

A Gathering



3rd Poetry A Wednesday Workshop Anthology

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Poems by:

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Shutta Crum
Katherine Edgren
Lynn D. Gilbert
David Jibson
Dana L. Johnson
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Forward

The idea for 3RD WEDNESDAY MAGAZINE grew from a group of poets who met in a bookstore in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Originally, they intended to publish a small book of their poems for themselves, their families, and friends. But soon, others began asking if they could submit to a "magazine." From there, 3W became a regular publication, slowly growing by word of mouth. Today, it reaches thousands of readers in print and online.

Most of the original group has since moved on, but in recent years the idea of a monthly workshop and critique group has been revived, including editors and contributors to 3W. Fittingly, it meets on the third Wednesday of the month—just like the original group.

This little book is our Poetry Month project for 2025. Many of these poems were refined in a 3RD WEDNESDAY workshop, so in a way, we've all had a hand in their making. We hope you enjoy reading them.

If you found this book in a waiting room, a seat on a bus, at a coffee shop, or any other public space, we probably left it there for you—because we know you love poetry. Take it home. If you'd like another copy for a friend, you can find it on Amazon.

David Jibson, Editor
3rd Wednesday Magazine

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Tom Brzezina

Tom's mother delivered him in 1950, but he was born when he saw the Beatles on Ed Sullivan in 1964. He sang professionally until 1985, when he took a job as a copywriter. He worked in advertising until 2011. He started writing poems shortly after.

Exclusivity

The dogs are dancing in the living room again.
It happens every time I play Sympathy for the Devil
on the stereo.

I've tried a variety of other tracks by the Stones,
including other "devil" songs.
The dogs sat them out.

I've tried music from other rock artists
that utilize exotic rhythms.
No dice.

Let them hear the opening from Sympathy, though,
and it's time to push the furniture to the walls.

Their dancing style falls somewhere between
whirling dervish and drunken sailor.
They dance on their hind legs, eyes blank,
snouts pointed upward, wagging their tails all the while.

I tried joining in the fun once, mirroring their moves.
They stopped and sat, looking at me,
so I returned to my chair,
at which point they resumed their dancing.

I'd be lying if I said it didn't hurt.

Radiation

I lie on the black table.
A grid-like mask fits
over my face and is
bolted down.

In the background,
an FM oldies station
softly plays the Bee Gees.

The ray gun circles
over me and comes
to a stop at a precise point.
I hear a faint electric hum.

The gun circles back
to its starting position.

After the gun runs
and hums three times,
I hear the technicians
shuffle in to release me.

The mask is unbolted
and lifted.

I rise like the sun
on an overcast day.

Utility

Scratching an itch
between my shoulder blades
was a major challenge,
prompting me to order
a back scratcher from Amazon.

When I first tried it out,
the relief was instantaneous.
“Thank God for technology,” I cried.
Now, I’m fully prepared for itches
in hard-to-reach places.

To be extra prepared,
I could wear the scratcher on my belt.
I could teach myself
to twirl it between my fingers
before sliding it back into its holster.

The scratcher is a well-designed
and effective tool, but limited in its use.
For example,
I’m itching to see you again.
The scratcher can’t touch that.

Reflection

He stares at me intently,
as if searching for flaws.
He clearly doesn't approve
of what he sees.

His brows, knit,
the corners of his mouth,
turned down,
nostrils slightly flared—
all signs of mild disgust.

I'm equally critical of him.
After all, who is he to judge?
He's certainly no prize himself.
I feel a surge of resentment.

I tell him to go to hell.
He says the same to me.

Not wanting to escalate,
we both turn away,
stealing one last angry glance
before we go.

Shutta Crum

Shutta Crum is a Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation honoree poet (2024). Her poems have appeared in many journals in several countries including *West Trade*, *Acumen*, *Calyx*, *Palette Poetry*, *3rd Wednesday*, and *Boulevard*. A Pushcart nominee, she is the recipient of 9 Royal Palm Literary Awards (FL). Her chapbook *When You Get Here* won a gold RPLA. Her latest chapbook is *Meet Me Out There* (Kelsay Books). She publishes the monthly newsletter: *The Wordsmith's Playground*. Find Shutta at www.shutta.com.

Madonna With Potatoes

while we play about her feet, potatoes spill
from their netted bag across the countertop

my mother wears a simple red blouse tucked into jeans
her dark hair is loose around her face

knife in hand, she chooses a dusty potato,
washes it, turns it, strips it to pale flesh

brown peels fall into the kitchen sink
with a nimble pivot of her hands

she picks up another, smiles, cradles the lumpy potato
as the kitchen curtains, sky-blue, flutter around her

and our father, bending to the adoration
—takes her in his arms

Some, Too Indifferent to Spring Winds

~ after Emily Dickinson

All things must rise—or die, it seems.
From darkness comes desire.
Or so glad Spring would have us think—
in Winter's wake, there's fire.

But I have not decided yet
who tells the truer tale.
Perhaps it's ice that kindles heat—
when pain's what we inhale.

For all that Spring does set ablaze,
it's Winter's craven turns
that bring us to our knees when grief
ignites the heart, and burns.



Norma Jeane

~after Milton Greene's Marilyn Monroe—Ballerina Sitting

poor Milton—I've kept him waiting
he wants me to pose again

they've gathered me
into a see-through poof of netting—
a kind of tutu—all flounces and fuss
the bodice, too small (of course)
can't be zipped
I hold it against my breasts

he wants Marilyn—and I bring her
lips parted—
he says, *needier*
and I do that—lifting my brows
a plea from a beggar's child

I do Marilyn, and he kneels
to photograph my knees

—*is this what you want?*

Leaving the Lake

In an uprush of wings, wild geese are abandoning the lake.
They rise with their cries of *are you coming?*
Lifting from the watery reflections of maple and alder,
each finds its place in the slanting light.

I, too, feel Winter's approach,
hear her stealing through the evening hours,
see her white breath curl and swell across the water,
know her handiwork in the filigree lacing the shallows.

So, I'm chinking the splintered gaps in the old house,
bringing in the firewood, restocking the larder.
I promise to stay as long as I can.
I thought you'd want to know.

When the snow deepens, I'll put on your sweater.
The sleeves, too long, will shelter my hands.
I'll walk the path to the water.
The last of the geese will have gathered in the mist.

They'll stretch their necks, lift heavy bottoms,
slap the lake into a frenzy of silver,
and cry out, as they veer off over the pines,
Are you coming? Are you coming?



Katherine Edgren

Katherine Edgren lives in Dexter, Michigan, has two books of poetry: *Keeping Out the Noise*, (Kelsay Books) and *The Grain Beneath the Gloss*, (Finishing Line Press,) plus two chapbooks: *Long Division* and *Transports*. Her work has appeared in many journals including *3rd Wednesday*. Before retirement, Katherine headed a department at University Health Service and was a Project Manager at the University of Michigan. Katherine has also served as an Ann Arbor City Council member.

Two Cabin Beavers

Larry's the kind of guy who loves being ready
for Minnesota's bitter cold. His cabin's in a forest
of poplars, pines, birches, oaks, and maples.
Some trees are always weakening, hollowing out,
or too old to bend to fierce winds off the lake.
Larry's a scavenger, a vulture for fallen trees.
After a windstorm, he sniffs them out. Then
he's out there with his chain saw making sure
nothing's blocking the road. He lugs them
to the cabin on the back of his four-wheeler,
splits them with his high-tech log-splitter,
and stacks them in wood piles as tall as he is.

This year, there's a beaver that seems to be imitating Larry.
This beaver likes to work at night,
and can fell a tree in 5 minutes—
nearly as fast as a chain saw.
Trees as tooth files keep him from tripping on incisors.
He cut down four trees in Larry's yard alone—
even an oak. I saw the signature pencil-tip myself.
He must have cut the larger trees down to size
to make them light enough to drag back
to a place he's been working on a while.
No one knows where it is,
but it must be a palace by now.

Field Trip

After we finished reading “West with Giraffes*”
eight women in their seventies and eighties
safari to the Toledo Zoo.
We want to see giraffes up close.

How refreshing to be in a zoo unaccompanied
by children or grandchildren.
No need to prevent them from
taking a stranger’s hand or falling into a moat.

We stride to the feeding station to shell out
twelve dollars for a stack of twelve leaves of romaine,
where we learn that a group of giraffes is called a “tower,”
and both sexes are born with horns that retract at birth.

Imagine giving birth to something horned!
Nearby signs tell us a giraffe’s heart
weighs at least twenty pounds.
Five are tall enough to reach the feeding station.

We marvel at their sleek, spotted coats, ache to touch
their fuzzy horns. Close up, their huge brown eyes
looked ringed with eyeliner,
encircled with lashes too thick to be real.

Eighteen-inch tongues reach out
to reverently accept an offered
lettuce leaf from each of the priestesses,
as if it’s a communion wafer.

*a book by Lynda Rutledge

Aubade

Some mornings, even Hello is too much,
a friendly wave will do.
I won't try talking to you,
unplugged from your hearing aids.

My eardrums reel when you empty the dishwasher,
clanking silverware into the drawer
like a drummer.
Mornings, I like it quiet.

And I cannot abide romantic music before noon:
soaring, throbbing, loud.
Measured, predictable Baroque
feeds my morning need

as does the gentle tick-tick-tick
of sparrows stabbing seeds at the feeder,
the brisk oak-a-lee of red-wing blackbirds,
sandhills trilling outside the front door.

Today, crisp daffodils blur in streaming rain
and, safe from thunder, the dog finds solace beside me.
Before long, we're left with a slow drip,
and what was frozen melts, what was closed, opens.

Off I go to scribble lines of poetry—
my morning prayer—
as I think of the poet who said
“the dream is always more than itself”

as morning is—very like a dream—
and like a poem, always
something drumming underneath
asking to be heard.

If Only Mozart Could Cover It

I'm slid into the mouth of the beast
 like a drawer in the morgue.
Is that my heart I hear?
Or the heart of an expensive hungry machine?

On my back, eyes masked, soft plugs squashed into ears,
I'm in a tiny tomb
with a headset piping in music of my choice.
Music that tries to trick me into thinking I'm someplace else.

But the Nachtmusik is too Kleine to hear
over sharp nails pounding the lid of this cold coffin.
A jackhammer shows up another another
 a blight of them

 each pitched higher louder louder
aggressively driving fistfuls of sound buffeting
breaking through soft folds of my brain
 to slice microscopically thin sections.

A snare drum leads a plague of low flutes
in this grinding parade.
 Pulsing perfectly in time pitched sounds bounce off
like ping pong balls

as the synthesized tempo prompts
 twitching,
but the more I move the longer I'll have to stay
in this living tube this submersible
 this whale belly.

And now I'm inside the guts of a double bass
plucked notes glissando-ing,
in the center of a jazz combo,
surrounded by thrumming dissonant techno-disco.

At last, the finale. Masked ones glide me into open air.
I uncover ears and eyes, plunge into eloquent silence.
Next time, I'll choose Mahler
or Sousa.

Lynn D. Gilbert

Lynn D. Gilbert's poems, twice nominated for Pushcart Prizes, have appeared in such journals as *Appalachian Review*, *Arboreal*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Consequence*, *Light*, *The MacGuffin*, and *Sheepshead Review*. A founding editor of *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, she lives in an Austin suburb and reviews poetry submissions for *3rd Wednesday Magazine*.

White Fire

In chill Midwestern woodlands, toward high spring,
after skunk cabbages and trillium
have pushed through debris of preceding seasons;
when near-dry creeks have pretty well refilled

but grey mists still doze late in the ravines
and blacktop roads shine dully under thin rains,
then white of dogwood flares in the somber groves
like lighted windows stair-stepped up night slopes.

Each wet branch, black with scarcely a touch of green,
supports a wafted streamer of white fire
borne through the damp and earth-mold smelling air
as if on hidden thread. Woods, so seen,

blaze with the startling glory of new hope;
and yet these four-bract blooms might be dismissed
as commonplace—like orchard pear or apple,
pleasing en masse, but merely picturesque—

if not for the marks of rust at each white tip
like laundered bloodstains, and the fluted curl
of white around each stain, as if to grip
these almost-circles left by ghostly nails.

Silent Hearing

It's often said, and true:
we all hear poems' sounds
in our inner voice, though we
read them in silence

just as Beethoven,
deaf as a stone, heard
his late compositions
in his mind's ear

and was moved to tears
by the simple pathos
of the "Cavatina"
in his third-to-last

string quartet, whose
four soft legato voices
sound to us like
"farewell, forever."



Reefs of Metal Junk

By the end of The War
the Mesabi Iron Range
was out of high-grade ore,
while clots of rust from it
lay splattered on beaches and meadows
the world over.

Every tank that whined and clattered
out of Cleveland's Cadillac war plant
took a bite of the Mesabi flank.

Every ship that groaned down the ways
at Norfolk Navy Yard, glacier-slow
into the North Atlantic
rode in a giant hole of displaced water
that was cousin to the enormous socket
clawed into the side
of the hematite Mesabi mountain.

Today deep undersea
long eels wind
between tall reefs of metal junk
scooped from the great Mesabi

and all the squandered oxides of iron
weep for their lost home in Minnesota

and for war-shed heme,
that iron-rich binder of oxygen
that flows in human arteries.

Grandfather Mowing

in memory of Richard Sharp Cibella

The patch below the pond too cramped
and hilly for the power mower
he'd scythe instead. When early damp
from the prior evening's dew or shower

had dried, he'd stride with whetted scythe
across the weedy drainage ditch.
I'd follow barefoot—keeping an eye
alert for snakes and toads—to watch

him swing that odd, two-handled tool
expertly, close above the ground
so that the waist-high grasses fell
in shaggy bundles all around.

His were skills of centuries past:
to shoe a horse, to cast in sand,
to smooth wet plaster over lath,
to plow on foot, or plane by hand.

Back and forth I see him pass
swinging his scythe close to the soil.
I hear the swishing of the grass,
the clang of whetstone honing steel.

David Jibson

David Jibson lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan where he edits 3rd *Wednesday*, an independent literary and arts journal. He's a board member of the Poetry Society of Michigan and helps coordinate events for *The Crazy Wisdom Poetry Circle*. He's retired from a career in social work, most recently with a hospice agency. Find him at davidkjibson.com.

A Fan Letter To Laura Gilpin

I thought you'd like to know
that I checked out a book of your poems,
the one that won the Whitman Prize,
from my public library.
I read my favorite about the calf with two heads.
over and over.

My library, which is in a small town,
still does things the old way
of stamping a due date on a slip of paper
on the inside cover.
I'm the fifth person to read your book
since 1977.

It's little wonder, with those numbers,
that you had to search for
and find a much better way
to live a life of healing —
to send into the universe
twice the number of stars.

Old Tractor Show

They trailer in from the little towns;
from Newaygo, Luther, Fountain,
Tustin, Onekama, Beulah, Kalkaska.
John Deere green
Farmall red, Allis-Chalmers orange,
Minneapolis-Moline gold,
the oldest ones with metal-tired wheels,
and a couple of old gals
steam-driven, like locomotives
come off the rails.

One proud owner claims his Oliver,
forty years older than he,
could still work the fields his grandfather cleared,
though he takes it easy on her now,
running a younger Deutz-Allis
to do the heavy work.

When somebody starts up a '39 Gibson
a crowd gathers to listen
to the pop of the single cylinder,
as the owner throttles back
until she's barely running,
each turn of the engine puffing
a perfect black ring of smoke.

Each year the men in their feed caps
have a little more curve in their backs,
more hair in their ears, less freedom
in their joints, but those machines shine
in their fresh coats of paint —
a line of pretty, dolled-up floozies.

The Canals of Mars

How glorious, the canals of Mars,
as Percival Lowell described them.
How dry the red Martian desert.
How welcome the relief
of water pouring from the polar icecaps
flowing like life's own blood
through the arteries and veins
over the surface of the warrior planet.

And where they intersect,
a sprawling city of crystal towers,
home to the great university
where once a year in Martian summer
great minds gather to debate the theory
that there could be life on Earth.

Too close to the sun's deadly heat,
the philosopher-scientists say.
How could it be?

Too wet and the air too heavy to breathe,
argue the philosopher-physicians.
Nothing could live in those conditions.

Even if life could exist there,
argues the philosopher-poet,
*how could one write music or poetry
or fall in love under the influence
of a single moon?*

A Gryphon In His Later Years

For Marvin

He's not the Gryphon who took Alice
to hear the sad story of the Mock Turtle,
though you might mistake him for the same
if you saw him reading sleepy-eyed
in a comfortable chair.

No, this one's speech is cultured,
befitting his university background
teaching interns and residents
the finer points of psychiatry.

He has never spoken to me of a mate,
though it is well known that
a Gryphon mates for life and
when the end comes to one,
the other remains faithful even in death.
Nor has he ever discussed with me
how long a Gryphon might expect to live,
though he makes reference to selling his condo
and organizing his possessions, which are few
except for shelves and shelves of books
he's been accumulating since the middle ages.

Ask him a question and he will answer with a poem,
always a poem about food;
mushrooms, broccoli, kale, artichokes,
lobsters doing a quadrille,
anything that goes well with boats of melted butter.

I ask him (with good humor) if poems about food
aren't really poems about sex.
He straightens in his chair, shakes out his lion's mane,
slowly winks an eagle eye,
opens his beak as if to speak,
says nothing but smiles
as if he were a Sphinx.

Dana L. Johnson

Dana works in corporate philanthropy and enjoys reading and writing poetry in her free time. She earned her English Degree from Central Michigan University in 2013 and is pursuing her MA in Creative Writing from Wayne State University. A student of yoga, Dana loves to share the practice with others and teaches classes in Detroit.

Postcard: New Orleans

She turned her eyes away from the horses,
foaming, as they were, from their wide mouths.
The sidewalk was cacophonous with the disarming
music of streetside performers.
The dark haunt she ducked into lured her
with promises of Oysters Rockefeller
and a stiff Sazerac. Later, on the riverwalk,
rats skittered back and forth, their paws
coated in powdered sugar from takeout beignets.
Later still, she arrived on Bourbon Street
to slide between sweaty strangers, half of them
shirtless, thinking to herself, I may be young,
but I'm too old for all of this.

Yoga

I learned to speak by repeating
what others have said to me. I spent
years hating phonics before I could
lose myself in a book and love it.

But I did not know it would be so
difficult to move my body the way
children do. To touch my toes, or lie
face down with my feet in the air,

or smile for no reason but to feel
the muscles of my face brighten.
To breathe like it's the only thing
that matters—and then realize it is.

No one told me it would feel like this—
As if to pull off rain-soaked jeans
and dress in warm clothes again. So
I peel at the world-hardened layers

each night in low light. I have learned
to move only by the limitations of my
own body, and love my weaknesses as if
accepting them is my greatest strength.

Roadtrip

Once a year, we make the trip from Munising to Grand Marais.
Through the forest, past the occasional logging truck.
We follow the winding road around the bay.

I watch for eagles along the way,
before stopping at Lake Superior Scenic Overlook.
We make the trip from Munising to Grand Marais.

We pull over at Hurricane River to hike our way
to Au Sable Light Station where we see a deer—a buck!
We follow the winding road around the bay.

From the beach, we search for shipwrecks in the spray,
and from the lighthouse, we spot in the surf a solitary duck.
We make the trip from Munising to Grand Marais.

Back on the road, we soak in this leisurely day.
It's hard to believe our luck.
We follow the winding road around the bay.

Our destination: Dunes Saloon for whitefish filet.
They sure know how to cook.
Once a year, we make the trip from Munising to Grand Marais.
We follow the winding road around the bay

Lissa Perrin

Lissa is a retired clinical social worker who lives and writes in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where she is a coordinator of events for the Crazy Wisdom Poetry Circle. Some of Lissa's work has appeared in *3rd Wednesday*, *Peninsula Poets*, *Making Waves* and *Book Women*.

In Deep Winter

No clouds mass overhead to blanket us
with some small measure of warmth.
Bright sun deceives us, cold and heartless
despite its amiable disguise. Shifting gusts
swirl the snow into dancing funnel clouds.

Stay home.

When you pull out your treasured Norwegian sweater,
(sky-blue selburose pattern on a cream background),
from its mothball-scented bed, savor its nubby heft
embracing you. Put on the kettle. Steep tea leaves
with a cinnamon stick and dried orange rind;
breathe in memories in the rising steam.

Stay inside.

Cover yourself with an ancient Log Cabin quilt,
red squares still bright as fiery embers. Sing.
Read a poem aloud. Choose an ode to spring
to wrap around the shivering maples outside your door.

Fresh Snow

Even now fresh snow delights me—
filling me with memories
of massive snow banks, mountains
piled higher than the red pompom
atop my father's blue ski cap,
of screaming *I'm the king of the mountain*
and digging caves and tunnels with friends
until daylight drained into evening
and we were chilled to the bone.
Even this late I lie on my back
sweeping soft powder
with my arms into angel wings.

The Traveler

sunbaked paving stones
warm the traveler's bony feet
circling hawk cries

under flat blue skies
the traveler sips green tea
a house wren darts by

ravens' wings flutter
the traveler shivers
home is elusive

Visitors

Sometimes,
in faint morning
light, when I lie
in the land
between worlds,
I see them standing
at the end of my bed,

their expressions
inscrutable,
bemused perhaps.
I wish
they would speak
some words
of love
or wisdom
yet they remain
silent.

There's so much
I'd like to ask

but when I look too hard
or want too much
they vanish.

Leslie Schultz

Leslie Schultz has six collections of poetry, most recently *Geranium Lake: Poems on Art and Art-Making* (Kelsay Books, 2025). She is a judge for the Maria W. Faust Sonnet Contest. Her poems can be found widely in journals, stamped into the sidewalks of Northfield, Minnesota, and (one haiku) circling the Red Planet as part of NASA's MAVEN mission.

On Good Bookstores

"If there is a garden in your library, you will want for nothing."
Si hortum in bibliotheca habes, nihil deerit.

Marcus Tullius Cicero

It was a fine, passionate bookseller
who handed me this seed-thought for free,
courtesy of an uncomfortable man
in a turbulent time. I want to understand
these shelves, my personal library,
as a living garden, not some unvisited cellar

stuffed with many a scarce-remembered tome,
but as a place to frequent, peruse, and prune.
Voices sing and argue in the lamplit air.
I feel at home here, in my own public square,
where there is room for branching paths, for moon,
stars, sunlight, and some preserved fruit from Rome.

Spirit Mail

March 20, 2023

These shiny coins, Dad, you gave to me.
Today I send them back. Spend them.

Here, on the riverbank.
On the cusp of spring.

Wispy-blue sky blows over grey water.
Leafless birches. Dogwood rises
like red-stained fingers above
the glitter of rotting snow.

May these profiles of dead presidents
row their way across the great gulf
between this moment and your death,
the unceasing current that flows between us.

Look! Their eyes burn. They turn twice, gleam,
then slip like sighs under
the moving skin of the river.

At a certain level, money is imaginary.
At a certain level, so are we.

I think you know this now,
twenty years on. Sap rises from cold earth,
as always, on your birthday's return.

A Cache of Antique Postcards

What is clear—under fading,
blur-softened pencil
lines, postal
stamps affixed
askew forever—
is that what we build
dwarfs us,
outlives us, ultimately
mocks us in the present
as news from the past.



Fun Fact

There is a storied tree in Delaware
its canopy vertiginously high.
They say that once upon a time, long
before the Constitution, it planted
itself beside a stream bed now long gone.

These sycamores are unusual. For
all trees, new growth requires greater girth
each year. And bark—their front-facing defense
against pests, diseases, elements—must
flex in outward ripples. With sycamores,

rigidity creates distinctive bark,
a kind of street-fashion camo—mottled
plates of broken color—ashen white, dove
grey, smeary yellow, and dusty pale green.
These rigid giants glide in slo-mo toward the sky.

I think of snakes with scales, shedding old skins
as they grow formidable and more wise.
What I did not know about sycamores
is how they hollow out with centuries,
create wide chambers tucked within themselves.

Why do they do this? And how does inside
spaciousness relate to outer clenching?
An arborist mentions a “fun fact”—that
the aged sycamore beauty crowning
a green hill at Winterthur has been filled

with twelve tons of concrete, not to mention
train rails and a host of other metals.
This happened in 1951, has kept
the tree upright, its sap flowing, its leaves
green and opening each spring. I presume

it has gained a further seventy rings,
pleasing (and outliving) H. F. Dupont,
that careful steward. So now I’m wondering,
how best to shore myself up for the long
haul while still keeping my heart wide open.

Laurence W. Thomas

Laurence W. Thomas is the founding editor of 3rd Wednesday Magazine. He remains active now as an associate editor. Laurence has been around long enough to know the sting of rejection and the salve of acceptance. His shelves are lined with his own books as well as the work of many other poets. He lectured on poetry at Ozark retreats for many years. Mr. Thomas is Chancellor Emeritus of the Poetry Society of Michigan.

Anatomy of Love

When I was young and wet behind the ears
I thought of love as something I could give
but that was long before I'd earned these scars.

I offered what I had to party goers,
something I thought they'd gratefully receive
but I was young and thick between the ears.

So I set out to proffer love in bars,
to make a gratis offer of my love;
that's when I first began to earn these scars.

In church I offered up my fervent prayers
to find some takers helped by those above
less young and thick and wet behind the ears.

Everywhere I looked, I found nay-sayers
refusing to accept my treasure trove
and causing me to earn so many scars

that I renounced my search for one who cares
enough to recognize the love I tried to give
when I was young and wet behind the ears
but that was not until I'd earned these scars.

Pantoum for Peace

We were taught to love our enemies
but that was before our leaders
taught us we should kill them, so
we learned to love to kill the ones we love.

But that was before our leaders
revealed an evil axis separating friends.
We learned to love to kill the ones we love
and not to love the ones we kill.

Revealed: an evil axis separating friends
from those who pose a threat
and not to love the ones we kill.
Does religion teach us to love

even those who pose a threat
so we can mete out mass destruction?
Does religion teach us to love
only those who join us in the chase

so we can mete out mass destruction
on the innocent and guilty alike?
Not only those who join us in the chase
but those who become our victims

help to bring about a lasting peace
to prove the power of love. Our leaders
taught us we should kill them so
we can learn to love our enemies.

Growing Up

One stops being a child when one realizes
that telling one's trouble does not make it better.
— Cesare Pavese, 1937

At confession, I got what I expected, no more
than to repeat by rote some phrases
trivialized by being dredged up from ancient lore
laced with intermittent praises

addressed to a father I wasn't akin to
and who, so far as I could tell,
needed only adoration before he would begin to
shield me from the gates of Hell.

Hell, at that age what did I know about sin?
— and couldn't have committed one
had it given me a written invitation
asking me to join in on all the fun.

Not that I didn't have troubles
like any other kid, and I would share
them with my friends hoping that, like bubbles,
they would simply burst in air

which they would have done in any case.
The fish that doesn't get caught by keeping
its mouth shut, starves. So I would erase
my problems, not by sleeping

on them but by telling them. Troubles arise
when making choices — the list's not long:
the right one and the selfish one are no surprise
because who would knowingly choose the wrong?

I've since learned to keep my problems close to me,
whether they be sins or upsets or things that I regret
because telling about them only makes reality
of those things that otherwise I might easily forget.

All I Can Remember

All I can remember
is the taste lingering on my tongue
mixing rich gravy with the texture of potatoes
along with savory meat such as I love
with a dash of salt, already fading
like the purchasing, and the preparation,
the clearing away afterwards.

All I can recall
of Brahms' second symphony
on television last night --
Kurt Mazur's pinched, sensitive face,
the bassoonist who resembled
a lemur, and echoes of melodies
with their rich, resonating harmonies.

The sound of laughter fades
along with the joy that caused it:
sharing commonplaces with friends,
the exchange of greetings, the oohs and ahs
of opening a present or giving one. Echoes
from the roar of an engine taking me home,
joyful voices when I get there, recede.

Few recollections remain
of the games we played
or our summers at the lake,
of our scrapes and tumbles
and the excitement of hunting eggs
and making Valentines. It's hard
enough remembering last night's television.

All that remains
of last night's corned beef dinner
are reminiscent airs
insinuating themselves into other rooms
with invitations for seconds --
a cold sandwich, a glass of milk,
leftover reminders of dinner at eight.
What lingers of old loves
still comforts, still warms:
the first kiss at the dormitory door,
tentative exploration, a coming together
of the minds. Fulfillment, separation --
some by wandering away, some by death.

Subsiding from my mind
are the particulars of old friendships
when I try to dredge up faces
drab as old photographs. Gone —
what made me laugh, or cry,
so what remains as I look back
is all I remember.

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