

The Lyric Magazine

The Oldest Magazine in North America Devoted to Traditional Poetry

Current Issue

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Selected Poems From Winter 2023

I Light A Candle

I light a candle, watch the shadows sway,
recall disasters, see the scenes replay;
on anniversaries, to show I care,
denote respect for grief beyond repair,
it flickers in my window, marks the day.

In churches or cathedrals, when I pray
for all whose lives have somehow gone astray,
for those brought low by sickness or despair,
I light a candle.

When skies are ash and cloudbanks glower grey,
when sleety showers lash the sullen air,
when days are short and darkness hard to bear,
to nurture hope, to drive the gloom away,
I light a candle.

Jenni Wyn Hyatt

Winter Birds

Feathered trembling, peck and scratch.
Were that I could light a match
And get you near and keep you warm
Until this bitter, blowing storm
Runs its course—or better yet

Were that I could somehow let
All of you—each tiny thing
Shielded by exhausted wing—
Come inside and make a choir
Chirp by chirp beside my fire.

David Jennings

Pomegranate

Persephone is eating seeds in hell,
the tart rubies of departure.
Barren fields have tales to tell –
that old story, mother/daughter.

The tart rubies of departure
we open to taste autumn's red song –
that old story, mother/daughter
how our children aren't ours for long.

We open to taste autumn's red song,
try to find some grace in letting go.
Our children aren't ours for long.
Their faces say, We know the things we know.

Try to find some grace in letting go.
Even barren fields have tales to tell.
Her face saying, I know the things I know,
Persephone is eating seeds in hell.

Alison Stone

Late, Late Night

I realized it just before the dawn,
how sad the world around you had become.
It's written in your eyes. Where have you gone,
so vibrant in my arms and now so glum?
When first we met your laugh was everywhere,
your voice was music and your smile a glow
that glittered like the dewfall, light as air.
But that was then, and sadly this is now.
Beyond the trees the sky is grey again,
and in the half-light there's a fall of rain
that spatters on the dirty windowpanes.
And now it's time for me to slip from sight
so that your soul can fill again with light.
Good night, my love, my only love, good night.

Gary Davis

A Hatful Of Water

"A man once dipped a hatful of water from a stream"
Carl Jung, describing his life

Few pilgrims have found the holy stream,
the mystical water that ends the dream.
Until then around and around we'll spin,
all that we know on the head of a pin.
Like comets with tails fantastic in size
we move through the world trailing our lies,
wearing our sins, illusions and pain
while snatching at baubles, our paltry gain.
King for a day, the next day a slave,
we spin and we turn, turn into our graves.
The world speeds on, the days without number.

Blind and deaf, we dream as we slumber.
I too, one day, shall drink deep from the stream
a hatful of water, and set me free.

David Crocco

The Three Commandments

This is the first and great decree:
Thou shalt not write rhymed poetry.
The second is like unto it:
Thou shalt not publish such, once writ.

And while we're at it, here's a third:
No beat, no meter shall be heard.
We now know all those bards were wrong
To try to get away with song.

Verse henceforth must by rule be free
Of toxic musicality.
Once all poems are of sound bereft,
All hail the kingdom of the deaf.

William Slayton

The Language Of Cranes

The earth is composing,
Inviting you to dream
In octaves of green and blue.

You can hear it best
Right before the sun rises
And from windows left open to

The sacred gathering of birds,
Returning to sing
Their migration song.

Nothing sounds more alive
Than the language of cranes
A thousand voices strong.

Mike W. Blottenberger

Announcements

The yearly awards for 2022 and the Fall Quarterly Prize were judged by poet, Paul Willis, who recently retired from his professorship in English at Westmont College which offered a window of leisure to take on the task of choosing the award winners for 2022. He has a recent collection of poetry, *Somewhere to Follow* (2021) and has published a Young Adult Elizabethan time-travel novel, *All in a Garden Green*.

The winning poems are listed below, with his comments:

- **Lyric Prize** (\$100): “Do Not Hold,” by Faith Thompson, Winter 2022. A perfectly written Shakespearean sonnet, giving relationship advice in the impish spirit of Edna St. Vincent Millay.
- **Honorable Mention**: “Wild Ride,” by Tom Riley, Spring 2022. This conversation with Alexa about playing songs from Wagner is lively and endearing—and accomplished in the rhyme scheme of a Spenserian sonnet.
- **Leslie Mellichamp Prize** (\$100): “Of Moths and Butterflies,” by Faith Thompson, Spring 2022. Easily the most lyrical poem of all four issues. Thompson crafts three nonce stanzas in complicated yet consistent rhyme and meter. The speaker is the plain moth, inexplicably preferred by the beloved to the flashing butterfly.
- **Honorable Mention**: “A Lesson,” by Gary Davis, Summer 2022. Davis builds on Shakespeare’s Sonnet 17 to create a sonnet of his own that is nearly as haunting and exquisite.
- **Roberts Memorial Prize** (\$100): “Cardinal Richelieu’s Cats,” by Gail White, Winter 2022. In lightly textured stanzas and refrains, White depicts the late-night plotting of the seventeenth-century minister to King Louis XIII as inspired by the cats at his feet.
- **Honorable Mention**: “Heaven or Hell,” by Jane Blanchard, Fall 2022. In mirrored stanzas, the speaker adapts to the surprise of an unwelcome companion in the afterlife.

- **New England Prize** (\$75): “The Clarinetist’s Widow,” by Stephen Kampa, Winter 2022. In four beautifully articulated nonce stanzas, a woman wonders whether her late husband reserved his greatest love for his clarinet—and then takes her revenge.
- **Honorable Mention:** “In Alan’s Studio,” by Frank Salvidio, Spring 2022. With effortless enjambment, this graceful sonnet speaks for an entire group of friends who envy the musical and artistic talents of the most unassuming among them. Salieri couldn’t have said it better.
- **Fluvanna Prize** (\$75): “Off Leash,” by Tom Schmidt, Spring 2022. The funniest poem of the lot—a sonnet. The speaker makes it into heaven only because his adorable dog distracts the holy gatekeepers.
- **Honorable Mention:** “Count to Ten,” by Carol Lavelle Snow, Winter 2022. In iambic tetrameter couplets, an exasperated mother or father bargains with an overly active child who is cooped up on a snow day.
- **Fall Quarterly Prize** (\$50): “Presenting Myself,” by Barbara Lydecker Crane, Fall 2022. Crane combines genres in an ekphrastic persona poem—a sonnet in which the seventeenth-century Dutch painter Judith Leyster describes her plan for a self-portrait that will win over the chauvinistic judges of the Haarlem Guild.
- **Honorable Mention:** “Wake-Up Call,” by Erica Reid, Fall 2022. In three wheel-and-bob stanzas, the speaker returns to her mother’s home only to learn from the motel-like amenities that her visit is expected to be short.

As always, we are deeply grateful to the Lyric Foundation which has made this small journal possible for 103 years, giving voice to traditional poets during the many years when fashion has been unfriendly to rhymed and/or metered verse. Edward Cameron, of the Lyric Foundation instituted the Collegiate Contest in the 1950’s to encourage young poets writing formal verse, and we are continuing that tradition.

Tanya Cimonetti, our intrepid and insightful administrator, has held the digital door open to students in American and Canadian colleges and universities, as well as accepting entries from the USPS. The winners are listed below, with First , Second and Third Prizes printed in this issue, and the Honorable Mentions published on our website.

They are:

- **First Prize** (\$500): “Little Nothings,” by Skye Robinson, sophomore at Brown University in Providence, RI.
- **Second Prize** (\$200): “Let Purple Fade to Grey,” by Faith Molino, freshman at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ellicott City, MD.
- **Third Prize** (\$100): “A Sestina for Common Cents,” by Adam Peters, Senior at Tufts University, Medford, MA

Honorable Mentions

1. “A Sailor’s Song,” by Alexis Carpenter, a junior studying creative writing at the University of Evansville in Evansville, IN.
2. “Paul Durand-Ruel upon First Seeing *Olympia* in the Salon,” by Alejandro Aguirre, studying history and English at the University of Florida in Gainesville, FL.
3. “A Baby’s Goodbye,” by Ella Fairbairn, a junior at Asbury University in Wilmore, KY

Congratulations to all of our winners and best wishes for more inspired poetry!

We are sending this issue out into the world at a moment when more than 40,000 people have just lost their lives in an earthquake and there is grief filling the spaces in our collective consciousness. Poetry coming from full hearts gives voice and offer light, comfort and perspective when looming clouds of disaster and war are darkening our skies. We send these poems out like bright birds or homing pigeons, flying to places where they can lift spirits, with much gratitude to poets everywhere.

Collegiate Contest Honorable Mentions

A Sailor's Song

I've tied my heart to glory's splintered mast
and sailed to the cusp of golden seas, then turned
again, lured by sweet-sung sirens of the past.

My ship is filled with trinkets, treasures amassed
on journeys taken ever since I learned
to tie my heart to glory's splintered mast.

Yet, old ambitions fade and slip so fast:
three distant lands, a rank once greatly yearned
now cower under sirens of the past.

I could set sail, but oh! What if I crashed
and saw my sea-floor jewels and coins returned?
I'd rather lose my heart from glory's mast.

Truly, no new voyage can match the last.
Why risk the danger, sail into white-churned waves,
when I could stay with sirens of the past?

I think I'll drop the wind-burned sails and cast
my anchor here. Forget the dreams I've spurned,
untie my heart from glory's splintered mast,

and follow sweet-sung sirens towards the past.

*Alexis Carpenter,
University of Evansville, Evansville, Indiana*

Paul Durand-Ruel Upon First Seeing Olympia In the Salon

Manet's subject may as well hang
à la lanterne, her left hand
in rigor mortis, her skin white,
men of class abashed by her stare.

They know she's no salonnière,
As sure as her ribbon is tight.
Still, thumbs play with wedding bands,
The men shyly reassuring

Their wives that lust is make-believe.
Passing judgment on the Louvre,
They walk past Manet and leave
Me to his painted prostitute.

I procure her with wounded banknotes,
Manet silent as tricoteuses.

*Alejandro Aguirre
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida*

A Baby's Goodbye

As babies we learn first, to say goodbye
We smile and wave our chubby hands—so sure
It's just a game, and nothing is awry.
We giggle, thinking only what is pure.

We smile and wave our chubby hands—so sure
Goodbye must only mean “I’ll see you soon.”
We giggle, thinking only what is pure,
And look ahead, and watch the turning moon.

Goodbye must only mean “I’ll see you soon”
Until the years begin to pass too quick.
And look ahead, and watch the turning moon
For any sign of friends once spread so thick.

Until the years begin to pass too quick
Then suddenly we start to wonder why.
For any sign of friends once spread so thick,
With only memories to say goodbye.

Then suddenly we start to wonder why
Our friends leave us; meet death with welcome hands.
With only memories to say goodbye,
And we are tied by time’s unyielding hands.

Our friends leave us; meet death with welcome hands.
It’s just a game, and nothing is awry.
And we are tied by time’s unyielding hands.
As babies we learn first, to say goodbye.

Ella Fairbairn
Asbury University, Wilmore, KY