lofty pedestals
Lay them wispy on the ground
Walk on water
Fly through caves
Bring the universe to its knees
I know you can
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circa 1985 new edit 9/9/12

Marie Berry Dixon

Dreamers

Reality
That bolt of lightning that shatters
So swiftly and deftly
A black appears
Juxtaposed against a glowing brilliance
As its laser beam opens a small clean hole
That widens and grows like a cancer
To devour the canvas of rainbow painted dreams
Of beautiful Camelot scenes with heroes
And knights with their always slain dragons
Truth and reality lie oft in the eye of the beholder
It's spoken of in many languages but no interpreters
It's written of in various versions by best selling authors
Add disagreeing scientists and historians
Truth is bought and paid for over and over
With the changing weather of political seasons
Truth often becomes too painful or merely too costly
Realities chilling wind blows hard against the messenger
Freezing him to a full stop
Cementing him to his own footprints
As he tries to outrun time
Many see reality as a necessity
To keep all dreamers well within the pasture
Most think dreamers live a pure and wondrous life
Heads floating above the hatred and necessary evils
That are the harsh realities of life
But most dreamers are battle worn soldiers
In tattered blood stained rags
Left alone
Crawling through rivers of tears
Cutting deeply the many gorges of grief
Throughout the land of realities
The only differences among them
Is how tightly the dreamers hold onto their banners
Yet all in the end are brought down
And when they are no longer able to crawl
They fall with a dream in their eye
And a smile on their soul
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(new edit 7/10/12]

Marie Berry Dixon

Words

The writer enters a private almost sacred space
It penetrates the membrane of a quiet personal place
To illuminate a special point in time
With words that take us through
Ideas disagreements disappointments and passions
And far away from the lure of petty enticements
Words can grind a permanent imprint on the soul
They can move and prompt to tell again
To others in future encounters and differing circumstances
As they reach out to distant places
Words can water and so replenish
Dry crusty corners of the mind
Words are sometimes powerful and cannot be dispelled
Like morning mist in the harsh realities of day
They can fall as seed reaching fertile soil
Touching those ripened to receive
Jolting one past a complacent passive place
Making bold explorers of the meek
Or brighten a mournful heart
Awaken all readers and listeners
And so rise above this earthly place
Awaken all writers
Give voice
As we commit to feast on words throughout the ages

Marcie Eanes

Teaching Knowledge

Third grade was a powerful test
My teacher taught all
Illinois city of East St. Louis
didn't exist
Said my family reunions were held
in St. Louis, another city and state
across the mighty Mississippi
Natural Bridge their link

She dismissed its rich history
Founded in 1797, manufacturing proud
Once a national Model City
 storied past includes
Al Capone slipping down from Chicago
dropping moonshine
on East St. Lou's Poplar St. Bridge
Speakeasies and hideouts pointed out
on tours,
Many American contributions
too numerous to name

Now sitting in my family's church,
a few miles from Missouri,
I bid goodbye to my grandmother
who missed a century by a year
Seeing deep Illinois roots fill each pew
Remembering, too, my Dad's talk
that third grade eve
Naming successes like
Jimmy Connors, Miles Davis,
Josephine Baker, Katharine Dunham
many more
But maintaining peaceful strength
in the face of arrogance
was my father's indelible lesson

Marcie Eanes

Paying Dues

Keep singing and performing
in more rooms with more chairs than people
Where light and shadows compete
for space during frigid winter nights
Belt out melodies,
act as if hundreds of thousands
are squeezed into those tiny rooms
Hanging on to your every word...
Forget weariness from numbing job;
you know what's important
When stage lights rise,
each note sounds richer, fuller
Every second the pursuit continues...

Spirit mixes with raw yearning
stirred by focused motivation
Paying dues adds seasoning
not obtained by blind imitation
Studying beloved greats,
honing skills amid the drudgery,
Delivers the best step by step
Add versatility's nimble flow
Refusing label's limited box
and you're ready to soar even more
Performing in places
beyond your dreams

The mantle gets passed
quicker than you think
There's always another intently watching
struggling to sum up spotlight courage
Last performance went horribly wrong
chasing The Dream
Knees buckled,
strings snapped,
lines forgotten
What a disastrous mess!
But teacher renews pupil;
mental notes are made to learn more
Shaking hands the final seal
Parting as friends
Both ready to face new challenges

Marcie Eanes

If I Were A Poem

If I were a poem, rainbow colors would mark my trail.
Azure sky paired with warm yellow sun,
hovering over a riot of flowers
planted firmly in dark, rich soil
Music of all kinds would fill the air:
salsa meets jazz, rock meets soul, gospel, meditation.
All notes peacefully co-exists
as one in my world

If I were a poem, favorite foods would join
experimental dishes just for fun
Hang out with exotic drinks for huge parties
or quiet reflection
Yoga and ballet stretch my mind
No stale thinking allowed
A few silent gray clouds
found in sky hold tears cried,
reminders that life has silver linings

If I were a poem, every line would push for better cadences
Dorothy and Bennie reside in my veins
beside the red, white, blue
The future is mine, more living awaits!
Life's meant for sharing and laughs,
more joy after the rain
And when that day comes
(that one which ends this life on earth),
dreams will be fulfilled
and cherished memories
of those left behind
will inspire all along the way

RAIN SHADOW

In an unseen shadow the mountains cast
lie these high and rolling plains.
It is not the cooling shade that falls
when summits block the hot
and drying rays of sun,
but a shadow born when mountain ranges
seize the winds,
strip the clouds of all they bear
and send them on,
 translucent husks of thistle down,
to make what spreads
five hundred miles beyond, below,
this giant land of little rain.

SILENT SYMPHONY

The blacktop highway ran
before the headlights of the car,
a dark river, beneath a darker sky.

The hiss and hum of road and wheels hushed.
The windshield framed the stage of night.
It began as might a symphony of light
with a flickering within a cloud
like a candle flame fluttering in a draft
behind a curtained window.

Another flicker followed, then another,
tempo building, intensity increasing,
as if tympanies pounded out the measures
until from horizon to the greatest height
bright implosions lit the tower cloud
with muted colors of the night.

Then in a blare of speed and light
an electric bolt of blazing white shot
from the cloud and speared the ground.
The distant mesa top flashed to view,
a cymbal clash in black and white,
before it dashed again to darkness.

The fingers of a hand of lightning
breached the cloud, reached
and spread across its face to trigger
ten, a score, a hundred more,
as if brass and woodwinds,
strings and drums and cymbals drove

the jagged burning cracks from cloud
to cloud across the bowl of sky,
too many for the eye to count,
until in full crescendo
the dome of heaven shattered
and collapsed into the dark.

A lone flicker fluttered on the horizon.
As if a cello and a single flute played on,
the cloud tower slipped apart and drifted off.
Breaking light from moon and stars
lit the short grass prairie by the fence
where the two-lane blacktop ran
before the headlights of the car.

Tricia Ferguson

Wandering Reflections

Here in the clamor is a single ray of light
Here in the silence beat a thousand golden wings.
Here in the morning sun, a single burst of thunder.
And in the darkness, a firecracker.

Here in the mirror blue, a pebble falls.
Here in the eternal stream, an arrow twangs.
Here in the wavering green, a splash, a shimmer.
And in the silence, a flash of silver.

Here in the drumming rain, a sunbeam flies.
Here in the lathered sky, a mountain crumbles.
Here in the bright green leaf, a ruthless battle.
And in the rain-bow, a breaking sky.

Tricia Ferguson

The Grasshopper' Ode to the Ant

Because the Grasshopper has a point of view

For Gail, the equipment works,
The coffee pot, the ice machine,
The wheels of society that never,
Never turn for me.

For Gail, with efficiency
Can bake a pie or mend a roof.
I have satisfactions, too,
But little built.

I know the rhythms each by name
and can discuss the use of each.
I understand the art of rhyme,
But Gail can spell.

I reap a harvest sown for me
By Milton, Donne, and Blake. I parse
The passages of time. For Gail,
The work gets done.

Shirley

Shirley, with the snapping, laughing eyes,
Has wicked tales to tell,
Black curls bobbing as she lies.
Shirley almost never sighs,
But she has hurts.

Shirley likes to hear her poems rhymed.
But she gives a mocking answer--
Damning praise. Shirley, for her
Every day is timed--
A victory.

Shirley, dancing, trancing through each day,
Has emptiness inside her, too.
When an ebbing, flowing tide of love
Almost fills her bay, she
Draws back too soon.

DARK SHADOWS

Evening shadows crept slowly
across old varnished farmhouse floors,
painting his chair in dark triangles.

Sunlight slipped through lace panels
tracing splotches on his worn slippers,
the elastic in his socks long ago gone,

stained rocker creaking as his toes pushed
on dusty oval rug. His lips draw in fragrant
tobacco, the cold pipe cupped in his palm.

Dark draped all as blackness grew, war-torn
ear drums forever dulled depended on dim
eyes to tell him when to flip on the lamp.

Light flooded the corner lifting his thoughts,
brows arching as he read round lips of family
gathering home. Turning his hearing aids up,

Dad shifted in curve-shaped faded calico
cushions sewn from his bride's church dress,
now plumped by his young granddaughter.

Sun-shapes silently shifted from gold to red,
peek-a-booing in what-nots, then disappearing as
faces smiled and rocker rocked in carpet ruts.

Vina Hathaway

The Patchwork Quilt

Mom never threw anything away,
as everything was recycled for another day.
Socks once darned while stretched over mugs
were cut into strips for braided hook rugs.

Calico scraps from dresses sewn new
became patches or pockets as little girls grew.
Plain pieces one now and then sees
were ovals for worn elbows and knees.

Mom had a way of making fun known
as hems were let down and Rick Rack sewn,
and Daddy's suit pants with the shinny seat
became ladies skirts to wear on the street.

Her fingers were busy and nimble
stitching squares with thread and thimble;
new ones and old ones, stripes and triangles
all pieced together at assorted angles.

The patchwork quilt of memories and charm
kept the whole family cozy and warm.
Now spread out, gracing a nursing home,
we talk about the love where it came from.

There Was a Flutter

There was a flutter,
A breeze, or was it?
The tiniest bird, just a blur,
A thimble-sized turquoise bit.

A breeze, or was it?
Zooming past my ear,
A thimble-sized turquoise bit.
Air churning near,

Zooming past my ear,
The sound of low buzzing,
Air churning near,
Humming, humming.

The sound of low buzzing,
The tiniest bird, just a blur
Humming, humming;
There was a flutter.

Pat Hauldren

AS A HUMAN

As a woman I can sit idly by
while crickets chirp and leaves rustle
their applause around a bizarre arena
of grass and beer cans defined by the porch light.

As a daughter I recall
quieter times
of love and strength,
of family and smiles.

As a stranger I stare
past the sights of a rifle
at two men struggling
over lost youth, titles, pride and ego.

As a human I relinquish
my self pity as I fire
at a tin can in the street
announcing my decision without pain.

I AM ME!

I am me!
I shout to the stars.
I am me!
Not Podkayne of Mars.
Of blood and of flesh, diverse and complex
I am me.

I am me!
I cry in rebuke.
I am me!
Not a reed in a flute.
Both woman and girl, with heart yet unfurled
I am me.

I am me!
I am growing and grown.
I am me!
In crowds stand alone.
Your grave has flowers, I've built glass towers
I am me.

Pat Hauldren

LIMBO LIES

In the castle dark the shadow lurks
Dank walls shelter creatures nocturnal
Air as close and thick as fog
A murky bog of stench fills down
Below earth's crust where iron clad bones
Did rust in days of yore. And
Dream I did of a shade smart and canny.
Still it awaits my dream state.
Well hidden beneath seven dream layers I drown.
Each breath is labored.
There is no sound as darkness covets
My sleeping form to sift and sap
One lone life.
I flicker, dimmer
My futile flight.
Demon that I loathe.
Have I escaped death?
Have I dared defy the laws of God?
In limbo I float, knowing not which world I rest,
Which layer of sleep will hide me best.

Edgar Watkins, Cheese Head

(A Spoon River Poem in Rhyme)

My name was Edgar; I read cheese;
friends and I were seers of leaves,
then moved to Wisconsin and found
the cheese to watch, both square and round.
Tyromancy is what it's called,
I thought it strange, became enthralled.
The art is ancient, old and couth;
the cheese predicts tomorrow's truth.
You look for color, is it deep?
With golden cheese you smile asleep
because it means good years for you:
your clan will feed on honeydew.
Coagulation speed gives signs;
slow jells are good; quick shivers spines.
I loved the modern world most times
but I still liked old paradigms,
and seeing futures rang my bell.
It helped us all when I could tell
how our days would be tomorrow,
full of joy or maybe sorrow.
I thought that I would write a letter,
explaining Gouda, Brie and Cheddar,
but when I sliced them up for study
my dagger slipped and made me bloody.
Buried with sixteen pounds of Brie,
I met my death quite cheeselessly.

J. Paul Holcomb

Previously published in *A Book of the Year, Poetry Society of Texas*

J. Paul Holcomb

Queen Anne's Lace

The dainty plants look
lovely in spring—
flowering doilies,
living lace adding
culture to my yard.

But once the rains
of spring have moved on
and the plants mature,
decorum is done.
Elegant blooms may whiten
yards in spring, but turn fierce
in heat. They transform
to determined pellets
that stick to my dog's fur
and to legs of my pants.

I cut them down while
they bloom. It's not easy
to walk through beauty
and whack at innocence.
The plants fall delicately,
desecration no reason
to abandon good manners.

I feel cruel but I persist.
These delicate flowers
become bold hangers-on;
at the end of her reign
Queen Anne turns tacky.

J. Paul Holcomb

Previously published in *Willow Creek Journal*

Sandi Horton

My House of Poetry

Every night as I lay down to sleep
Poetry dances in the darkness
I close the books but
The words magically escape

Poetry lives in my house
I feel it in my body
I hear it in my head
I see in in my dreams

The words are playful
And make me smile
The words are melancholy
And make me cry

I wish the words would be silent
So I could go to sleep
They have so many friends
Visiting in my house of poetry

Moving About

The ghosts appear
 when I least expect them
So bright I almost
 need shades
Pure and white and
 Moving about

Some ghosts make a sound
 deathly quiet
A ring in the ears
 like passing out
I sense their energy
 Moving about

Can anyone else see them
 or hear them
The ghosts in the corners
 I know
Unexpected guests wherever I go
 Moving about

Sandi Horton

Another Perfect Morning

Sky of blue with half a moon
Mantras of bird songs
Racing squirrels finally rest
Another perfect morning

The sun on my face
The earth under bare toes
The breeze caresses my skin
Another perfect morning

An old dog sleeps serenely
Another dog delightfully digs
Two dogs tug on a branch
Another perfect morning

I feel contented,
Reverent, enchanted,
And thankful for
Another perfect morning

Phil Cade Huie

Kitten Magic

Gentle the kitten knows
Secrets of softness
Burrowing cuddles
Tiny nose dampness
Quiet breath dusting
My skin with her warmth
Featherweight trusting
Asleep in my hand.

And then a purr trembles
The tiny heart dances
To pulses of music
Only cat souls can hear
Pink tongue curls yawning
A dream twitches whiskers
Clinging paws hug me
And peace tender descends.

Going Blind

Stars once glittered
Like fireflies, gold-bright
Before this cruel foggy cloak
Erased all traces of the light
And snuffed out the candle flames
Of night

Buried alive, I struggle
As a heartless ebony blanket
Gently lowers over me
Pressing icy hands against my face
To absorb my tears
With promises of oblivion
That will replace the fragile gift
Of vision

I miss your eyes, whose burning stars
Have melted into velvet gray;
Like a watercolor in the rain
Remembered beauty is washed away.
Dewshine no more sparkles
Sunsets fade and die
And my creative heart lies weeping
For no longer can I see
And no more can I rely
On memory.

Phil Cade Huie

Moon Voyage

She led our slithering steps from the ooze
As we strained toward her silver light,
Liquid blood guided by her power
Through endless millennia of night;
We were helpless against the slow rhythm
Of her relentless celestial song
Like ocean tides whose dance she designed
We worked with her and learned to be strong
To ease our fears of night's darkness
Her light spilled through narrow cave doors
She gave us the courage and curiosity
To venture forth and discover new shores.
She pulled herds across lands for us to follow,
She heard humanity's first baby's cry
Mapped stone rings into the first calendar
Taught tribes to travel with eyes on the sky,
She shaped our first tentative ceremonies
To celebrate hunters come safe home again
And steered our eyes to the cycles of harvests,
Watched us plant the first kernels of grain.
She's shed light to illumine our visions
From the start she shaped dreams into form
Gave us company through long hours of darkness
And hope for an end to the storm.
She's taken a thousand names of the goddess,
Wears the fecund light of Hathor's crown
Is the deity of childbirth and healing
And the resurrection in Isis's palm.
She transmutes the sun's golden energy
Into an enchanted light of her own
Emblazoned with legend and mystery
She rules the darkness of night alone
She has inspired the hearts of lovers
With her own tale of marriage to the sun,
Seduced our souls to believe in love's magic
Taught us to hold hands and move as one;
And as years take their toll on our bodies,
She softens the lines in our faces
Keeps sparkles alive in our eyes
And gentles time's earthly traces.
Now through darkness and danger we've flown
To lay daring hands on her distant face
Leaving human bootprints forever imprinted
In her flesh, to prove our embrace,
As a promise of explorations to finish
Dreams fulfilled and encounters to come,
We have traveled from ocean to orbit,
From mud to the mirror of the sun.

Catherine L'Herrison

At the Kite Festival

Shaped like a big bat,
the bluish-black stunt kite
with long red tail
climbs, swoops, dips, and dives
before gyrating in giant circles.
Spinning faster and faster
in ever increasingly smaller circles,
the red tail becomes a lariat
that lassos the sky.

She watches him in the open field,
observes his hands, the subtle motions
that control the dual lines,
makes the kite do his bidding.
She remembers when they first met,
how quickly the small things he did
set her emotions spinning faster
and faster, until her heart strings
spun in circles, entwined her heart,
bound them together for life.

Published in *A Book of the Year 2013* by the Poetry Society of Texas

Catherine L'Herrison

In Minnesota Again

for Linda

Rushed, we didn't have time
for her to pose for a photo
where I really wanted
to take her picture,
but in my imagination,
I envision her there—
she, smiling, with her
premature snow-white hair
glistening in the light,
white blouse with blue trim,
blue slacks, white sandals,
standing in front of that tree
so full of white blossoms,
it had no room for leaves.
Although no photo was taken,
in my mind's eye, I see her—
my poet friend, who like
that tree, has blossomed.

Published in *The Earth Still Turns* by the Brown Bag Poets

Plant Sale

When I went out this morning,
I spied a lot of males.
They were waiting to enter the gate
at one of my neighbors' plant sales.
But I couldn't understand
why there was such a line,
and what the draw could be,
until I caught a glimpse of the sign
that said, "Naked Ladies For Sale." *

*Naked Lady is another name for Spider Lilies

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by the Brown Bag Poets

Anne McCrady

The Calf Died

Under a moon too full to last,
one night past a perfect circle of light,
after an afternoon of anguished struggle,
we, two women, cow and keeper,
working for this long-awaited birth,
find our day is done. She lies exhausted
in the hay; I am sprawled against
the stall. Between us, our shared endeavor
is curled: wet, motionless, perfect.

In the hours that have passed,
the welcomed burst of February sun has set.
Darkness has overtaken us. The flowers
my family gave me for Valentine's Day
are fading on the table, the card unopened.
Supper, never cooked. Calls, never made.

Confused by the labored hours,
I lift myself, step outside,
collapse on the concrete step,
as the mother's bawls
become a call to prayer
beneath my whimpering song.
Looking up, searching for stars,
a warm stream of tears fills my ears
with the silence of interruption.

Above us, haloed by clouds,
the moon too heaves itself up
from the horizon, its misty spectral glow
rippled in the ridges of the metal barn.
Inside, the cow quiets; the night stills.
Tomorrow there will be more sun, more work.
Tonight I need this step, this crying bench,
to ache for all we love that does not live.

Anne McCrady

My Body Takes a Chance

Feet up, torso softly folded
into my work-worn sofa,
the day drenched,
I am lost in listening
to the throb and thrust
of my existence, a blood engine
pumping seventy-two times
a minute inside the wooden cage
of my rib-strapped chest.
A piston, muscle-made-machine,
my heart pounds out its purpose
as a rhythm inside my skin.
It's you, it's you, it's you,
pulsates back against fingertips
pressed to my thin-skinned wrist.
Liquid percussion in downdrafts
of drumming, the real pulse
is in the pauses between beats,
the uneven gaps when for a puff of time,
the flow of life – life! – is suspended,
and my body takes a chance
that its four flooded chambers
will remember what to do
and not lapse into the luxury
of a fluid daydream...this
being the kind of Sunday
afternoon perfect for taking it easy:
dishes finished, the kids gone,
a slow, soft rain dripping
off the roof in an autumn cadence
of *not now, not now, not now.*
Just the sort of day to let
my heart take a breather,
before I ask it to beat
back the world again.

Patrick Marshall

A Tweet from a Twittering, Sweetie

Without a feather anywhere near
I received a tweet sweet to my ear.
She sent lust and love thru time and space,
A scarlet hot flash engulfed my face.
No time spent waiting for a letter,
Tweets, hot and fresh, are so much better.

In an instagram, thru time and space,
I sent her a smiling anxious face!
My world grew quickly, deathly quiet.
A rising fear or brewing riot—
My wife was just a tad too tweety.
The twit had tweeted, the wrong sweetie.

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Fences – Initially Unaware

I built my own fence; totally shut myself inside an escape pod going nowhere. Initially I just wanted some solitude from the frustration of an unwanted move. Time passed and I regretted the numerous walls I had built between me and the world. Encased in a mental and physical battle of wills, I existed; a slug undecided on actions of escape. Desperately wanted to warn others about building fences and the paranoia that easily seeps in, settling debates about walls and refusals to ask forgiveness for foolish behavior.

Years slipped in and out of my consciousness crying for past joys. I finally grew tired, could no longer climb over the fences I had built. Tearing them down took a toll on me, those I loved, and those who loved me.

Sometimes feeling life dictates we must build a fence, make it barbed wire. A chance for a little pain exists, if crossed incorrectly, but you can see and touch those on the other side and with a little help climb over, slide under, or crawl through the wires.

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Patrick Marshall

Fires in a Never Dying Garden

In remembrance of Violet Newton, Texas Poet Laureate, 1973

I did not know the Lady and never heard her read, never knew the joy it must have been to sit and talk with her, sharing life and imagination. I have sensed the gratification she must have felt penning such beauty and accepted her sentiments when reading her lingering words, thoughts given and taken in an exchange of love.

She has only passed in spirit, remaining here ageless as emotions she shared. Countless people in the future will discover a simpler place and time when silently reciting her verses in their minds or speaking publically thoughts expressed in timeless verses unraveled through her pen.

And I, a child of poetry, devour the strokes she left on paper trying to digest the essence of charm and character contained, that I might forever remember her contribution to my voice, having enjoyed the sweet taste of her words.

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Patsy Mayhan

[Music and Lyrics composed by Rick Stitzel and Patsy Mayhan]

REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

Ornate Box Turtle

I'm a turtle slowly walking at a crawling pace
If I moved a little faster
I would like to Race!

The Scarlet Kingsnake

I'm a snake that's hiding in the rocks
I would like to crawl into your socks
See my skin is yellow, black and red
I would like to hide under your bed.

The Blue-spotted Salamander

I am a blue spotted salamander
I like to sleep all day
Then when the sun goes down at night
I come out to play
Deep in the forest where I live
Life is pretty neat
There I have everything I need
like snakes and bugs to eat CHOMP!

The Reticulate Collard Lizard

I'm a collard Lizard from the Rio Grande
I am strong and perky
Playing in the sand
You might like to catch me
There is just no way
If you try to catch me
I will run away
I'm a speedy fellow fastest in the land
I'm a collard lizard from the Rio Grande

The Ornate Chorus Frog

I'm a frog that is hopping down the road
Sometimes people think I am a toad
I just like to sing my froggy song
Would you like to sing along?
RIB-BIT RIB-BIT RIB-BIT

Jessica Ray

Aida

Silver bracelets cascading down her arms glisten
on a bright morning in Petra
Jordan's treasure of treasures

Flowing traditional headscarf covers her long dark hair
But that is where tradition ends -
western jeans and t-shirt take the day
and of course ubiquitous flip-flops

"My name is Aida" she announces
in her distinctly Jordanian accent
We meet on a dusty road
where breathtaking works of art are chiseled from mountain peaks
Reaching to the heaven

She is there to sell her wares . . .
beguiling as Little Egypt performing
her unique belly dance for a Bedouin sheik

In no time she makes me the proud owner of two silver bracelets -
a self-appointed tour guide she walks beside me and queries . . .
"Do you have anything from America?"

(I wonder if she could know that centuries ago
this city of antiquity was a great trading center
that led to the Near East by way of the Mediterranean -
No probably not . . . (just wondering)
Was the art of selling in her DNA?

Aida sizing me up has something in mind . . . maybe something I am wearing
Moments later smiling with glee . . .
an oversized pair of sun glasses tilt unsteadily on her nose
dwarfing her tiny face
(size doesn't seem to matter to her at all)

There is magic here - one of the new Seven Wonders of the World
But there is another magic . . . so enchanting . . . bridging antiquity and the present
Selling silver bracelets and flashing her dazzling smile . . . asking
"Do you have anything from America?"

Jessica Ray

Wonder* in the Desert

Once upon a time . . .
on a Pale Blue Dot in space
an island appeared on the shores of time

And now from the distant past
It suddenly leaps out
to shine and dance once again
in Earth's ancient drama

A mythical city shrouded in silence and mystery . . . a lost jewel
uncovered to sparkle in the sands of Jordan
and dazzle the beholder millenia later

Surely an army of artists labored as though
they were forming the Earth itself
 Their blood on fire with the love of creating
Carving out astonishing sculpture temples tombs on the slopes of Mount Hor
to become poetry in stone

As I wander this path you walked
 I wonder . . .
 What took you away from this paradise
 war plunder disease searing hot summers?

A laurel crown to each of you and your untold story
Your honor is etched in every stone

* Petra, Jordan, one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Sue Roberts

Declamation Day by Tom Sawyer

When I was just a young'un
Maybe in school a year,
The teacher said some dreaded words
That all did seem to fear.

She stood right up one morning
Delivered these words of grief,
Next Tuesday will be Declamation Day
Some girls began to weep.

Now, I didn't have no idea, see
What a dreaded day was to come.
If so I'd had a belly-ache
And kept myself to home,

Then I found out what happens
On that declaiming day,
The teacher gives you a paper
Showin' what you should say.

It was mostly words of others,
You was expected to recite.
And put some effort in it,
So it would sound just right.

Now here I was a southern boy,
And pretty sure I ain't
Never gonna recite no words,
Ever spoke by U. S. Grant.

Well, I might recite some words,
Of Bobby Lee or Jefferson Davis
Those sons of the Confederacy
That worked so hard to save us.

But if that teacher wants me to say
Some words some yankee said,
Well, I'll just tell her straight out,
I'd just as soon be dead.

If she'll only let me recite Bob Lee,
I'll give them something to remember.
The farewell words he spoke that day,
He delivered his sword in surrender.
My fear was realized one day,
She put me to the test.
When in later years she handed me,
Lincoln's Gettysburg address.

But I done what any good southern boy would
And declaimed it with so much grace
Speaking words of a yankee,
Won me a blue ribbon for first place.

Jim and Me

The old man and the small boy
Were quite a sight to see
Such an unlikely friendship
Between old Jim and me.

What do they have in common?
People would often say
A small boy and an old man
Whittling his life away.

We'd sit upon a wooden bench
On the old courthouse square
He'd tell me tales, while whittling
Of hunting buffalo and bear.

I never tired of listening to his
Tales of derring-do
Of learning where the doves nest
And why the sky is blue.

He whittled me a pony
A blue bird and a dog
And told me why the rabbit
Likes to sleep in a hollow log.

He told me tales of bandits
And lawmen strong and true.
How the leopard got its spots
How to make wishes come true.

If I could learn to whittle
And tell a tale or two
When I am old, I'll find a boy
To share my derring-do.

I'd tell him of my own exploits
Over the land and sea
But mostly I'd tell him of the friendship
Between Old Jim and me.

The Bed of a Pick-up Truck

Some southern men have a ritual.
They practice it most every day.
They all gather round that pick-up truck,
Staring in its bed as if watching a play.

What are they looking for, I wonder,
In the bed of that old pick-up truck.
Maybe if they look long enough,
It's sure to bring good luck.

There's seldom much conversation,
As might be expected from men.
After a spell of looking one might say,
Ole Bubba's been drinking again.

Upon further viewing of that pick-up bed,
Another might venture, that's bad.
He ought to look after his Mama,
Instead of his no account Dad.

If a poet sees the world in a grain of sand,
Then surely with a little luck,
Them good old boys may see the same,
In the bed of that pick-up truck.

To gaze in a pick-up bed so intently,
Could even be deemed as spiritual.
Perhaps they search for the meaning of life,
As they perform this treasured ritual.

Or maybe they do it just because,
It's something their Daddies did.
After all boys must follow Dad's steps,
From the time that he's a kid.

If a poet lacks inspiration,
And waits by the muse to be struck,
Perhaps he could gather with the good old boys,
Find salvation in the bed of a pick-up truck.

Conquering the Red Maple

For Lyle, Lee and Dawn

I'd spent the day cleaning up
last red maple leaves.
Felt good to work hard.
Felt good to cook dinner,
radio on and candles lit,
though knowing more leaves would fall.

It's funny, the memory seems so recent,
so far away, that Thanksgiving.
I held Dawn in my lap as the swing
did its slow drift. The other kids
raked and piled those generations
of leaves, running, jumping, scattering.

Lee, breathless would come up the steps,
climb in the swing with us for a brief
rest and a slightly rigorous hug
before returning to the leaves,
the raking, the running, the jumping
and Lyle as he covered himself in fall.

Lovingly, the holiday left
behind promises to return.
They do return, Dawn or Lee or Lyle.
Perhaps the leaves and more raking
prove the quote, "We have to do
the things we can't not do"

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Letter from Ogden in the Mid-West

My Dearest Frances, Isabel and Lanell:
How great! My daughters have rhyming names.
I may need any rhyme I can find after my welcome
in Tulsa and OKC. Hollis Russell, the bookseller,
did sell 200 books at his 3-7 soiree, so thus
I am writing this with limp arm
from shaking hands, shaking hand from signing
books, each recipient requesting "just a short, short
rhyme with my name" How many different ways
can I use "anther and panther" "Driscoll and Episcal"
"Brown and crown" "Doubleday and Hemmingway"?
in the swamp of oil barons with only my verse and
Free Wheeling to defend myself?

I was rescued by my host and chauffeured
To what I thought would be a quiet dinner
And early return to the Biltmore. (Note their fine
Stationery.) Not so, a mansion full of guests
who parked their oil wells outside, were inside
for more autographs and by now the advertised
short verse. I was once told: When you do something
two times, it becomes tradition. Maybe I can call it
An Oklahoma tradition. Tomorrow I greet the Texas
Cattle barons. Maybe I should buy boots and chaps
with the \$51.00 I received for two poems from the New Yorker.

I close with all of the love that keeps me in good spirits
When I know that we will be together in a matter of days,
hours and minutes now. I think of you constantly, even
the train hums your names, Frances, Isabel, Lanell,
Frances, Isabel, Lanell as I retire to my berth.
All, all my love forever plus our five extra minutes.
Goodnight my adorable ones, Ogden

Daddy

p.s. So far no one has asked me to recite
Burgess' Purple Cow

p.p.s. One word of advice to my young ladies:
Generally speaking, it's better
To call older men *Mister*

Jeannette L. Strother

Wavering Path at the Stone Pavement in Hebrew Gabbatha

“Pilate, therefore went forth again, and saith unto them,
Behold, I bring him to you, that ye may know
I find no fault in him.” John 19:3

That night my bed was a restless tomb
as I wrestled demons in my head.
Torn between duty and conscience
I did not want the night to end.

In my dreams, my hands dripped red
with flesh ripped on a pure white lamb.

They said...He raised the dead,
healed the sick, cleansed the leper
and gave sight to the blind.

Who was I?
to stand in judgment
of such a man.

I queried...He answered.
I found no fault in him.

I, the Governor for Rome, in Judea
had worn a trail from door to room
I raised my hands and washed them clean
and released to the them...their King.

Leaders roused the rabble, posted the cry,
“Release the robber! Barabbas!”
I questioned, “What, of this man, Jesus?”

They insisted,
“Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Jeannette L. Strother

Winter's Treat

I open my mouth in awe
at the low widespread nimbostratus
rushing in with a northern blow.
One by one from frigid sky,
first a flutter then a flurry
and dumps in blizzard squall.
White icy lace of intricate physique,
softly to my lips it falls
soft and wet and clean.

homage to my hips

these hips are big hips
they need space to
move around in.
they don't fit into little
petty places. these hips
are free hips.
they don't like to be held back.
these hips have never been
enslaved,
they go where they want to go
they do what they want to do.
these hips are mighty hips.
these hips are magic hips.
i have known them
to put a spell on a man and
spin him like a top

By **Lucille Clifton** 1936–2010

**pardon me miss clifton
homage to my lips**

these lips are soft lips
they are are a size
perfect for my face.
they don't need more stain
just a ready smile. these lips
are warm and brown.
they don't like to frown.
these lips have no lock and key.
they diss who they want to diss
they kiss who they want to kiss.
these lips are heady lips
these lips are voodoo lips
i watched them hex a man
to lose himself
in a dervish whirl.

Jeannette L. Strother

Susan Beall Summers

Haiku

in silver moonlight
fish spawn in feverish whorls
life dances in tides

Haiku

grey Monday
I drink my blues with coffee
as mourning doves coo

Susan Beall Summers

If I Could Remember

If I were a young child and I could remember
all the days of summer which were filled with wonder -
riding down that old clay hill,
lying in the grass, wishing on stars and finding gold 'neath rainbows,
I'd find the sun and make it shine on me and you.

If we were young lovers and we could remember
all the ways you touched me and the moments filled with beauty-
making love all night long,
weaving dreams into stories, and laughing so carefree,
I'd find the belief that love can last for me and you.
Yes, it would be true.

And I'd see you as who you are and not who you pretend to be.
The roles you've played, your accolades,
the hope that died because you never tried
would come alive and become the chance to live your life anew.

If I were a mother and I could remember
the miracle inside me growing with so much love-
nights of lullabies, holding a sleeping babe, watching so proudly as he grew,
the smiles and secrets just for two.
I'd find that place of peace and rest and fill the world with all things blessed.
and there'd be time for me and you.

Sharon Taylor

The Mind of Poetry

Late into the night
I read a book of poetry,
an anthology of minds

that rings with rhyme and
some that flow in meter.
Others scatter

about the page
in merry dance
or serious thought.

Some minds speak
softly in metaphor
or scream in paradox,

and the message leaps
off the page or hides
in dog-eared corners,

begging for discovery,
pondering,
or understanding.

Ideas are squeezed
caressed, and smoothed
from writer's block

until, finally, the pen
sculpts from the mind
another poem.

Fresh Field Flowers and Old Pottery

I scurry into the kitchen
to find coffee made.
A spray of field daisies,
still damp from morning dew
reclines in bouquet on the breakfast table.
I fill a familiar mug
to inhale the aroma of morning.

I pick up a dainty daisy,
touch it gently to my face,
then place it in an heirloom vase.

One by one, I arrange the flowers,
then walk across the room to
admire them from afar.
It has been a morning to savor,
much like the decades of mornings before.

He is an early riser.
I, a midnight writer, cannot easily
succumb to daybreak.

But, we look forward to early dinners,
and evening jigsaw puzzles,
where we are always enthusiastic
about finding the right pieces.

I treasure midnight muses,
and sleeping past daybreak,
but nothing is so special as pairing
fresh field flowers and old pottery.

Early Spring

A thousand branched hands curl
to the sky as windows of morning
light glow through the limbs of a
solitaire tree standing firm in the pasture.
Silhouetted cows gather round the aged old
trunk to welcome solitude of a new day.
They do not know that from a distance
I am admiring their leisure.
I wish you were here to stand by me
in this early spring mist.
You would feel the beauty I see in each
intertwined branch still bare of leaves.
You would hold my hand and say,
"Only God can paint like that,"
and I would brush my damp hair back
to rest my head upon your shoulder.

The Bop Poem

He Does the..... Litterbug

He's a man on a mission,
bag knocking at his hip.
So many cans he's gathered
his sack's about to rip.
That newspaper ad that blew across the street,
he leaned down to grab it and never missed a beat.

I didn't drop it but I'll pick it up!
I didn't drop it but I'll pick it up!

Greasy fast food wrappers
are trashy, makin' waste.
There's short order road litter,
some hiker dropped in haste.
That chicken in the box is cleaned to the bone.
Out of some car window
with a toss it was thrown.

I didn't drop it but I'll pick it up!
I didn't drop it but I'll pick it up!

He thinks to himself
that his eyes have never seen
those who nightly dump their junk
all through this country green.
God bless this busy man. We sure owe him a hug.
This man who daily walks and does the litterbug!

I didn't drop it but I'll pick it up!
I didn't drop it but I'll pick it up!

Carol Thompson

Mother Nature Keeping House

Mother Nature keeping house, blesses final rest.
Her spirited winds wipe clean the chiseled stones.
Her flurries of tender snow polish each monument,
markers bearing words of adoration
created in love from broken parts of the heart.
Intimate tributes carved with care,
sacred work entrusted to crafters never met.
Mother Nature keeping house, love watching over,
tucking in with creamy layers of soft moonlight,
glazing the earth with radiant warming sun.
Mother Nature keeping house, welcomes rain,
sometimes soothing, or driving, pounding
to wash away years of dust so scaling, staining
that silent dates and sentiments cannot be read.
Mother Nature, keeping house, her visits unending
especially to those stones that bear no urn
and call no loved ones to place the flowers
and stand before to read, reflect, remember.
Mother Nature, keeping house, witness of
the fate of bygone stones now vanished.

Carol Thompson

The Nugget

Not silver, not gold,
but a story untold,
a poem that yearns to take form.
The poet delves deep
and pulls from the heap
an idea which springs to be born.

Perhaps it's a word,
a phrase overheard,
the lightning bolt strike of a theme.
Nuggets come in the night.
The poet must write,
so the verse is not lost in a dream.

For past centuries old
mankind has been told,
"there is nothing new under the sun."
Has my poem of lore
been written before
by kindred souls long gone and done?

Mary Tindall

ONE DARK DECEMBER DAY

Remembering Sandy Hook

They tumble out of safety seats:
A line of fuzzy hats and boots
With overstuffed backpacks of dreams.
The sunlit path to learning suits

Them. The bell sounds. They take their seats
And open joys that overflow
From juice boxes of childhood. Rhyme
And rhythm mark the rite to grow

And learn. The morning lesson rings.
In ponytails of promise, they
Possess the future. Sparks of hope
With missing teeth alight its way.

Displays of careful work and play
Express their pride and will to please.
Their hearts with trust to spare bestow
It freely.

Frames of childhood freeze.

Their school becomes a horror house
That day. A monster steals the light
And raids their youth. Then leaves behind
The dread and doubt of darkest night.

Mary Tindall

THE SIGN OF BLUE

Returning bluebird pairs arrive
Afloat on warming trends, align
With nature's voice to nest and wait.
In nervous darts of blue, the sign

Of life inside the graveyard gate
Appears. They briefly visit stone
To stone, reflecting blue of sky
And hope of spring. They build-to-own

The silent space. Its stillness soothes
Them. Builders claim the resting place
To do their work and raise their young,
Exchanging song for keep. Their grace

Surrounds the borrowed grounds where work
And worry wane as winds. A stone,
Alive with song, proclaims the good
The smallest deed presents. Alone,

A watcher waits inside the gate
To catch elusive scenes in view.
In sunlit rites, the grounds receive
The gift of spring on wings of blue.

Mary Tindall

My Mother's Voice

Whispers back to me

on winter winds:

"Button your coat.

Come home before dark."

Returns me to the ruckus of backyard

drama and discipline:

"Don't slam the door.

Say you're sorry."

Soothes me in the patchwork wrap

of home:

"Hold my hand.

We'll go together."

Brings me back to long waits

on the front steps of regret and change:

"Wait till your daddy gets home."

Repeats the hand-me-down truth:

"It doesn't matter

what everybody else is doing."

Quotes from the Sermon on the Mount:

"Treat others the way

you like to be treated."

Hers is the voice of the one
praying beside the sink
in the morning of goodness
and hope.

Scott Wiggerman

Missing Persons

That girl whose father
walked away from his family,
not to be heard from again:

I never thought of
my 95-year-old grandmother
as that girl,

but here she is,
conversing with him daily
until he turns

and walks off—again.
Through tears she asks,
Why would he do this?

I wasn't done talking!
She's confused
by his smooth skin,

his full head of hair—
It's like he doesn't age—
never mind that

eight decades have passed
since he became a ghost.
Last night he was supposed

to meet her at the drug store;
another day, the park.
Locations change,

but one thing is constant:
the turning away.
Rumor was he went west,

and now that she's
in a home in Arizona,
she thinks she might find him.

She may be closer
than any of us
can see.

Poor Poet

starting with a Dickinson line (#224)

I've nothing else to bring, you know, so I keep bringing these.
Some wishes are lies. I know—for years I've been stringing these.

A scrunched-up piece of paper and a pen in my pocket.
I always have a line. But groceries? I'm winging these.

Dappled patterns of light across the vacant boulevards.
Leaves overhead, a chorus of green, softly singing *These*.

Street by street, door to door, a practice in misery.
No one answers doorbells. I know, I've been ringing these.

The words do not belong to me, and yet I claim them.
Hush, tender: soothing. Acrid, guilt, fester . . . stinging, these.

I keep looking up at dreams through the trees. Where do they go?
Only so much can be carried: keeping those, flinging these.

Out of One's Element

A leaping fish—not large—suspended in
the air for seconds like a skier off
a jump, before returning to its own
environment; an acrobat, as if
this shimmery flash in the sun were planned,
this gorgeous arc its last hurrah. You dove
into the water once, so deep the end
seemed near, but isn't that a buzz like love?
You surfaced in a panic, out of breath,
but happy to have lived, the air a gift
you've not forgot. The fish, back in its bath,
swims low, but sees that glow above, a theft
remembered in its bones, and you recall
the water's snare, its depths as dark as coal.

Thom Woodruff

IN A LIFE OF COUNTED BREATHS

Some will be Significant. We will recall what someone said-
whether in wisdom or in foolishness/in a manner that refreshes
like a fountain in the city or a spring in hidden deserts
or the generous advice /support some elders bring
when they choose to act as children. Example is everything
Long ago, i gave away beliefs. Left them like money beside a Sacred Well
for others to pick up if they need. (we all need something/
and hunger comes in many forms). Now, sans certainties, i feel @ease
in a world of uncertain changes. There ARE "powers beyond our understanding"
More than death ,taxes and poor public transport. Because i do not know them all
This is why i write tonight-in trust you will enlighten via response..

WHISPERED CONSOLATIONS

if you have seen something
no dreamworlds could utter
if you have been where
no one could follow
if you have been told
secrets that kill
there is still tomorrow
and today's gift is choice-
free range ,herd,organic,individual
you range across its broad prairies
past piles of ghost dancing bison
alongside fenced fields and railroad certainties
past washed out bridges for which there is no warning
and your future always invisible cats/blinking eyes
in a darkness punctuated via stars
and this momentary memory's
undecipherable hieroglyph

Thom Woodruff

HOW DOES LOVE START ART?

Via look in eye that meets one's mirror
by speech bridges to auricles within ears
Hands that hold,cuddle and caress
Legs that walk alongside and towards
Whole bodies of energetic commitment

to another/who responds in ways diverse

and independent.Once upon a page
over distance conquered via postage
epistolary connections affirmed such

as when close needed no such contract.
Assurance,supplication,petition,affection
found clothes in words that drew love out
and were held for years as lovers might
not meet in flesh/hence letters meant depth
and sustained relationships.Now we are connected
No one has time-for more than text or Tweet
Acronyms and smiley faces.Even when face to face-
barely as close as mobile devices.Once-long letters
Now-short romances.Is the real relationship-
with language/expression?Write to me..

WE HAVE TWO LIVES

One-when we enter this world ,dancing womb wet ,cute as a button
Entrancing all via miniature size and skill sets.Elders fawn upon us.
We grow in the light of their black and whites as we burst into colors
warmed via praise.We recall/remember the best of these beginnings
as we dance and sing in our beaming.Harmony rings through us.

In dotage,we seek service-to help others.Divest our pasts
or use them as currencies-to exchange for a betterment for all.
Here is when the call of your life is heard twice-
to reinforce the brightness of youth via the autumn strength of knowledge

So we remember both Shirley Temples-one who danced and sang
The other who served selflessly as we aged.She was always young.

Patrick Wright

Whence Coffee

About the ninth one hundred years, among
the hills of Kaffa, Kaldi kept his goats.
Each year, young Kaldi watched his herd consume
red berries from a little shrub—and dance.

The dancing goats of Ethiopia
gave Kaldi wonder what the bitter fruit
might do if he should chew, and so he did.

Ebullient, Kaldi gathered for his priest
a handful of the berries meant to share.
His holiness into the fire did throw
these vile and wicked fruits of bitter sin.

The aromatic burning stock left seeds
which Kaldi raked into a pot to save.
He ground them down and boiled a piquant brew.

So, this he shared with family and friends
for health, then wealth, as came from miles around
the traders, brokers, rulers and the rich,
all wanting to partake of Kaldi's cup.

The dancing goats of Ethiopia,
from Kaffa hills, for humankind, did cause
in roundabout, a drink—our Kaldi's boon.

Impaired Pitch

Tinnitus sings unceasing songs to only me,
crescendos, fortes no one else will ever key,
discordant arias that roil in constant blare
accompanied by common sounds I hardly share.

Patrick Wright

The Lyric Eye

I live not free
 writing this poem
nor
 when making love
 or
 picking a flower
to watch unfold.
 The late summer bloom
orange and brown sitting atop
 a single-stemmed shoot
on the green field
 of a lawn
calls me over to call others.
We each see
 a different blossom
opening in the same green field
 by delving
inside to see out:
 Each soul reaches
back into self before time
 inside the womb,
before that seminal date—
 conception back
 through the passion,
into that early meeting
 of another man and woman
 blind in sin—hot skin
hungry with seeded desire,
 reaching in rhapsodic arch.
 Thick clouds burst free
for flashing, crashing epiphany.
 Thus we strip our bodies,
 an exposure in order
to connect each revealed self,
 tightening the tone,
relying on the bone marrow—
 the male part flowing
 through the female,
 like that original bone,
 but now more like eyes
seeing through fallen leaves
 the bud scars of spring.

June Zaner

...navigating Cibolo Creek.....

© by June Zaner, February 25, 2014

Back then, some time ago, the Cibolo ran wide and deep
And fast through stone canyons where strange mountain cats
Came to drink and were swept away.....we know, we see their bones
In fossils from that time, lodged perhaps upon some cactus root
Or in buried pock-marked stone, uncovered now as secrets are
Laid bare.....the toads and fish and wild things we cannot name
Caught in the middle of their love-making perhaps and engraved
Like carvings on a tree....."*salamander loves salamander*" forever
And ever.....until what was for them the end of time.

And, just so, we wander through those long ago love nests
in our trail boots and with a stick turn over the notes they left us.
Maybe it was without intent but the lesson remains, water washes,
dust blows and the Cibolo keeps its own path gentle and sweeping
over land now dry most years, or in a torrent of anger, swollen with
a rage out of control. The river-bed is consumed and then laid bare
again, like a lover who has lost interest and gone to bother someplace else,
it is that way with people too, I understand.

my scrapbook...

© by June Zaner, June 3, 2011

deep into my paleography, I studied the
stick figures, the enormous sunflowers,
the house with smoking chimney which
stood beside the leaf-high trees and the
four figures beside the frightened big-eyed cat....
our family for this little boy of ours
when he was five years old and still held
a knee-high vision of the world around him.

I am left now a white-haired decipherer of
a crayoned many-folded map, yellowed, dry,
while our son collects his own drawings from
his tiny artists...the images, in waxy colors
showing a joyous series of sunny family scenes,
facing front, always, and smiling into some
distant camera, fixing forever, a magic box
of time when what they see, is all there is.....

June Zaner

Phillip Seymour Hoffman dies on the morning of the Super Bowl.....

© by June Zaner, February 3, 2014-3-2014

I have heard there exists a group of men
who eat the dried blood of the entire crop
of last year's blackbirds.....this saddens me.
They feed silently on roasted tips of sparrow
wings, suck marrow from the pigeon's breast
and haunt the black night for eagle's nests
to heap hearts, still beating, on their plates.

These same men divide the world into teams,
put them into helmets fashioned from monkey skins
and toss them a ball to play with.....they did this
yesterday and do it on almost every Friday night, as
we cheer, and drink, and eat strong meats with
mustard, until bones are broken open and
blood is spilled and only then we learn that, with

a needle still in his arm, a gentle actor dies
from too much feasting, too much drama,
too much of life.

Richard Zaner

Birds

Some birds just look like that:

 Pigeons perhaps, or wrens
With thin penciled wings, light
 Tendrils waving gracefully below
Closed beaks, slight heads cocked for flight
 Feathers spread, wings hung as if
There were no need of wind or even
 Air to billow hollow bones.

Aloft! These birds fly! Leaving
 Their peculiar stains, their simple
Marks below, droppings flung from
 Seven-storied perches, any narrow stone
Or wooden ledge enough to post
 Them as they contemplate the scene
Beneath: strange birds, they carouse
 The skies, eyes alert and lean:
Centurions of trash and other human things!

© R. M. Zaner, ver 2, 2/4/2014 (ver 1, 2001)

Richard Zaner

Outcropping Of My Life

Stuck in my memory like a shrub growing from the side of a rocky canyon wall—it just stands there, stark snapshot yet diaphanous. At times it becomes lodged in a moment of time along with other moments, before and after, after and before, phases of time’s streaming currents, bringing with them odd and compelling notes; this one in particular:

How I once ceased to breathe, clinically died, so I was told, from acute food poisoning. I had, it seems, thrown rocks at a tree to bring down its fruit—split, green and unripe as myself. I ate a lot, so my Mother said, became extremely ill, threatening lasting neural system damage, some said. I was taken as fast as our rickety ’31 Ford would go, to the nearest hospital, forty miles away, where I died, until a nurse brought me back into life, with just her hands busy on my tiny chest, without the aid of fancy technology.

The mystery of that event, rare and furtive as an inscrutable rune, my clinical death is oddly bizarre, think about it, present to me now only as the merest murmur of a memory—an allusiveness that insinuates even while it still shuffles about within my life.

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Richard Zaner

Repetitions

I once upon a river etched in dust
Came and stood in silence there
Before the dry, once-rhythmed ribs of sand
Proceeding each by each in solemn grace
Like old ones holding, hand in hand,
The final moment when a flute of wind,
Sweeping down the breathing river,
Breaks between the buried weed
And the further reach of the sea.

Unbound from time, the usual move of things,
The sun beat hard on the unmoving river;
Spilled it with busy shadows
From a hawk's slow-circling wing,
The river then seemed as if remembering
The angry rains which like a hurried hell
Would rip across this place from which my hand
Now gathers dust and vagrant seed.
I then watched my hand move out and trace
Those unused currents, held mutely now,
Poignant memory of how a troubled word
Murmured in the night is forever said but once.
Suspended and alone, my hand held the river
In a palm of sand and knew its touch,
Its birth, and threading sand, moved on and knew
The dry, inevitable death of dust:

And in the quiet of the moment grew in my hand
The sudden green of a living reed.

**The 20th Annual
Beall Poetry Festival
March 26-28, 2014**

Andrew Hudgins, Valzhyna Mort, Christian Wiman, Ronald Schuchard

Wednesday, March 26

3:30 p.m., Carroll Science, Room 101
Student Literary Awards

6:30 p.m., Bennett Auditorium
Virginia Beall Ball Lecture in Contemporary Poetry: "In the heartland of the ordinary":
Seamus Heaney, Thomas Hardy, and the Divided Traditions of Modern and Contemporary Poetry,"
Ronald Schuchard

Thursday, March 27

3:30 p.m., Bennett Auditorium
Poetry Reading by Valzhyna Mort

6:30 p.m., Bennett Auditorium
Poetry Reading by Christian Wiman

Friday, March 28

3:30 p.m., Carroll Science, Room 101
Panel discussion with participants

6:30 p.m., Bennett Auditorium
Poetry Reading by Andrew Hudgins

All events are free and open to the public. For more information, call (254) 710-1768
