

WestWard Quarterly

The Magazine of Family Reading



Fall 2021

To our readers . . .

We're happy to present the Fall 2021 issue of *WestWard Quarterly* — which, once again, might be called “WestWard Quarterly International,” since in addition to contributors from the United States we feature writers from Canada, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Ireland, India, and Syria. As one of our contributors from India pointed out, it's not so easy to relate to northern hemisphere Fall colors there — nor, of course, would those autumnal hues pervade Brazil, or perhaps Syria! But writers from those areas seem happy to take part in our “Fall” issue anyway.

This issue's Featured Writer is Susan Surette from the Cape Cod region of Massachusetts. Her “bio” and a selection of her poetry may be found on pages 4-5. Enjoy our usual features, including Frances Leitch's “Autumn Harvest Time” quotations (page 18) and Esther Leiper-Estabrooks' “Trilogy of Autumn Poems” from northern New Hampshire (page 19). Calliope the Cat fills in for Chester with her reflections on “exploring new heights” (page 17).

Through scanning or other errors in the Summer 2021 issue, we failed to accurately reproduce poems by Lois Greene Stone, John Muro, and Sandy Conlon. We are reprinting the corrected versions on page 29. Because many of our writers like to give copies of this magazine to friends or relatives, we do our best to avoid mistakes — but, regrettably, we don't always succeed, so we do our best to make amends when errors occur.

Along those lines, don't forget that you can order extra copies of *WestWard Quarterly*. Subscribers get a \$2.00 discount on extra copies, and contributors who aren't subscribers get a \$1.00 discount on issues in which they have a poem (see the note at the bottom of this page). Subscribers please note the reminder on page 31 to check the expiration date on your address label; and if you're not a subscriber we invite you to support this venue for your work and other writers like yourself.

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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Cover Image: Harvesting Corn, Kirkland, Illinois, 2007

Photo by Richard Leonard



Featured Writer

Susan Surette Massachusetts

At a fairly young age, I was well on my way to becoming a lifelong bibliophile. Gifts of books, such as the latest volume of a Nancy Drew title, ranked high on my list of coveted possessions. Decades would pass before I was given the opportunity to write something for others to read.

As an empty nester, I was hired to work for a hometown newspaper, reporting on current events and happenings. Minor in college journalism proved beneficial, but receiving permission to cover human interest stories for a monthly spotlight series ignited my passion for writing. Additionally, I volunteered to assist a fledgling Boy Scout troop by creating a newsletter called "The Semaphore."

Fast forward several decades to my retirement years and relocation to a coastal community, where I'm active with yoga, biking, fishing, hiking, gardening, and hand drumming, when not traveling or enjoying a trio of wonderful grandkids. A few years after settling in and searching for another activity or new area of interest, I was drawn to a free class in creative writing at a nearby senior citizens center. Expecting the sessions to concentrate on short stories, essays, life journals, etc., I was initially dismayed to find the emphasis to be on poetry, a topic and writing style I was woefully ignorant of.

Yet weeks later I became hooked on this genre, unlike journalism with its deadlines and word limits, this focused on choosing the best words and finding new ways to express thoughts. The writing instructor urged me to submit work for publication, resulting in *WestWard Quarterly* accepting one of my early pieces, thereby spurring me on to pursue the art of poetry. Since then my poems have appeared in *The Curler*, *The Avocet Journal of Nature Poetry*, *Nine Muses Poetry*, *The Voices Project*, *Cape Cod Times*, and *Eskimo Pie*.

Two years later I began a small group, the "Not Yet Dead Poets Society," consisting of several special classmates eager to support each other in our writing efforts. We enjoy an easy relationship and compatibility in our approach to poetry, differing only on the subject of learning how to write haiku, for which I am the lone enthusiast. Undaunted, I continued to educate myself and continue penning this beautifully simple writing form.

In early 2020 I was given permission to lead a senior citizens class at the same center I attended, offering others an opportunity to discover the joy of poetry and my chance to give back. Unfortunately, a few weeks into this new venture, the center was forced to close due to the pandemic and eventually a transition to online sessions was made.

Poetry has sharpened my observation skills, helped me develop a keener insight about the complexities of people and life. Doors to the natural world have been thrown wide open, welcoming my closer inspection on what used to be dismissed in the past.

An appropriate label for me is *logophile*, or lover of words. I am especially fond of adjectives, because when carefully chosen they give readers a wonderfully descriptive mental image, something I always appreciate.

After reading one of my poems, someone said they found my writing to be "accessible." I liked that thought because I write with the idea of others being able to read my work with what I hope is understanding, enjoyment, and at times some enlightenment.

When you read poetry, don't just think about what the author wrote, consider how it makes you feel.

Poetry by Susan Surette

Repeat Performance

A film of dust clings upon
scrolled antique trunk
hidden in forgotten attic corner
with contents enfolding deep
sentimental value
Nestled beneath cotton sheeting
yards of faintly yellowed
finely sewn material
await lifting, to be shaken free
Passage of time emanates
from baby soft satin,
intricately hand-stitched lace
tiny seed pearl buttons
evoking lasting memories,
vows exchanged among
riotous wildflowers
two hearts joined
in a country meadow
Smooth slender hands
gently caress delicate folds
of familial past
drawing them into sunlight
inhaling nearly scentless
lavender sachet tucked within
when times were simpler
As the heavy lid lowers
back into place, a smile creases
flawless skin with realization,
sweet opportunity awaits
to once again drape the form
of another young woman
in love

Haiku

exquisite ladies
drink green tea by pond
glistening with koi

swirling inland
inscrutable fog lingers
within silvery linden trees

Autumnal Shift

inky blue sky settles as
early morning mist rises
air enfolding a slight chill as
sun slowly trickles into swath
of peaceful woodland
water meanders through trout
stream's cool dark depths
scarlet and orange drench trees
rimming curving shoreline
carpet of fallen leaves beckons
to be crunched underfoot as
bucolic minded leaf peepers
soak in scenery on languid stroll
backpacks filled with wine, cheese
crustless sandwiches
dew sparkles upon crabapple trees
dangling crimson berries abuzz
with pollinators, tempting birds
and jelly makers
a loon's haunting tremolo carries
on damp breezes as the slap of
fish startles a meditative calm

Venetian Sunset

Evening combs through ancient canals
past dank decaying walls
where lines of sheets and shirts
hang overhead along damp
back streets shadowed between
buildings of white and terra cotta
cool greenery dripping over secret walls

narrow streams of fading daylight
slink past narrow passageways like
shifty stray cats
weary feet sigh beneath tables
outside trendy cafe, tourists
sipping extraordinary wine from
exceptional varietals
lips rejoicing when golden, unctuous
liquid passes through, as steady
beat of gondolier's oars sweeps past

from behind gleaming windows, the
sidewalk scene of this colorful village
is like a living paint sale where all
too soon the sun melts into
the waiting glass

Time and Time Again

Jane Hutto, Florida

Inching toward autumn, leaving
The heat, humidity and hover of
High temp days like a trail of debris,
I turn my face to cooler months —
November, December and the like,
Keeping in mind the attractiveness of
All around good times found in
Both September and October.
Of all the months in the year, I am

Usually my best when the air is not
Torrid. Not to be a complainer,
Yet I must have my say: My very
Own opinion of delights found
Under the list given above, and
Always I remember to be grateful.

Least loved months offer life and
What would one do without their
Actual succession? Mornings
Yield more than toast and eggs!
Something awaits each of us as
Our day begins, no matter the actual
Month. Space travelers that we are,

Each rotation and revolution brings
The best of what is to be, the best
Intended for those who ignore signs
Mainly because our times are in His
Equally divided moments. Of this I am
Sure.

Signs of Autumn

Lydia Moccero, Pennsylvania

Leaves are falling near the old covered bridge
where many a horse and buggy passed
in bygone days.
The air has a touch of chill,
and a layer of frost cleaves to the leaves.

A beaver is putting finishing touches
on the lodge he is building —
he's busy and zealous —
and all these things tell us
that Harvest time is here.

The Book of Life

Satyananda Sarangi, India

I bring to you with wrinkled hands
The treasured accounts of my past;
From the day I saw the sun cast
Its image on the shadowy lands:
As it kissed the brow of the brook
And caressed every newborn bloom
After a sleepless night of gloom.
I bring to you this timeless book
Where every page is a day gone by,
Sewn together with care and love
Like stars held by the sky above;
And all tears from a laughing eye
Form the words here, and the mild tone
While reading these, lost in those years
Of childhood, youth and senile fears
And in the quest of the unknown.
But this book of life is strife-bound,
Fastened with sacred threads of hope;
Written by God beyond our scope
To seek on earth what is not found.

Boulders

Dennis Ross, Iowa

I feel at home with boulders.
They have no place to go
no hurry to get there as time
seeps into their crevices for a nap.

Boulders pay full attention
never too busy to listen
never interrupt or argue.
Peace is their byword,
no barking voice no insistence
on strange beliefs or loyalties.

Halfburied in soil
they are deeply grounded
and have a solidity of presence
a quiet grandfatherly dignity.

They just quietly soak up sunshine
or bathe in the rain
fully part of their environment
slow dancing with this life
not troubling about what's next.

Two Violins for Sibelius
Tony Cosier, Ontario, Canada

He was the boy, already a musician,
who roamed the woods with his violin
cross-bowing snatches of improvised abandon, trying
to sound like birdsong, waterfalls, rain.

Did he ever expect that, given time, he could be
a husband and father who, long through the evenings,
would sweep-and-saw with assured sonority,
as he stood by an opened window weaving
intricate suites and legends for the moon?

Autumn Stars
Michael Keshigian, New Hampshire

It was late when he meandered outdoors
to open the book of midnight
to the page where only the stars appeared,
always the stars, blinking upon
the vast vat of black,
attempting to mitigate infinity
until the moon decided to return,
their constellated designs,
moving imperceptibly,
inducing hours to pass
before he might reach the next page,
as their hypnotic and poly-rhythmic twinkles
lead him away from commonplace
and everyday dilemmas
to a place he longed to occupy,
a moment upon a shimmering wish,
poised to fulfill itself
within the brilliance
of these sentences he read,
waiting for it to define him,
envelop him as he lowered his eyes
away from the script upon the page,
closing the book tightly,
feeling the sudden euphoria
of experiencing paradise
the glimmers of light punctuated.

Autumn Work
Matthew J. Spireng, New York

Half a tree left, half
split and stacked, stroke
after stroke of the maul

lifted and brought down
hard so most rounds
pop apart after a few swings,

those halved, and those,
eight pieces for the stove
from each length near the butt.

Near the top, cut lengths
that need no splitting, rounds
just right as they are.

Call Me, My Friend (*Rondeau*)
Mahathi, India

Call me, my friend, sometime. Pick up mobile
or simply yell aloud dwarfing the mile.
Today or tomorrow, noon or at twilight,
before the dawn or even late midnight.
It's fine with me, no need to quail, just dial.

When you're pensive or in a rhetoric rile,
when penitent or proud, when fair or wile,
when sullen or with delight jumping light,
Call me my friend.

When I'm desolate like a flooded isle,
or hurtling through a crowded hotel aisle —
trust me, your call ignites my inner light.
Sleeps not my eager mind in any plight;
Call me, my friend.

A Fall Reflection
Bruce Levine, Maine

Fall leaves and pine needles
blanket the ground
Shades of ochre
nestled against a crimson backdrop
Orange berries fill a tree
punctuating the landscape
As if the metamorphosis
needs defining

An October chill
a presentiment of days to come
Winter poking its head
out of hibernation
Yet the days hold fast
to the glories of fall
And still linger a little longer
before succumbing

A time for reflection
and exploration
Uncharted pathways
set down by nature's cartographer
In forests transformed
into stereoscopic slideshows
Of heightened expressions
engraved on the mind

Knowing Your Place in Time
Russell Rowland, New Hampshire

In centuries past, their answer
might not arrive for months on the mailboat:
folks realized it, turned to other things.

Today, that email or text response
does not chime in for hours. Did I offend,
has she quit loving back? Should I

phone for clarification in my disquiet,
or sit patient under a blue sky that can wait
for birds to cross it when they choose,

take a stroll over hills that seem
to sense what's important happens slowly —
calm in myself, in the gradual sun.

Time is an open friend to people
who take it on its own terms, and don't
expect more than the hour delivers.

They check their own pulse, rather
than look at the clock every minute or two.
That's knowing your place in time.

You're sure you're well-centered
when distractions ebb like a moonlit tide —
all those unwashed shirts and dishes.

Steps Beyond the Glass
John Schoonejongen, New Jersey

To feel the day is to live the day.
To miss the chill of twilight, nascent spark of dawn,
Is to miss life's sound, touch, sight.
The sting of wind-blown rain,
The awe in a high sun as summer's heat
Ripples across dry terrain,
Siren's sound of crickets in crackling grass,
Of a thousand tiny voices in fields
That mark the seasons as they pass,
All are life whose glory yields
To the steps beyond the glass.

Light Travels Long and Alone
Jarad Bushnell, Pennsylvania

When the robe of the night pulls over all of the trillion points: pick one.
Even a close glow is so remote, it might be another world's sun.
For the sight in the eye is time ago, the finite speed says so.
When it parts from first point to course through cosmos:
Light travels long and alone
In a ray made of stripes (giga-pile of time), what was when the light left home.
Through expanse of space, over the blackness great — all the while it bides
bright and strong.
What belights the profound through the sight is found not by nose nor tongue
nor thumb.
The unknown is told through a single mode:
Light travels long and alone
Not always so, but we see it go in right lines proved by shadow
Just to bend and bow (when the motion grows slow) through the water in
the cup you hold.
From the moment of invoke, right to closeout, all the ticks, for us, tock on,
But the photon knows not an interval:
Light travels not at all
When the robe of the night pulls off the dome, of the trillion points now one:
The almighty Sun, the world's engine; light's powered all for long.
In a sight from afar our Sol turns star, it might sit in a constellation.
In another night, in a time unlike, while it twines spacetime to one:
Light travels long and alone.

Eden
Thomas Donovan Murphy, California

At first the pale, hinting glow
Came rising slow to light blue skies
Till arching bright that vaulted dome
Arose high flown, across my eyes
Where bordered all around beneath
Horizons melding with the skies
Below now I my garden keep
Where eastern morn midst blossoms rise

Still clearly see, that first of dawn
Was Genesis, so long since gone
That hallowed morning still yet see
My garden and the apple tree

Beyond the Horizon
Frances Leitch, California

Look beyond the horizon
to that which knows no fetters
To that which fly — high
as the eagle o'er mountain vale
To that which rise with the sun
And stay off night's cool
To that which clinging to the cliff
like a stalwart tree
and so tenaciously
Knows the ladder to heaven
And walketh upon fiery coals
with a disciplined stride
a kind of inner freedom
That grows oh so slowly
to the mountains' majesty

What the Night Wanderer Saw

Julian D. Woodruff, New York

Through open country, along dirt roads, the traveler walks.
The late night breeze lifts his fatigue. He stops to gaze
toward the departing clouds along the eastern ridge,
then overhead where, shortly after sunset, high-stacked
water-laden cumulus formations were
roughly chased off by currents pushed across the plain.
This new-moon night, against a backdrop nearly black,
the stars emerge in choruses, clusters, and crowds
such that the nearby planets and the constellations,
road signs to the eyes that journey through the dark,
are all but lost. The sash of white that's strapped across
the vast expanse now claims the wanderer's attention.
His mind reflects. This must have been the kind of sky
that caused ancestors of the distant past to ask,
"How came all this to be?" — turned restless teenagers
towards astrology, or sent them, wary or not,
offshore to risk the deep and dangers of the storm;
that Beethoven beheld above Vienna's woods,
then fixed forever as an ode for string quartet;
and to Van Gogh at St.-Rémy brought "Starry Night,"
committed then to canvas. Even now, how many
stargazers are staring through their telescopes?
And at this moment who, aided by Hubble's lens,
is studying some pinpoint of this panorama?
The wind has stilled. The eyes of the wayfarer drop.
Well off the road he'll seek his bed beneath this blanket.

Can Poetry Matter?

Robert Ronnow, Massachusetts

In the debate between accessible and difficult poems
Poets' poems and poems for people
Only the single poem and private reader matter

Both kinds and anything between can matter or not
Solid or made of air, a vase or heavy clay ashtray
One word repeated or many like a lei

An acquired taste, like wine, and like wine
Not sustenance, yet men die with their miseries
Uncut without it, news and mere matter

I advise everyone to keep a personal anthology of poems that matter
Or not. Perhaps it should be novels. Stones, insect wings,
Feathers, Birds you've seen, People loved.

Returning *Sandy Conlon, Colorado*

On seeing Matt Smith's painting, "Weathered," which features a wooden structure from a long ago time in a snowy field with distant mountains. Matt is a nationally known professional artist.

In the first light hillsides teemed
with aspen trimmed in saffron and gold,
cottonwoods shimmered alizarin crimson,
and silver-streaked rocks and rills
like tungsten steel in the afternoon sun
reflected the passing day.

They might have said she's seen better days —
her timbers are all dried up,
seared in summer heat — so where's the life now,
the vibrant laughter, children at play?

Of course she ran the sheep and cows,
catered to the whinnying demands of horses,
Invited neighbors for picnics, campfires,
Sunday dinners, sleigh rides, welcomed barn dances,
barbeques, birthdays, wedding feasts, and funerals.

She watched wind move down the mountain pass
across the quiet earth older than time itself.
It was a land of misery, a land of plenty
leveled by the winds and brought back
to what it once was.

Through the years, time and circumstance
lifted her from her moorings,
led her back to the beginning,
to the land she came to love.

She saw the landscape lying fallow,
waiting for memory to be enlivened
by the nuance of perspective
and brushstrokes of immortality from the artist's hand.

Rhapsody in Rain
Alexi Noble, Texas

Ensnared in the sway
The trees shiver, inflamed
By the piccolo trill of the whippoorwill
By the staccato rhythm; the tempestuous precision
Of raindrops on rooftops and drain pipes, tap dancing on tin
Lyrical liquid
The skies are addicted
To the plaintive sting of sitar strings
To the petrichordian accordion; orchestral earth, reborn again
The cloudburst composer in notes and cord closures
Raising a concerto of cyclones,
A movement of storms

Warm Week in November
Ray Greenblatt, Maryland

I lie here on a lounge
surrounded by pine needles
— winter champing in the wings —
but roses in the garden
still strut their whiteness;
though red and gold leaves are gone
browning ones hold a gloss
that can catch sun's attention,
turning them to parchment
or tissue paper;
the calico cat
has found her place among
crinkled crackled things and purrs.

A Secret Pray'r Triolet
Melissa Frentsos, New Jersey

Imagine each leaf is a dream...
A wish, a hope, a longed for thing —
Not one of which is too extreme.
Imagine each leaf is a dream,
More brilliant than a moonbeam —
A secret pray'r your heart must sing.
Imagine each leaf is a dream...
A wish, a hope, a longed for thing.

Canyon Hike
Diane Webster, Colorado

From trailhead designated parking lot
hike path through millennia.
See prehistoric lizards skitter
across balanced rocks gnawed
by wind storms rampaging
through canyon stones once
ringed by evaporating lake
reflected by rain pools
collected by granite hollows.

Twisted pinyon pine trees
display tortured eons
in digital photographs.

Boot print squished in mud
dries under sun
into temporary fossil
eroded into twenty-first century
foot traffic ascending stairway
to visitor's center.

Friends, Land and Flowers
Edilson Afonso Ferreira, Brazil

I am guilty of not having many loves
and few people have been my friends.
I am a man of old-fashioned customs,
the one who hopes to be duly introduced
and then exchange a full conversation.
Forgotten refinement of the times of yore,
etiquette learned in the old social rites.
My friends are few, faithful and heartfelt,
not subject to the usual taps on the back,
easy laughs and feigned cuddling.
They are always austere, even stern,
but never fail when you need them.
Never accustomed to false praise
and empty words,
but prompt, effective and friendly deeds.
Like the land where I was born and raised,
dry plateaus and arid hills, narrow creeks
and honest meagre sheaves by the harvest.
Stubborn trees that, unlike the others,
wait for the driest season to bloom,
naked even of leaves, find strength
to bring forth delicate yellow flowers,
resembling pure and true gold.

First published in Young Ravens, issue 9, December 2018

Telepathic Love
Martin McCarthy, Ireland

Even when you are far away,
you are with me every day;
and at the going down of the light,
you are with me every night.
I hold your heart within,
I hold the diamond sparkle of your grin;
but you hold me too, I guess,
you carry me deep in your caress;
and though it isn't easy to believe,
there's no reason here to grieve;
for, by now, I know what's real,
I know the truth of what I feel,
when you send me, like a dove,
the warm hug of your telepathic love.

From My Vantage Point . . .

by Calliope the Cat



Getty Images — iStock

Wild Roses in Autumn

Shirley Anne Leonard, Illinois

Autumn days drift like yellow gold dreams
and bring to remembrance the years of old,
as we walk again by those childhood streams
where memories abound and years unfold.

Wild roses grew by the side of the road,
where the aged ice-house stood under the trees.
I paused to smell petals lustrous with dew
near the old home place, in the morning breeze.

I walked once again down the soft dirt path —
mist over the fields and meadows in flower.
Refreshed by the tang of the woodland scent,
I retraced my childhood in that blissful hour.

The way led through pines — tall towering trees
majestic in stand, where blueberries grew —
blue sky overhead, hushed stillness beneath
broken by crow's call and quaint catbird's mew.

I entered a world that was, in my youth,
a paradise known but to a child's mind
now gone and forgotten. I yearned to return
to that life of delight I had left behind.

Wild roses grow by the side of the drive
on a new home place in an autumnal breeze,
sparkling with dew as the sun comes alive
brushing the tops of the evergreen trees.

They remind me of home — the days of the past
when life was simple, and carefree, and good,
and winter and summer and spring and fall
flowed in a fixed pattern just as they should.

In reflection I muse of an older home place,
the creation when all was unsullied and bright
and God said, "It is good! The whole human race
shall live in its beauty, its grace, and its light."

Did wild roses grow in that Eden of old
where God walked with Adam in the twilight?
Did fragrance of pine waft midst the sun's gold
in Adam's home place in the dawn's new delight?

When we arrive at the mansions of glory
will we discover that nothing's been lost?
Will it resemble that home, and our story,
by God's mercy, be preserved and embossed?



We cats always like to explore new places. For example, Chester likes to open the lower kitchen cupboards (he likes to bang the doors shut in the middle of the night!), or pry open the cabinets in the office, or slip into the closets when our Publisher opens the doors.

As for me, my exploration takes me to the heights, like the top of the entertainment center (from which I can access the basement window ledges), or the top of the dressers in the bedroom. I have even been known to leap to the top of the grandfather clock from the back of a nearby wing chair, till the Publisher put a teddy bear up there to ward me off. And not long ago I explored the top of the kitchen cabinets over the sink, by leap-frogging from the counter top to the microwave to the refrigerator.

I think it's the mark of the creative artist to always want to explore new heights, or to go down avenues never before traveled. Are you stuck at ground level, putting out the same sort of poetry you've been writing for ages? Or do you have the urge to try something different — forms or styles you've never tried before?

Being a writer, especially a poet, is a high calling! Don't be afraid to leap upward once in a while. You might be surprised at what you're able to create.

Now, how do I get down from these cabinets?

Quotations of Autumn Harvest Time

by Frances B. Leitch, Writer and Poet, California

Harvest Time, farmers call the autumn season, especially in days of old when they needed the autumn full moon's light to wind up reaping from the years' planting.

Speaking of autumn's eve, poet Sara Teasdale calls it "lyric night," and notes "shadowy fields full of singing."

Can you picture it? "The leaves fall, the wind blows, and the farm country slowly changes from its summer cottons to its winter wools," Henry Beston, writer and naturalist says.

Autumn season changes with the wind's passage. Beginning September 22nd it rolls and blows along till December 21st. That September 21st launch is one many think of as a perfect day. The sun is exactly in line with Earth's celestial equator. As a result, Earth receives exactly twelve hours of light and twelve hours of darkness. It's a good day for gathering up the year's crops.



"For man, autumn is a time of harvest, of gathering together. For nature, it is a time of sowing, of scattering abroad," Edwin Way Teale, naturalist writer, says.

But man is not the only one gathering in preparation for a taste of winter. And, for some there is a harvest of brain growth and optimum production, as life hastens to wind up the day's work before winter hinders it. Squirrels can testify to that. The critters bury nuts and seeds in hundreds of caches to help them sail on through winters' snow season. It's quite a job and, in autumn, their brain power grows a full fifteen percent to meet the challenge.

Autumn is inspirational to just about everyone. As writer Laura Jaworski says, "The leaves are changing; I feel poetry in the air."

As if in response, poet John Greenleaf Whittier writes:

*Heap high the golden corn!
No richer gift has Autumn poured
From out her lavish horn!*



Autumn is a harvest of beauty, one a painter like Vincent van Gogh cherishes. "As long as autumn lasts" he says, "I shall not have hands, canvas, and colors enough to paint the beautiful things I see."

And poet John Donne asserts that "No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace as I have seen in one autumnal face."

North Country, New Hampshire: Trilogy of Autumn Poems

By Esther Leiper-Estabrooks

Words on a Writers' Retreat *Sonnet for October*

— Placed halfway up a ridge, snug Xanadu
Has morning sun, then shade for afternoon
With generous, tall windows to gaze through,
Plus most nights, leisured passage of the moon.
A river fronts this home at middle-distance;
Across the valley mountains stretch away.
Good abounds inside, plus host's insistence
To write and write more; never waste a day.

If our homestead's compact, yet what grand ideas
Flow out like freshets from some sheltered springs
Why Earth is ready for us to use; free as
Friends who write new poems with strong wings!
Thus each of you — if not from Kubla's dome —
May find it's best to write from your own home!



Good Mother Cats Teach *Sonnet for November*

Now days prove darker as time passes on
And sometimes even snow in November.
With hardly a bit of green on our lawn
As thought of cold whiteness makes me sober.
Our five cats who like to roam out at night
Soon come into the cat-hole meant for them.
Birds go down south; and thus, plus bad or right
Cats do as cats do — yet I often condemn:

Alas, the damage they do to poor critters,
Still think of wildcats; of felines galore
While the mothers teach kits in their litters,
So soon they learn hunting and know its lore.
But unlike wildcats they stay close to us;
Thus if cat food isn't set, they make a fuss!

Whiteness and Brightness *Sonnet for December*

In north New Hampshire we kids like snow-time,
While even in autumn we may be sprinkled;
Although we think colored foliage sublime!
Yet soon all the bright leaves become wrinkled,
Plus often from Canada chill snow scores —
So from wherever it comes, we'll have white
And even if fluffy — we want going outdoors.
Thus if school's closed, why we all feel delight!

For here the Earth now is not green or brown!
— So we're happy to skip the Golden Rule —
While we pull sleds upward and then race down.
As a bonus we'll be glad to skip school:
Thus let's get sleds out — or make a snowman.
Why, come winter, we'll play all that we can!



In the Bowels of Granddad's Garage

Julie Allyn Johnson, Iowa

Broken croquet mallet,
spider-webbed, smothered in ancient dust,
grimy to the touch.

Great-aunt Belle's favorite doll,
its left arm mysteriously AWOL.

Cousin Will's six-gun, walnut-grain
plastic molded grip
cracked and splintered.

Allen wrenches and pipe-sockets
covered with raggedy newsprint

from five decades past,
yellowed, chewed through by mice
industrious creatures engineering

downy nests layered
with the headlines of the day —

Blanket

Desiree Davis, Virginia

I made a blanket soft and warm
The back of a couch it once adorned
A dog who truly liked to snuggle
Getting around became a struggle
One cold, wet walk he began to shiver
Tail wags for the blanket giver
He had a blanket soft and warm
Hair stuck to its new form
Makes a pillow for naps in the sun
Warms up stiff limbs after a run
Gave him comfort with his last sigh
It is so hard to say goodbye
I have a blanket soft, but worn
Though scrubbed clean, so forlorn
Atop the bed in place of a pet
Tears will fall at night, and yet
Comfort comes to the blanket giver
Remembering joy once delivered
Left with a blanket soft and warm

For Drummer Buddy Rich

Alan Yount, Missouri

many thought
drummer buddy rich
was the premier jazz timekeeper
for all of time.

how many of us
have to do the same things
over and over, several times
to get something down.

buddy once said
he could not
read a note
of music.

he said he had the timing
and tune, perfectly down forever
if he just heard, a song,
for just once.

Waiting For Godot

Charles Parnell, Pennsylvania

How much I loved the play;
I saw it at Point State.
The cast were polished in their roles.
I marveled at "The Wait."

At Pozzols monologue
I knew that I was hooked.
Suspense and tension all around
With nothing overlooked.

I waited like the rest
With Magic in the air.
I wondered what would happen next —
As I was made to care.

And as the play progressed,
Soon Beckett's world was mine.
Such drama filled the ample stage
And everything was fine.

Godot did never show!
What could he even say?
The play did more than entertain.
I looked at it that way . . .

The Great Silence

Antonio Machado

—translation by Dr. Thomas Feeny, North Carolina

Has my heart fallen asleep?
you ask. The beehives that once stirred
my daydreams, are they no longer abuzz?
Has the waterwheel of imagination
gone dry? Are its buckets now empty,
as they rise, fall, filled only with shadow?

No, it is awake. It neither sleeps nor dreams
but with clear eyes watches
for signs off in the distance,
and listens, here
on the edge of the great silence.

Vignette
Jane Blanchard, Georgia

You stop your bike to take a shot
Of something off the common way.
Pic snapped, you look at what you've got:
It's grass; the bunny didn't stay.

Market Day
Ricky Lyons, Michigan

Today I went a-marketing —
Such curious things I bought!
I'm sure you'll soon agree with me
When you hear what I got.

I bought a newly ripened state
Down at the old State Farm.
Then I went down to the Armory
And bought myself an arm.

I went into a rest room,
And bought a restful bed.
Then I went to police headquarters
To buy myself a head.

Out at the city airport
I bought a box of air.
I went into a hardware store
To buy what I hard to wear.

I went down to the railroad tracks —
That's where I bought de pot.
Oh, today I went a-marketing
And that was what I got!

Teacher
Robert Black, United Kingdom

She was doing it again, humming,
"Happy chalky, chalky. Happy chalk,"
while she wrote words without reason
on the face of the blackboard.
Hers was a simple black-and-white world.
Then someone slipped her a green chalk.
She still had no idea what she was writing,
but it was much better.
Then a red chalk, an orange, a yellow,
a blue, an indigo, and finally violet;
all the colours of the rainbow.
No, they didn't find a crock of gold
at the end of the lesson,
but the playground was *so* much brighter.

Hans Christian Andersen
Susie Gharib, Syria

He is mainly associated with cartoons,
the Ugly Duckling,
the hardy Tin Soldier,
and the Little Mermaid who embraced her doom,
but Hans was a sage whose fairy tales were metaphors
for human values and social reforms.

Regardless of how little a woman may be,
like Thumbelina who was abducted by a toad,
she is not to be coerced into a matrimonial bond.

A belief in Providence is reiterated,
in the goodness and harmlessness of the winged dead.
And only evil people are incapable of seeing elves.

We all experience poetic moments in our lives,
at least once,
so there is poetry in the thoughts we express.

Our souls possess greater gifts than we deem,
displaying their marvelous dramatic abilities in dreams.
They have a memory that retains every sin and ugly deed.

And death is an electric shock that hits our hearts:
on the pinions of electricity our freed souls are dispatched.

Minding
David D. Horowitz, Washington State

Stream water drifts like mind releasing thought,
Reflecting sunlight and ignoring ought
And should. It simply flows. I don't. I think,
Consider, balance. And if not, I'd sink.

insight
Nancy Coffey, Delaware

when darkness comes
not in the ordinary way
no gradual departure
of light, no dimming
of colors
just of a sudden, night
the body freezes
and the mind contorts
familiarity is lost
hands grope blindly for walls
feeling our way along
something we've always avoided

Fall Deep into Autumn
Janice Canerdy, Mississippi

Flamboyant, fabulous fall waits in the wings
As sultry summer gradually winds down,
Losing strength to chilly changes September brings,
Leaving lovers of long hot days wearing a frown.
Delights await those who favor fall.
Exciting festivals and special days
Enliven our spirits. Outdoor scenes enthrall,
Pleasing the eye with vast, colorful arrays,
Inspiring, serving as poet's and painter's muse.
Nature lends progressively less daylight.
Trick-or-treaters have cute costumes to choose,
Ornate orange bags or buckets — adorable sight —
And sweets to eat on Halloween night.
Umber earth is rendered white by frost, then snow.
Thanksgiving feasts and football are November fare.
Ultimate fall plans center around coming yuletide glow.
Merry Christmas! Gather; gifts and blessings, share.
Now winter waits with a new year in tow.

Five O'clock Whistle
Vernon Waring, Pennsylvania

It blows, and suddenly the pavements are filled
With men and women going everywhere,
But none are going anywhere.

Women in pretty dresses are not going to dances.
Yesterday was long ago
When tomorrow set shimmering curls in their hair
And summer slipped a diamond on their fingers.

Men in soiled denims are not going on safaris.
Yesterday was long ago
When adventure held the scent of salt-air
And their names were on the roll-call of ambition.

The whistle is a smokescreen,
And somewhere, on the other side,
Lies the "Open Sesame" of youth.

Over the Rainbow (an Acrostic Sonnet)
Mike Mesterton-Gibbons, Florida

Once I was chasing rainbows. I believed
Vague promises of being fortune-bound
Enough to be too willingly deceived —
Real fortune needs both feet kept on the ground
Then I discovered roots, as it now seems.
How quickly rainbows I once tried to chase
Evaporated, as I found new dreams,
Rewarding hearth and home with pride of place!
And then, before I knew, I had retired.
In looking back, I wonder what I might
Not do again, or have instead desired,
But find there are no scenes I would rewrite
Or wish away — and now I comprehend
Why fortune is not at the rainbow's end!

Poet's Corner of Heaven
Douglas J. Lanzo, Maryland

How blessed would I find myself
surrounded by angels one fine day
extolling God's magnificence
beyond comprehension, on display
radiating all through heaven
with love and glory, perfect and true
rays of unparalleled splendor
flowing through seas of emerald-blue;

How joyous the sight and knowledge,
God's smile refreshing souls new,
with amusement and sheer delight
at words crafted by angel crew
inspired by the poetry
of one poet gone to heaven
teaching in a poet's corner
words of humor, wit and leaven.

Harvest Time

Kiersta Recktenwald, Maine

Summer sleeps amid the snow and vastness
yet to come, but autumn renews us all
in expectation: morning frost and calls
of singing wings, of calm acceptance in
the truth of change, in hope of far and fair
beginnings ever closer to our goals.

Autumn Leaves

David Fox, New York

The Autumn leaves are on the trees
until the wind provides its breeze.
They skip and dance as they fall,
they seem to be having quite a ball!
Oh, what fun it is to see,
an Autumn leaf fall from a tree.

The Tree

Mitali Madhusmita, India

Silent, lonely,
Stands the old tee,
Quietly dropping and sprouting
Leaves
Since eternity.
I paused a moment before it,
Awestruck, humbled,
My complacent ego bruised,
by the ageless grace and dignity
Of this speechless giant.
Who says
Trees don't speak?
The old tree
Rustled a few branches,
Smiled.

Slow Rain

Bruce Bailey, North Carolina

Dozing under a dazzling maple
soft gray skies release dull drizzle
innocent pit-pats high overhead, pecking
topmost trembling October leaves

Tiny droplets sliding, joining
growing, faster, layer by layer
each tiny red-veined umbrella shedding
to restless brothers and sisters below

Twisting, turning, falling
ever downward, pulled
until one hardworking drop
splats coldly into the dream
drifting beneath my christened brow

Back Lot

Dr. Roger G. Singer, Connecticut

with a quiet
ground beneath
and wide blue skies
overhead,
a time worn
red chipped
clapboard sided
railroad station
struggles to stand

chain locked doors
weeds between tracks
broken glass and
tin cans

no engines
or cars to tow
no steam
or water
only dry
unforgiving winds,
blowing flat
over the past
of nevermore

A Bright Yellow Trumpet

Lois Greene Stone, New York

How does a daffodil bulb
survive snow belt winters?
My slender fingers with
unpolished nails nestled
a plump bud into inches
of soil. Unlike me, it
needs no food or love,
but, like me, it silently
accepts decades away
from familiar. On
schedule, its happy
color pushes upwards
as a message to notice
the beautiful cycles,
rhythms I do have control
over. In my garden, it
reminds me that my
season is short and
people make up my
place, and place without
my loved ones would
just be a layer of earth.

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Reprint: Shemom, Summer 2017

Celosia in Autumn

Judy Lorenzen, Nevada

Towards the end of September, the leaves
on our trees become an artist palette,
golds, oranges, reds, and bronze
everywhere, this season, a remembrance of The Fall,
and I — always moved deeply by autumn's beauty
and farewells —
step out my front door
and become overwhelmed by the spectacular leaves,
flowers, russet fields, pastures,
and pumpkins — all vying for attention,
while the Arrabona Red celosia flame
around the garden's edges in plumes of fire
as the angels in Eden
guarding the tree of life.

Words of Rhyme
John M. Armstrong, Connecticut

Poems hide and shelter inside my head,
or are they lurking in my toes?
Words of prose are less than shy, so easily said.
I find them wherever my day goes.
They flutter and bounce along the tongue
natural as God above,
no effort required to say “well sung,”
“let’s go,” spread news, or ask for love.
But words aspoke evaporate, echoes decaying in the ear,
fact-filled with where, when, why and what,
bland as gray, unworthy of recall, kept without tear
no longer than needed, and then, ah, so soon forgot.
But words of rhyme, brewed in joy, spawned in sorrow,
get crafted once, then held aloft, not for today but for tomorrow.

Let It Go

Dr. C. David Hay, Florida

There comes a time in life
When wisdom lets us know
When to take offense
And when to let it go.

Learn to pick your battles,
Most aren’t worth the fight;
The dog that’s left asleep
Has no cause to bite.

Not every problem has answers,
No matter how much we plan;
We have to let it pass
And do the best we can.

So put your mind at peace,
And let the ill winds blow -
You will have a better life
When you learn to let it go.

Mist

Eira Needham, United Kingdom

It drifts around me, like a veil
of dampness, infiltrating bones.
My blood is cold, emotions frail,
I stoop, as aching shoulders groan.

This fragile shroud beclouds the light,
its cobwebs cling to fog my thought
as brumous layers blur my sight,
morale corrodes ’til I’m distraught.

When mizzle sprinkles, like the dew,
its lace embraces me with tears
until a glinting ray shows through
to desiccate persistent fears.

As hope comes blinking through the haze
my shivers dwindle. Warmth assists
to strengthen weakness — heat ablaze!
Afflictions vanish with the mist.

Corrected Poems from Summer 2021 Issue

Acquired

Lois Greene Stone, New York

China: crystal; sterling
silverware always needing
polish. Porcelain
figurines popular in
the 1940’s; linen
damask-pattern
tablecloths requiring
starch . . . heirlooms?
Perhaps? Generation
clutter, maybe?
Inheritance is biology.
Tiny strands that select
eye color, potential diseases,
shape of lips. RNA, DNA
do not require a storage
cabinet or Directive
in a Will. These
simply get passed.

Chalk

John Muro, Connecticut
—for Marianne

Camouflaged by glazed layers
Of leaves, a sidewalk lifted
And skittled by chalk when
Memory knocks and I think
Of you and those brute batons
Of color, thick as ladder rungs,
And the ease with which clouds,
Waterfalls and whirlpools
Found their way onto a
Concrete canvas. But mostly
I recall the bright blue door
You said a person could
Open if only they were kind
And pushed hard enough and
How the delicate furrows of
Pastel-colored birds managed
To pass thru that same narrow
Doorway since you were apt
To leave it ajar and how it
Could sometimes lead those,
Who were young enough to
Wonder, into a luminous space
Where life could be brushed
Away or simply colored over.

Even Light

Sandy Conlon, Colorado

Like a woman drowning
she came to me in a dream,
and I heard her say all is well
all manner of things will be well.

Alas, I could not fathom
the intricacies of her words
. . . nor clearly understand
the soulful sound of her voice.

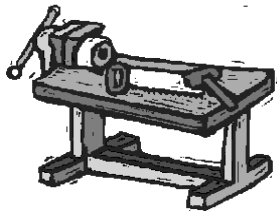
I fixated on her strange luminosity
and conch shells opalescent in each hand
echoing the oceans of the world.

She beckoned my soul —
reach for the depth
go further down.

Stretch the boundaries
reach for the depth until you see
beyond human blindness.

Then she was gone in an instant,
in a silver trail revealing
Orion’s three-pronged light.

Evening bells in the distance
rang out the close of day
and summoned the fall of night.



WRITER'S WORKBENCH

Finding the Right Word

Words have nuances of meaning. For instance, to describe a *sound* you might use *whisper, squeal, squeak, trumpet, honk, fizz-sizzle, grate, rasp, purr, creak, rustle-swish, whirl, drone, hum-buzz, clang, chime-blare, crunch, rumble, roar, thunder, hiss, ring*, etc. Watch your action words and your descriptive words to create imagery.

You really need a good thesaurus, which is a book of synonyms. I recommend *Roget's Superthesaurus* by Marc McCutcheon, which is the one I use. And while we're mentioning handy tools for writing, a good rhyming dictionary is a must. I recommend *The Writer's Rhyming Dictionary* by Langford Reed.

If you work with a computer, your word processing program will have a thesaurus. In older versions of Microsoft Word look under Tools and click Language, and then Thesaurus. In Word 2007, right-click the word and select Synonyms, then Thesaurus. (We have not checked for Thesaurus in Microsoft 365.) In WordPerfect, it's Tools and Thesaurus. But the books are helpful when you are not working at your computer, and often you can find more variety under the cross-references.

If you are writing a rhyming poem, you have two objectives. Find the precise word, keeping in mind that you must find a corresponding accurate word for rhyming. This occurs only at the end of a line — but keep in mind that all words are important.

In poetry there are no “throw-away” words. Every word either builds or tears down the idea you are attempting to communicate. If you tend to be too “wordy,” using more words than necessary, a good discipline would be to read some of Emily Dickinson's poetry and notice the precise structure she used in constructing her poems. Every word is there for a purpose. There are no unnecessary words.

Of course, this takes work! But nothing well done is ever accomplished without work. Look at the hours a pianist practices to perfect his or her art. Look at successful people in any field of endeavor, and you will discover that they put in long hours of work.

“Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration. Great accomplishments depend not so much on ingenuity as on hard work.” This is a saying of the American inventor Thomas Edison who gave us the light bulb, along with 1300 other inventions. This man had only three months of formal education and struggled with deafness.

Remember, practice (and work) makes perfect.

Happy Writing,
THE EDITOR

(Reprinted with adaptations from the Winter 2005 issue)

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