

WestWard Quarterly

The Magazine of Family Reading



Fall 2014

To our readers . . .

Viewing the network news these days can be an unsettling, even discouraging, experience. A survey (just released as we go to print) disclosed that the majority of Americans, when asked to select from a list describing where the world is going, chose “going to hell in a hand-basket.”

If that’s the case, we have all the more reason to persevere in the enterprise of producing uplifting poetry and exposing ourselves to good writing. We build the world we live in by the things we say, and declare, about it. We don’t close our eyes to the evil about us, but we counter it by constructing a picture of a better world. That’s why we advise our contributors in our guidelines (repeated below), “Adversity happens. Find the eternal purpose behind it. Reflect an uplifting, positive or gently humorous attitude in your submissions.”

Our featured writer in this issue is Karen Kelsay of California, who not only writes poetry but has her own publishing company (www.kelsaybooks.com). Read about her accomplishments and sample her poetry on pages 4-5.

On page 17, our staff member Chester the Cat illustrates Dawn Zapletal’s poem with his own comments about threatening night creatures. Our “Creative Quotations” selection in this issue, on page 18, is a short survey of the unique voice of American poetry; we think you’ll find it of interest even if you aren’t from the U.S.A. And since our next issue is scheduled for January, we have a special Christmas section of poems in this issue, on pages 28-29.

And please check out the note on the bottom of page 29, because we depend on both our established and newer subscribers to keep making this magazine available to those who enjoy writing, and reading, positive poetry.

Shirley Anne Leonard, EDITOR

WestWard Quarterly

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WestWard Quarterly showcases the best work of upbeat writers and poets. Our magazine’s philosophy is: “Adversity happens. Find the eternal purpose behind it.” Reflect an uplifting, positive or gently humorous attitude in your submissions. Send all letters, requests for guidelines, queries or submissions to the address above. Send SASE for response.

Maximum length for poems is 40 lines. Shorter submissions have a better likelihood of being published. The Editor reserves the right to edit material. For more information on guidelines and how to send your submission, visit our web site.

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Subscriptions — \$15.00 per year U.S. and \$18.00 foreign (4 issues).

Single issues — \$4.00 U.S., \$6.00 foreign (contributors to an issue:
 non-subscribers, \$3.00 U.S., \$5.00 foreign for that issue;
 subscribers, \$2.00 U.S., \$4.00 foreign for that issue).

Make checks payable to Laudemont Press.

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Cover Image: Autumn Scene Near Hamilton, Illinois, November 2013
 Photo by Richard Leonard



Featured Writer

Karen Kelsay
California

I was born in Southern California and grew up in Orange County. My interest in poetry came late in life. I have studied for the past thirteen years, both free verse and formal poetry.

Over the past few years I've received five Pushcart Prize nominations, the Fluvana Award from *The Lyric* 2013, and won the Association of Mormon Letters Award in 2012, for my book *Amytis Leaves Her Garden*.

My poetry can be found in various journals and magazines including: *Mezzo Cammin*, *The Raintown Review*, *OVS Magazine*, *Boston Literary Magazine*, *The Touch: Journal of Healing*, *Grey Sparrow*, and *Pennsylvania Review*.

I enjoy writing detailed poems, narratives, nature poetry, and verse written in form. My objective in writing is to connect by using images from nature along with everyday situations and observations that ultimately provide an interesting mix of thoughts and ideas to the reader.

My long range goals are directed at my poetry publishing company, and developing systems to make it run as smoothly as possible.

I enjoy baking, cooking, jewelry making, swimming, traveling, writing, and sewing. My extended family lives in England, and my travels often serve as inspiration for much of my poetry.

Three years ago I began a publishing company called "Kelsay Books." It's a growing company that now publishes seventy-five full-length books per year. Most of my time is spent working with mid-career poets who need books for readings and contests. My workload consists of reading manuscripts, designing covers, and doing layout work. When I have free time it is usually spent taking photographs and writing poetry for my next collection.

Poetry by Karen Kelsay

Winter in England

It's here I pause with each December, where
the snow trimmed walls of timeworn brick align
beneath the window sill, and winter's bare
limbs bend beneath a delicate and fine

glossing of frost. It's here I garner all
my thoughts of months gone past, beside the sheers
and yellow paisley chair. A woolen shawl,
a pearl and knit of smiles and raveled tears,

is wrapped around my shoulders. Nothing speaks
but morning's melting icicles, and wind
that steals the breath of graying skies. The creek
is frozen into timelessness and thinned

with dying grasses, every shade of brown.
I take my stock of daisies dried and pressed,
my verses, scratched impetuously down —
time balanced here on its mid-point of rest.

The Drive

I'm riding in the back seat of the car.
The mountains lift their blue chemise of cloud,
while pre-dawn haze stirs quietly. Bizarre,
how palms along the roadside all look bowed
beneath the desert air. Last night it rained —
mesquites are yellow as a slice of sun.
My parents are in front — I'm self-contained,
my young mind on vacation, watching one
by one, as fresh-washed stars depart. It's been
near forty years since I've been in this seat.
I fold my hands, pretend I'm young again —
not heading to the hospital to meet
white gowns that blend and morph into each other.
My parents chatter on — and I am blind
to fates that whirl and storm above my mother.
This morning I'm the girl time left behind.

Winter Lullaby

It's always in the violet hour you call,
when dusk spreads infant-smooth across the skies,
and winter teeters on the wings of fall.
The poplars change to gold and improvise.

In spite of chill, the memory of you warms.
Unpunctual star, kind winter brings you near,
to break you from your listlessness — transforms
that vagrant whisper I can barely hear
to incandescent words; the subtle burn
of maple leaves to red, a flame of thought
that gives the seasoned birch a breathless turn,
as random dreams within its twigs are caught.

The Courtship Hour

I love the hour that hangs its weightless haze
of yawn across my bed. An ivory wrap
of humming stillness, spectral dance embossed
in thimble-light. I love the wentletrap
of thoughts and gurgled chants that twist before
white shoals of sleep. The bend and blur of night
with loveliness and brokenness inside
soft vagaries that pivot in the light.
I love the hour subservient to dreams,
when day's satiety leaves remnant sky.
And all beheaded moments shed their wings
into a hushed reluctance as they die.

Mariana

With lowing of the oxen you awake.
And like a crow that's ferried by the moon
across a changeless night into opaque
portholes of sky, your mind is strewn
inside the molding weeds and brambles
of the past. Your farmhouse leans aslant
with age, an edifice that sadly ambles
out an addle-minded creaky chant,
that taints the sparrow-song. Your moated grange,
where even Angelo was overcome
by fields of melancholy, dies. How strange
that dogtooth violets never bloom, and plum
trees wither markedly, their fruit askew
and dim — depression always follows you.

Shapes of Churches

Tony Cosier, Ontario, Canada

Nothing strikes the skyline like the shape of a church.
 Cathedral stones, fused together and flying,
 abrupt as an Alpine scarp,
 can set me soaring with them.
 Squarings in oak that steady a steeple's rise
 inevitably steady me too.
 I see integrity all along a chapel roof
 whose slanting shingles meet
 and match like praying hands.

Humbler touches, too, have holding power.
 One church nearly lost within its woodlot
 curves where it cuts the earth
 like the claw of a bracing wolf
 anchoring into loam.
 Another's plain white paint
 riding its clapboard side
 smiles with such clean-cut civility,
 how can I not be ready
 for the door above the steps
 to swing a wide-open welcome
 releasing a warmth of voices,
 an aroma of fresh-baked bread.

Previously published in Time of Singing in Spring 2011, Vol. 38, no. 1.

Summer's End

Dawn Zapletal, California

Farewell bright ribbon of idle summer days;
 The willows, pines and sycamores seem
 Insubstantial in the almost autumn haze.
 Wild and rampant roses intoxicate my sight;
 Their ravenous color consumes the light.
 The country cottage, shabby and serene,
 Is fringed with vines and thick with leaves
 Through which the sun comes grotto-like
 And green. My memories of summer packed,
 I hesitate, though the day grows late, and one
 More time I stand and wait for that last
 Burst of light before the golden day
 Is gobbled up by greedy night.

Late Summer Tomatoes

Sandy Hiortdahl, Tennessee

The sun leaves Leo and tomatoes
 Ripen deeply on their vines, overly full
 Of the tangy, tart memories of a fading
 Summer, summer going, even as the taste
 Conjures memories of those Taurus golf ball
 Tomatoes, back when we wondered still
 What summer may bring.

It came, it went, it left these sweet beauties
 As postscript, as summer fading toward its
 Successor, even as the taste lingers, teasing us
 With the desire to hold still.

Diamonds

Vincent J. Tomeo, New York

People are like diamonds
 Born by pressure bearing down
 Carbon crystallizes
 Black sun turns inside out
 Dazzling streams of fire reflect pure light

Some diamonds veil brilliant beams of light
 No two are alike
 Most diamonds have foggy feathered flaws
 So look beneath to see the brilliance

People are like diamonds

Shifting Tides

Lois Hayn, California

World roars
 wars rip, armies redden
 to self-made storms galore.
 Still ancient seas stretch new blue breasts
 moving sure as seasons
 to roll out the tall clean air
 glisten, gladden coasts and glaciers
 make fishermen smile
 surfers stand on boards
 like walking on water.

Learning Curve

Cathy Porter, Nebraska

Tomorrow we can sail over hard
 terrain, blue skies in the distance,
 as today waits for the moment
 the sun slides into a back view,
 before conceding to shut-eye.
 We walk with arms entwined,
 our silence comfortable as our years.
 I have crashed into your heart;
 you have picked up the debris
 through the miles of scattered circles.
 I don't make it easy — and you
 let me know when I have stepped too far.
 Tomorrow we can sail over hard terrain —
 today we wait, as memory plays tricks
 on all the plans we made under cover.
 You slip into character and I fade behind —
 there is no hurry; we are here to learn.

Let's Face It . . .

Herman Bush, Maryland

When you smile, you nourish my heart.
 That is just one of your amenities,
 for in the mirror is proof:
 nature has been generous to you.

The waves of your love, sweet undulations,
 prove the best thing about love is today,
 it is always only today, another thing
 devoid of beginning or end,

like space, numbers, now,
 or my fervid allegiance to you.
 These things have always existed.
 They will not be finished in our lifetime.

Doubts

Patsy Kisner, West Virginia

Doubts creep in
 To cover dreams with mold
 But ugly only grows
 In unkempt spaces
 So I scrub the floors
 And wipe the walls clean
 Before the spore
 Can grow

Our Legacy

Douglas Young, Georgia

As my leaves begin to brown,
 I want ever more to plant my tree,
 Big, bold, tall, and sound,
 Inspiring others and outlasting me.

Wandering graveyards and reading dates,
 Lives are reduced to names and mates,
 Noting whose plots are well kept
 And whose are now decrepit.

How soon dear ones who've died at work
 Are fast forgotten, no matter the hurt,
 As carefully crafted castles along the shore
 Are soon leveled by waves with nary a roar.

We're brief "Here"'s in the roll call of time,
 Small cameos in a film that won't rewind,
 For even a Victorian home bulldozed for an office,
 In a few years is all but forgotten.

So how best to lay down a legacy,
 Deep-rooted in spite of me,
 A home-run record that won't be broken,
 A souvenir to keep, not some token?

For even Ozymandias got overtaken by time,
 Since statues become challenges for children to climb.
 As sidewalk chalk marks get erased by rain,
 So last year's bird's nest is never used again.

Yet values last as timeless truths,
 And a kindness delivered can't be diluted.
 All the good we do
 Can inspire others, too.

Good (and bad) deeds
 Plant many strong seeds
 As we provide much of the toil
 That helps till the youths' soil.

If we want our values remembered
 Long after our lives are surrendered,
 We should grab every chance to help others,
 Spreading the gospel that we're all brothers.

True teachers are preachers of ideas,
 Not selfishly promoting themselves,
 But inspiring students to be pioneers,
 Not conformist little elves.

As promoters of principles and dreams,
 We can impact way more than it seems.
 So work hard and celebrate what's profound
 To leave a legacy that's good and sound.

At Fanny's House
Kari Gunter-Seymour, Ohio

Fanny in white apron, bleached
 in peace and love, gossamer fibers
 refracting stitch-to-stitch.
 Her kitchen thick with pan-fried catfish
 and cinnamon spiced sweet potatoes
 glittering in their cut glass bowl.
 Religion to the souls of empty poets,
 arriving needy to her table,
 seeking fullness of word and belly.

Her close cooing unlocking
 cool blue dreams, ping-ponging
 plate-to-plate, pen to paper.
 Notions pinched and shaped,
 feet tapping rhythms
 against the polished floor.

Ask the tree, she said, passing warm
 apple cake and sweet cream butter.
 And they did, speaking covenants,
 swinging hand over hand
 into all that was yet to be written.

Troubadours

Francis D. Conlon, Colorado

I look for the wandering troubadour
 With good news in songs' ethereal humming
 Set to the rhythm of musical strumming,
 Bringing faraway tidings to us alongshore.

They were the newsman of ancient day,
 With luck and rank of knightly skill.
 Revelations in a mysterious thrill,
 Tutoring us with their brief stay.

I miss the meeting a wandering congregation.
 Not fixed building made of stone,
 With worn texts consumed alone,
 But rather a vital conversation

Whose import can make a difference
 And bind us to that eternal dance.

Tea Time
Carole Mertz, Ohio

A late afternoon, one of those perfect
 late-summer days,
 I walked a remote path among cornflowers,
 buttercups and Queen Anne's lace.

The florals lifted me, inspired,
 but first of me a confession required.
 Sized up by all the Susan "One-Eyes"
 I obediently drew up my list

then sat
 along the pathway's edge
 and viewed the blooms,
 all vibrant-hued and God-kissed.

My list contained a series of dos
 and don'ts — a surfeit of needs and wants,
 things I really could do without,
 a dearth of what I should have done.

Then "Tea is served," I heard it spoken.
 The regal mistress of the place
 held sway and served it
 ever so sweetly in tiny buttercups.

Queen Anne had all the Sues there, of course,
 and cat-tails stately and brown
 from down by the willows' marshy ground
 among the bracken and gorse.

Three deer, the only passersby,
 stood still and viewed the spread
 resplendent, and snorted and sighed.
 "You'd be invited,"

Queen Anne said, "but your heavy
 tread would cost me my face,
 and there'd be no more of
 Queen Anne's lace."

The party drew to a close, cornflowers
 comforted by kindest deeds
 of mustard seeds, and in their bowers
 shared the afternoon's news.

"Let it not be said we serve no purpose,
 for that one who visited will have taken to heart
 her list, and seen to it, by all our florals' graceful
 sway, to gather the light, and seize the day."

Hitching a Ride

Elizabeth Howard, Tennessee

Ruby-throats are at the feeders, conducting their usual wars, chasing and buzzing, their throats glistening emerald and ruby in the sun. They will soon be on their long journey south, looking for sunshine and flowers, for insects to fatten them up for the return voyage. My elderly neighbor says, "You know hummingbirds hitch rides on wild geese, don't you?" I think of the story of Nils, the boy who is turned into a gnome and rides about from adventure to adventure on the backs of wild geese. Hitchhiking, a fanciful idea from the era before people knew many facts about hummingbirds, fierce little voyagers who fly five hundred miles nonstop across the Gulf of Mexico, each bird flying alone, just as it lives at our feeders, fighting daily for survival. I show my granddaughter a walnut-sized nest tucked away in a holly, tell her the hitchhiking myth and the story of Nils. These stories lead us to the library for an afternoon of reading. As we cross Elm Street on our way home, a flock of geese flies over, honking. We stand looking up, feet grounded on concrete, but our fancies hitching rides on the broad wings of wild geese up there in the blue sky.

Gravity, Perhaps

Greg Schmult, Michigan

The sycamore leaf tumbled
into my periphery, slowly, still
waiting for something.
Gravity, perhaps.

The brown cup of its palm stuttered
in its cartwheel, half way to ground, caught
in the still-green foliage of the pear beneath
where it became unlikely, a balance
of such pregnant maybe that I'm yet
waiting for a drifting mote
or nanobreeze to nudge it lawnward, pluck
the first ripe fruit
in a whole summer of unripe leaves.

Museum Pieces

Richard Luftig, California

These urns need no odes
but rather the job to do
for which they were made:
water to carry off for someone's bath
or oil to cook an evening meal.

Hopi blankets to keep a sick child
warm, Inuit baskets with ivory tops
to hold beads, pestles for grinding
grain, Kachina dolls to teach
young girls the meanings of the rain.

And away in corners of splintered barns,
hidden under warped and rotten boards
of ancient cottonwoods, broken
plows once used by these farmers
now waiting to be of use again.

Cottage Industry

Lynne Viti, Massachusetts

Fat bumblebees have commandeered the lavender
Two or three to a slender stem, dulled by competition
They've occupied the green and purple hedge
outside the kitchen door.

Leaning down, I hear a low rumble.
Mindlessly they hang on the purple nodes.
They're stuck between harmony and desire,
their motors so loud they're
unaware of the earth mover's sounds,
the house being built, the road being paved,
the grinding punctuated by beeps
in the middle distance.

The bees will stay at their work till sundown,
Drunk with lavender juice.
I'm stuck between harmony and desire, myself.
Our old apple trees have dropped their fruit too soon.
Tomorrow there'll be rain.
Few bees will report for duty.
The lavender will stand tall, unweighted by these busybodies.
I'll be on the road back to the city,
All news all the time.
The bees will take no notice of my leaving.

Safekeeping

Alina Zeng, California

Enchanting autumn welcomes
Migrating birds on the flyway
South; they stop to rest, hiding
But trilling from great trees.

Enchanting autumn welcomes
Branches dancing to the wind,
Their leaves in rainbow colors
Relaxing, getting ready to fall.

Enchanting autumn welcomes
Earth carpeted in auburn, blue,
Purple, and gold, glimmering
In still warm October sunlight.

Enchanting autumn welcomes
Pristine lands, safeguarded
By man for coming generations
To rejoice in Mother Nature.

Sunset

Eugene Carrington, New York

Rose petals fall
and bedeck damp
grounds below
a bee whose legs sparkle
like gold
flies to his hive
to unload his goods
and rest a while
in dim evening sky a few
clouds still linger
and the birds
have flown away

I glance at the park's pond
I glance at aged lovers
strolling by water's edge
an old man lifts his wooden cane
then looks my way
and today tomorrow
nothing but different sides
of the same coin
and setting sun glows
softly in the distance . . .

Fragments of Autumn

Susan Dale, Ohio

With rainy eyes
And slippery feet
Does autumn come.

* * *

Ardent afternoons
Shimmering in gold dust
The burning beauty of autumn.

* * *

The sun taking refuge
In an arch
Where waters meet the skies.

* * *

Wrapped in a melancholy cape
Crackling steps
Walking along.

* * *

The cry of goodbye in the skies
Looking up to see
A gaggle of geese.

* * *

Lolling about on ample afternoons
With no edges
Lit with the sun's jeweled throat.

Slow

d. n. simmers, British Columbia, Canada

"A sound slow like stacked plates." — Charlotte Pence

I am acquainted with the park
the sunlight and dark.
Between shadows
row on row a
hollow tree will not grow
or a slanted one and more.
Tall evergreens that take harsh sounds
makes them soft and slow.
While feet that travel in and out.
May go to paths
less taken
by the speeder in the cars.
They do not see like blind reptiles.
The slow signs they go by, every day.
And at night when the hawks
and the eagles come back
high against the sky.
The hush of even-more
is the counting time for silence.

Orange

Brenda Kay Ledford, North Carolina

Orange is the color of autumn,
a maple burning like Moses' bush,
fire on the mountainside.
Orange is a pile
of pumpkins and squash
at the roadside market.
Orange is the webbed feet
of a duck splashing in Lake Chatuge,
sourwoods reflecting like cinders.
Orange is the pom-pom mum
poking its hands through
a blanket of leaves.
Orange is the candy corn
tossed into the sacks
of trick-or-treaters.
Orange is a Jack-o-lantern
glowing in the window
and a harvest moon.



Photography by Terrence A. Malmgren



Find "Through the Eyes of God," Photography by Terrence A. Malmgren, on Facebook.

Seasonal Painting Instructions Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

Life handed me a brush and said,
Go paint —

I set a canvas in the winter
working in the cold
and brushed a swath of white
across the frozen fields,
mixed diamonds with the night
and sprinkled them on sky,
and sprinkled them on sky,
daubed cedar-green on snowy hills
and tinsel them with light.

I painted only what I could see . . .

In spring I dipped my brush in rain
and drizzled silver on the eaves,
and spread its luster everywhere
mixed with pastels and violet leaves.
And when the sun came out to dry
I painted gold and blue for sky,
and tulips dancing in the parks,
and purple lilacs filled with larks.

I painted only what I could see . . .

In summer my palette overflowed
with every color ever known
in giant splashes end on end,
a kaleidoscope that would send
the bees in frenzies, birds to flight,
and gardens dizzy with delight,
shimmering in a world of light.

I painted only what I could see . . .

In fall I tiptoed through the hills,
my brushes dripping orange gold
that fell in patches on the rills
as leaves turned amber, fold on fold.
A purple mist I used on trees
when twilight came without a breeze
in mystifying solemn haze,
till winter swept it all away.

I painted only what I could see . . .

— Published in *Creation's Song* by Shirley Anne Leonard (2008).

From My Vantage Point . . . by Chester the Cat

Strange things happen after dark. I have to be alert at all times to ensure that nothing threatens our house or interrupts our progress in putting this magazine together. Cars are always rushing by, as mentioned in the poem below. What if one of them suddenly veers up the hill toward our house? You never can tell; a few weeks ago, at midnight, a car went off the road next door and knocked down a tree (happily, no one was injured).

But cars I can handle. More threatening are those night creatures that could disrupt our peace. I must be on constant lookout for tree frogs climbing the porch furniture, moths circling the gas lamp, some night bird calling ominously in the rustling tree branches, or perhaps a raccoon nosing around the foundation. There's no telling what's out there in the dark that could disrupt our production schedule. One must be vigilant.



Night Watch Dawn Zapletal, California

His gaze sieved through
A wire window screen,
The cat stands night watch
From the window sill.
His tail, a plumb line
Hanging down the wall.
Silent, still as a piece of pottery
On a shelf.
His supple form firmly,
Surely sculpted.
Yellow eyes alerted by
Approaching light
He watches cars speeding by.

Two furry triangles in outline
His isosceles ears twitch
At every sound;
Moths around the lamp globe
And leaves whispering
Their secret to the stars.
Midnight and all is well
His eyes close to lantern slits
Content to let the cheddar moon
Take up the watch till dawn.

Creative Quotations

American Writers Write for American Readers . . .

American writers have been writing for American readers for more than three centuries now. Poetry in the New World began to establish itself before the Constitution. Anne Bradstreet, emigrating from England with her Puritan husband, was one of the first in a long series of specifically American writers that continues vigorously into the present.

Bradstreet came to a wild country, but hardship, cold, and the deaths of her children never shook her faith in God, her love for her husband, or her belief that coming to the Massachusetts Bay Colony was the right choice to have made. American poets since Bradstreet have usually exhibited a persistent optimism about America even when the evidence pointed in the other direction. Centuries later, in the early 1800s, William Cullen Bryant and Ralph Waldo Emerson refined that optimism into a public poetry appropriate to stern, progressive New England, while Henry David Thoreau cut a path to a purer, more spartan life that embraced the independence and solitude of the individual living harmoniously with American nature. Likewise, Whitman turned American individualist aspirations into something of a religion — a religion that brought human beings together as one exuberant soul that was America, singing. Not even the Civil War could disturb his faith in his country's generative powers.

In the twentieth century, after the revolutionary precisions of the poems of Emily Dickinson, American poets expanded even further into an examination of all aspects of national life. Their styles became even more diverse — what poets could be more different than Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg? Paul Laurence Dunbar began chronicling the experience of black Americans, an activity continued by other black poets in the present day; Carl Sandburg took Whitman's long poetic line and explored the new industrial landscape, which still fascinates writers. Poets like T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore, and Ezra Pound remade the language of poetry to suit a complicated century. Free verse — that is, poetry that relies more on rhythm than on meter for its power — became one new way of communicating the American experience to reflect the strength and variety of the country. "Make it new," said Ezra Pound. America made it new, and so did its poets.

Although American poets became more and more diverse, they usually retained their fidelity to an important and lasting element of America: the home place, the land, the region. Who can think of Robert Frost without thinking of New England? Frost is as much a part of his countryside as stone fences, maple syrup, and snow. Poets like Whitman bravely charted the westward path of the pioneers and the ever-changing urban landscape, and Native American poets both then and now created songs that reflected their tribal attachment to the soil and to nature. Edward Arlington Robinson wrote of small-town America, and Theodore Roethke embraced his native, damp Pacific Northwest. From Bradstreet to Updike, in one way or another, American poets long for solid ground beneath their feet.

Along with a sense of place came a poetic fascination with the idea of America as a nation — a country with a particular experience that set it apart from any place anywhere else in the world. A sense of America flourished not only among poets like Whitman and Williams but at the popular level as well, in ballads, in national hymns, and in folk stories told in verse — all feeding the American hunger to find out about itself. Side by side with a sense of country was a feeling for particularly American versions of religion, home, nature, and humor. Songs of the southern slaves and Native Americans gave a distinctly spiritual flavor to American poetry and to the American people as well.

"The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. . . . Here at last is something in the doings of men that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night." In those words from the preface to his *Leaves of Grass*, Walt Whitman made it clear that American poetry is made of Americans. And it cannot do without American readers.

— David Groff, in George Gesner (ed.), *Anthology of American Poetry* (1983), pp. xiv-xv

Forever with Us

John W. Williams, Georgia

The voice of some poets
Is like a gentle breeze
Stirring our hearts . . .

They are forever with us,
Linking our soul
To inspiring words.

They are poets who look
To God for guidance;
They are special gifts
Sent upon wings of angels . . .

And long after these
Eminent poets are gone,
Their words live on
With love and admiration . . .

Thank God for such unforgettable poets
And for the heritage
Of their treasured poems.

Inchworm Meditation

Lisa M. Drago, Virginia

Gazing past trees and bushes —
to see calm water beyond.
Some tiny movement close by.
Inchworm measures length
of bark, brown and slant.

Ah! One moment,
silly and playful —
the next poised tall
on hind legs.
Perfect stillness.
Image of a stick.
Serene meditation.
Not even the tiniest
flicker of movement now.
Oneness with bark is all
that's evident in the moment.
This attention can go on and on.

A Birth

Rona F. Simon, Ohio

tea pen paper me
solitude serenity
a poem is born.

Corner of Her Eye

Maura Cavell, Louisiana

She hates when
it rains on Mondays,
juggling bags, books,
umbrella, papers,
gray spears
making it hard
to get to where
she must go,
umbrella broken,
inside out and useless.

When she's back
to a small space
that's dry, away,
she will put lemon juice
in her tea,
sweetener, the wind
beating the windows,
the shadow of his
love in the corner
of her eye, a fleeting ghost.

Wonderful Stories of Old

Raymond F. Benn, Illinois

The old folks in the back will say
Wonderful stories of old,
Good times and bad times of another day —
Stories that have to be told.

How else can young people consider
The future, the right way to go?
As a country we can't be a quitter;
Our history, they need to know.

Our neighbor countries are older by far.
We're still a very young nation.
Some ruled by king or a czar,
Our blood mixed by immigration.

No matter our country of origin,
No matter our country of birth,
We owe respect to the good ole US of A,
The best country on this Earth!

Pride of the Dakotas

Charles S. Parnell, Pennsylvania

Rubber bands and chewing gum And shoestrings just for luck, All these things together Help to run my truck!	Its power is productive, Its mileage still is low; But other trucks don't get me Excited or aglow.
Duct tape and some Scotch tape And shopping-bags galore, You'll find these in my truck cab In case I lose a door!	The wax on it is peeling, Still, I'm saving lots of bucks; I love my Dodge Dakota, The "Pride of Pickup Trucks!"
It rattles on a bumpy road And squeaks now when it brakes; At times it shifts uneven, But still has what it takes!	I got it new in "Ninety-Nine" And it has served me well; And I hope for many years it lasts, But only time will tell!

November

John B. Swartz, California

Leaves flicker
Revel in forest finery,
The season of many colors;
But the ides of November arrive
With colder nights and misty mornings
When the aura of holiday festivities emerges.

Leaves flutter, fly, and finally fall
As winter winds wing their way closer.
Families gather, tell stories, laugh as one,
Fill the table laden with bounteous feast, pray
While the perfume of sweet memories fills the air.
Fresh pies and aged port draw Thanksgiving's curtain.

First Snow

Linda Fuchs, Ohio

it snowed last night
the first of the season
the trees are beautiful with
layers of white covering
the roughhewn branches

the blanketed ground
sparkles and shines
it invites children to
create snow angels
and snowmen

those lucky enough to have a hill
slither and slide in glee
tearing down the incline
roaring and screaming
with delight

as a child we opened the fence
that kept the cows and bulls
from wandering onto our property
now they are safely ensconced in the barn
for the winter allowing us safe passage

to slide down their hill
zigzagging around the cow pies
left throughout the summer
frozen, they cause us to bump

and fly just enough to
make us squeal even more

The Whippoorwill

Debbie Richard, South Carolina

As I lie awake on a late summer's eve,
The moonlight streams through my window panes,
The familiar call through the night rings out,
The whippoorwill calls to his mate again.

By day, he sleeps on the forest floor
And is rarely seen by the human eye.
His wings blend in with the dying leaves.
But at night comes the familiar cry . . .
"Whip-poor-will, Whip-poor-will,
Whip-poor-will."

On the Side of Time

Jesse James Doty, California

My impatience — and impulsiveness —
Will be my undoing
Unless I gain control of both
In the short run and the long run
Once I gain some modicum of control
My coping skills
Will increase exponentially
Which can only help me
Time may not be healing
But compulsiveness
Can make everything worse

Time is neither my friend
Nor my enemy
Time is constant
And then again it's not
Time is open to interpretation
And closed to predictability

I can only gain control over
My impatience and compulsiveness
But Time is there
Irrespective of what I accomplish
Time is forever changing
Time is eternal

Autumn,

John F. Gruber, New York

Under an ashen sky
Sorrel leaves on the lawn
Wait for the rake.
A cold wind off the river
Makes branches shake
With the first frost.
The blush of the last rose
Will be lost.

The Fall of a Leaf

Daniel Edwards, Kentucky

is a glide down the breeze,
a slow-dance with time,
a letting go
of weathering memory,
a giving in to gravity
as we close our eyes in sleep —
like a planter lays
a seed into soil —
a dream dissipating into glory
of morning song.

Sun's Sound Asleep

Eira Needham, United Kingdom

The sun lies snug beneath a spread
with crimson ribbon trims —
clouds pillowing his frazzled head.
His daily dazzle dims

to silhouette the trees below
as twilight nibbles night.
Moon lightly croons, her face aglow
as umpteen stars unite

in silver slippers, dancing spry —
they shimmy, 'til a flush
of sun's long fingers touch the sky,
commanding them to . . . husssh

Little Baby Bumpkin

Sedalia S. Sanders, Oklahoma

Little baby Bumpkin
Sittin' on a pumpkin
Smilin' with his friends
Now that's really something!

Along came a birdie
Now that's kinda' pretty
Talkin' on away
With lots of little wordies.

Along came a cat
Who knows where it's at
Hummin' and a-purrin'
Lovin' Baby Bumpkin that

Little Baby Bumpkin
Sittin' on a pumpkin
Smilin' with his friends
Now *that's* really somethin'

Rain

Ginger Peters, New Mexico

Lovely rain falls from the sky,
Mother is in the kitchen
baking an apple pie.
My brother is staring out the window —
bored as can be.
But, I love the rain
and the rain loves me.

Kids'
Korner

Kids'
Korner

Conversation with a Cat
Caryl Calsyn, Texas

I told him, "long time, no see.
We need to cat-ch up."
He didn't reveal anything
cat-astrophic or cat-ty.

He just said, "Meow."

I said nothing cat-chy
and he didn't cat-erwaul
nor was he cat-atonic.

He simply said, "Meow."

Our conversation ended when
I unhooked the screen door.

With one last meow
he cat-apulted into
the cat-tails by the porch
(I made that up).

I said, "Chow, cat,
I'll cat-ch you next time."

The Bookends
Robert Black., United Kingdom

A wooden aardvark and a marble zebra
were embarrassed at only having
one thin book about accordions
squeezed tightly in between them,
until the day a music manuscript shoved in!
Now, it's true, they've something more
but it will insist on moving!

Contacts

Jane Blanchard, Georgia

Oh, 'tis the season to cull cards
That fill my Rolodex,
For I had rather not incur
A new year's jinx or hex.

So let me toss the cards of those
Who died or moved away,
Went bonkers, bankrupt, off to jail,
Lost on election day.

Regarding who did what to whom
At home or club or church,
I should distinguish those that left
From those left in the lurch.

And as for former colleagues, few
Have time to stay in touch;
Most are too busy working hard,
Or not, to ring me much.

Without a doubt I can remove
The cards of folks who call
Too frequently or late at night
Or simply not at all.

I Wonder Why
Helen Webb, Ohio

God gave two eyes, two ears, two arms,
Two hands, two legs, two feet.
He only gave one tongue to talk
One mouth to use to eat.

It could be that we need to see,
To hear, to work, to walk,
At least about two times as much
As we should eat and talk.

There's an App for That
Connie Walle, Washington State

If you need to know the weather
and you're far away from home
there's an App for that
on your mobile phone.

If you need to buy new clothes
for your boss's next review
there's an App for that
so you'll look as good as new.

If your daughter must write a paper
and she doesn't know what to do
there's an App for that
which will walk her through.

If you have a downtown meeting
but you're not sure exactly where
there's an App for that
which will quickly get you there.

If you need a recipe for corned beef
as St. Patrick's Day is near
there's an App for that
and a suggestion for the beer.

If you need to deposit a check
into your bank account
there's an App for that
one that's paramount.

There's an App for nearly everything,
which I believe is true
there's an App for that
even saying I love you.

Kind Laughter
Eliot Singer, New York

From the sound of the roars,
Enormous exuberance soars
With jinks outrageous,
The laughter is contagious.

Everyone can join in!
You don't have to be thin.
It is a wonderful release.
It brings on inner peace.

My Father's Pencil Mustache

Aden Thomas, Wyoming

It all began in jest one day, he said,
when he just felt like changing things awhile,
emerging there, his beard shorn clean, his smile
completely bald to match his face instead.
A second glance and it was there to see:
a thin mustache that barely passed for hair,
as though he had to groom to keep a dare,
to shave like it was 1943.

Who knows what power relics have to hold
captive our sub-consciousness in awe,
but suddenly my father seemed to draw
a savoir faire he instantly paroled.
Behind the farce he saw the people stare
and long for vintage, dashing, debonair.

Soda Fountain Reprise

Larry Granger, Minnesota

Yes they were inseparable at the
soda fountain after school,
month after month sipping away
with two straws on a cherry coke.

Destiny seemed to be leading to
a long term commitment, which it did
for several decades during which the
world changed as soda fountains
disappeared and fast food joints
took over everywhere, or so it seemed .

Every so often they went looking for
a soda fountain to celebrate
one anniversary after another.
No luck!
But they lived long enough that
nostalgia became a marketing gimmick
for some drug stores and restaurants
who brought back soda fountains.

And the Coke sippers of the past
came rushing to many soda fountains
but needed help from the wait staff
to get up on the stools.

But this time around they had
enough money for two Cherry Cokes
and even a banana split and a hot
fudge sundae.

Brown Shoe Friend

G. A. Scheinoha, Wisconsin

I am your old
brown shoe friend,
scuffed and marred
as a brogan,
worn comfortable
by the years.
Whenever life
hammers you flat,
I'll be there.
Whenever your day
drives you hard
as a heel,
I'll be soft,
yielding.
Discard me
if you can,
send me away
if you must
but know this:
I'll never leave.

A Leaf Descends

David Sermersheim, Connecticut

Haiku

Shirley A. Leonard, Illinois

The first ray of light
in the east an amber haze
outlines the mountains.

Autumn reds and golds
pasted against deep blue sky
take the breath away.

Birch trees touch the sky
with delicate golden leaf
and white graceful limbs.

One Way

Edward C. Orr, Illinois

Beyond the candle
darkness folds its hands
in prayer and meaningless
whispers rocking
themselves to sleep.

Three Haiku

Barbara Tate, Tennessee

pine needles
I remember the smell
of Christmas past

heat lightning
I listen to what
the silence says

sheep's wool
the clouds gather
tomorrow's rain

Haiku

Mike Weaver, Wisconsin

Morning rain
The ministry
Of mountain streams.

Dawn at autumn
The animation
Of mortal language.

The mystery
Of autumn
The harvest of infinite.

Selected Haiku and Tanka

Raymond Flory, Indiana

Golden afternoon
fades in October twilight
geese sweep horizon.

In autumn haze
two deer tiptoe in forest
a mourning dove calls

Sparrow on bare branch
shivers in November wind
snow clouds overhead

November dusk
captured by falling snow
city white-out.

November night rain
rattles windows of old mill
westerly wind moans

Christmas Is Coming!

The Magic of Christmas *Homer Sherrill, Illinois*

Little snowflakes fill the air,
and the children gather round.
Presents are seen under the tree,
and I hear that sleigh-bell sound.
Mother and father are content,
watching the children play.
Faces aglow with the thoughts you know
we have on this Christmas day.
Opening presents is a sight to behold
as the paper is ripped and torn.
I wonder if any thought is given
on this day the Christ child was born.
The joy of giving is evident
and receiving is gracious too.
The wonderful magic of Christmas
is a beautiful sight to view.
Let us not forget the birth of Christ
who was born on this very day.
And keep the memory in our hearts
and the magic won't go away.

Cardboard *Gordon Dean Schlundt, Illinois*

Christmas on the farm was sometimes meager,
Especially during the forties, as the world
Went mad with war and death and misery.
We small brothers knew the sad conditions:
Our gifts would be socks and sweaters,
Not the usual grand display of toys,
Since every ounce of steel or tin
Was needed for the war against the foe.
So, this was the year for cardboard.
We built cardboard planes
To drop cardboard bombs
On cardboard ships in the cardboard sea.
There were cardboard guns, cardboard tanks,
Even little cardboard men to man them.
Now, as decades are marching away,
I still remember those smells of cardboard gray.

Portals *Gerald Heyder, Wisconsin*

Through the portal comes the light
that washes gold the day
and with the fallen shade of night
comes respite slumber's way.
From the laden cloud comes the rain
to make my garden grow,
with the cold of winter's day
descends the virgin snow.
Melodious wave of dulcet sound
angelic music for my soul,
on canvas my image found
portraying appearance of glow.
Through memory's portal comes the sight
of angel I can't forget,
with face of sunshine smiling bright
and Lasting Love Forever set.
Through my days yet left to live
my pen shall fluently write
until eternity's portal gives me
passage to Infinite Light.

Kincade's Cottage *Eve Blohm, New York*

He paints light in oils
for our generation and
creates hopeful dreams
brightening the stormy night
as the snow silently falls
Christmas candles glow
in the cottage window
a church and steeple
covered with falling snow
as the golden glow takes
away all of our fears
As I hold the greeting cards
I look and dream of love
and relationships which
endure time and the bonds
withstand time too

To Me It's Always Christmas *Janet Goven, Pennsylvania*

You can call it what you want to,
or not celebrate at all,
but to me it's always "Christmas,"
for Jesus Christ has come to call
those His loving Father gave Him,
we who gladly would receive
the greatest gift that e'er was given.
As little children, we believe
in the Savior come from heaven
who would save us from our sins —
full forgiveness in the moment
in which our faith in Him begins.
Like the wise men who brought gifts,
all we have to Him we bring;
filled with praise and adoration
we give ourselves to Christ our King.
Now Christmas is for giving gifts
to celebrate with those we love,
for we give them in remembrance
of the gift given from above.
Yes, to me it's always "Christmas."
Jesus Christ did come to call.
I rejoice that I have answered
and received the greatest gift of all.

Christmas Bells *Herbert Jerry Baker, Ohio*

Ring the bells of Christmas cheer
to proclaim love this time of year —
Twinkling bells to warm the heart
filled with memories of those apart —
Silver bells adorn the trees
gently swaying in a wintery breeze —
Jingle bells deck the halls
delighting children with their call —
But the bells to which we should hark
are the church bells rung solemn and low,
To the bright lone star in a sky so dark,
in honour of Him born that night long ago.

No-Well, Noel *Kathleen Tiedemann, Arkansas*

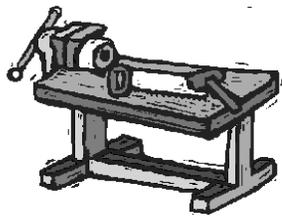
Human trials, tribulation
Disease, debt and desperation
From the Savior separation
Assessment of situation:
"No-well, no-well, no-well."
Hope for a hurting nation
Jesus, joy, jubilation
Peace beyond imagination
Hear the angel's proclamation:
"Noel, noel, noel."

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WRITER'S WORKBENCH

Writing with a “Ring”

(Reprinted from the Winter 2009 issue)

“In North America ninety years ago, our ancestors established a brand new governmental entity. They thought of it in terms of civil rights, and focused on the idea that everybody starts out on an equal basis. . . . From these battle casualties that we’re memorializing, we need to pick up their same level of commitment to the program they gave their lives to promote. We’ve got to really make sure these combatants didn’t die for nothing, and work together so that our country — under a Higher Power, of course — will guarantee everybody’s rights all over again. We’ve got to do that so that a government the people vote for, one that benefits them, won’t just go down the drain.”

Fine patriotic sentiments, perhaps, after a major incident in warfare. But consider how President Abraham Lincoln said it on November 19, 1863 at Gettysburg:

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. . . . that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Compared to the Gettysburg Address the first example sounds flat and tasteless, doesn’t it? Unlike Lincoln’s words, it has no “ring” to it. It doesn’t sound very “literary.” Today’s fashion may be to make writing sound like ordinary casual or conversational speech. But if what we write sounds just like how we talk, why bother to write? Yes, there’s often a place for the colloquial and, perhaps, even the banal especially if we’re dealing with dialogue. But to compose a poem, essay or narrative that will elevate the reader’s appreciation for your topic — that requires us to write words and expressions that “ring.”

The English language, because of the way it developed, has a larger vocabulary than most other tongues. In English there are many different ways to say the same thing, a multitude of approaches to getting your idea across, a plethora of choices when it comes to how to express oneself. (You get the idea.) Writing would not be a craft if there were not such a variety of possible ways to fashion the writer’s concept. Perhaps we cannot always aspire to the level of the Gettysburg Address, Shakespeare or the King James Bible, but we can employ our craft to select our words and shape our phrases so that they “ring” with a reverberation that’s a cut or two above the mundane.

Happy Writing!
--THE PUBLISHER



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