

July 2011 – Poetry Invitational - Class of 1960

Beyond

"...an experience beyond joy." Standing,
Stolid as a pudding, a woman
Who'd attack sorrow with a
Stick, wildness too, she
Ended her tale of a
Young nephew, coming into his own.

Words can rivet a stop in time.

I had to ask,
And she a stranger,
"Are they yours, those words?
Or did
You find them
Elsewhere?"

"Why, they're mine." Said
She, solid as a post,
Holding the tether to the phrase.

I thanked her, smiling,
And did not say,
"No longer."

Pat Demmons Topitzer

CATAHOULA BLUE

Like the dappled pelt of a Catahoula bitch,
My mood shifts from creamy bright
To blue- blackness, small spots of fire
fusing into one splotch of frenzy.
I patrol the fence-line of normalcy.
Needing to scream,
I voice only feral gnarls,
Warding off a tendered caress.
I snap and slash with words,
Not at some stranger passing by,
But the hand that nourishes me, nurtures me,
Strokes me without fear, despite my curled lip.
I guess that's love.

Ruth Passweg Dunkle '60

Driving Into the Storm

A rough rain gravels the roof of the car;
the radio warns but the wind is here now
and cold coming fast. No time to spare,
no chance to change, no choice but to drive.
Pinecones skid on the rain-slick road,
a wind-ripped branch grazes the door.
Outrace the storm — crest the incredible
climb into Tolland and drop down the mountain
to safety at Granville — before impossible rain
turns impassable ice.

In the storm-washed valley, wipers churning,
the car veered west along the river;
fast-roiling clouds spewed out a rainbow
of fractured light. Then the road swung back,
snapped back eastward to eye-level sun,
white-coal winter-sun searing the road,
blinding.

Rain filled the windshield with sheeted light
kaleidoscope fragments pelting too fast
for wipers to clear, mirror-sharp shards
shattering sight.

No pupil, no retina, could have withstood
what pierced those eyes:
that diamond-wall falling,
more deadly than ice
dead ahead.

Betsey Wells Farber

HOMES PUNNING FOR WEDNESDAY

The child inside stamps and presses its nose flat.
The pain holds a view of tomorrow.
In the full-measured marking of hours
Is the child's ire and awe of eternity.

The woman there tenses and stirs.
Expectant, she blushes,
Bearing an ancestral prerogative.

With deference for the two
The savvy heart watches and smiles,
Knowing that Wednesday will spend itself in stride
And that Thursday, for all the world, will come too soon.

Jane Cady Fitchen

Dad at 100

'Your Dad is sweet'
'He's amazing.....'
'Can he really?'

On the slide of memory
he is near the bottom,
at the end of a century
his circle of thought
is a few hours -
only the strong memories
hold up his space.

Light is dimming
but a twinkle can spark off frayed ends of wit -
a raised eyebrow
or puckered mouth
a knowing straight look
to share the joke.

Rolly Neal Beckett

Our Secret

Sometime ago
when I was young
but old enough
to think about love,
I confessed
I loved you best.

You, though old,
were young enough
to embrace what
I'd confessed
and told me back
you loved me best.

We could not
let the others
know, and so,
we chose
a sign to send
each other anytime.

It was the letter "C"
the coded message
our hands flashed
between us
you and me.

Sheila Hannan Kirscher (with love to her grandmother)

Switch

If I had on your skin and you
Were wearing mine, would we then be
Aware behind each other's eyes
Of covert selves we now could see
Or still not know those strangers who
Gazed back behind exchanged disguise?

Lynne Mayo Mayocole

(no title)

Gray November.

Mockingbird

Re-calling

Lost songs

Of summer.

Joan Britton

Votive Candle

Though soul encased in flesh may be,
Yet flesh may light the way to soul,
And keep alive the memory
That onetime we had seen the Bowl
Of Him who gave us soul and flesh,
When handing out these things to men,
And yearns to have us back again,
That soul that in our body lives,
Alight in hope of seeing Him.

Helen E. Broxmeyer

WHY I'M NOT JUDY COLLINS

He doesn't even know I'm alive

neither in fact do I

The rhythm pulse in line and note

I hear it too

It doesn't catch and then I looked away

I thought the trick was just to be with him

not be him

Don't you know the kind of man

who has to tell the punch line?

while you're in line for punch

But I am soft and easy now

I barely hear that music going out the door

My words are so much canon (fodder)

My strings are strung in case I hear a song

Jane Stern Davis

This set of four Haikus was written while monitoring a "special needs" student taking a standardized test:

Standardized testing

Required of the weakest

To prove they need help!

When the test's too hard,

How can we spare them the shame?

They know it's all wrong.

Those words on the page.

Here and there familiar ones,

But making no sense.

Waiting for Stephen

to fill in circles of doubt,

Haiku holds his grief.

Ann Montgomery Carter