

WestWard Quarterly

The Magazine of Family Reading



Fall 2019

To our readers . . .

As we write these words from our headquarters in far western Illinois, the heat of September (which inhibits outside activities) has suddenly transitioned to near-freezing temperatures at night. We hope, wherever you reside, that the changing seasons have not kept you trapped inside your climate-controlled abode.

Our Featured Writer is Sandra Conlon of Colorado; her “bio” and poems are on pages 4-5. The Featured Writer in the next issue will be Sandra’s husband Francis Conlon; this pairing will be the first time we have followed a Featured Writer with his/her spouse.

In this issue we’re featuring a taste of Emily Dickinson’s poetry on page 16, with photos (including our cover) taken at her home in Amherst, Massachusetts in 2001. This historic brick home has since been painted an ocher (brownish yellow) color, as it appeared in Emily’s time — a common practice in that era.

The New Hampshire Poet Laureate saga continues; Governor Sununu has nominated Alexandria Peary of Londonderry to the post. The appointment was to be acted on by the Executive Council on October 23; we’ll report the outcome in our Winter issue. The type of poetry we present in *WestWard Quarterly* — positive verse with rhyme or rhythm that connects with the reader’s experience — is considered passé in the academic literary world, which favors poetry probing the obscurities of the writer’s own mind. Sadly, the academics have a stranglehold on the seats of political power, resulting in the appointment of Poets Laureate who write according to their taste. Read Esther Leiper-Estabrooks’ comments about Poet Laureateship in “Writer’s Workbench,” pages 29-30.

Dr. Richard Luftig has published *A Grammar for Snow*, available on Unsolicitedpress.com; Caryl Calsyn’s new book *When Someone You Love Dies* may be obtained via Amazon.com. Both of these authors have been *WWQ* contributors.

Dr. Richard Leonard, PUBLISHER

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).

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Cover Image: Shirley Anne Leonard, *WWQ*’s Editor, at the home of Emily Dickinson, Amherst, Massachusetts, in October 2001.

Photo by Richard Leonard



Featured Writer

Sandy Conlon

Colorado

I have always loved words, their sounds, their power, their beauty, and have spent my life reveling in the world of words, teaching students to write and to understand the power of words well written and spoken. I live in Steamboat Springs, a small ski resort in northwest Colorado. Following

a wonderful fifty-five years of teaching — forty-six in Steamboat Springs High School, one year at the college, and eight years in San Diego — world history, literature, college composition, and creative writing, I retired in 2016. During those fifty-five years I was awarded two Fulbright study/travel scholarships, one Fulbright-Hayes, and several National Endowment for the Humanities scholarships, which allowed me to travel and study in summer seminars in Greece, Turkey, Italy, China, Ghana, southern Spain, and Morocco.

In 1996, during a National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminar for teachers in Greece, I wrote some of my first poetry standing in the ancient agora of Athens where Socrates chose to die rather than compromise his soul's virtue. Over the years, I have written nearly one hundred odes to celebrate students and colleagues at graduations, various academic and athletic awards ceremonies, retirements, and funerals. A few of my poems have been published in *Steamboat Today*, *Steamboat Magazine*, *The Steamboat Local*, *WestWard Quarterly*, and in the 2017 and 2019 editions of *Goose River Anthology*.

I love the challenge of writing poetry, both rhymed and unrhymed. As a teacher, I always encouraged my students to learn and use the classical forms of poetry, as well as to enjoy the relative freedom of writing blank verse. I also encouraged them to read the work of traditional poets and to imitate their favorite poet(s) in both form and content, to practice a kind of mental readiness, discipline, and openness to the possibilities of poetry.

There is no simple way to explain the writing process or how poems “come to be.” Sometimes words or phrases will come to me when I least expect them, so I try to jot them down in one of several notebooks I keep handy. I also write stuff on scraps of paper and sticky notes which later is developed into a stanza or theme of a poem. Often when I am meditating I will catch a phrase, a word, or image which later evolves into a poem.

Rarely does any poem come fully formed. The brief poem “The Gift” almost appeared that way, until I reflected on the fact that I had been mentally wrestling with the ideas and imagery and how to make sense of the experience for over a year. My “Ode to the Muse of Poetry” appeared in pieces on a summer day when I had finished an on-line graduate course in poetry and written a paper on the poetry of Richard Wilbur.

The two poems, “Fez” and “Sefrou” were written when I was on a Fulbright-funded study trip to Morocco, and the “Ode to His Wife from the Cameleer” was written while I was studying Arabic Literature in Translation in a National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminar at Swarthmore College. I also wrote the wife's response to the cameleer, but it is a bit too racy and sassy for *WWQ*.

Poetry by Sandy Conlon

Fez

Let us tour one more medina
of narrow passageways
“Balak! Balak!”
make way for the donkeys of Fez
Through the market of dead animals
goats' heads and hearts of sheep
Great delicacies in the medinas of Fez;

Tanneries and dye vats
fine leather and embroidered cloth
Djallebehs of silk in the markets of Fez;

Figs, grapes, and lentils
heaps of saffron, and cardamom
Olives, almonds, and plums
taste the riches of the walled city of Fez.

The Gift

Encountered by chance
In time and space
Nothing more than a passing glance
Yet unexpected familiarity
Deeper than reason
Older than thought
Possessing power
Penetrating the soul
Gentle, unassuming
Softly present
Without haste or necessity
Beyond sense experience
Lucid, transparent
Destroying grief and despair
Ravishing the heart.

Ode to the Muse of Poetry

Word mistress
Lyric meister
Flinging out metaphors
Serving up similes
To tantalize human awareness
Into awareness
Of things unseen and not
Yet dreamed
Joining word and flesh
In paradox and contradiction
To make sense of sense
And illuminate intelligence.

Ode to His Wife from the Cameleer

My favorite camel
Such a graceful mammal;

So too my love your beauty rare
To this fine beast does compare;

Your eyes limpid, warm, and proud
Much like my faithful one profound;

Lashes long and bold against the sand
Flutter softly near my hand;

Your love like an oasis spring
Refreshes the dryness of my being

And my soul takes flight
As we ride together through the desert night.

Ode for the Odes

Pindar wrote the first Ode on Greek parchment
Many long years ago
Followed by Horace four centuries later
Then Virgil down through the ages
The heritage is haunting and fills many pages.

Wordsworth, Keats, then Shelley, Lord Byron, and Burns
Celebrating numerous events and creatures each in his turn
Skylarks, nightingales, rivers, and trees
Once to a mouse, a louse, even a flea.

Yes the Ode enjoys a colorful history
Filled with laughter, tears, revelation, praise, and mystery.

Sefrou

It is old, I tell you
the medina, my home;
It is crumbling with age
where all my children were born;
The balconies of the French
have fallen away;
And long ago play in passageways
has given over to the footfall of strangers
From far off places,
coming to buy this beautiful city.

Marriage of Many Years

Dana Gioia, California

Most of what happens happens beyond words.
The lexicon of lip and fingertip
defies translation into common speech.
I recognize the musk of your dark hair.
It always thrills me, though I can't describe it.
My finger on your thigh does not touch skin —
it touches your skin warming to my touch.
You are a language I have learned by heart.

This intimate patois will vanish with us,
its only native speakers. Does it matter?
Our tribal chants, our dances round the fire
performed the sorcery we most required.
They bound us in a spell time could not break.
Let the young vaunt their ecstasy. We keep
our tribe of two in sovereign secrecy.
What must be lost was never lost on us.

From his book 99 Poems: New and Selected; used with permission. Mr. Gioia served as the California State Poet Laureate from 2015 to 2019.

Remembering to Forget

Dr. Richard Leonard, Illinois

Sometimes, it seems, when you're with me
And days go laughing by,
I forget who I ought to be,
That I'm supposed to cry.

Sometimes I feel such happiness
I miss the former pain,
The comfort of that old distress
That I should know again.

What right have I to laugh and smile
When sorrow is my lot?
I ought to lament all the while,
But — sorry! — I forgot.

When we're together now, it seems
It's always been this way,
And memories of faded dreams
Are spared the light of day.

Sometimes when I should make my head
Remember with regret,
I get it mixed up, and instead,
Remember to forget.

Reprinted from the Summer 2003 issue.

Star Song

Jane Hutto, Florida

It is said the stars sang
At their creation,
As well they should have,

Such bright glowing orbs
Straight from the Creator's hand,
The universe their habitation.

I heard the stars sing once
And they sang a song of space . . .
And endurance.

Try as I may, though, no song
Can last forever, so I write
My own songs now with
Paper, pen, and ink.
A poem is a song —

Let me sing for you, listener.
Would that its tone go on
And on, the lines brave and true,
A song one might remember.

Between Seasons

Eira Needham, United Kingdom

September weaves lime and copper
leaves; a robin's wistful trill coaxes me
outside where a bitter north westerly

chills to the core. Stomping
in the rain, fallen foliage
is muddied to mulch. I ache

for dog days' perpetual light. Yuletide
offers distractions, gaudy baubles
gift shopping and overspending.

Spangled limbs invite me into an idyllic
realm; desolate I decline, huddled
beneath my faux fur throw, until

a glimmer promises. I stagger
to the window, searching, for
the scarlet flash of a swallow.

Dusk

Frances B. Leitch, California

Lavender hues, the mountains there
clothed in eventide's waning light
Hidden chasms of the mind
Thoughts of the dawn's early light
lost in the day's haze and
Then, the sun's last rays
And the veil of darkness
Drawn close about the shoulders
Dark — the nighthawk
perched on treetop
The mountains
receding in the darkness
All the mauve gone
and the night's feet treading on
Hush — the silence

October in Black and White

Ray Greenblatt, Maryland

It's a smoke and charcoal day,
air fills us all as blowfish —
only touch of yellow "Yield" sign,
pink of one stubborn rose
in shaggy garden —
sea now growls and roars
without baby blue blanket above
without dotting eye of sun —
rather than landmark
our cottage becomes cave —
we no longer remember
summer was honey
with flies stuck to it.

Honeymoon, Context

Robert Fern, United Kingdom

The September air,
full of golden seed,
luminescent,
harmonising,
colour-bleeding;
an early still
of childhood bliss.
The deer walked through
the valley, from our place,
the complex-yellow grasses,
and boles of lodgepole pine,
formed a frame.

Squint of Daylight

Diane Webster, Colorado

Remnants of light
darken like eyelids
drooping into dreams
skittering black birds
into leafless tree.
Last squint of daylight
tree branches
perched full of birds
look like pussy willow
sprouting furry buds.

Fall

Bruce Levine, New York

Fall is for color
Bounty and splendor
Spring is renewal
But fall toasts
The future
Nature's own blossoming
In earth tones that
Shatter the rainbow
With rock solid
Treasure to last
The year

Harvest balls
October fests
Foodie's delight
Magnificent moments
For taste buds
In sight

Fall holds a promise
Crisp air to breathe
That cleanses the lungs
And erases the lethargy
Of summer's heat

Thanksgiving to all
Mother Nature raises
Her glass
Mulled cider and cinnamon
Roast turkey and corn
Remember the season
Of color and bounty

Remember fall
Throughout
The year

Sunrise – Sunset

Raymond Gallucci, Maryland

Is it certainly fitting
May be my last time here
Finds me on the beach sitting
In October this year?

Although Equinox Autumn
Passed just ten days before,
Still feel late summer's warming,
So all's well at the shore.

Next year I'll be retired,
Eastern coast I'll have left.
Too much time has transpired,
Must return to Northwest.

But for fourteen years running
I've returned to this spot
For my ritual sunning.
I will miss it a lot.

For the Ocean Atlantic's
Even warm in the Fall,
But the Northwest's Pacific
Even lukewarm can't call.

But the Northwest will find me
At the shore this same time
With the sunrise behind me
And the sunset now mine.

Sonnet/Sonata

Lois Hayn, California

Rainbow over keys
Ivory steps jostling time of their own
Ringing deep bells across dark afternoon
Like well-chosen words
Scanning love rich enough
To last full evening

To the Father Teaching His Daughter
to Fly a Kite, Sunnyside Park
Michael T. Corrigan, Maine

A tilting tug from blue
Fallen to tragic green,
Your small child wails at you,
Come fix her downed machine.

And so you do, of course,
Adjusting, gauging climb,
Applying counterforce
To distance, height and time.

And once it's soaring high
The kite's all hers again
To guide through wind and sky
Maneuvered by a hand

That's learned the world is trying
To bring her down — and so,
The paradox of flying
Is *hold!* — and then let go.

Examples Made

Randal A. Burd, Jr., Missouri

Our lives are like a looking glass
Through which our children often see
Their futures through the veil of time
With more responsibility.

From us they gain the will to live:
Learn to endure through hardships met,
Find that it's better to forgive
And how you can't escape regret.

Our happiness is theirs to share.
Our struggles help define them too.
Our choices are examples made
Of what you should — and shouldn't — do.

We fiercely hope they will succeed,
That we have given them our best,
And fondness taints their memories
Of times before they flew the nest.

Autumn Fancies
Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

September comes tumbling
through sunflowers and weeds,
marigolds nesting in her hair,
romping the golden countryside
with tantalizing flair.

October's not so sure,
cavorts with scowling rain
amidst the sun's warm rays,
and calls her children home
on stormy days.

November broods in brown,
her trees remembering their leaves,
now crumpled on the ground,
and looks around on warmer days
for bees to come around.

A Selection of Haiku

Susan M. Surette, Massachusetts

Season for poets
final riot of colors
birdsong goes quiet

Gusty winds hasten leaves
windows close, skin covers up
blushing trees turn bare

Gold leaves carpet ground
empty wooden bench beckons
for brief reflection

A season of mist
sweaters cover golden skin
alewives sink deeper

World turns brown and gray
wispy cloud escapes chilled lips
cozy fires are being lit

Peek-a-Boo

Harry T Roman, New Jersey

The October sun
rides low and bright
somewhat bashful
in its transit
seeking shelter
now and then
peeking from
a cirrus sky

That Which We

Gregg Dotoli, New Jersey

That which we accept in voluntary blindness
becomes the filament that binds us to flat lives

twines of gold and blue
white and yellow
strong nets strip us of our humanity

That which we accept in voluntary blindness
becomes the filament that binds us to flat lives

patience pause care
vision wisdom
the fabric of truth

That which we accept in voluntary blindness
becomes the filament that binds us to flat lives

Why I Don't Own a Camera

Marne Wilson, West Virginia

I have yet to take a photo of a North Dakota sunset
or the grandeur of a towering cumulus cloud.

Not because I do not value them,
but because it seems wrong
to trap such things in a bottle for all time.

To try to capture something
is to admit that you fear it will leave you,
or perhaps that you will be the one to leave
if not bound entirely by chains,
which always hold the captor as tightly as the captive.

I do not try to capture the sunsets or the clouds
as a way of saying that I trust them to come back,
and also that I trust myself to always return home,
stray as much as I will.

I have yet to take a photo of a North Dakota sunset
because I know that I will see another one.

Rima XIII

Gustavo A. Becquer (1834-1870)

Translation from Spanish by Dr. Thomas P. Feeny

Your eyes are blue
and when you laugh
their soft clarity recalls
the tremulous glow of morning
reflected on the sea

Your eyes are blue and
when you cry, tears shine
like drops of dew
upon a violet

Your eyes are blue and,
when in their depths an idea
breathes a spark of light,
I behold a lost star,
adrift in the evening sky

Stargazer

Dr. C. David Hay, Florida

It is a night to stir the soul,
To watch the heavens all aglow;
A colorful spectral meets the eye
As fiery meteors rush by,
Born of brimstone, fire and coals
With a destiny no one knows.

Does life exist out in that maze
Of worlds that glow and stars that blaze?
A universe of endless space
Where planets spin and comets chase;
Infinite wonders of the skies
Awaiting gaze of curious eyes.

So if you be one of these,
Seeking cosmic sights that please,
Blessed by beauty that you see,
You are a dreamer just like me -
Beholding trails where angels trod
And know you saw the Face of God.

Lesson Learned

Brian C. Felder, Delaware

Though most of us think of a burden
in the literal sense, something heavy
that needs to be lugged from here to there,
it is, more often than not, a product
of our own mind or heart
and it is thus borne alone.
As the majority of us don't wear our problems
on our sleeve, to use an old expression,
they are never seen by others
and so their weight falls solely on us,
but like the real thing,
like a sofa that needs moving up stairs,
a pal is needed on the other end,
for a shared burden is a lessened one —
When you need a hand, ask,
though this is easier to expound than execute
for we are too often too proud
to admit that we can't do it alone.
False pride was what my mother called that
and she had no use for it whatsoever,
which is why she always helped when asked
and asked for it whenever she needed it,
teaching me that there was no shame in that.
It was her way of making my life easier
and looking back on it now, she did.

Cycles

James B. Nicola, New York

Our cycles of discomfort, I am mostly grateful for.
Whenever hunger grows too great, we have the grocery store.
And when fatigue persists until we're just about to drop,
Why, all we have to do is find a bed where we can flop.
The hottest wave or coldest spell need not turn us to grief:
Within a couple weeks or months we're bound to find relief.
And if at once all your household appliances you use,
You know you won't blow up the house for first you'll blow a fuse.
Yes, Nature and Technology have crafted some sweet system
Of eating, sleeping, and delights too numerous to list 'em.
Why do our hearts, then, fill and wax and swell until they burst?
Why don't we have a circuit-breaker where we need it worst?

The Last of Summer

Cynthia d'Este, Wisconsin

Here I am...taking in the last of summer,
listening to the hush of winds pushing
the trees around and the click-clack music
of curled, dry leaves that dance about
the pavement.

Sitting on the cement stoop by the garden,
now stripped of plants, I feel nearly invisible,
one of nature's own. And the garden?
The garden's a dark apron of loam
showing a few mysterious holes and
a few garnet and ruby tomatoes
escaped from the picker's hand.

I empty the garden hose of its last draught
and make a nest of it for winter's rest.
It doesn't sadden me to be here, not really.
I know what's ahead. Now is, however,
the last of summer, a magnificence
distilled where I'm held within a frontier
of maples, box elders and ashes that
alter swiftly from green to gold.

And I wait only for the ginkgo tree
to transform the colors of sunlight
into rows of gilded fans and
gracefully drop down,
while I make plans

A Meditation of Pines

Matthew J. Spireng, New York

Think of the sound of wind
in the branches, how one might
wish to stay, not just now, but
before and after so it would be
the sound one hears whenever there is
wind. One might lie on a bed of pine needles
listening, learning bliss, learning
what wishes bring, even unspoken,
even unknown, because sometimes
what seems so simple — the movement
of wind through the branches of pines —
is not so simple at all.

Poet Emily Dickinson's fall garden may have been more extensive than this more recent photo taken in October, 2001 on a visit to Amherst, Massachusetts. Although she was nearly unknown as a poet during her lifetime, her skill as a gardener was well known locally. People in Amherst knew that her gardens were superior to others, and she was noted for her ability to cultivate fragile flowers despite the harsh New England climate. It is estimated that roughly a third of Dickinson's 1,800-odd poems, and more than half of her letters, mention flowers. Records show that her father built a greenhouse in 1855 for his daughters Emily and Lavinia. Emily turned it into a year-round garden where ferns unfurled their feathery fronds, the perfumes of gardenias and jasmine sweetened the air, and fuchsia, carnations, and "inland buttercups" bloomed alongside "heliotropes by the aprons full."



Emily Dickinson's Fall Garden
Photo by Richard Leonard

Poetry by Emily Dickinson, 1830-1882

"Forgive me if I never visit. I am from the fields, you know, and while quite at home with the dandelions, make a sorry figure in a drawing room."

Autumn

These are the days when Birds come back –
A very few – a Bird or two –
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies resume
The old – old sophistries of June –
A blue and gold mistake.

Oh, fraud that cannot cheat the Bee –
Almost thy plausibility
Induces my belief.

Till ranks of seeds their witness bear –
And softly thro' the altered air
Hurries a timid leaf.

Oh Sacrament of summer days,
Oh Last Communion in the Haze –
Permit a child to join.

Thy sacred emblems to partake –
Thy consecrated bread to take
And thine immortal wine!

November

Besides the Autumn poets sing
A few prosaic days
A little this side of the snow
And that side of the Haze –
A few incisive Mornings –
A few Ascetic Eves, –
Gone – Mr. Bryant's "Golden Rod" –
And Mr. Thompson's "sheaves."

Perhaps a squirrel may remain –
My sentiments to share –
Grant me, O Lord, a sunny mind –
Thy windy will to bear!

Autumn

The morns are meeker than they were –
The nuts are getting brown –
The berry's cheek is plumper –
The Rose is out of town.

The Maple wears a gayer scarf –
The field a scarlet gown –
Lest I should be old-fashioned
I'll put a trinket on.

From My Vantage Point . . .

by Chester the Cat

(Reprinted from Spring 2012 Issue)

The creative artist requires solitude: time to be alone with one's thoughts and reflections. It is difficult to contemplate the beauties of art, music, or literature amidst the press of mundane duties that clamor for one's attention. It is especially difficult to ponder the imponderable mysteries that give birth to a good poem when harrassed by others who demand to be noticed or served in some commonplace manner. So often do I seek solitude for creative contemplation, only to be jarred from my musings by some other creature oblivious to those grand, universal realities that call forth the best of my poetic efforts. Sometimes one doesn't even know where his next meow is coming from.



Maybe I'll be safe under this rug. Perhaps I'll have some time to think, at last.



Uh oh. Maybe this wasn't such a good place to hide, after all.



Oh well, better luck next time.

Cat Pause

Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

Oh, what lessons to be learned
in charm and subtle grace
from my friend with silky fur
and winsome whiskered face.

Such artless poise, such cunning guile —
what innocence infer
from soft green eyes and canny smile
and smooth as velvet purr?

Quotations of Autumn

by Frances B. Leitch, Writer and Poet, California

“No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace / as I have seen in one autumnal face,” says John Donne.

“Every leaf speaks bliss to me, / fluttering from the autumn tree,” Emily Bronte says.

So, as in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s “Autumn,” “Go, sit upon the lofty hill / And turn your eyes around / Where waving woods and waters wild / Do hymn an autumn sound.”

Autumn speaks of maturity, beauty, intensity, and the shifting sands of life, as winter plants a foot upon its bridge.

“If a year was tucked inside a clock, then autumn would be the magic hour,” contemporary poet, Victoria Erickson notes.

Magical changes: “The grass had turned from supple green to crisp gold,” Tracy Guzman wrote. “The air in midafternoon was laced with the smell of things gone to ground. Beech leaves curled in on themselves, brushed with the finish of autumn.”

“Autumn carries more gold in its pocket than all the other seasons,” writer, Jim Bishop says.

Gold — writers can mine that gold. Autumn is a time of beauty, a time of ripeness, of change, and one of reflection. It’s especially effective in inspiring descriptive poetry and prose. Why not pen a poem sitting on a porch swing, watching the leaves fall from the trees?

Fall scenery births poignant feeling. And the winds of change blow keenly. For writers, autumn can be a time of reckoning. Emotion is strong. And time is marching on. One might go over earlier work and crunch a bit, trim the boundless leaves of spring and summer.



As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow says, “The greatest firmness is the greatest mercy.” Then, bale the hay! The harvest passed on. Autumn is a perfect time for wrapping up work, and clothing it in stupendous fashion. “As the evening twilight fades away, / the sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.”

“Autumn turns the world from one thing into another,” Catherynne M. Valente says, “The year is seasoned and wise.” So in this time, when Grandma and Grandpa sit perched on the porch, watching the young ones strutting down the street to school, and the school-bell tolls, “another year, another season of living,” life unfolds and the pen scrolls. Of autumn, Mary Oliver, notes, it’s “boisterous, and like us longing to stay — how everything lives, shifting from one bright vision to another.” *AUTUMN!*



North Country, New Hampshire: Trilogy of Fall Poems By Esther Leiper-Estabrooks

A Harvest Horror

An Acrostic Sonnet (ABABCDCD EFEFGG) for October

A golden-colored moon glowed after dusk;
Heads of orange pumpkins swelled each day.
As Halloween approached, each full corn husk
Rewarded belief that picking time held sway
Vines of ripening grapes sweetened cool air
Exciting noses with their pungent scent,
So every wife scrubbed canning jars with care
Thus keeping busy, just as God has meant.

Harvest time — almost sacred on a farm!
Of course good folks nearby offer their aid,
Relying on neighborliness, thus no harm
Rips asunder wise traditions, old and staid,
Or so they hoped till some strange fungus blight
Ruined their ripened crops in one cruel night!

Beginning of the Blizzard

An Irregular Sonnet (AABBB CCCDD EFEF) for November

The wind blows wet and wild across our world:
All day our green-stripped awnings have been furled,
But still fringe whips and flaps as rain falls slant
While century oaks, protesting creak and rant
That autumn ease for trees seems all too scant.

At work here I make change and do small chores;
First mop up foot-tracks by the double doors
Then peer through falling dusk toward other stores.
The filling station lights across the street
Now show how rain has newly switched to sleet,

While Mr. Rose whose bakery basks warm
Plus sweet-perfumed with every sugared treat
Stands up, immense though indistinct in form,
To gaze through steamy windows at the storm.

Esther's Note: My dictionary defines "sonnet" as a 14-line poetic form embodying statement and resolution of a single theme. The underlying intent of this Fall trilogy was to show my prowess in writing in various known forms mentioned last quarter: NOT TO BE! These three took off on their own, and they became Irregular! Rather than fight it, I went with it. It's fun to experiment with the sonnet because of its flexibility and freedom to create, yet staying in the bounds of remaining a formalist poet. In addition to adhering to the 14-line rule, I keep to the usual 10-syllables/5-beats per line. October is in the Shakespearean pattern, it just leaned toward becoming Acrostic!

Blue Sky Morning: Snow Fall Warning?

An Irregular Sonnet (AA BCBC DEDE FGFG) for December

The sky beamed blue this morning as snow fell
In great blue flakes as from a witch's spell.

Our weather's topsy-turvy, many say,
While thoughtful scientists claim global warming:
Earth's had her best years and we all must pay;
Glaciers melting, yet no new ones forming.

New white has covered over curving drive
And soon I must go forth to shovel it.
I like to watch the fluffy stuff arrive
But disposal of it, I scarcely like one bit!

It seemed like magic, but was it good or bad
To have such sifting come from azure sky?
I couldn't sort the mixed feelings that I had
Nor can I now quite comprehend the "why."

The Poet in the Fields

Tony Cosier, Ontario Canada

He continues on to wild, unopened ground
here he follows the winding course of a rushing stream.
He listens to the wind
sifting through clustered pines,
glimpses the doubled
bobbing of a sparrow's flight.

Somehow, he feels, it all adds up to song,
and is a better song the more it resembles
the music of a warbler
hidden in the leaves
that sings quietly, then waits unseen,
and sings again.

stream

Vernon Waring, Pennsylvania

my words will roam
like untamed cattle
searching for water
for the velvet of grass

the sun will bear down on them
ruthless and bright
ignorant of their aimless trek

with no leader
they will have to find their own way across
the prairie of thought
their thirst quenched only by the clear water
of ink

My Days and Nights

Mahathi, India

(Spenserian Stanzas)

That sleepless night didn't go a waste, in sloth.
Fistfuls of twinkling stars I could amass;
I jumped and hopped in milky moonlight froth
and etched my worthless name on skies, in gloss.

My nights, with eyes open, I dreamt daydreams
and during days, eyes closed, recalled those nights
and spoiled papers reams and reams and reams.
One day I found my weighty poems at heights
of skies, in my kid's tender hands, as buoyant kites.

At the Sale

Lydia Moccero, Pennsylvania

A love of Reading did prevail,
For they came, in droves,
to the Used Book Sale —
Mothers with children,
Adults, and teens —
Searching for bargains
in books, magazines.

They raided each shelf
and they ransacked each box,
as if they were searching
for Gold at Fort Knox.
These are kindred souls,
I thought to myself —
Book Lovers who
won't bypass one shelf.

The entire scene
was rather dramatic —
Though an Onlooker would call
each of us a fanatic.
You'd think we had found a million bucks
When we went home with Armfuls —
our treasure in books.

More Expressive

Ahmed Kamal Khusro, India

Words have charm,
especially for writers
Cast-a-net
Spanish twirls and fishermen throwing nets;

The Asiatic lily — orange merging
imperceptibly into yellow
At edges of
scimitar-shaped petals
Is more expressive,
Mellow word in sun's epic candor
Wordcapture snags
things-as-they seem, in the
rocking cradle of sound and meaning;

Water slips through cupped hands of words.

Confession of a Man in His 80s

Jonathan Bracker, California

Sometimes I sit on my cat.

Taking a nap and being jabbed awake
By the sudden loud ring of the phone,
I stumble to the armchair I sit in to converse,
Unseeing sweet Henry nestled there,
Black furred (with some brown hair if you look closely)
Upon the cushion's deep dark blue.

He is taking a nap of his own, and is
As surprised as I by our contact
And madder: he scratches me
Quite sufficiently, and I
Immediately rise to release him
From Down Under. No wonder

I am cranky with the friend who has called:
I listen while mentally licking my wounds
And feeling below to see whether
There may be a little blood. But there is not.
Hey, Life's like that!
Sometimes I look first before I sit,
And sometimes I sit on my cat.

Husband on the Roof

Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

(True Story — Wheaton, Illinois, 2002)

My husband had been lost
in his computer all the day,
somewhere out in cyberspace
and could not find his way
back into our reality,
much to my dismay.

And then, it seems, while sitting there,
he looked out upon the roof
and saw autumn leaves in disarray
And on *his* roof, they must not stay!.

But alas, he'd been in cyberspace too long,
and accustomed to do anything
as with a keyboard and a mouse,
thought it not so very strange
to just climb out of our house.

By opening a window
near the desk where he had sat,
he soon was out upon the roof
scooping leaves from gutter trap
and scattering them upon the street,
a street where people pass!

You say you don't believe me?
But wait, I have the proof!
Here's the open window —
his computer chair is empty —
and I think I heard a passerby
shout a remark, not complimentary.

Caught Up in the Timeless Magic

Linda Amos, Pennsylvania

She stood there immersed
In the quiet tranquility
Of a perfect autumn afternoon.

Once the traffic slowed,
She strode out onto the median
That divided the busy avenue in front of her home

Leaves of gold, umber, and red
Drifted soundlessly from their trees
Announcing autumn's magical reverie.

She bent down and placed her purse
And her ever-present raincoat on the ground.
Then she stood up, threw back her arms, and fell

Backwards onto the biggest, fattest, highest pile
Of Autumn leaves she had ever raked together.
A smile spread slowly across her face.

Cars drove by at their hurried pace,
Delivery trucks ran up and down the avenue,
And even a city bus rushed past her.

She lay there smiling and thought to herself,
“ You are never too old, too mature, or too grown-up
To *not* play in a big pile of autumn leaves! ”

Some may call it childish,
To be caught up in the timeless magic
Of autumn's fluttering leaves.
She continued to disagree!

The Elves

David Fox, New York

Once upon a starry night
Some elves came out to play.
They sang, they danced,
they frolicked,
And some might even say
They partied until sunrise,
Until the time was dawn,
For at that moment,
I blinked and they were gone.
Elves are just imaginary,
That's what others say,
But I know they're for real
For I saw them at play.

The Sighs of the Gas Statue

d. n. simmers, British Columbia, Canada

After Andre Breton

Ever watch a glass blower
build his pieces from a plug
of glass?

Move it.

By blowing air
into its molten form.

With a long low stick
they force air through
as they turn the mold,
the melted silicon takes shape.

Sometimes one hopes
that the world can be changed
the same way by forcing
the beasts that are growing
into other creatures like doves

While the sun comes
up and goes down
through the glass windows of
now and then.

As evil and the good
have turns at blowing
after fighting for the stick.

They are blowing
on the glass tube
right then left
over the centuries.

Sing II

Dr. Susie Gharib, Syria

I'll sing a hymn
for the night within,
for an altar built
with each heart-string,
for the sacrifice
of awkward sighs,
for a brimful chalice
to banish malice,
for the bread of peace
that rifts appease,
for the resurrection
of recollection.

I'll sing a flight
in the world without,
for the stout swallow
a song to follow,
for the nightingale
a melodious grail,
for the golden plover
at a flower's Passover,
for the mist that blurs
what doubts had stirred.

Byways

Kiersta Recktenwald, Maine

By changing each kind of beauty
and being better than before,
By being each kind of beauty,
yet better than before,
Rather happy days
become lovely ones,
And cinders of the past
become a pathway,
A byway to the stars.

Thought I Would Paint Today

Nancy L. Dahl, Michigan

. . . . on my white canvas, in my mind,
a splash of blue for the skies
and puff ball clouds going by,
then to the steel blue water below.
I pause for just a moment to think —
what will I put in between.
Then I see — boats with sails,
breezing in the wind,
add some straight lines breezing in,
catching a bird or two gliding by.
That's all — nothing more — just quiet peace.
Painting a picture for only me
found peace within
that no one else but me can see.

Clouds

Nelson R. Locher, New York

It is fun to describe the images we see.
So many different shapes, we guess what they might be.
Fluffy clouds go by, as they continue to roll.
Looks like mashed potatoes in a big blue bowl.

Scan through the sky, as we sometimes tend to do.
You'll see a parade of animals that would usually be in a zoo.
Imaginations run wild in these wide-open spaces.
A tree, a car or a house, maybe even some faces.

When clouds change color from white into black.
Trouble is on the way. They're ready to attack.
Depending on the season, be it rain or be it snow.
Clouds are predictable. They always let us know.

Sometimes clouds come down so close they touch the ground.
This event becomes fog, no visibility to be found.
Clouds are important for all the beauty they bring.
Listen to the angels bowling. It is such a wonderful thing.

At the Lookout

John Grey, Rhode Island

The lookout must be scenic.
The sign tells me so and it's been here since the 50's.
And Autumn forests, from this height, are radiant enough
to light the darkest mood. The pastel smoke extends to lakes.
Cold air smothers warm and ghosts arise. Sun skis the slopes.
A cloud or two puff vexed they can't be blue.
A red-tailed hawk spreads his wings.
Thermals bear the weight of flying.
In brush below, warblers sing praises
of what only they can know.
A hasty note to Paradise: I've read your plans.

Something Beautiful

Dr. James Piatt, California

The sunrise with its pink and coral
quilt covers the morning dew
signaling another beautiful day,
and showing us if we remove
the incoming angst, there is
always hope, always something
to experience, which is beautiful.

Social Anxiety Acrostic

Melissa Frentsos, New Jersey

So scared
Of being the
Center of attention,
I
Appreciate
Loving encouragement

And people who understand
Not pressuring me or
eXpecting more than
I'm ready for
Each of these people are
Treasures
You are one of them

Lass-scorned

Philipp Ammon, Germany

Alas! my lass was hubris-hurt
And forth she went,
Away she turned:
"And ne'er e'er see me mo
And shun ye me,
Far, thither be!"
A crime, it seemed, had I performed
And clogged her ear from all my talk.
She scorned my heart,
Its swell and naught.
The haughty look
And way I walked
Was spelled to nil
And killed in thought:
"I curse at thee,
Hurl ye from me,
Pray, curl away
Like mist and fog!"
Aye, I for me.

Looking Out a Window

Judith A. Batorski, New York

Dedicated to A.S.

Looking out a window
I see the soul of life.
Stars and peaceful sky.
It leaves its footprint on
Every artist's canvas and
Every photographer's lens,
And my memory.
Trees enveloped in a warm breeze.
A symphony of soul plays music,
Yet unheard, in the silence of each pause
Of the beat of my heart.
Ocean waves caressing soft sand.
The soul of life is writing my story
In the silence of my inner landscape.
I hold out my hand and you are there.
Looking out a window my soul
is touched by eternity.

Jerusalem Sun

David Gershan, Illinois

Brothers
Long apart but now united
Walked out of the Old City

Down the hill to the Mount of Olives
Canteens empty
Mouths parched
The remains of the City of David
Archaic, hallowed stones
A fierce Jerusalem sun

An ancient tunnel beneath the ruins
And a subterranean stream
They're cool now in the water

Shadows
Dancing across the cave walls —
Walls echoing the laughter of children

I'm There . . .

Annapurna Sharma, India

I'm there . . .
in the faded blue of a falling feather
in the yellow leaf of autumn
in the broken verse on the wall

in the grass flower
inconspicuous, yet smiles
when trampled

in the melody of a crow
that loves to sing
only to lose
and make you win

in the old neem tree
pirouetting with the wind
unfurling its arms

I'm there —
in the darkness of the moon
in the fragrance of seasons
at all times, dear

when
my heart beat shows you the way
my breath keeps you warm
my unspoken words gives you company
my soul lights your path

I'm there always for you . . .

My Cat "Oreo"
Charles Parnell, Pennsylvania

When I try to pick her up,
She runs to get away!
I chase her through the house —
This is how we play.

Ice-cream's her only treat —
She always laps it up!
I hold her for a time,
She's loyal like a pup!

Her age is almost Ten
But she's still a lot of kitten
My gentle pet-companion,
As cherished as a mitten.

She's so good for my moods
And keeps me company;
We sense each other near —
This classy cat and me.

She scampers through the house
And hides in favorite places.
Her appetite is great:
She eats her meals, then paces!

Winter Again
MaryJean Zajac, New York

Was that you, winter?
Creeping around the corner.
Cold breeze whipping up when I wasn't looking.

I saw you as you whisked away the last of the leaves.
You thought I didn't see you blow through the panes
And chill the air around my room.

I remember you, winter, when I turned my collar up.
Most of all I remember when you left.
And knew you would be back again soon.

One Last Fall
Richard T. Rauch, Louisiana

Every tree rings true
After the rain leaves
A blue-green morning

Sparkling with wee birds
Singing grand hosannas
To a buoyant sun, telling

Their stories like troubadours
Among the uncollected
Throngs of raindrops gathering

To the breeze-driven,
Leaf-fluttering rhythms
Of one *drip* last *drip* fall.

WRITER'S
WORKBENCH
To Be or Not:
A New Hampshire
State Poet Laureate

by Esther Leiper-Estabrooks



Laureates hope to give their best efforts in poetry to get readers or listeners to enjoy how they see and feel. I dislike poetry that flies over my head, like a bee deciding to sting. Yet by contrast, other poems may be gooey sweet. Indeed, I'm not pleased by poems so sentimental that I feel embarrassed for the author; while I can honor, yet not enjoy, poems of death and suffering. In time we will all go there, willing or not. I prefer poems that balance words and meaning to entertain readers by offering fresh outlooks and insights.

Having been a competitor for the position of State Poet Laureate of New Hampshire in 1989, 1994, 1999, 2004, and now 2019. I continue writing my way, publishing in varied venues: magazines, texts, plus books with helpful advice. My *WIN! Poetry Contests* text (2006 – 350 pages including my twenty illustrations) attempts to tackle in an entertaining way all a hopeful poet should know. Even the expert poet can learn something new from it.

I'd like to become New Hampshire State Poet Laureate (NHSPL), which at present seems to be tied up between various other poets hoping to be chosen. While a position of distinction, being a Poet Laureate is mostly glory with little money involved. Such Laureates are invited to give readings, not for a *fee* but for *free!* Indeed, few poets get rich on poetry, and while there are many "Mother Goose" books, there is no living Mother Goose or heirs to be rewarded with profits from such treasured tombs.

More important, and more fun for me, was being invited to be a Poet-in-the-Schools in Cookeville, Tennessee, where Peter and I once lived. I was asked if I would take the position when two other male poets, hired before me, dropped out for unexpected, private reasons. I promptly resigned enrollment at Tennessee Tech University where I was working on a master's degree. My professors encouraged me to take the job for the honor it was and would become; plus the pay checks were very nice

Soon I introduced kids in different grades to varied poems I felt they'd enjoy. Some of these I wrote, but most were by others. Since Tennessee was in the Bible Belt I kept choices very conservative. I chose poems about people who were godly, while those about nature and animals proved safe themes. Then I taught in varied classrooms to a wide range of grades. I was also invited to go to other schools, some as far as fifty miles off, to give readings.

(Continued on next page)

Very few children knew much about poetry, so I introduced them to haiku and clean limericks — both short and easy to grasp. Of course while boys favored action verse, girls preferred gentle poems. High school seniors proved the best listeners, yet now I laugh being, at seventy-two, a *Senior* myself! However, many classes I brought poetry to had much younger students.

One troubling problem turned out well. When I assigned twelfth graders to attempt their own verse one young man turned in a plagiarism. I showed it to my guidance teacher, who explained that the boy's father had died leaving his mother to fend for many younger siblings; this boy became "man of the family" at sixteen, and worked after school in a grocery store six days a week to keep his family off welfare. I gave this student some welcomed attention.

If not a Poet Laureate, still my job enabled me to pour out all the skills I had. I loved Cookeville and teaching. Climate was mild, yet after a teacher's meeting one night electricity went out blacking all homes and stores. My windshield became awash with down-pouring rain, while lightning and thunder proved constant. It took an hour to reach home, only three miles away. Street lights and traffic lights also went dark. Next morning Cookeville woke to an unforeseen disaster. A tornado had ripped straight through town killing three and injuring many, plus splintering homes in its path to matchsticks. Peter and I were spared, yet many children came to school crying while many more were absent. Ditching my prepared lesson, I encouraged the kids who did come to talk to me or their friends. It was a day for sorrow, but not poetry.


Now decades later I'm Poet Laureate of the New Hampshire White Mountains Region, and happy to visit schools and libraries when asked. Alas, some folks still fear or dismiss verse of any sort. Recall the old expression, "You can bring a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." The children I taught before are grown now, but surely hold on to horrors and sorrows suffered that dreadful night. It is easier to write of joy than tragedy, yet this experience I still carry with me. Particularly, I am reminded of it when I see and reread the letter from former NEA Chairman Dana Gioia on the next page.

This past July 2019, the opposition to New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu dug up some nasty dirt on his pick for NH SPL; enough anyway, to cause him to withdraw his appointment of a fine poet. So New Hampshire is on "pins and needles" wondering whom the Governor will pick next.

As likely as anyone, I guess it could be me. If so, it will be the very first time ever for NNH (Northern New Hampshire) to be recognized with such an honor; whereas SNH (Southern New Hampshire — below The Mountains) has had the honor bestowed on it twelve times. So stay tuned! Watch the news: *This has become a very big deal in New Hampshire and beyond.*

Footnote: In 1999 and in 2004, I was the first place pick recommended by the Poetry Society of New Hampshire's Board of Directors. This choice was submitted as such to the then New Hampshire Governors and Executive Councilors for appointment and confirmation — which politically did not happen, twice!

What Critics Have Said about *WIN! Poetry Contests* by Esther Leiper-Estabrooks



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

The Nancy Hanks Center
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20506-0001
202/682-5400
Office of the Chairman

October 5, 2004

Ms. Esther M. Leiper
P.O. Box 87
Jefferson, NH 03583


Dear Ms. Leiper,
I am in receipt of your letter and galley proof.

I would very much like to thank you for the nice mentions throughout the packet you sent. I appreciate your kindness. I was pleased to read you served as "Poet in the Schools" with the NEA in 1973.

WIN! Poetry Contests, with the Patterns and Forms to Get You There has many beneficial ideas for poets. It will serve as a motivational tool for novice poets, trying to acquire recognition, as well as present experts with new and creative ideas. Your forty years of success in poetry contests becomes very apparent in this book. It will be invaluable to both teachers and writers.

While I would like to endorse your book, unfortunately, I cannot do so for ethical and legal reasons as the Chairman of a Federal Agency.

Thank you for thinking of me and I regret I cannot participate.

Best wishes,

Dana Gioia
Chairman

CC: Leon Ogreske

Nominated in 2002 by President George W. Bush, Dana Gioia (pronounced *Joy-a*) served as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts until 2009.

From 2015 to 2019 he served as the California State Poet Laureate. As such, he has endorsed Esther Leiper-Estabrooks as the next New Hampshire State Poet Laureate.

Leiper is a Scottish family name, found in Pennsylvania beginning circa 1765. Pronounce it as *Leipur*. Lt. Tom Leiper was a 1776 Revolutionary War hero in the Battle of Brandywine.



How to Order *WIN! Poetry Contests*

Price is \$20.00 US (shipping cost included). Make check or postal money order payable to *Esther M. Leiper-Estabrooks* and mail to
The Poet House, 15 Potter Street,
Gorham, NH 03581-1525 USA
Money-ordered copies of WIN! will be shipped the same day; check-ordered copies will be shipped in seven days.