

WestWard Quarterly

The Magazine of Family Reading



Spring 2017

To our readers . . .

We're pleased to present this Spring issue of *WestWard Quarterly* for your enjoyment. This issue offers some selections of exceptional poignancy and insight. (However, we might say that of almost any issue of this magazine!) Contributors to this issue come from twenty-four states, two Canadian provinces, and Brazil.

Featured Writer for this issue is Jane Hutto of Florida; you'll find her "bio" and poems on pages 4 and 5. Our "Writer's Workbench" material is again the work of Esther Leiper-Estabrooks of New Hampshire. She features a description of the "Diamonte," a diamond-shaped poem with an intriguing structure; try it out! She also has a spring poem in this issue on page 25.

We add a family member as contributor to this issue, our grandson Samuel Richard Leonard of Illinois. He has his own poetry site on weebly.com. His poem "The Morning Rain Has Yet to Descend" fits right into our Spring theme. Chester the Cat is taking a leave of absence in this issue, and has turned his responsibilities over to his associate Calliope ("Callie"); her comments appear on page 17.

Frequent contributor Curtis B. Vevang has announced his latest book, *the nature of things*, which he describes as "a selection of thought-provoking, introspective, humorous and compassionate poetry and essays as well as short, short stories about growing up in Chicago in the 40s and 50s." The book is available through Amazon.com.

Have you visited our web site, www.wvquarterly.com? And check out our Facebook page as well!

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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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Cover Image: *Spring Glory*. Photo by Mark Burchard.



Featured Writer

Jane Hutto Florida

It seems I have had an association with books, poems, and learning my entire life. My mother, Mary Hazel, was a schoolteacher from the hills of East Tennessee. She gave me my love of learning, books, reading, and art. When I lost her at age ten, in time to come my dad remarried and, of all things, my step-mother was a schoolteacher! In my teens I determined that I, too, would be a teacher.

I attended Florida State University in Tallahassee on a State Teacher's Scholarship, which paid for my tuition and rooming. For food money I worked in the school's cafeteria, the Seminole Club. Besides paying for my meals it also helped pay for my books, along with odd jobs on the weekends.

Although I loved teaching my career was an off and on sort of affair, what with having a husband, home, and two children to care for, not to mention some health problems. In the end I started my own business in our home, calling it A. S. K. Tutoring, which stood for Assisting School Kids. This lasted for fourteen wonderful years and was a highlight of my life.

Since then I have been retired and spending a lot of time with poetry submissions to the small presses. One of my earliest ventures in this area was with *Bell's Letters Poet*, now discontinued. There was *Parnassus Literary Journal*, also discontinued, and many, many more. At the present I submit to *Pancakes in Heaven*, *WestWard Quarterly*, *The Poet's Art*, and until recently, *The Oak*.

During an illness (mentioned above) I wrote a series of happenings in my life as a small child. In 2015 I asked a local printer to prepare them as a children's book called *The Adventures of Birdie Goodie*. The printer also worked up several poetry books for me: *To a Dreamer*, *Little Bits of Everything*, *Day By Day*, *Drawn to the Light*, and *All for Love*. In addition to the *Birdie Goodie* book I prepared a small workbook called *Alberta Penelope Goes to School*. Cory Meyer of *Pancakes in Heaven* has published three poetry books for me: *Poems from the Blackwater*, *Elsanor and Other Poems*, and recently, *Anhinga on the River*.

I belong to the Florida State Poets Association and my poetry can be seen there. Locally I am a member of the Santa Rosa County Writers Group. For online poetry I can be found at *The Christian Poets Pen* and *PoetryRepairs*. I feel that it is important to belong to and help support poetry endeavors and am appreciative of their efforts. I have a saying that "A day without poetry is like a day without sunshine."

Since retirement, besides writing and sending out poetry and some short stories (mostly Birdie Goodie stories) I spend a lot of time reading, sewing, and until recently working outdoors in my flower gardens. Lately, most of my gardening is done in flower pots (smile). I own the complete works of Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost, plus the published letters of Margaret Mitchell. I have collected as many books as I could of James Lee Burke, Dick Francis, Sue Grafton, and have a signed copy of one of Michael Connelly's books. I own two of Jane Stuart's earlier books, one of which is signed. At Florida State I discovered her late father's work, different poems of his (Jesse Stuart) and now own two of his children's books, plus have a personal letter from him which I cherish.

It saddens me to see the need for so much effort in trying to get children to read and to be interested in books. One should read to their own children and encourage them in the home. I am grateful to my parents and other relatives who gave me the desire to read naturally — as natural as breathing. At my grandmother's house I always gravitated to the bookcase in the living room where I could find a first edition of *Gone With the Wind*, *Tobacco Road* (yes, I read some of it), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* to name a few.

In the future I plan to write as much as I can and for as long as I can, looking for places that will be receptive to my work. It has been an honor to be chosen as a Featured Writer for the spring issue of *WestWard Quarterly* by Ms. Leonard. My many thanks go to her.

Bathed in Sunlight

Cool-spun light shafts,
Morning's wonder, stream
Across a paling sky . . .
Dawn's upon us, day is waiting,
Harvest fields must be laid by.
Night is past and darkness finished,
Steps are fresh to walk The Way.
Bathed in sunlight, clothed in glory,
Lord of Light, we greet the day.

Childhood Recalled

When I was a little girl
Mornings were bright
With sunrises and
Expectations
Days were filled with
Kindly relatives
And loving parents
My evenings
Were soft with the silhouettes
Of dust before nightfall.
There was nothing
I could not become and
Wishes had wings upon
Which I flew in my imagination
My parents were the
Foundation of our home
And stability the wall
That supported us.

No Minimum of Harmony

Roll out the red carpet! Carlton cried,
His benevolence spackling the gaps
In friendship's lapse.
So we were not limited —
There had been no eclipse
In our misplaced hopes —
For Jennifer Alice, like a member
Of some wagon club, had kept it
Alive, her ideas as free as white birds
Flying, and when we did meet
On Miller's Bluff (rumpled bay clouds
Embracing us), their gray sheen
Muting our view from the crest,
We stood united, like pines along
The Gulf, and met our Nemesis
Head-on.

Buying Power

Past Pelican Beach, across the narrows,
Lies Olivia's Landing, irresistible by day
(How blue the sky!),
A winking beacon come nightfall.
Olivia Anderson, many say,
Along with Carabelle Claymore
Claimed this water view of the Gulf,
Two prudent ladies, led beyond lanes,
Purchasing their destinies —
As free as high-flying birds.

A wood ridge of magnolias
Decorates whispering timbers,
Which contour the journey of coastline
And when stargazers, shell searchers
Or sandy castle builders extend
Their stay, who complains?
Share your happiness some cry,
Then the winds echo back to the mainland
A song of sea breeze, starlight, sun,
And their association with life.

Around the Clock

How refreshing is the dawn!
Even the brightest stars are gone.
Now when sunlight begins to trek
Across the forest, fields and deck
A world awakes.

Tables chart for land and sea
Corridors of compliancy
As busy workers stay in step
And frequent inventory's kept
Throughout the land . . .

What a lovely time of day!
The sun has slowly slipped away
And nightfall spreads a velvet robe
The way a mother might unfold
Her cherished child.

There must be a winding down
For people everywhere around,
So implements are put away
As folks close out another day
And evening falls.

Still Loved

Edilson Afonso Ferreira, Brazil

Somewhere, sometime, in the old East Lands,
in a spot relieved for four rivers, shadowed
by luxurious a garden, at royal a manor house,
by one saint sixth labor day, we awakened to life.
Made on the Creator's likeness, by many years
we enjoyed His care and His love.
Someday, on uncovering life secrets, like
good and evil, our ancestors were banished,
having our Lord locked the Paradise Gate.
Since then, the hard and harsh of our toiling,
no one really knows, but You, our Creator.
How long more will last our penalty?
When and where should we meet again?
Although heavy sternness demonstrated,
be aware many of us still venerate You,
and, some, still love.
We hope to see once more inhabited
that manor house where all has begun,
appeasing Your heart and disarming
some cherubims' flaming swords.

Published in Dead Snakes (a closed site), February 29, 2016.

Might Have Been

Francis D. Conlon, Colorado

Clouds rush by pushed by the wind,
Like thoughts of what might have been,

A trail not taken or course not set,
A journey missing the freshness yet,

Is a woven pattern of a scene not taken,
Like echoing ideas perhaps forsaken,

The warp and woof of a Weaver's hand,
With last thread snapped to understand,

Swirling thoughts are a look and guess,
Filling the memories of mind's recess.

Observing Nature

Joyce G. Bradshaw, Texas

I admire the perfect flight
of the hummingbird
because its perfection
is attained by grace
and not by technical expertise . . .

honor the stately demeanor
of the stag and doe
because their self-assurance
does not necessitate
the denigration of any other . . .

bask in the mystical glow
of the waxing moon
because it does not claim
to be the originator
of its inherited light . . .

anticipate the predictable
change of seasons
because its constancy
speaks of an order
beyond its own commanding.

Walking to Beauty . . . Tuscany

Dr. Jane Stuart, Kentucky

Following the storm that blew cold rain
over felt roses blooming on the carpet,
and painted tulips growing by the window,
the city woke to see a world of beauty
in hills that glowed with sunrise,
shadows pink from moonfire,
the yellow light of fading stars
and trees in silhouette against the sky
as dark as autumn roses.
Walking with beauty, shimmering from rain,
leaving shadowless footsteps on the street,
this city made a trellis out of night
when a gold moon again rose over clouds
that covered roofs and dark red barns.
Time's empty rooms filled with silver,
light that was full of laughter, morning's drums.
We listened to a pounding tambourine . . .
And a thousand snowflakes fell,
or so it seemed — but it was not that time of year

The Black Bear Visitor

Tony Cosier, Ontario, Canada

Unfamiliar slumping in a familiar clump of brush
drew me in to explore. Pale summer grass
was crushed, wrenched in rough circles.
Green leaves were strewn, stripped
From broken branchlets. Two ten-foot saplings
were snapped near the top,
jagged at the breaks. Where the lean centre pole
of a young white ash had been spared,
I raised my hand to the bark
and discovered the oozing groove
left by a long curved claw.

It seemed the place had been enshrined.
I dropped my chin to my chest as though
in prayer.

What Homer Imagined

Sandy Conlon, Colorado

I saw it turn right before my eyes,
The close of day dressed in vermilion, opalescent rose,
Shimmering silk, satin-lace;
Beyond the ragged curtain sky
Aegean blue clinging to the edge of fire;
Then almost unnoticed
The sun itself dropped from view
Leaving Agamemnon's gold and incandescent hues
Balanced on the rim of night.

The Arrival

Aishah Salihue, California

Green leaves fly in the wind,
Roses bloom all around,
Sunshine, warm, happy, and refined,
The sky so blue yet so true,
White clouds wander through,
Green grass glimmering with dew,
Butterflies dance in the air,
Cherry blossoms bloom bright.
Spring has spread everywhere.

Unclaimed Blessings

Linda Amos, Pennsylvania

Every day when I awaken I just know
In my heart of hearts that my Father God
Has unclaimed blessings in store for me today.

On a spring day
It could be an unexpected flower
Blooming in the most unlikely place;

Or a bird's song carried on the breeze,
That brightens a gloomy day;

Or a warm breeze that kisses my cheek,
And or a pink and orange sunset.

On a summer day
It could be an unexpected bouquet
Of lilacs given to me by a neighbor;

Or a gaggle of geese waddling down the street
To a nearby pond with goslings all trailing in a row;

Or a cool patch of grass on which to lay my head
While I watch clouds form in the blue sky,

And a refreshing glass of fresh mint tea
To quench my parched throat.

Each and every thing that is good
Is a gift from my Father above
Who treats me like I am His favorite child.

Spring Is . . .

James B. Peters, Tennessee

A bed of red tulips
Blooming in the April sunshine.
The redbud trees
Flowering along the highway.
The cherry trees
Blooming along the Potomac.
The white cherry petals
Floating on pools
Of last night's rain.
The purple plums persisting
In the rock garden
After twenty years.
The apple orchard trees
Looking like floral shop bouquets
When flown over low.
Ah! April
Life is everywhere.

Roses in the Carpet

Dawn Zapletal, California

The curtain's opened to the day
Where April finds its warming way
And roses in the carpet bloom
With blushing beauty in the room.
Faded colors are once more bright,
Painted pink in the tender light.
Memories catch me unaware
As roses scent the melting air
All in a shaft of sunlight sweet
The dreams of past and present meet

Wind of Dawn

Bobbi Sinha-Morey, Oregon

After the first wind of dawn
sunlight on the ocean is
reflected on the ceiling of
a cliff side inn, a motion
of water for onlookers to see
and where the light scent
of mimosa never leaves.
A joie de vivre for sunbathers,
art lovers, English vacationers.
For weeks they have been
letting in doves who have
fluttered their feathers at
the windows, slept in pairs
by the doors, who have sung
to the oil paintings of small
waves leaping like swordfish.
Tomorrow, and every day till
the summer's end, the sky will
be blue and electric, the water
green, white-foamed, children
running into the ocean to play.
Rapt with every soft breath
of the living, young roses
arranged on patio tables
begin to open.

Flowing

Dr. Dennis Ross, Iowa

Flow into the day
treading not at all.
Be invisible,
unimportant,
a part of the stream
not a builder of dams
Fashion your work
with ease
from deep within
as a master
carpenter might.
Plant wildflowers
if something more
demands doing.
Take time
to just sit and be.

Tonight, no concern
over pies unbaked
or walls unmended,
just drift on your raft
in the forever current
dreaming.

Learning to Sing

James Miller, Delaware

Perhaps it was a bright feather
or the quick light of breaking clouds
when sudden wind pulled the weather
into a flashing sight of sound
as both the birds and sun became one
of many visions that must be sung.

Spring Sestina

John Robinson, West Virginia

I watch the sun climb through oaks,
shadows of leaves fall on every word.
There's a train through Ambrosia this morning, freight
snaked along Kanawha banks, past older buildings.
A gold finch mutters in Eastern light.
The slightest wind makes a dappled pattern sway.

Moisture pellets through limbs, falls away
down across nail-holes of in-pouring light
with not a whisper of any word,
across rusted metal my eyes peer, an utterance building.
One fire ant moves a wasp in freight
beneath strains of scarlet in the oaks.

Wind won't speak a metrics of ways
where enjambed ideas settle among oak.
One syllable, fierce as sun and made of light
erupts in a mote with just a word;
silence from the musty floor of this aged building,
all the planets hurled around like so much freight.

In a dream, I saw a tree made of words
and a voice told me this is the life I'm building.
Still, my mind shifts and moves in ways
evading every man-made thing like light.
Thoughts don't weigh on me in freight.
I am the light, the sun, the one, the golden oak.

This is my spring freight.
I have only one way.
Keep writing, searching and building,
I have longed for petals of magnolia and honeyed oak.
A thousand times I've lost my words,
laughed, and let a proverb live in me like warm sunlight.

Once, I kept my dreams in my grandfather's building.
Obscure, though eventually awake in the light,
I walked hours through numberless oak,
thought of things that no one could consider freight.
Even the stillness and sounds of water know the way.
Here, in this lethargic place, I conjured words.

Grown like oaken limbs, I have lived this fight with words,
of so much mental freight, the thought building
toward a speech of light, which always is the way.

Having the Same Dream Twice

Alan Yount, Missouri

*"You can't have the same dream twice:
it's impossible"—An old saying.*

climbing the creaking stairs
to my great-great grandparents' house,
I had found in fayette, missouri:

in the same dream,
over and over, when I reach . . .
the top of the stairs:

in their old victorian house,
where they grew up and lived:
their house is suddenly

gone . . . it is there, no more.

and they are long gone, yet repeated
in my dreams and primal memory:
for a reason, also related, for forever.

you are my great-great grandparents:
your blood
is in mine.

for some reason, which you can figure:
your house, is also
locked in my memory, forever.

Limoges

Marc Livanos, Florida

People, like tea sets,
are vulnerable, precious,
fragile things and yet
somehow useful.

Maybe they're trudging with a load
more than they can bear.
Maybe they're hurt so deeply
it's hidden from you.

So, speak, smile,
be a friend, show you care.
You'll make a difference
with the help kindness brings.

Resist cubby-holing them
like your chipped china
waiting to be discarded
in the dust bin.

The Maker

Peter Bloch-Hansen, Ontario, Canada

The Maker sleeps in us all:
His breath a living, rising pulse
That counts the hours of wakefulness
More surely than sun.

The sleeper's long, long breathing,
Rising with the rise of oceans,
Falling with the fall of leafy seas,
Drawing clouds around his head,
And stirring mist about his knees.

Here is Love's imperium —
Not even love may disobey,
Yielding itself to the weave of flesh,
With death, at the end of the day.

The Maker sleeps:
We fall to dreaming.
We become each other's dreams.
The web of senses
Only catches the gleaming of light,
Intimations of endlessness,
Nestled in night.

The web of senses,
Drawn by ruthless intellect however tight,
Or by the hopeful, expectant heart
Stretched wide,
Seeks, searches, excavates the bottomless soul,
Surrendering at last, pride.

The passing present remains.
We, steadily more ancient,
Garment ourselves with the new,
Till finally,
In that high place where all names fail,
And the One slumbers,
Whose smallest movement
Makes worlds rise,
Whose sighs are the measureless arcs
Of stars,
Whose unending dreams we are,
We tremble
As he awakens.

April

Terry Johnson, Minnesota

Snow piles now dirty from wear and tear
Are seen to be melting here, and there
A final snowball flies in fun
At a laughing target on the run
In magical rivers down the sides of the street
Float imaginary boats next to splashing, little feet
Young ones on bicycles are a giggling affair
As they celebrate a warmth absent for months in the air
Tulips, hyacinths, crocus, and jonquil
Reawaken from a nap in the frozen soil
Bringing with them a promise of beauty to come
Under the warm and renewing summer sun.

Forest Feelings

Josephine Chou, California

When I am among trees,
Fresh pine, willow, and oak,
They sway in cool breeze
Whisper, Stay here longer.

Leaves twirl, swirl, whirl,
Then sail down the river
As the forest awakens:
Birds call, squirrels skip,
Butterflies flit and flicker,
Lizards crawl, all in all.
A world of nature eternal
With violets and sorrel
In bloom as ferns flourish:
The life cycle never ends.

When I am among trees,
From the blue distance
Amid the tallest treetops,
Clouds call, Don't leave.

Mary Oliver's title, "When I Am Among Trees" inspired this poem and appears in it. "Forest Feelings" took first place in California's annual Voices of Lincoln Poetry Contest and was published in a chapbook of winners in October 2016.

Sea Song

Frances Leitch, California

Remember as a child
watching the waves
of the sea go
crashing into shore
Watching them lazily
as they spoke the words
Forevermore, forevermore
The sand, the sky
the sea and we
In some strange way
pass and yet stay
Like the sands that
return on distant shore
Forevermore, forevermore

Calico Quincy

Betti Bernardi, Colorado

The house is new, the furnishings old,
Lovingly restored and placed with care
So that we might be surrounded by beloved
Treasures—yet yearn for a Calico Cat.

Kitchen collectibles are the cornerstone —
Our much-loved items from a time gone by.
A rag rug from our mother is under the
Big churn — missing only a Calico Cat.

Crockery bowls and wooden spoons and blue
Speckled lids add color and charm.
Our kitchen is warmth imbued with family
And things — only we need a curled up Calico Cat.

Rocking chairs abound and quilted bedcovers
Lend quiet harmony and civility to the home
Furnished with auction finds and hand-me-downs
And garage-sale items — except there's not a Calico Cat.

Grandmothers' afghans and tatting and lace
Add grace and connection to those loved ones,
Their special skills and precious influence
On our lives — they would approve a Calico Cat.

Baskets and dried flowers and hearths that display
The collection of our union and memories of the years
During which love has warmed the home that we share.
And, sons growing up — not knowing a Calico Cat.

Enter an addition to the assortment we enjoy,
A kitten with comical markings and antics.
She's a bandit with black shrouded eyes and
White chest and feet, and orange a'top — a Calico Cat!

Old clocks ticking serenity into the rooms
Filled with symbols from other families and times,
Silently paying homage to the laughter former owners
Left intact — interact, now, with gentle purr — Calico Cat.

Quincy, she's come to complete the circle of family
Love and collection and home. She's the curled
Sleeping feline the rag-rug begged and the quilted
Bed missed — Quincy, our Calico Cat.



Tree in a Nest



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

It's All About New Birth

Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

The birds are busy with spring this morning,
The wind is sweeping the earth;
The grass is greening, the chimes are singing,
And it's all about new birth.

The earth is moving its freight of winter,
The rains are dancing with mirth.
The streams are leaping, the trees are waving,
and it's all about new birth.

My life is sensing a new-found freedom,
My soul is sensing its worth.
The heavens are singing a song of glory —
And it's all about new birth.

From My Vantage Point . . .

by Calliope the Cat



Chester didn't have any good ideas for a column for this issue, so he asked me to fill in for him.

Do you ever feel you're just lost in the crowd — in the case of this magazine's readers, lost in the crowd of aspiring poets? You'd like to be noticed, but there are so many other writers out there that your work just seems to fall through the cracks.

I know the feeling. There are so many teddy bears around this house (thanks in part to our Editor's activity with the crochet hook) that I often wonder how I can stand out from the crowd. What can I do differently, in order to get noticed?

In the photo above, I found a way. I used a prop, a wicker basket. I defy any of those lazy bears with polyester stuffing for a brain to get into a basket and curl up. I think you would spot me in this crowd!

If you're going to get an editor to notice you so your poems can be published, try writing something out of the ordinary. I don't mean something bizarre or wierd; some editors may like that stuff, but our Editor decidedly does not! I mean something that stands out as exceptional because of its insight into life, its imagery, its humor, or even its poetic excellence with clever rhyme or flowing scansion.

Or maybe just get into a basket and curl up in your living room. I'm sure people will notice you then. (Or would they just call you a basket case?)

Creative Quotations

The Writer's Job . . .

The writer's biggest job is that of combining words . . . to share ideas. Organizing the material and choosing precisely the right words require more effort than just writing down what is in the writer's head. The knowledgeable writer possesses information or ideas that the reader does not. To make that information accessible, the writer must use words that the reader understands (or explain any that the reader does not). The writer must choose which information to include and must decide what is superfluous or would burden the reader. . . .

Words are our tools in trade. They are our medium of communication. They form a bridge of thought between the writer's mind and the reader's. To find the right word, therefore, is sometimes to find a treasure. The right word can supply a meaning that no other word can provide. It can lift writing from ambiguity into lucidity.

— Steve Dunham, *The Editor's Companion* (2014), pp. 13, 47.

Establish a Beat — Then Break It! . . .

There's nothing like a good beat. In prose, as in free verse, the beat is unstructured, the rhythms natural. In traditional poetry, the beat is made up of a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables: iambic (˘-), trochaic (-˘), anapestic (˘˘-), dactylic (-˘˘), and spondaic (—). These patterns are called metrical feet.

Even here, however, too much of a good thing becomes monotonous. We want to hear a beat, but we also want some variation in the theme. First you establish a rhythm; then you break the pattern.

Consider the beat in this sentence: "I take thee to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, to have and to hold for better, to have and to hold for worse, to have and to hold for richer, to have and to hold for poorer, to have and to hold in sickness . . ." Well, you get the idea. It's too much of a good thing.

Now compare that version with the wedding vow as it was written by sixteenth-century Archbishop Thomas Cranmer:

I take thee to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us depart.

Read the sentence out loud, and listen to its cadence. Note how Cranmer establishes a rhythm and then varies it. After the first "to . . . to . . . to . . ." comes "for . . . for . . . for . . . for . . ." and then he changes it to "in . . . in . . ." and then he goes back to "to . . . to . . ." Then comes the shorter, almost abrupt, "till death us depart" (or more commonly, "till death do us part"), suggesting permanence and finality. It's more than the meaning of the words that makes his wedding vow memorable and enduring; it's also its pleasing sound or euphony.

— Stephen Wilbers, *Mastering the Craft of Writing* (2014), pp. 245-246.

Quandary

Rona F. Simon, Ohio

All these years
I've written poems
just because . . .
I felt a need
and had to do it.
That's it.

And then
after putting in a book,
for others to read
what I'd written —
poems never intended
for any but me —
I'm in a quandary.

Ever since that book's complete,
Whenever I begin to write,
An annoying, inner voice entreats:
Careful, not that word —
"They'll" think that you're absurd.
Choose a better noun —
The one you wrote will cause a frown.
I never cared
about "their" thoughts before
and I want not to anymore.

How can I return
to the former me,
again to write just for me
and only write
what feels right?

Once again,
that pesky voice responds:
Quandary, Schmandary —
Stop whining —
Write!

Outside the Box

Jesse James Doty, California

Never liked following rules
unless they made sense to me
Whatever happened to creativity?
working outside the box?
Coloring outside the lines?
I've always cut paper like a lefty
Smeared my watercolors
made undescribable figures out of clay

To this day
I don't like arts and crafts
always skip that part of class

Poetry is different entirely
To me, the less rules the better
Write what I feel
write what I think

Nobody made me practice poetry every day
I wrote it my way
when the muse struck me
fortunately, the muse came easily

Guess at heart I'm just a rebel
never could stay out of trouble

Following rules is for sheeple
I write for, outside the box, kind of people
as if you couldn't tell by my writing style
I just write what I want and smile

P O E M

Doris Meakins, Colorado

Not To Be Red Allowed

Eight rhymes with fate
And great and strait.
And strangely, also ate.
Fraught rhymes with got,
Fought, haute and yacht.
Isle and I'll
Both rhyme with aisle.

Oh how I love this English language!
(Or perhaps I only need a sanduage.)

Two Large Words

Eve Blohm, New York

Never is a large word
Grave consequences — *Never*
leaves a sheet of paper blank
It leaves a canvas empty
feeling, wanting a story, a
poem, novel, song, symphony,
painting, sketch, idea, drama,
musical, an opera, ballet

Never does not see the truth
or beauty in the world. It
cannot hum a tune. It becomes
a hollow log, waiting for a
dream, adventure, romance.
It becomes an acorn, waiting
for the oak tree to develop,

Never is a word that is
devoid of color and hope
Never does not try because it
has buried the talents in a
well or it becomes a sunken
ship waiting to be discovered,

Never is never until you think,
dream and respond

We lose people, but we never lose the artist,
writer, composer, architect, poet or singer

Never does not believe in
happy endings or second
chances. *Never* does not believe
in the ability to change
your heart or change directions.

Nothing matters to you and me
except kindness, trust, hope,
love and understanding —
we share in order to build
bridges to erase the differences
we experience.

The words we speak or
write can be important to
another person because
they last in our hearts
Nothing we do is fully erased.

Nothing is etched in stone
except an inscription
epitaph or burial stone

A team cannot succeed if it depends
upon one player. We succeed
if each team member works

Nothing is permanent except
the four seasons of the year,
or the records we play

Nothing lasts except the
love we share with others,
or the memory in our hearts
unhampered by hate, prejudice or fear

Nothing is so important that
we should lose sleep. The
mistakes we make are
stepping stones to learn,
grow and expand our horizons.

The Morning Rain Has Yet to Descend

Samuel Richard Leonard, Illinois

Amid night's leftover blues a gold seeps in, slow.
The buzzing lights in the park have ceased to glow,
And it seems this early robin is the first to know.
I watch her flutter in the green just over there,
Alighting to hop, and peck, and worriedly stare,
As I sit immersed in redolence thick upon the air.
Where is your worm, winged mother? Or the butterfly's cocoon?
In what hole lies the hare? What sapling aspires to loom?
What happens to a worm chosen by the robin?
I know these things, I think, but only deep within;
Why can I not see them at the place where they begin?

Confessions of an Art Collector

Dana Stamps II, California

White plastic bags labeled with red and blue
Salvation Army Thrift Store insignias
encamp in my closet. Often, I come out empty-handed
from shopping there, but I have acquired
many fine oil and acrylic paintings, not reproductions.

Most are unsigned, unlike those sold at galleries,
improbable to declare them important,
an investment for later auction at Sotheby's.
But if you want an original painting, the beauty
of a good deal, then shop for art

at thrift stores. But history will catch up
with me, and it will become my time to donate
these priceless quality artworks back
to the Salvation Army shelves. The still life

of a wine bottle and full glass next to a toppled
basket of red apples makes me laugh,
because I paid \$2.80 for the piece,
and the ripe apples are palpable enough to pick off
the canvas and eat, real and historical
as any pricy celebrated Braque or Cézanne.

Classical Heavyweights
Charles S. Parnell, Pennsylvania

I Don't Have a Poem Today
Vernon Waring, Pennsylvania

I'm waiting for the "block" to break.
My pen is filled with ink.
Nothing seems to come to mind.
I can barely think.

My rhymes have just meandered
Out the kitchen door.
Inspiration took a day off.
My life's become a bore.

The headlines don't excite me.
The President didn't call.
The Queen did not invite me.
There was no mail at all.

The Pope just went fishing.
Congress is on a break.
My lottery tickets have disappeared
And I can't stay awake.

I guess I'll stay in bed all day
And enjoy a lengthy nap
And maybe have a dream or two
To get me back on track.

I don't have a poem today
Or wait — I think I do . . .
I'll call it "I don't have a poem today,"
And foist it all on you!

First came Toscanini,
Later, there was Puccini:
They had a flair!
Ormandy waved his baton.
Arthur Fiedler battled on.
I used to care.

Ravinia gave me Ozawa.
Van Cliburn had the pow-ah.
And I would cheer!
Sir Thomas used a bar-stool:
We clapped and thought him so cool!
I shed a tear . . .

Carlo Maria Giulini
Appeared to be rather teeny:
He gave a bow!
They came from far and away,
And I think of them now this day.
Andre Previn deserved a "Wow"!

Steinberg conducted the best,
So dramatic in his quest:
A balcony seat, my home!
Music was all about;
How much I wanted to shout!
This ends my poem.

The Kiddie Car
Laura J. Bobrow, Virginia

I remember the body of that little car.
It was seamless and round like a huge fat cigar.
My arms, when I climbed in, were pinioned inside.
No motor, no pedals, just foot power to ride.

My feet touched the ground. I was big. I was two.
I was ready to take on a world that was new.
The steering wheel turned to the left and the right.
From my throat came the noise of an airplane in flight.

With gusto I launched us, intending to roll
down the road, but despite me the car took control.
We were meant to go forward. Instead we went back
encountering Dad's shins with an ominous thwack.

He nibbled his mustache. He gave me a shove.
Though I'm sure his intent was none other than love,
I stubbed all my toes and twisted my knee,
and back to his shins I went, once I was free.

The next thing I did was to walk with my feet.
I succeeded in tumbling off of the seat.
He smiled at me bravely and gritted his teeth.
"Lean forward," he said. "Keep your feet underneath."

I tried. I did try, as hard as I could,
but I never could make that car do what it should.
I either went backwards or circled around.
We have visible proof in the movies we've found.

And so was my first reputation defined:
that I was a child of an obstinate mind.
Folks who saw me would say with a shake of the head,
"Tell her one thing and she does the other instead."

Leather Gloves

Thomas Cannon, Wisconsin

I tuck my sweat-hardened gloves
under the tight twine bindings.
Lug the bale to the calf pen
shoulders tight
stalks scratching my arms
the bale bounces on my thigh.
I toss it over the fence and follow
yank one strap off,
then holding the other,
knee the bale in the middle,
send the slices of hay,
with a kick
into the feed trough

scent of leather and clover
lingers a lifetime.

Newton's Acorn

G. A. Scheinoha, Wisconsin

Climbing out on a limb
of the family tree
means never
having to dangle;
we branches
bear each other up.
When storms
assail
the massive trunk
and rattle
the leaves, I
may not always
be aware, but when
an acorn drops,
I know because it
usually bounces
off either
head or
heart.

different views

Dottie Piet, Oklahoma

time out
not a punishment for me.
but a time to catch my breath,
to renew, rethink, before
continuing my journey.

for you
dear grandchild, time out can mean
something else, but much the same,
in a different context.
some day you will understand.

Walk With Me

Dr. James G. Piatt, California

Walk with me
Enjoy the beauty of the gleaming
Colors of the morning dew on
The grass:

Walk with me
In the early dawn and,
Watch the sun climb
Quietly over the mountains
Tinting the rich earth with
An orange tinge that
Wakes the meadowlark
And wren:

Walk with me
To the edge of the slow,
Flowing brook where trout
Are busy catching bugs
Flying near its blue skin,
And mottled frogs croak
Their morning songs:

Walk with me
As the day comes into
Being and our minds are
Still fresh with the wonder
Of merely being alive.

Rodeo Poet

Gerald A. McBreen, Washington State

Can you believe it?
Cowboy poetry
during the rodeo show.

Spin that rope,
skip through the loop,
ride an old bronco,
grab the bull by his horns
step up to the mic,
speak out so everyone
can hear over the cheers
cowboy poetry.

Thought I'd never see
poetry advertised on TV.
Big bold letters giving
poets like me
legitimacy.

A Dandy Time

*Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks,
New Hampshire*

It's snowing in May;
Wonderful stuff —
Light on the wind;
Yes, dandelion fluff!

All sifty and drifty
And lighter than air
Seeds on the breeze
Spread here and there.

If I wave a flower whose
Head has grown gray
I'll release baby lions;
Up, up and away!

I love golden lions
And it's pretty clear
More will spring up
Come April next year!

Tag Sale

David Sermersheim, Connecticut

sitting on the steps
of the Winthrop Baptist Church
observing the trickle
of treasure seekers
poring over the detritus
of trinkets gadgets
broken tools
unfinished projects
games used toys
assembled into a motley melange
best discarded or given away
a boy appears
and sorts through a pile
of dusty 78 rpm records
excited about what mysteries
he might find in the worn grooves
of these scratched treasures
and antique sounds
of a former time
distant and remote
from his world
yet he claims these relics
as his own
and tells me he has
a machine on which
he can hear the sounds
cradled in his arms
takes the pile
of shellac memories
to his father
gets in the car
turns smiles and waves
as the past
goes down the road
into the future

Wild Wind

Diane Webster, Colorado

The seagull tacks across the wind
in slow-motion glide flight
until a tipped wing catapults the bird
over cows grazing in gyrating grass.

White caps break over the grebe's back
until queasy it dives into calm depths
then surfaces again to shake water
from its head already sprayed
by the next swamping wave

while rocks on shore glisten
like shards of mirror reflecting sunshine
as wind whips the lake into higher tricks.

Flowers Are a Blessing

Nancy McCleaff, Pennsylvania

Thy garden is pure; the roses cherry red.
All the violets are reaching
For the Lord's light up ahead!
And Behold! The lilies are rising
Out of their beds!

Thy touch of a petal; soft as newborn skin.
What better way for life to begin.
To see the beauty, and smell the freshness,
It's a blessing from God
For everlasting happiness.

Beautiful Butterfly

Glenda Frazier, Florida

My beautiful caterpillar wrapped in a cocoon
Wanting to be a butterfly soon
So sheltered she could not breathe
She pushed and pressed to be set free

With each new struggle she grew to be strong
She had to break through on her own
Finally she was loose with wings spread wide
She was all grown up and ready to fly

I did not want my butterfly to leave
But found the courage to set her free
I miss her dearly and sometimes I'll cry
But letting her go meant saying goodbye

Summer Dream

Justin Feng, California

Sunlight bright, warm on my back,
My eyes shaded by visor black,
I hiked with Mom and cousins;
On granite cliffs we kept on track.

Roar of water reached us soon,
Then appeared the deep lagoon,
Serving freely Yosemite Falls
With power and beauty in June.

Next, in pools we waded deep,
Rock on rock with ease we leaped;
The spray of mist refreshing us:
A memory we'd always keep.

The falls were grand, so enticing,
But darkness fell, unwavering.
We had to depart for dreaming;
We had to depart for dreaming.

Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" inspired this poem.

All Ours

Barbara Briggs Luczkowiak, New York

The breath of Spring
The songs of birds
The sun's warm beams
The low of herds
The fragrant smell
of lovely flowers
The flowing brook
The quiet hours
The way to church
The time of prayer

The happy home
The will that dares
The love of God
And patience too
Are in the world
For me and you
The best for man
Lest we forget
Is ours and is
Not rationed yet.

Haiku

H. Thomas Roman, New Jersey

Chubby cheek crocus
heard 'neath the snow
laughter and giggles

Back When the Earth Was New

After Rita Dove

d. n. simmers, B.C., Canada

When the feet are forming
steps to walk and
hands move
together
or apart
like a new dance.

When the mind is working
out the puzzles of growth.

Or the face is next to another
and you're talking and
shuffling your feet.

Explaining
the this and that of
the world
or something
that has just come to you.

Funny things make the
feet want to stamp and
stomp
and whirl.

Sad things
make them
want to stoop
over
and stop.

Knock

Marcia Blacker, Maryland

A knock
The door opens
He steps in
After only three months
The camera clicks
A bird in flight
Frozen like the freckled face that caught my heart.

The door opens
I think I love you stings my face
Shoots through me like an arrow
I blink, too stunned to answer.
I offer grapes and wine.
Munching, we sit and pine
Knight takes rook, check mate
He wins again.

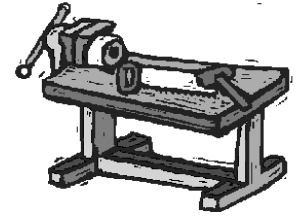
The game continues twenty-three years.
Summers in the sand, waves lifting our bodies in unison
Spring, fall, on the pier tossing line after line in the sea
As birds depart,
Winter dawns, we two trudge through snow
As we grow older, daring fate to keep the gate open
A while longer
The door,
The knock that opened years.

A Smile That Warms My Heart

Eliot Singer, New York

When a good child fails and begins to weep,
then is comforted,
and all is made better —
the child's wide smile after crying,
the noticeable difference from despair to happiness —
this smile warms my heart.
And when I have been the one doing the reassuring,
and my precious loved one returns to normalcy,
I am uplifted.

WRITER'S WORKBENCH



The Diamonte

by Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks

The Diamonte is a short, structured form, typed in the shape of a diamond and —like that jewel — should sparkle with wit plus vivid language. Since it is quite brief, if you write one, think carefully about your subject contrasted with that subject's opposite.

A diamond as opposed to coal might be an idea to try, or an angry bull contrasted with placid cow, or a babysitter minding mischievous kids. Opposites attract, and perhaps this quirky little form can prove that theory to be so! On the other hand, another *bon mot* declares, "Like likes like." Either attitude can be cleverly argued. Certainly trying the Diamonte pattern offers an exercise in language flexibility, to make your lines flow and thus capture readers' interest as the pattern works out.

I encountered the Diamonte *not* while being a Poet-in-the-Schools in Tennessee, but from homework daughter Hannah brought home in fifth grade, years later. There are always new patterns to try, in poetry or knitting! (I can tell a yarn but can't knit a stitch!) Now, about the Diamonte, Hannah's handout sheet glibly declares it's easy, and adds, "The purpose is to go from the subject at the top to another totally opposite subject at bottom." Here are the instructions:

Line 1: One noun (subject No. 1)

Line 2: Two adjectives describing subject No. 1

Line 3: Three participles (words ending in "ing") that tell about subject No. 1

Line 4: Four nouns; first two related to subject No. 1; the second two related to subject No. 2

Line 5: Three participles describing subject No. 2

Line 6: Two adjectives describing subject No. 2

Line 7: One noun (subject No. 2).

In addition, the Diamonte is a shape poem. I wrote the examples following and, frankly, I did not find the form as simple as instructions implied. The directions didn't say so, but I bolded the first and last line to make the poem appear more vivid.

Cats

Slinky sly
Purring, poking, perching
Feline beeline — Pooches, pups
Sniffing, snooping, yipping
Tired, worn-out

Dogs.

Flowers

Bright-perfumed
Blooming, swaying, scenting
Air, garden — autumn days
Blowing, flowing, glowing;
Gorgeous colored

Leaves.

The following is the long-back Diamonte Hannah wrote in fifth grade. (She now has a master's degree in plant science from Montana State University at Bozeman, and currently works in her own campus lab full-time; focused on improving barley as a world-wide food crop.)

Day

Blue, yellow
 Playing, running, raining
 Clouds, sun, moon, stars
 Sleeping, sitting, stirring
 Black, white

Night.

Trying new forms is *trying*, just as true love has ups and downs. The following I wrote for my husband Peter, so good at un-kinking our computers when I do something stupid. (Techwise, I've trouble with anything more complex than an eggbeater!)

Friend

Sweet, good
 Daring, sharing, caring;
 Man, mate, comrade, adventurer
 Hugging, kissing, cuddling

Dear, wise

Lover.

Themes? Contrast a Chihuahua with a Great Dane, or a rainbow with lightning. Writing with a purpose keeps brains alert. Now at age 70, I find this is a bonus. Youth has life to look forward to; age ponders decisions made. Keep a sense of humor and whimsy. Is a zebra a horse in striped pajamas? And, yipes/stripes! consider the zorse; foal of a horse and zebra. (I saw a photo of one in a newspaper — cute as he could be!)

Inspiration is endless. God and His universe offer so much that we'll never have enough time to write all we think or feel. But do dare to keep on. A Chinese proverb advises, "The glory is not being never-failing, but in rising when you fall." Here's more wisdom:

- "All the arts are brothers; each one a light to the others." (Voltaire)
- "Take care not to grow too wise, for a great pleasure in life is laughter." (Addison)
- "Honor what you accomplish, but don't be smug." (That's from me!)

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