

HOUSE OF POETRY

Poetry Reading Session - Volume XXXI - 2019



A Golden-Cheeked Warbler by Gil Eckrich,
"The only bird that only breeds in Texas."



BAYLOR
UNIVERSITY

House of Poetry Program

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

On the campus of Baylor University, Waco, Texas

All events are in the Armstrong-Browning Library

(Follow the link for directions; enter at the portico of the Cox Entrance Foyer off James Street)

8:45 a.m. Registration and Coffee Reception—*Cox Reception Hall*)

SESSION ONE: Cox Lecture Hall

9:15 a.m. Welcome: Department of English, Baylor University

9:30-10:30 Readings from "The House of Poetry" Volume XXX

10:30-11:00 Break—*Cox Reception Hall*

11:00-12:00 Guest Presenter: Nathaniel Lee Hansen, "The Freedom of Poetic Constraints"

Noon-1:00 p.m.: Annual Luncheon—*Cox Reception Hall*

SESSION TWO: Cox Lecture Hall

1:00-2:00 Guest Presenter: Benjamin Myers, "A Hallway with No Doors: A Masterclass on the Poetic Line"

2:00-3:00 More Readings from "The House of Poetry" Volume XXX, Closing Remarks

Nathaniel Lee Hansen is the author of the poetry collection *Your Twenty-First Century Prayer Life* (Cascade Books, 2018), as well as the poetry chapbook *Four Seasons West of the 95th Meridian* (Spoon River Poetry Press, 2014). His poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in such venues as the *Willa Cather Review*, *Barren Magazine*, *Foliate Oak*, *St. Katherine Review*, *Split Lip Magazine*, *The Curator*, *Writing Texas*, *Perspectives*, *Blast Furnace*, *Fredericksburg Literary Review*, *Christianity and Literature*, *Driftwood Press*, *Whitefish Review*, *The Cresset*, *Midwestern Gothic*, *Bluestem*, *The Evansville Review*, and *South Dakota Review*, among others. He is Associate Professor of English at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor where he edits *The Windhover* and directs The Windhover Writers' Festival. His website is plainswriter.com.

Benjamin Myers was the 2015-2016 Poet Laureate of the State of Oklahoma and is the author of three books of poetry: *Black Sunday* (Lamar University Press, 2018), *Lapse Americana* (New York Quarterly Books, 2013) and *Elegy for Trains* (Village Books Press, 2010). His poems may be read in *The Yale Review*, *Rattle*, *32 Poems*, *Image*, *Nimrod* and other literary journals as well as in magazines such as *Oklahoma Today* and *The Christian Century*. He has been honored with an Oklahoma Book Award from the Oklahoma Center for the Book and with a Tennessee Williams Scholarship from the Sewanee Writers' Conference. His prose appears in *World Literature Today*, *Books and Culture*, *First Things* and other magazines. Myers teaches poetry writing and literature at Oklahoma Baptist University, where he is the Crouch-Mathis Professor of Literature.

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Linda Banks

Matinee

Hooves hammer the hard ground
dust rises to a brown cloud
cowboys call out commands
voices muffled by bandanas.

Horses respond to subtle moves
of hand to rein, foot to stirrup.
Spotted dog runs alongside
barks a boundary
reprimands renegade runners.

The black and white screen
mesmerizes with its magic,
transports to another time

until...

an arm snakes around my shoulder
hot breath brands my ear

I bolt—run all the way home.

Safe in my bedroom,
I look up at the Rex Allen poster
hanging on the wall,
retrieve my romantic notion
of a cowboy who gets the girl
by crooning a love song
and keeping his hands
to himself.

Linda Banks

Morning at McDonald's

A group of girls shares a table.
They giggle and gossip, munch
hotcakes and muffins, check phones
one more time, then fold their hands
beneath their heads as if to doze,
their long straight hair spilling
across the table.

Morning streams through plate-glass,
across tiled floors and formica countertops,
spotlights the gaggle of girls, and weaves
ribbons into their hair, painting a moment
worthy of the masters.

But as quickly as they rest, they rise
to answer summons of the day,
gathering up books and papers
for the short walk to school.

Sunlight spreads across the floor,
pools around the empty table,
washes away the extraordinary
from an otherwise ordinary day.

Linda Banks

Samara

The word repeats itself
again and again,
samara... samara....

My lips whisper, *samara... samara...*
until my pen becomes the silencer
that puts it in its place upon this page.

But my curious hand still holds
the instigator, a wing-nut seed
that landed at my feet.

It flew here on the wind,
unknown entity until its name
invoked this mantra,
samara... samara...

I toss it into the air,
sending it
on its journey
of quiet mystery.

Sonya Barron

On Being Great and Grand

I was born grand
Deep in a line of many.
I knew the older greats,
Somehow, they didn't rate.

Age worked magic.
I began to understand—
To truly appreciate,
The strength of connection.

Grandparents, not grandchildren,
Know the value of life.
Theirs are filled with trips
And wisdom from those falls.

The Greats chuckle,
Sharing stories of the Grands
From when both were kids,
In a different world.

Now I am a Great,
But the lines are shorter
And far more separated.
I don't rate either.

I tell stories
To the little ones.
I see their eyes glowing.
I remember that wonder.

Then I was a
Grandchild, a great niece,
And a great-granddaughter.
I doubted some of the stories.

Now I am a Grandmama,
A great-aunt, a mystery.
I come from a different world
And I love to tell the stories.

The Clarion Call

Listen my children and you shall hear:
All about math your seventh grade year.
We start today, August 25, year 2012,
By the STAAR test in April, you'll surprise yourselves!

We begin with numbers – the rational ones:
Positives and negatives are integers – FUN!
Fractions and decimals, you'll learn percents too
And ALL the operations, ALL the year through.

You'll learn NUMBERS: squares, roots and cubes,
And every Friday a clip from "You-Tube."
MATH ROCKS!! I want you to know!
When you can do math — "Oh! The places you'll go!"

You'll learn Geometry and Measurement.
I want you to know just what I meant:
Similar, congruent, corresponding (VOCABULARY!).
All this is done before January.

Pyramid, cone, quadrilateral,
Polygon, pentagon, square, rectangle
It's all just vocabulary—learn it and thrive!
Believe me—one day you'll need this to drive,

But the Big Idea this year is Proportions.
Equivalent ratios (all the relations.)
We'll compare sides and angles. (It's called correspondence.)
You'll see every day why it is relevant.

You can do this! Repeat after me:
 I'm a Patriot 7th grader.
[class repeats...prompt as necessary]
I'll think and talk and learn each day!
[class repeats...]

Heather Bayless

After the Funeral

The last God-fearing place open
Past 12 am, we went to Whataburger
After I let you kiss me raw, neck and hands
And thighs. Now we're fries and shakes
Deep into being the only ones here. Still tasting
The salt of your tears I buy you a burger. Your
Slumped spine is poking through your shirt.

Is this how Uncle Mike died? Heart attack from
A late-night cheese burger when he was 21
with not a small but a large shake. It is the curse
To be one reckless youth away from middle age.
Everyone grieves differently so I do not mind when
We play footsies, do not recoil when your chilled
Hand slides under my shirt I know you'll miss him.

Heather Bayless

Moving Out

If they put grates over the street drains where will
the cats live? Will they circle around, smell my
milk, slink to our house, and curl up beside
us Dear? I picture you here, just so. Arms
outstretched, chest bare, teeth exposed.
You know the mood I am thinking:
Why don't we live together yet?
Why don't the cats stay in the
woods? Who will live with
whom? Two virgins walk
into a room with
a bed – the rest
is a joke, aren't
I funny? Ha-
ha ha-ha
have me.

Barbara Lewie Berry

Integration

Psychologists diagnose several strains
of maladies not heard before,
recommend play therapies, medications
and clinical interventions designed
to stimulate cerebral neuron processes.

Grandmothers, however, know other
remedies that make young girls sit tall,
intent to master the form and function
of fitting in, adapting to new situations,
acquiring self-esteem and confidence.

So sit here, my child, while I wrap love
around your shoulders like a shawl
and feed you with the words of life
you were too afraid to learn. Grow
into my world of encouragement.

Listen to your unique spirit as sounds of self
unravel uncertainties like a seamstress removes
errant stitches from an unfinished garment.
Together we will decode the mystery while
we sing new songs and weave new stories.

Previously published: *A Book of the Year, PST 2009*

Barbara Lewie Berry

Prayer for Katherine

She stretches tiny hand for Sippy cup,
then round baby eyes begin to droop,
lids flutter dreamily as tiny tube
is inserted into her hand; she murmurs
soft sighs then whimpers as breathing
becomes heavy. I stroke the wet curls
as she is lifted from the crib, carried
lovingly by the gentle nurse down
marble halls to double doors; there
I release her to the team in white
and turn into my husband's arms.

Create in her a new heart, O God.

I sit silently in prayer, imagine her
there in the theater amid bright lights
where she is the star of the show,
17 pounds of soft baby flesh upon
stainless steel table and where four
gloved hands poise above her tiny
infant chest while surgeon's music
morphs sterile silence into serenity.

Even there your hand shall guide him.

Here in the family room, we wait,
newspapers unread, coffee half-drunk,
listening for the phone, for a door to open,
for our name to be called. He appears
in paper shoes, his tired eyes recognize us.
He nods as we stand and move toward him,
and then he smiles – a physician's triumph.

My heart leaps for joy, I will give thanks.

Previously published: NFSPS *Encore*, 2011

Barbara Lewie Berry

Untethered

Today
with the door opened
the stone rolled away
she is free,
her memory restored
her spirit spiraling
in slow motion
toward heavenly peace;

Drifting among images
of the babies she birthed
and the young sailor
she loved,
memories clinging
like a prayer shawl
she soars
toward her forever.

Previously published: *A Galaxy of Verse, 2018 Finis*

Christine H. Boldt

Bleeding Hearts

The bleeding hearts are stitched with fuchsia jewels
above swatches of ornamental grass,
but they're ripping out Mrs. Larson's garden
to make way for the southern overpass.

The bleeding hearts are stitched with fuchsia jewels,
the lilies of the valley almost spent.
The fence was offered, curbside, for kindling.
Mixers are churning with fresh cement.

Above swatches of ornamental grass,
patches of iris, portulaca, chive,
she looks out from her shadowed porch to see
wheelbarrows of rocks trundled down the drive.

Neighbors admired Mrs. Larson's garden.
People stopped to chat about her flowers,
saw her with bonnet, trowel, and kneeling pad,
radiant in early morning hours.

Of course we need the southern overpass
more than dahlia beds, geranium pots,
more than one woman's dreams and peonies,
or graveled walks hemmed with forget-me-nots.

Previously published in *Poetry at Round Top* 2013

Christine H. Boldt

Reliquary

*. . . how can the poet be fully present, completely "there"
in the poem, employing his/her love for words and craft,
and, at the same time, disappear?* Robert Cording

If they crafted them just so,
workers in gold, long ago,
could meld spun metals with glass and jewel
to work caskets as lacy as tulle
in which most sacred vestiges,
with lofty presence, might be shown.

If they crafted them just so,
brass, gold, silver, ruby and peridot
would celebrate the bone they held,
rather than artisan's facet and weld.
They would, transparent, demonstrate
a mystery that was God's own.

Oh, if only I could write a poem
that was holy coffer and wholly bone.

Previously published in *Missing One Muse, the poems of Sylvia St. Stevens*.

Christine H. Boldt

Rust Belt Perspectives

Late afternoon, flying in for the funeral,
looking down as we circle, waiting to land,
I see derelict heaps of slag still mar Lake Erie's shore.
From up here, the massive curves of empty granaries
are reduced to children's building blocks;
the corroded fan of the freight yard spreads
before the barren, unused terminal;
the surging path of the Niagara
still splits at Grand Island. Its two arms
rejoining only to spill over the Falls;
early frost rimes the copper-green towers
of Forest Avenue; the red and yellow glory
of autumn is now a shabby blanket
beneath bared trees in Delaware Park;
graves stretch four-o'clock shadows across stiff,
brittle grasses in nearby Forest Lawn
where what's left of my raveling family
will gather tomorrow to mourn again . . .

Cassy Burleson

Heritage Oaks Village, Which Has No Oaks and No Village

She rolled past me, asking for her 11 a.m. cigarette. It was only 10:30.
She had a 40-minute wait. She was polite but not at all happy.
She asked again at 10:45. The nurse told her she might as well wait
In her room. She twirled around, petulantly. And a little more aggravated ...

I never saw her get her cigarette, BTW, and wondered how hard it might be
To get some good bourbon, straight up, which is what I wanted, even though
It probably was only 5 o'clock in Margarita Land or wherever Jimmy Buffet lives,
And certainly not even noon in Corsicana, where it was about 109 degrees in the asphalt shade.

And that's when I realized it was probably that hot in VietNam on that remote hillside where
My first boyfriend, the Corsicana All-American Green Beret and Army Medic Joe Smith
Died because he got shot and no one came for hours and hours and hours
And I wondered if he asked for or needed a cigarette and some gave him one.

I hope so. And I hope if you need a cigarette and someone grants you one off-schedule, it will
Ease your way to the only thing certain in this life. Because only death will ease your pain.

Cassy Burleson

Sifting Snow for Diamonds

My stepmother Susan Raines wanted to be a florist, and I always loved the flowers she arranged. She became an Army MASH nurse in Korea instead, and that squelched her pansy fantasies. She arranged us as children instead by always serving a full breakfast with grits and keeping Our grandparents safe down the hill because she was that kind of woman. That kind of woman.

That kind of woman I wanted to be. Not faint of heart, although she was a Georgia peach. No Southern Belle, this string ball of strength you'd wad up and up and say it's ready for a bat. And turns at bat she had. She never talked about them much, but I was glad she'd had them when People grabbed me by the balls who wouldn't have made it through the "MASH" unit's winters.

I'd been pre-fortified by Sue. Mortified on occasion, but Sue had no problem with authenticity. Sue used to say, "A good damn never hurt nobody" and could clear and burn brush like a man. Ironed my Daddy's khakis and his underwear and his white T-shirts and the sheets, by God, Before she threw them on our beds like clouds and clamped down the top fold 9 inches back.

You could set your tape measure by it. Sue was tidy, even when she broke a sweat, and laughed Like lightening in a thunderstorm as she twirled her Salem's mint embers into cool night air.

Cassy Burleson

When Raggedy Ann Can't Sit Up Straight

Tonight I went out to a warm winter concert of stars and moon
Instead of to the one with the "will call" option at Waco Hall.
I chose to walk instead in a place where my thoughts
Didn't have to have shoes on.

The man in the moon had on a blue button-down shirt I thought about
Mothers who won't let their children get vaccinations
Because they're sure it's some sinister plot to make their kids zombies
Like the glassy-eyed flock in "Village of the Damned." Damned if you do, or don't.

And so tomorrow, I'll have to unwad my Big Girl panties,
Put on pantyhose up to my neck, and think more seriously,
With wooly socks on, about all the things I rather run from
And dodge instead while I want to bury my head with a sense of dread.

But like a cowgirl strolling down I-35, right hand caressing the neck of a guitar on my shoulder,
Left thumb stretched out against the wind toward whatever gig my next hard ride might take me.

*Postscript: The year the Raggedy Ann doll was born and christened with a patent,
The little girl who played with her first died from an infected vaccination.*

Susan Maxwell Campbell

The Inheritance and NOTES

Silent days have whitewashed the snow drifting
over Thursday's grey crust and Friday's slush
frozen again in the rutted dirt roads.¹

In Josie's old house, tall windows and bare
wood floors leak the immovable winter

of March. You'd say this sky looks ironed, criss-crossed
by iced branches of apricot trees. You—
the third angle between Josie and me—
you'd feel these lions too, waiting for dark
to seep from her dresser mirror, waiting²

to stalk the slanted truth of heart and bed.
In the dusk, I still see the chicken hawk
nailed to the barn door—and other black forms.
Cold comfort is mine:³old house and worn-out
land, all this she'd promised you from the first,

but we're all jilted, and our knotted hearts⁴
long—I long for spring: mesquite, scissortails,
bluebonnets—space for her ashes, a grave
for lying. Banish the mice in the walls.
Burn shriveled canna leaves, fern fronds, stickered

rose canes.⁵ I'll take a toddy to her white
painted bed, spread her last quilt—Wedding Ring—
and lie counting the board creaks and window
rattles. I'll leave the lights on all night long
and hope not to shiver or dream at dawn.

Poem appeared in *Beyond the Gate* for Fort Worth Poetry Society's centennial in 2010

Susan Maxwell Campbell

NOTES ON THE POEM *The Inheritance*

¹ It was a sheaf of papers,
impaled on a mesquite fence post
along 287 near Childress.
December sleet had stiffened it,
and once unfolded, smoothed, dried,
the untidy writing was urgent,
but nothing was too blurred
if you held it close to your lantern.

² The kitchen light pools
onto the formica table, and
squinting, you're troubled by the metaphor
of lions in the bedroom, and there's gun-
powder whiff in the banal triangle, but
shouldn't all this mean more
than blue ink and notebook paper—
scrawl and scribble and cross-out?

³ Like sailing cold and starless in an unfinished ship,
whatever this is, wanting to be a poem—
it dreams—it dreams of cyclones and tsunamis
where an unfathering sea breaks reader and poet.

⁴ Of course all this is indirect, only
edging toward its subject. Every day
you want what you call real: reloading shotgun shells,
breaking new snow, watching for enemy
birds over your bantams. Always this cudgled memory
is too blunt: Josie in her cotton nightgown
clutching a good serving spoon—under the crusted
drifts behind the hen coop. Here: crows,
knowing what crows know—

⁵ And these lines want to walk you barefoot
over ice and packed snow and chilled melt.
Read them again. Look what crawls
from under the red rusted pickup, now
upright, a paw in a pocket of matchsticks—
wild fire, frost fire, sky fire. Bone fire.

Poem appeared in *Beyond the Gate* for Fort Worth Poetry Society's centennial in 2010

Susan Maxwell Campbell

descending a staircase, the nude

she comes in a rush like a falling of water steady
like a streaming under november ice
a nude with all haste
 and here the forever pauses
feet moving with great authority
 why nude why not nude
 no one asks
she demands this nudity as the air's touch
 the sweep in that light which her hip sketches
 the dip and rise in the air which her shoulder describes
and her knee traces an arc in the clean space
 as if she tells or perhaps does not tell
empty of the useless full of light full of air
 motion inside unmotion
the flux and diagonal flex of space
 remembering an inner ballet, she thinks:
 smooth and rhythmic
 as if she remembers
 as if she dreams
shadow swinging or shifting and
 a slope of an unwinding now
she comes in a rush like a lengthened falling of leaves connected
outside time inside the eye
her thoughts design arcs all around her
 why descending what errand which staircase
 why ask
she turns her skin gold bronze in a shadow inside its now change
no time passes—now is forever is now
 the nude descends
 urgent anonymous universal
like the banister the balustrade the risers and treads
 having forgotten the color of dizziness,
 she is the center of motion:
 air and light descending immodest in the gesture in light
 tying her curves in space
many nudes many tribes of nudes under one skin

—after Marcel Duchamps, *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 58 inches by 35 inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art. Poem appeared in *NFSPS Encore* in 2016.

Nancy W. De Honores

Clouds of Gray

Sequestered by cloudy shades of gloomy gray,
the radiant circle peeks to light in fire;
the breath of dawn stops, looks, and waits away
its presence in the celestial empire.

Clouds show their dissipating grayish robe
in the vast firmament; a timid sun
fights grayness over the blue earthly globe.
A vast green velvet rug displays its colors.

Two walkers stopped their routine in the park
to watch the ducks and fish swimming. They
find myriads of pink flowers enlightening dark
shades below the wooden bridge. Birds sing free
while a soft scent of grass fills the atmosphere;
pink-gold rays paint the sky of the earth's sphere!

UMAMI¹

うま味

UMAMI, a tasty word to express a sensation
of delight to add to the four flavors: sour, bitter,
salty, and sweet. UMAMI, it is of flavors the fifth!
It comes with the first taste of vanilla, the first kiss,
a “Lychee Martini,” a quiet solo dinner with crab
& caviar, a hungering touch fulfilled. It is a second
of glory, a sensation of the human senses in the flesh.

UMAMI is as well a Zen-sensation of the spirit
for surprising facts, unexpected, ignored by one’s
will, but tangibly overflowing the soul. They are
unique providential gifts, fulfilling wishes long
desired. They inundate the soul with acuity of
plenitude, like when rising and reaching a pinnacle,
a loving surprise, the peak of happiness, Nirvana,

or ecstasy. It may be someone you meet by chance,
a coincidence, or the reading of Rosenmann’s sonnet
“The Cup of Coffee,” Kozer’s “Midsummer’s Dream,”
or Morales Saravia’s “No. 6.” It is a sensation that
fuses man-reader, man-poet in cosmic time, space,
and distance with thoughts, sentiments, sensations.

Waiting for a word, or words, to express this
inebriating state of deliciousness that fuses
mind, body, and soul, was almost like
Waiting for Godot.² But, here the results:
a great-superb sensation, a poem with
the tasty flavor of UMAMI!

¹ *Umami* (うま味) is a loan word borrowed from the Japanese that can be translated as “pleasant savory taste.” Prof. Kikunae Ikeda, first scientifically identified *Umami* in 1908. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umami>
Umami, is also a concept probably rooted in Zen-Buddhism, used metaphorically, that can involve all senses to express positive emotions. <http://theherbfarm.com/Farm/Umami/>

² *Waiting for Godot* is a play, originally written in French (*En Attendant Godot*) by Samuel Beckett, premiered in Paris in 1953.

Nancy W. De Honores

**Yellow Roses,
If One Gives Poems to an Undeserving Heart**

Yellow roses, I wish a kind, deserving heart,
for if one opens wide to an undeserving
heart, it may close the doors of revolving
dreams and illusions. It may hold one tight
as prisoner of its own decaying light; it will

keep one trapped in a round encircling.
If one blindly trusts an undeserving heart,
it will pull you down without further thinking.
It will betray your most secret silent night!
Yellow roses, I wish a kind deserving heart.

If one listens to a cold, undeserving heart, it
will turn you deaf to clearly hearing the cosmic
sounds and to seeing the stars, whose blue
light makes one feel and sense a mysterious
fright. The wind blows, chiseling the ears.

The memory of yellow roses makes one wish
a kind deserving heart.

K. Lorraine Ellis

at the end of the pier

i like to go fishing at midnight
and miss the crowds out
on the pier
walk down weathered planks
immersed in darkness
until each step
exists only by
the sound of its persistence
above the waves
and the constant breeze across the bay
with wind and salt water spraying
my face in the darkness
it's a darkness that is sweet
so much sweeter
than any
stream of daylight shadow cast
as it's softened and
stirred by long
trails of moonlight and pier lights
at the end of the pier
with my legs over the side
and constellations out to shade me
i could sit
with lines adrift forever
and let midnight on the pier
wash the
heaviness of the daylight
from me

K. Lorraine Ellis

Landscape

a brush of dark color in a stream
as it turns to night
what to leave blank
and where to put a dot
of yellow sunshine
what to save and
what to leave behind
a shadow
a touch of light
cast a smile over at me
or quickly look away
a brush of dark color in a stream
as it turns to night
the material things
that have become too burdensome to store
and a waste of time to clean
the emotions that only hurt
and damage more
resentment from long past deeds
failures best learned from then forgotten
tragedies in newspapers folded and
stacked high
it now seems
all too heavy to carry
so, i am going to clean
closets, the house,
the garage too
and toss almost everything
and i've got to decide
whether to put
a brush of dark color in a stream
as it turns to night
and i've got to decide
if i will always remember
your bright spirit
reflecting constellations
suspended in your eyes
or if i will finally cast it all aside
with a brush of dark color in a stream
as it turns to night

K. Lorraine Ellis

So Very Bright

i've seen the view from her backyard
porch steps on a clear night through
bare tree branches across blacktop parking lots

when the sanctuary is empty and dark sometimes they turn on the ceiling lights and the
church windows glow so very bright

through stained glass panes the broken pieces of color in each mosaic radiate a grace
unseen during the day and

tonight the towering windows shine out below an autumn moon and above modest frame
homes as their illuminated hues pass through low oak tree branches
that swoop across neighborhood yards

and kaleidoscope shadows form on the long empty stretches of pavement that adorn city
streets on a weekday night
still and quiet

and if the doors were open and the bolts unlocked even someone doubtful of love
who has walked by and thought of it as just another sidewalk might go in and pray
tonight

beckoned by the artists hand of devotion
that reaches out towards a deeper understanding

the eloquent glass requests contemplation

as the last hours of late evening fade

intricate colors of light stream down and search the dark ground for heavenly compassion

i've seen the view from her backyard
porch steps on a clear night through bare tree branches across blacktop parking lots

when the sanctuary is empty and dark
sometimes they turn on the ceiling lights
and the church windows glow so very bright

My Daughter, Texas Born

While her grandmother proudly pointed out the precise plot she would one day occupy in the Pearsall Cemetery, my three-year-old happily banged along the wrought iron fence chasing big South Texas red ants with a stick. It was this grandmother, her mother's mother, who was a Texas Eloise, raised in style by her own grandmother, her mother's mother, in San Antonio's finest hotels, the Menger, the Gunter and the city's namesake, the Saint Anthony. It was this grandmother whose father's father was one of the biggest cattlemen of his day and the biggest victim of the Big Steal, still buying Texas brands and tally books for cattle herds already gathered and driven north by someone else. It was this grandmother from the brasada with stories of an aunt who lost a leg to gunfire and a pair of uncles too trigger happy to keep their Texas Ranger badges; a lady who knew Frank Dobie and spoke often of his charge to students. "Go out into the world, visit capitals of nations, dine with kings and princes, but never forget the land and the people from which you came." My pony-tailed blonde caught me watching her. I looked from her to her mother and grandmother and back. She poked her little stick at the sky and laughed, among the ant dens and the grave stones triumphant. At that moment, I knew none of us in our heavens would need spend a single second in worry that my daughter, Texas born, would ever forget.

The Arkansas

How mighty must it have been?
That river. Then. When it bore the
meltings of a million ice age winters
through the majestic gorge it carved
in the solid stone of eons past,
crushing boulders big as mastadons
to pebbles, sand and riverrocks
with its currents in the chasms,
and rampant on the plain beyond
its torrents stripped the surface
of an ancient earth and swept it
east and south and toward the sea.

So tranquil, this river now, languid
in its bed of silt, mud banks jammed
with tamarisk and briar, waters
dammed, siphoned off to cities and
canalized to farms. In shallow, braided
channels it seeps past shrinking towns
that once grew to mark its course,
like a lone tramp steamer making
ports of call in forsaken harbors,
its thin wake glinting on this grassy sea.

Patricia Ferguson

Heart-Shaped Stone

My uncle died of "summer-complaint" in his second year.
He lies beneath a heart-shaped stone, alone.
Purple iris grow around the marker on his grave,
their sweet scent permeates the Memorial day air.

My father only mentioned his brother once when he told
of taking a stone from Donald Ray's mouth
the day they plowed the corn field
and finding a tiny perfect arrow head.

My grandmother grew onions from the sets she bought
each year. I remember the musky-musty scent
of earthy decay in her yard.

Not iris.

But we had iris in our yard, and that is the scent
that brings childhood back to me,
to me, too.

Patricia Ferguson

To A Mitten Tree

A sassafras tree grows on my uncle's grave
in an un-kept, back-road cemetery.

I hope they haven't tidied up the place
and pulled it up.

Mitten-leaved sassafras trees give us
tonics and toothbrushes, medicine and hygiene,
and file (an herb some governments have banned
because for one reason or another,
they find it harmful. Maybe it doesn't taste
like they think it should. Or maybe
it gives us pleasure.)

A mitten tree's
a better legacy from my uncle,
I think, than silver or gold because
even if they pull it up, the sassafras
will be back again, next year.

Patricia Ferguson

The *Jenny*, Antarctica, 1840

(A Golden Shovel)

In Drake Passage, the Schooner *Jenny*
glitters, stranded, ice enshrouded, snow kiss'd;
structure perfectly preserved. Ah, me,
sailors frozen in place with no more when.
Their mistakes a lesson for such as we...
who'll never know the price until it's met.

Foundation from "A Rondeau" by Leigh Hunt,
"Jenny kiss'd me when we met."

Diamond Tears

*You have kept count of my tossings;
put my tears in your bottle.
Are they not in your book?
Psalm 56:8*

*He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.
Revelation 21:4*

Sharp, hard, multi-faceted tears
slice through my heart
and rip through my eyes
My whole body aches
my stomach rebels
I drench my pillow with weeping

But these tears are precious
tiny gems on a face
when all other expressions
have failed

As grief washes over me
and these jewels are torn out
the Lord counts and bottles them
He spreads the balm of his presence
over each gash
And one day...
Someday...
All these tears will blossom
into a garden of joy

Leila Fincher

No Comparison

Cancer. Stage IV. a death sentence
She scheduled treatments, studied diet, set
necessary plans in motion
and we kept walking along together--
but as weeks slipped away and unseen forces exacted their toll
I began to grieve... and it hurt
but the before pain when I could still see her face
hear her voice
does not even compare
to the death stroke pain-- and after...
grief upon grief

But...

the long ride to Six Flags is nothing
when you're breathless on the rides
the stab of pine needles is nothing
when you're opening presents around the tree
the burned fingers are nothing
as you savor the Thanksgiving feast
and God says
"the sufferings of this present time
are not worth comparing
with the glory that is to be revealed"

for now
we're on the road...
wrestling the tree...
sweating in the kitchen...
but a day is coming
when light swallows night, joy swallows sorrow
life swallows death
and it is no more
while we step into the first
of increasingly

Best.

Days.

Ever!

Leila Fincher

Sunshine Tapestry

The sun blazed and the air was thick
as we rode, waist deep, in Galveston Gulf waves
conversation rolled in its own waves
while we kept a mama-eye turned toward our fledglings
early teen questions
the hum-drum of home
the unique in each child
the sometimes “grr” of loving our men
the latest treatment... and numbers
Death tried to cast his shadow that day
but we grabbed sunshine with both hands
spinning a tapestry
of friendship... memories... love

Diane Glancy

The Cosmos Dances When It Thinks No One Is Watching

You sit under a quiet evening wind.
You spend time in the dark until it forgets you are there.
You see the sky start to move—
a falling star or comet
or a blinking plane far up—
a sound that is more like silence fills the air.
Not yet—
a while longer
the moon begins to hum—
the little kettle drums of planets rattle.
You push your nose to the sky.
You see fuzz of light and shadow—
then stars begin their noise that sounds like distant ankle bells.

Diane Glancy

Dog w/ Back Pack

Your voice will come from the ground like the voice
of a ghost, and from the dust your speech shall whisper—
Isaiah 29:4

You carry flint for starting fire.
Arrowheads in a little roll of rabbit skin.
A boy's bow made from sinew and a bent stick.
A ball of red clay to paint the warriors' faces.
A trader's wire found beside the trail.
You trot beside the war horses when the tribe migrates to winter camp.
Your ears alert.
Your tail raised to the air.

Diane Glancy

Arbuckle Anticline*

Driving to Texas on I-35— 50 miles north of the Red River— there is a rise in the interstate— the bedrock upturned / downturned / buckled back upon itself during an old upheaval.

The land full of karsts, sinkholes, fractures, fissures, that lead to underground caves. After all, in Chickasaw origin stories, they emerged from a hole in the earth. They already knew The Maker lived in the sky when missionaries told them of their God. The Indians knew of the wars there. The lines of rock strata vertical on the anticline was a row of The Maker's arrows.

The story of history is full of rocks— and the language that belongs to them— thrust-belt deformations and displacements angled and wrench-faulted— the horst of exposed folds— sorghumed together until layers of rock once horizontal stand at attention— the sedimentary layers from a sea over igneous rock of volcanic origin— strata folded by tectonic compression into a mountain range worn by wind erosion over time— violent and knowledgeable of unbearable endurance.

* Geologically the Arbuckles are an elongate anticline; a fold in the earth's surface that is convex up. They contain a core of Precambrian granite and gneiss formed about 1,300 million years ago; in the western Arbuckles, Precambrian rocks are overlain by at least 5,000 feet of Cambrian rhyolites formed about 525 million years ago. Sub note— The range now reaches a height of 1,412 feet above sea level. According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)

Paige Hardy

Patience

My anthropology teacher tells me
Early man did not survive because he was faster or stronger than his prey
He was more patient.

When he told me I was safe, I believed him
I did not see him waiting
Patient.

My textbook says early man survived
by choosing the weakest member of a pack to pick off
Wait for her to lag behind
Patient.

I wonder at what point he knew I was weakest
whether it was a limp in my step
or the way it seemed I could barely hold myself up
Months passed before he took me on a date.
Waiting.
Patient.

My ethics professor says that what sets man apart from animals
is his ability to use tools to hunt his next meal
He'd sharpen stones for hours
Patient.

Only now
centuries removed
can I see the way he drew me in.
He was no beast charging on all fours
with blood-shot eyes and metal claws
He was sweet.

Soft.

Slow.

Safe.

Patient.

After the final blow was landed
Early man used fire.
Covered himself in the skin of his kill.

Feasted for days until
every
bone
was
clean.

he carved the bones to make new tools
would hunt a new prey soon after.

I wonder what my rapist learned from me
to use on his next attack
I wonder if his house still smells like me
if the rising smoke stained the ceiling above his bed
if his fingerprints indented my ashes
if I was worth all of the trouble
worth all of his patience.

Paige Hardy

seconds

when my best friend tells me she is raped for a second time
I buy her wine
this
will not make anything better
But nothing could possibly make it any worse.

when my best friend shows me where she was raped for the second time
i help her move her bed
rearrange her shelves
this
is more than redecorating
it is trying to enter a parallel universe

when my best friend points to the shirt crumpled in a ball in the corner
i take it to my car
this
will not take his memory away
but at least she won't have to see the other thing he left behind
used

what do I do with a rapists shirt?
this
is not a rhetorical question
this
is the type of questions i have to ask myself now

do i hold her hair when she hurls the remnants of her life into the toilet?
or will even my touch remind her of the monster still under her skin?
this
is not a rhetorical question
this
is me asking the world for an answer I'm not sure I'm ready for

when she asks me if she can kill herself
so when she leaves her body he will remain trapped in it
how should I respond?
this
is not a rhetorical question
this
is something I have wondered too

when she beckons me for more wine
I do not deny her
this
is not enabling
this
is our latest stage of grief

no matter how many nights like this i have
the questions remain the same
unanswered
i do not have the strength for anger any more
i do not have the strength for much of anything

Paige Hardy

fire

they tell me
i am a fire cracker
but some days i am only ash

when he burnt my house to the ground
i blamed myself
i could have stopped him
i thought
they thought
they said

when i walked through the rubble
i called it consent
i covered sinful flesh in ash
hoping to blend in with my shame

the foundation washed away with my tears
i built my house on sand
i whispered
calling myself a fool

the neighbors came by
asked why i didn't take his matches
asked if my words were his gasoline
begging to be lit
asked why i didn't run when i saw flames in his eyes

i should have
i say
i could have
i say
i'm sorry
i say
for this mess i have made

but in the silence
i grabbed the embers
i swallowed them whole
i burned until there was only flame
i burned

Pat Hauldren

To the Illusory Muse

To the Illusory Muse,

She who...

tortures writers with whispered promises of story,
robs our sleep,
causes wrecks and divorces and suicide,
makes us give up a thousand times a day,
then whispers in our mind again.

And we're off...

sailing the solar wind,
flailing in the ether,
losing oxygen,
riding a dragon,
bioluminescing,
again.

Previously published in *From Planet Texas with Love and Aliens* (2017)

All Hallows

Your darkness sleeps
like the kernel in a peach,
the part in desperation you try to forget,
just waiting for you to fall,
just waiting to pounce when you fall
when the year turns its face from life
to court death with frozen breath
and everything stops, the moon is high,
magic wings down wailing from the whirling sky,
and shades come out between the stars
to call to the forgotten ones in your soul.
Can you hear them whispering
louder than night winds?
Can you feel them rending the bars round your heart,
struggling to crawl out, swelling forth
to answer the call,
just waiting for you to fall,
ready to pounce when you fall?
The ghosts of your blackest memories,
the demons that drive you at night,
the ones that won't let you sleep,
the ones you can't reach in the deep,
so deep you can't reach the ones that don't sleep
come out on All Hallows and answer the call,
waiting for you to fall, ready to pounce
when you fall.
No need to fear witches and demons and phantoms,
for they come from within your own mind,
within your own heart, within your soul,
your dark bleeding soul.
Tomorrow there might be light again,
if you live to see it soar
above the blackened horizon.
but tonight they are rising,
tonight they will fly,
tonight they will claw their way
out of your eyes,
pouncing at last when you fall,
pouncing at last
when you fall.

The Horses of Lascaux

With fingertips rough
as the cold limestone wall
she strokes cinnamon-tinted
ochre powder
ground for hours into pigment
beneath small hands
black with greasy soot,
slowly now, into emerging shapes
as graceful as the swooping wind.
On midgety-short spindle legs
two horses forever run, their bodies
ripe with future possibility.
Cheveaux cinois, long-backed,
small-headed, ancestral icons
of the human love of movement,
flight over the land, manes and tails
whipping in air forever trapped
in the invisible lungs of fat,
rock-bound horses.
In flickering torchlight the color of dawn
she hears their swift hooves resounding
as she draws them with a trembling finger,
their whinnies echoing
through dark limestone tunnels.
She sees their powerful muscles
rippling as they flee
from her spear-bearing brothers,
manes whipping like blackened grass
in the wind of their flight.
She feels a sleek neck under her hand,
curving like a reed bent beneath a stream,
runs her fingers through the tangled mane,
gazes into mud-brown eyes, f
eels hot snorting breath on her face,
scents the musk of their living hides.
From her fingers they are born,
two immortal horses,
embryos of inspiration,
for thousands of years to remain
a loved spark
in the ascending spirit of man.

Winter Awakening

When your spirit came to me,
your touch was like snowflakes
falling, to layer on my skin,
each crystal softly resting
upon the next,
until I lay covered
in the hot, cold,
blanket of you.

All that night you held me.
Your eyes offered me moonlight
Until I learned the language
of your song
and we rose in harmony.
The night breeze of your hair
fell dark upon my eyes,
and your lips ignited me.
Time's spiral collapsed around us.

When the first rays of sun
kissed your flaming crown
your eyes buried their sapphire light
behind grey rain.
Your snowflakes melted
and ascended like music in a mist
that vanished in white shadows
against the glaring sky.

You have burned me,
and my soul is not the same.
Against your memory,
my day is colorless.
Your voice lingers
in my skin like scars.
What have I ever known
of reality?
All my truths shattered
in your hand.

Jean Kubala

WHEN

One of the things
I wish I knew then
Is not to be always
Waiting for *When*.

When school is out,
I'll do nothing but play.
When I'm a grown up,
I can have my own way.

When I am married,
I'll be loved and adored.
When I have friends,
I'll never be bored.

I'll surely be happy
When I lose weight.
Being slender at last,
My life will be great.

When we have money,
I hope it comes fast,
I'll forget all my troubles
And be happy at last.

You can waste your whole life
Waiting for *When*,
Take care of *Now*.
It won't come again.

Catherine L'Herisson

Against the White of Snow

Against the white of snow,
I threw some grain and bread.
I saw a jet-black crow.

So deep, nothing could grow,
birds flew in to be fed
against the white of snow.

Then out stepped a shy doe
and buck, antlers on head.
I saw a jet-black crow.

A man approached real slow.
I was afraid of red
against the white of snow.

I felt a sense of woe.
Stay quiet, the hunter said.
I saw a jet-black crow.

A caw made the deer go.
He shot the bird instead.
Against the white of snow,
I saw a jet-black crow.

Published in *A Book of the Year 2018* by Poetry Society of Texas

Catherine L'Herisson

Crane Flies

Outside on this spring day,
I stop to stare at crane flies,
creatures that resemble
giant mosquitoes.
Sometimes called mosquito hawks,
they cannot kill mosquitoes,
do not bite or sting,
are only a nuisance.
Rather vulnerable, their stilt-like legs
are deciduous, come off easily
like leaves that fall from trees.

They beat against my windows,
the sliding glass door,
even the solid wooden front door
in an effort to get in.
I wonder what they are seeking,
or if they are fleeing from something?
Do they know how short
their life span is, only a few days?

On a beautiful day like this,
in my initial rush to get inside,
they give me pause...
make me wonder how many days
I may have left, what I seek,
what I might be hiding from?

Published in *Prize Poems 2017* by Pennsylvania Poetry Society, Inc.

Catherine L'Herisson

Sequestered Sanctuary

While my spouse shopped
for tools, I waited in the car,
saw several sparrows land
atop a small hedge nearby,
disappear into bushy green.

As dusk neared and air chilled,
a small flock flew in,
also vanished into the hedge.

More, more, and more came,
until I wondered how many
were cloistered inside,
little brown monks
converging for evening vespers.

Published in *WordFest Anthology 2017* by HOT Press Poetry

At the Flea Market

At the flea market I buy a blonde Dutch doll
because she reminds me of my old collection
of "story book dolls." She looks fresh and new
in her box. But carefully sliding her out,
admiring her blonde braids and wooden shoes,
I find money: riales from the land of Oman.
two tens, two ones, and some change.
I study the strange bills with unknown faces
and the bright coins, and the mysterious language.

Her face is cheery, you want to pinch her cheeks,
but she has nothing to say about that money.
Who bought her, where, how did she end up
at a packed street market in Louisiana?
She was never played with. Was she lost?
Did a father buy her at an airport?
Did he forget her in a hotel room?
I wish I could invent her story, name the
participants, give it all a happy ending.

I see her on the high shelf where I found her,
next to a bear and a pale Virgin Mary.
I see her on the table here as I write,
pink cheeks, blue eyes that click open
and shut. I wonder if she cost
twenty-five reales plus tax, if the father
tendered a fifty and this was his change.
The intricate embroidery on her dress
shows a craftsman's care, concern for quality.

Janet McCann

Ironing Silk

this stiff green blouse, crumpled
on the closet floor like an old hankie--
I am going to throw it out, but then I don't.

it is hard to find the iron; I last used it
on a white cotton graduation gown
my daughter wore in kindergarten. She is 50.

the iron still works when I wipe off the cobwebs.
I never could iron, mother tried,
said *do the collar first, then the back*

then the shoulders. awkwardly I slide
the hot machine over the green silk
and it spreads, widens, smooths

the blouse is faded in spots but beautiful,
the different greens, the hinted yellows, browns,
and it seems to melt, glow under the iron.

my motions are soothing now, almost skilled,
the harsh bumps relax to gentleness,
oppressed somehow into a glad compliance.

and though when I finish it is still imperfect,
has extra folds, still, it is pliant, soft,
something to wear at summer celebrations.

I hold it up, it billows in the fan,
breathes in the eddies, gestures with sleeves.
light flows over it like liquid love.

Learning My Grandchild Will Be Named Pepper

There's no St. Pepper so I will make one up.
Neither virgin nor martyr, she was
Just good. Fed any animals that were
Hungry, including human ones. Tall
And quiet, when she stood at the edge
Of the woods, she could be taken for
A sapling, but she was just listening.
Knew all the animal languages, so she
Could translate Rabbit into Dog, so the dog
Would leave the rabbit alone. Her miracles:

1. The forest reclaimed some of its
Depth, abandoned houses at the edge
Falling to ruin, roots poking through
The crumbling foundations while the deer
Grazed there.
2. Her beautiful grey wolf-dog
Protected local strays and stragglers, and
3. A domestic cat acquired a tenth life.

Michael Minassian

The Knocking at the Gate

This day seems like any other,
watching the hummingbirds
through the kitchen window;
hard work, I imagine,
flapping wings so fast,
they seem to stand mid-air,
hunting for food, spiders and insects,
and the occasional sweet snack.

They hover and dart from plant
to plant, flower to flower,
while I fill my coffee cup
a second time, adding sugar
and cream, dreaming
of gardens on earth
and angels beating
their wings, descending
to deliver a message.

No wonder the women
look so frightened
in the old paintings—
nothing good ever came
from a knock on the door
in the middle of the night,
or the sound of rushing
wings, hovering just above
your bed, time standing
as still as an unwanted caress.

Previously appeared in *South Florida Poetry Journal*, 2016.

Michael Minassian

Superman Lived Next Door

When I was just a kid,
Superman lived next door;
of course, he had lost
his super powers by then
and only wore his costume
and cape on the 4th of July.

Most times he sat around
the house drinking beer
working on his scrapbook;
sometimes at night,
you could catch the green
glow of Kryptonite he kept
in an empty aquarium
in his living room.

When I got drafted,
he let me hide out
in his Fortress of Solitude,
but I damn near froze to death;
later, he helped me get a job
on the local newspaper;
after work we'd listen
to the Kinks' song and laugh
at the *weakling with knobby
knees*, the one we all become
in the end, Kal-el said,
folding his Clark Kent
glasses and business suit:
Who do you want to be today?
he asked me before he finally
disappeared down in Florida
right before the last moon shot,
the one that never returned.

Previously appeared in *Kakalak*, 2017.

Michael Minassian

The Great Depression

In 1929, my grandfather's boss
at Hovanian Oriental Carpets
ran out of money, so paid him his wages

in brightly woven rugs from Armenia, Turkey,
Afghanistan and China, "Take this, home,"
the owner said, "*d'ram cheega*." *

So week after week he brought home carpets,
tacking them to the floors then the walls
of the three-bedroom apartment

in the Bronx, using a large
Persian rug as a bedspread,
and another to protect the couch.

Then my grandmother covered
the kitchen table, refrigerator, and stove,
the bathtub, toilet, and sink;

next, she stitched together clothes:
pants, shirts, underwear, and socks,
and convinced the cobbler down the block

to make shoes for the whole neighborhood;
then they lined the street and sidewalk
with carpets and tapestries, remnants, and rugs.

Soon you could walk barefoot on Bathgate Avenue,
while up in the apartment, my grandmother
cut strips of fabric to bake or fry,

serving the pieces mixed with rice pilaf,
or toasting thin slices in the morning,
stuffing the rest into the coffee grinder

boiling it down as thick as Turkish coffee,
a stiff bitter tonic
served with salt and sand.

**Armenian for: "there is no money"*
Previously appeared in *Red Earth Review*, 2015

Masood Parvaze

Fear Not

(On visiting US Mexico border)

On this side

There is a River High mountains Barbed wires Fences

Armed men with dogs on leashes

Drones Motion detectors Canyons and a Desert

On the other side is more rugged terrain

That's where Poverty lives

Hardship Long hours Dirty nails

Sunburned faces Hands with cuts Restless eyes

Ready

To Swim Sail Crawl Climb Fly Walk

To this side Knowing there is

Coastguard ICE Custom officers with

Cold Unrelenting Piercing Stern Looks

A Frightened Immigrant is always on the other side

Color changes from century to century

But No Documents No Money Bad accents is the Usual story

For a long time it was

Poor Illiterate Unskilled Outcast White Men

Sometimes it's Black Yellow or Brown

All come here

To Plough Grow Pick Wash Cook Serve Teach Learn Invent

For just one thing

A Bigger Loaf of Bread

Masood Parvaze

Silent Violin; at the Concert

Always under his left arm; huddled together they walk the streets; sometimes he talks to it . . . in
whispers; sometime . . . he drums its case with fingers

Dusty and fragile, loosely . . . strung; cocked . . . bridge; chinrest . . . worn; fingerboard . . .
scratched, its pegs jammed

The violin came in a battered case; velvet . . . that was once . . . candy apple red . . . now pickled
cherry; patches worn out and wrinkled like old men's neck

Their friendship . . . eternal; loyalties . . . unquestioned; from shelter to . . . Bourbon Street; and
then . . . east to highway ninety

This is where Atchafalaya swamps begin; trees at sunset are standing in knee deep water;
wearing robes of fog; break their silent prayers to greet them with glee.

Evening is here with gold in the sky; maestro stands on his usual bronzed rock, next to cypress
audience; waving his baton, birds and clouds take positions for another ballet

Shake up some strings; with the wood of the bow; cut down the thimbles; drums in legato;
trumpets in allegro;

Con Gusto . . . Con Gusto; Give us some rhythm, give us some music; give us some tempo

Masood Parvaze

The Tree I Grew

When life adrift was ... all ahead; aimless youth skidding ... in directions ... unknown ... I went to the bars, where smoke circled around the ceiling fans; and dulled already dim lights. Friends slapped on shoulder just to spill my beer; exposed pipes dripped moisture on afros, dreadlocks and wool caps

Outside on the street ... people pushed dead cars ... Black artist with peacock feather in derby hat, still nursing his first cognac, waves from his corner seat, but I have to go. My gang of dishwasher friends was out of prison for a while; and I had to drive to our workplace at midnight.

Some nights we went to Belle Isle, yards away from Canada, where old jazz players with scratchy blues were long gone for another winter, we peed on fresh snow, making yellow hearts

Spring and summer came and went. I slept in a pile of leaves, holding her hand, dreaming about my village house, facing away from distant salt mines; evening chill woke us up. ... Let's get married, have kids, and push their swings in the backyard with lilac walls and maple trees

That's when I learned to see bright vivid colors on a blank page ... smelled ... beautiful ... bursting ... life ... on dangerous streets, listening ... to the songs of silent flowers

Didn't know ... then

I was feeding my ... poetry tree

Previously published in "Flowers Thorns and Other Offerings" (2017)

Jessica Ray

Poetry

Reaching back to the dawn of history
Some say the earliest language
was the language of poetry –
images, feelings, thoughts
found form in the hearts and minds of human kind
^
from the lowest to the
highest strains of thought

But somehow a missing link occurred as
Cities sprang up
And civilizations were created
And flying through outer space became common
Progressing at a dizzying pace
human life suffered a loss
Its inner space underwent the misfortune of a missing gene –
it was lost and couldn't be found

There is an ancient story of the creation the first human beings – Adam and Eve
As the story unfolds God in His mercy took
a rib from Adam's heart to become Eve's heart.
This became the guiding force in Adam's life –

It was known as love

Jessica Ray

Forever Young

Hello,
My name is Vickie
I want to talk to you
for a little while
I want to tell you who I am
I want to tell you about my life
And I am asking a friend to help me
You see —
 it's been a long time
 so long I can't remember
 when I moved away

But, oh!
 I do remember the fun —
 the happy times back then,
 especially when Mommie and Daddy
 would come to see me
 and bring special treats
 and toys to play with

There are so many stories
in my head
but mostly they're in my heart
So many beautiful people —
If only they could be here —
to tell you what I can't —
about who I am

But I do remember
That it was in April
When Spring turns everything
into a miracle
(Maybe like the miracle that
someone said happened on
my birthday, December 25)

That I decided that
my new home might be exciting!
A perfect place where there is only
love and happiness!

And I was right!
Because now I can sing
I can dance
and I can run through the grass *
I am free to do all I ever wanted to all my life

You may wonder why I am telling you about me
but someday we may know each other and become friends
and be forever young together

*Patty Grubb's memoirs of her daughter Vickie (December 25, 1955 – April 25, 1984)

Denise Salerno

My Shining Armor

Walking through the woods he sits,
Upon his horse
The light bright sun through,
The trees Shine upon him.
The Wind blowing as we hear,
The Cracking leaves,
The sound of the Birds above
The wind blowing toward him he sees
Another day
As he looks beyond
Another day.

Jean Ann Shirey

Dear God,
You are the heart
of my beat,
the drum of my soul's
eternal reverberations,
and the calling
of my essence.
Creator of all
by tethered line
to daily decisions.
Walking home toward You
in the Name of Jesus.

Previously published in "Dear God," 2018

Jean Ann Shirey

Man of War

We walked the beach again,
as when the boy held my hand
and played, moving back and forth
on this very shore.
We watched mysteries then and now.
The man beside me rose and,
keen-eyed, marvels beheld.
I lifted sand with my toes,
barefooted, playful, through soft foam.
Cool wind, warm sun
was shining on white shells
and my uplifted hands.
Memories of emotions
held a lightness of Spirit
and peaceful waves;
a child wonder-grazed.
A clear, iridescent bladder
lay before us, waiting.
At home in sea to sting its prey,
scarring men for life,
at war with man to death.
Etched in sand,
carved, careful delicacies,
gentle marks of
tentacles laid hidden
just beneath the surface.
You are dying,
and we are living today
to shells awaiting our touch.

Only a mystery, our time,
your stings provoked will take us down
until we walk with our best Friend,
carver of our life,
and meet each other
once again and free,
free of stings of surface laid,
free to meet and be.

Previously published in "Plum Delight" 2019, pages 96, 97.

Jean Ann Shirey

Good morning Lord,
How are You?
How was Your night and day?
Did you move the stars around?
Did the moonflower open wide?
Did the rose scent fill the air?
Did You watch things creep and crawl?

Did You send the sun's rays over to my eyes again
and make the sky so brilliant that I cried,
wonder-filled with awesome
to watch Your painting in the sky?
Did You bring the cardinals home
and fill the bird songs in the air?
Did you make the rooster crow
and feather hens feet all around?

Could I ever stop writing about all Your many works
from where I sit to sing Your praise and lift You up?
You are such a pleasure!

Previously published in "Dear God," 2019, page 61.

Satin Slippers and Pink Ribbons

Première

With her heels and knees together,
toes pointed out, forming a V-shape.
She stands straight, her head, back
and pelvis aligned. Her arms softly
curved in front of her torso.
Her pale face sets in determination.

Second Position

She turns her legs out from the hips.
Her feet shoulder length apart, in a V-shape
She rounds her arms and put them out to her sides.
She hears her diagnoses...leukemia.

Third Position

Her legs turn out from the hips,
she crosses a front heel halfway in front
of the other foot. Her heels touch one
to the other at the middle of the feet.
She raises her right arm overhead
in a semicircle and extends her left arm.
Her bone marrow transplants begin.
Her hair thins in response to chemotherapy.

Fourth Position

Her movements are stilted. She is exhausted
by treatment, reactions and countermands.
She develops a new language; infection,
anemia and depression.

Fifth Position

We cross her legs one in front of the
other to turn her side to side.
We lift her arms to raise her up in bed.
Échappé, she has no escape, no return.

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 wood 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, Miss Loretta...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.

Marlene Tucker

My Best Friend's Daughter

I saw you in a wedding photo,
And I was stricken uncomfortable,
Embarrassed at being unable to explain the tears.
I closely studied the others
In the same shot,
All beautiful, same loved.
I saw them outside in,
But you...
You were inside out.
I saw your late mother in your smile,
And I felt her say "Isn't she...?"
And I whispered "Yes, yes."

Marlene Tucker

The Passage of Time

Time is my punishment. It's measured out and I am forced to sit through it. Forbidden to have fun, freedom or cookies until the slow-moving minutes have passed. The sentence of five minutes is forever long. And so, I sit and whine.

--a five-year-old

Time is endlessly mine and I own it! I can sleep it away if I want. It doesn't rule me. Life is a clock and time is mine to wind.

--a twenty-one-year-old

Time is something I never have enough of. I manage the minutes as the pennies of my time budget. I could accomplish anything if only there were more hours in the day. When I make my plans, time is what I try to find.

--a forty-year-old

Retirement seemed a goal to work for. Some say they can't wait for it. Truth is, it waits for them! Now what? I have all the time in the world to wish I was back in the race. Time is something I'd like to rewind.

--a sixty-five-year-old

Time is something that slips by unnoticed until we start to measure it. The more we try to manage the minutes the faster they go. And when there is nothing to fill them with they slow to a painful, lonesome procession. They drag along like a punishment, with us having no way of knowing how many we have left. Time is what I'd like to bind.

--an eighty-nine-year-old

Marlene Tucker

The Waitress

Ten booths,
Five tables,
Five stools at the bar.

Bad tooth,
Pierced navel,
A broken-down car.

Lost youth,
Bad label,
Short tips in the jar.

No couth,
No cable,
No wish on a star.

Just booths,
And tables,
And stools at the bar.

Thom Woodruff

Swimming Pool. Red Geese. Blue Swans

Cry & Cry Again...

Wring your skin suit out w/compassion
For the health of others. For past loves.
For those passed who will not return. For the burning times.
For the red geese and the blue swans. For the swimming pool of tears.
For the impossibility of return. For failures and successes.
For singular humanity in a plural world.
For the loss of memory and the gaps between
For the work has already begun. Even if you seem absent.
Perhaps you would prefer blue waters and red fires.
Our times are rivers on fire and mansions burning.
Streets choke with tear gas tears and yellow vest spontaneity.
There is no "leader". There never was. Just grass growing fed by blood red teardrops
And blue swans swimming in a lake of fire.

Thom Woodruff

Ways Waves Change Light

How Height Has Tone & Form

Tips white as flecked foam

Base as deep and dark as liquid night

Green between/translucent

To filter storms in motion

Toss boats as playthings

Toy with us as bobbing corks

Sails shredded via slicing winds

Seas sing strongly/rise high mountain

Move with a pulse and breath and rhythm

that threatens all solid with capsizing.

If you are fluid, and flow

You know how weight moves strengths

Sinks all who resist change. Oceans before and beneath

Land is only a promise-Before-and After

Waves have broken their beauty on our backs...

Thom Woodruff

Windblown in Glastonbury, Beneath Trees

A box of bruised apples awaits
the willing arms and eyes of passers by
Winds have shaken too many to the hard winter ground
They are fallen apple angels, bruised by life's rock exigencies
Soft their skin, with brown soft kisses
They are loved by strangers, and redeemed
by the hunger of others, who come ,and lift
these browned and broken to their lips
Carry them away to softer spaces
Where they can be sliced and heated
for apple sauce and apple stew
For even half an apple better than none
And every body loves the fallen.

David Lester Young

Red Bricks Of Circle Education

Red bricks of the Old Schoolhouse

Foundation of Tallmadge Education

Learning from the Circle of Knowledge.

Each THS student, these building blocks

Moving out upon diverse spokes

Each path a Uni-Que quest to achieve.

If we must destroy the Old Schoolhouse.

Let us build a Tallmadge walkway trail,

Where the remnants recycle visions.

That we take time to inspire future grads

To excel within values that are found here.

Wherein they evolve amidst life's treasures,

While revolving alight lifetime pleasures.

Trail Of Words

Words spoken, sometimes - sail one way in rhyme,
Once heard, there will be no, moving backward.
Sometimes in haste, other times amid precise timing.
When recorded, a spoke must move, one direction.

Trailing word presence, being this live-long sentence,
When one declares their individualist independence.
There is no retreat, only commitments moving forward,
One casts away, leaving the umbilical compliant chord.

Like moving out, to going to college the future is forward,
To turn back, total failure; the rest of your live - obscurity.
Sink or swim, you navigate adrift your own unique passage
That twists and turns on you bearing, your own volition.

Like riding a bike, driving an automobile, to get your license,
You get behind the wheel, to rotate counter clockwise,
Upon your driver's side; clockwise being time's passenger.
Around changing seasons, we weather 12 months into years.

Work routines become morning repetitive, beside evening doldrums.
We start mundane, end up rushing home, adrift Friday release endings.
Wherein half a century one takes the trail of years that add upward
That decades soon add up to assert retirement curtain - Senior Dream.

There are bridges, one must burn; while others, will be forever regretted.
Relations that will never again be close knit family and friend - time bonded.
Chain links - being broken; will never again mend, what was, to what will be.
Passage of time frames being lived, trying to find solace, -
Sailing on a Journey.

David Lester Young

Old SchoolHouse

Around the Circle of Enlightenment

Exists an old Church and Town Hall,
And upon a Northern spoke present,
An Ohio Western Reserve Schoolhouse.
Tallmadge, this hub for higher education,
Where every road led to THE CIRCLE,

Principles laid out in Old Schoolhouse's

That was the founding foundation of America.
Where every child needed those special teachers,
Whose abilities elevated our American frontier.
Old Schoolhouse, here and there, with graduations -
Where every year, new generation learned more.

Oh, woe be me, a Tallmadge grad, they want to raze school.

History - for Condo Apartments to serve Land Developers.
Who will lay waste to Tallmadge's Old Schoolhouse.
Who would make THE CIRCLE, Parking lots and Cement.

Central Junior High gone, old Tallmadge High, also to be razed

Every building deemed on track for demolition, whence one attended.
But biggest blight amid tragic travesty, is to be deemed unworthy,
Is to take the building foundation Of Tallmadge spoken words
And destroy the fabric of why Tallmadge was established.

That from evolving revolving spokes of THE CIRCLE inheritance
This Old Schoolhouse started World Wise Word THS graduations.



**April 3-5
2019**

The 25th Annual Festival

A three-day celebration of some of the finest contemporary poets, with readings, a panel discussion, and the Virginia Beall Ball Lecture on Contemporary Poetry.

Featuring

Mary Szybist, Donald Revell, Juan Felipe Herrera,
Meg Tyler, and a Poetry Panel

About the Event

Baylor University's 25th annual Beall Poetry Festival is supported by the John A. and DeLouise McClelland Beall Endowed Fund, established in 1994 by Mrs. Virginia B. Ball of Muncie, Ind., to honor her parents and to encourage the writing and appreciation of poetry.

Event Details

All afternoon events at 3:30 in Carroll Science Building, Room 101

- Afternoon of April 3: Student Literary Contest
- Afternoon of April 4: Meg Tyler, The Virginia Beall Ball Lecture in Contemporary Poetry
- Afternoon of April 5: Poetry Panel
-

All evening events at 7:00 in Kayser Auditorium, Hankamer Academic Center

- Evening of April 3: Mary Szybist poetry reading
- Evening of April 4: Donald Revell poetry reading
- Evening of April 5: Juan Felipe Herrera poetry reading