

REFLECTIONS

As the Gull looks into the water
It sees its own Reflection
Carefully looking for his new found dinner
Standing on his long legs
The female Sandpiper not far away mimicking him
At dusk the waves silent

Patty Cahill

response poem

HOLLY-BERRY

My Holly-Berry, a Christmas Gift for me
A wonderful surprise from my grandchildren
Overwhelmed this little Golden ball of fur
A bow around her neck
She looked so precious, timid, and small
Her face captured it all

Patty Cahill

starting poem

Love without measure
And friends to treasure
Small moments of pleasure
Cookies and tea
Friends you've known forever
Time well-spent together
Surviving the weather
Come share with me
The warmth of the kitchen
You talk and I'll listen
Like new snow, words glisten
Cookies and tea
A time now for sharing
A time now for caring
Love all things bearing
Come spend time with me
So happy ever after
Talking and laughter
And during and after
Cookies and tea.

Christine Wheeler Beauchaine

response poem

Leaf

Yellow-veined and orange
The autumn leaf
I picked it up because it was beautiful
I carried it
As I walked with my love
And talked with my love
But at the bridge
I painted another picture
I let go and it fell
A symbol, if you will
For strife, for confusion
“You’ll write a poem about that leaf,”
He said
And took my hand

Christine Wheeler Beauchaine

source poem

For an Artist in Her Studio

when early morning finds you standing at your easel
with a juicy paintbrush in your hand
and you wonder why you are here, why you paint, does it matter at all.....
what do you know?

when you play with color
when you dabble in purple-plum blotches
and you pull clementine orange through woven canvas threads
and you drip drip drop your small blue dot.....
what do you know?

do you know that by crisscrossing wet, sticky lines
you cross the miles between you and me?
that there's a wall somewhere that crumbles just a bit?

when you stand at your easel and you stare at empty whiteness,
and you doubt if you can ever paint again,
and you think that you are the craziest person you know
and you really ought to get a real job.....
what do you know?

do you know that every leaf on every branch of every tree
in every land feels echoes of your pain?
do you know that the waters that run down mountainsides
hear your call for sheltering arms?

when your back aches from long hours on your feet,
and you have been alone for hours,
and you are surrounded by teal and seafoam green and lavender
and electric blue pieces of your excavated self.....
what do you know?

do you know that the world weeps for you, begs you,
requires you to stand at your easel with your juicy paintbrush
and aching back and pour all the colors
of your insides out for all to see?

Mary McDonald

response poem

Worry Not

sit quietly

worry not of the cares of your day

listen to my voice, words that tell

of clear water rushing a mountain creek

that whisper of glimmering rays at sunset

that tell of warmth and coolness,

melody and silence,

impulse and stillness, water and earth

sit quietly

these words come from love.

Mary McDonald

source poem

Supernova

Lysergic fire spirals

Through the limpid midnight blue

Stars dance out of sight

In psychedelic destructive hue

Sudden gravitational collapse

A violent outburst of atomic core

Interstellar velocity

A shockwave of prehistoric folklore

Degenerative brilliance

Catastrophic Astronomy

Cosmic evolution

Celestial Domine

Kevin Saleeba

response poem

a moth trapped in a light fixture

fluttering wisps of tiny white wings
springing from their dark cocoon
a bouncing blur of insect life across the brisk fall sky

charming rays of Lunar Light which prance before ocellus eyes
calling flyers of the night
as they dance across the nocturnal sky

restless winds whisk a moth away
from Heaven's blissful astral orb
the bewildered bug tumbles blindly away from the illusive sky

emptiness traps the moth in limbo on the ground
as shades of clouds hide the bright ambassadors of the night
no Moon to see nor Stars to guide as a void spreads across the open sky

small eyes are suddenly mesmerized
the enticing shimmer of synthetic shine
quivering wings stretch, flap, and spring the moth into the vacant sky

slipping through a crack in the glare
the moth smashing and bashing its head
crashing against the plastic walls; restriction from the joyous sky

melting beneath the warmth of bright death
tired wings cease to wave
unimportant to all, the moth takes its last breath

Kevin Saleeba

source poem

Privacy

Pensive she stands
morning sunlight, alone
The curtain drawn, open
Let sunlight in; shone
The ocean behind, distant
Solitary the wave
Like nature of quiet
The woman, it gave
Comfort robed listening
Perhaps for the sound
Or maybe still, silent
Thoughts only, mind, found
What is it she's thinking?
A question: a clue?
Why peaceful,
Just standing
Like morning
Anew
Wistful in thought
What about?
Pose a guess
Hands balance the table
Her posture,
At rest
Her face whispers "private"
Known only to her

A lost love?
A memory?
A dream?
A new man?
Guess, if you will,
"Good Luck,"
If you can
Her freedom,
Her solace,
Her thoughts
All her own
To keep
For herself
To others
Unknown
A mystery she'll be
Standing still by the sea
A woman,
Hands steady,
Holding table,
Her stand
Her voice,
Her thoughts,
Silent
We can't understand

Linda DeFeudis

response poem

To Todd and Cristy

Upon a hill
A sunlit sky
The stillness blue
With white of cloud

Their endless love
To each
Has vowed

The beautiful bride
The handsome groom

A love too large
For any room

The world stood still
To listen in

Two hearts are one
Their lives begin

Unable to share
Your marital bliss

Todd, Cristy
To each, a kiss

Love,
Aunt Linda

Linda DeFeudis

source poem

Breathless until divine light descends
She is porous allowing His gift whispered into her soul
Absorbing its purpose
The winged column
Guiding her into accord with higher will
And sacred intention
Inwardly aligned and
Outwardly lambent
She exhales the shadows that never belonged there
Sorrow, fear, ignorance
No longer her limitations
The darkness altered into infinite illumination
She is hope
She is faith
She is the light

Tracy Vartanian

response poem

Lullabies and Dragons

Windswept forms and watered eyes look upon the heaved and open ground
Waiting to receive the gnarled and lifeless guest

Her thunderous bawl trails behind the soul
Barely done with lullabies and dragons
Flown with angels much too soon
Beyond her touch beyond her sight not beyond her heart

The second and the third watch with fearful eyes
The one who bore them crumble into a new reality
Too young to comprehend
Unable to grasp the finality of this demise

He's not there they urge
And bid her stop her clinging
Being torn with urgency and care from his limbs
Her legs refuse to be restored
She makes no apology for her position
And none expected

Sorrow marks the moments the days the weeks that follow
Time nor even the hand of God will heal this wound
Her soul shattered
Her womb deceased

The crows return cannot fix this thing
Or provoke a new beginning
Moonlit shadows conjure lies
As she reaches and finds empty air

Her haunted rocking pervades the night
Through no reprieve
Tears dissolve the sweet youthful fragrance
Of a towheads tiny blanket

Ignorant of those still living
From beneath her darkened veil she never sees
All that they require
Within mourning's gloomy depths she cannot attend
Her only illustration at response
Her anguished recurring murmur
Seeks hopeless resolution
Please oh please bring back lullabies and dragons

Tracy Vartanian

source poem

Lady of the Sea

Lady of the sea
You can't tempt me.
With your song so graceful and sweet
You enchant all you meet.

Your grace the waters so blue
Underwater enchantment too good to be true.
For those who claim to see
You would gladly disagree.

For you are a fleeting shadow
One with the waves drifting to and fro.
Hide amongst the fish
For you are a hunter's greatest wish.

Luring sailors to rocky shore
They have no idea what's in store.
A beacon of darkness
A lullaby trap oh so heartless.

Queen of the sea
You tempt sailors that see.
With your song so graceful and sweet
You keep all that you meet.

Sam Schroder

response poem

It's Too Late

Your kind have no respect.
Can't you hear my cry?
You tear at my hair,
You rip at my skin,
You blacken and drain me of my tears.

Oh creatures of hate and destruction,
Your time is coming to an end.
I rage and I fight,
I'll take back what's mine.
You have no say.

I will protect my children.
The ones you beat,
Abuse,
Torment.
They can't speak but they can feel.

Leave us alone!
You think only of yourselves.
You kill,
You destroy,
You take but never give back.

Your time is near.
Your time will end.
I will protect myself.
I will never nurture you again.
You don't deserve me anymore.

I will be free.
Like a lioness ready to strike,
Like a wolf I'm ready to bite.
I am a Goddess.
I am life.

I am the Earth you killed.

Sam Schroder

source poem

Days End Dance

Billy Idol pulls my hair into pointy blonde spikes
throws a collar on me and I'm grooving

even before my eternal voice went bankrupt.
Suddenly, I'm thinking this poem wants

to be a love poem so bad.
I'm not saying my father abandoned me.

He just died, stranding me on the flip side of 13
when I was a needle ready for a vein.

I back-fill over and over in search of him.
I push my way into a scrum of boys

dancing to the radio on the patio.
I want to be a part of their music.

You look like a hooker. It's my mother
standing in our orange and yellow kitchen

phone cord twisting round her fingers, you can't
go out like that, she says. But I'm trying

to look like that, I say.
I could, if I wanted

hang Madonna's crosses round my neck
make them want me even more.

Karen Elizabeth Sharpe

response poem

Soon Silence Will Have Passed Into Legend

The sounds of the city
are cars that need mufflers
church bells and sirens
a restaurant's happy hour kitchen
bass lines bubbling from porches and windows
a fountain of beats spilling
from the sunroofs of cars
and this, too, the moment in the bar
when my husband needs the bathroom
and not recognizing the glad hand
of an old acquaintance reaching for him
he blurts out the way he leans
on the horn at Kelley Square
"I have cancer"
having just come from the hospital
"I have cancer"
like he's got his foot on the gas
riding hard to get to the other side
"I have cancer,"
blaring, like the noon fire alarm
in our small town on Saturday afternoons
"I have cancer,"
his martini half gone
his shaker of ice just beginning to sweat
its steely perspiration the only thing
keeping silent in the din of it all.

Karen Elizabeth Sharpe

source poem

You are a carnival of colored lights,
The swoon of a carousel painted horses going up–
and around,
Moving and still.
You rise like swirling marbled balloons–
no word on ever returning to Earth,
and freshly laid out boxes of candy
where you can eat the whole thing
and never have too many,
all the innocent highs of childhood.
A vibrant circus where all the stands are filled,
and they wait for you with smiles,
all eyes are yours,
You who breathes fire,
and breaks the rules–
It's a secret how you can keep it all,
I wish that you would tell.

Sarah Beth Guimond

response poem

A Last Love Letter to Van Gough

I want to tell you I love you,
but I should just shut my mouth.

I want to tell you that no one has ever used yellows
quite as brilliantly as you, not in a hundred years.
That I can't even look at a night sky because the stars will pale
in comparison to the complexities of your canvas.

That I would have cut off my own roots,
and my life short
to have been the subject of your still life.

To have been as a vase upon your table,
that you would have looked upon me with such focus,
and learned my every detail so intimately
as only a painter can;

I want to tattoo your fingerprints
in a banner across my chest & ribs,
The way they have been
re-surfacing there
in the dust of my
soul for years, rising like
suns over the foreign landscape
of my forgotten flesh.

I want to cut out my heart and send it to you,
like a school girl's paper Valentine, so anatomical
and precise— beautiful in a way
that only nature & the things unseen
inside us are beautiful; to
uncage this injured bird & let it fly to you—

In
my note
I would say
“My Darling,
Here is the heart
That has always been yours,
Send me your ear
and I will whisper to you
with my last breath,
of all the things I was afraid to say
in life.”

Sarah Beth Guimond

source poem

Swirls of color.
Salmon, violet, blonde,
twists of cornflower blue,
flutters of lavender.

Incandescent light
glows from the
curl of a petal.
The shine in bright eyes.
The warmth of a smile.

Playful joy
shimmers in each ruffled flower,
in the sparkle
of a woman
who has found
contentment.

Lisa Shea

response poem

Like soft, billowing moss in
gold, rust, and deepest crimson,
the autumn foliage nestles around
the mirror-still lake.
Shafts of white birch –
earth-locked craggy lightning –
are crowned with a glow
as if a thousand amber-hued
prayer flags
fluttered in the gentle breeze.
An ancient fallen log
settles more deeply into the Earth,
nurturing the soil.
Cascades of turkey tail mushrooms
blanket its length.
A cloud drifts.
A heron calls.

Frank then added this line:

Her mate responds.

Lisa Shea (and Frank Robertson)

source poem

It stands alert, a patient guard
An ocean fence, an island yard;
The elements attack at will,
But there it stands ever still

It's epic pose a luring sight
Its constant vigil through the night;
Its ruby wink, far distant reach,
Warns the traveler from the beach

The years have passed; the changes came
And still the endless frightful game
No simple structure made by man
Has ever worked a nobler plan

Bob Marrone

response poem

The pencil is a wondrous thing
It gives us art and written speech
It scribes in earthy tones of gray
Or vivid colors rainbow bright

The pencil comes from lofty trees
And earthy clay from deep below
Empowering children young and bright
And artists skilled and in the know

What can we do to sing its praise
To make the world see all its splendor
To show the tribute it deserves
And share the joy that it can render.

Bob Marrone

source poem

The Beach

I walked on the beach begging
The ocean to hear my
Plea
I look down as a wave slapped
Against me
An accident changed my life
When it took my love
Away
It left me wandering aimlessly
Every night and every
Day
My eyes fell upon a little
Snail moving slowly in the
Sand
I reached down, picked it up
And held it in my
Hand
The little head disappeared into
Its shell escaping every
Strife
And I wonder if I was doing
The same thing with my
Life.

Jane Nozzolillo

response poem

Around the Corner

Guess what came around
the corner the other
day
Old age, and no matter what I said
it decided to
stay
The first hint that I had that it was going to
attack
was when I bent over
Oh! The pain in my
back
I looked in the mirror, at my wrinkles
and my
double chin
I vowed to exercise
This horrible creature was not going
to win

Jane Nozzolillo

source poem

Your words are barren drifts
against my heart.

I feel them press upon my
chest. Cold reminders of
promises gone by.

The shadows dance black
against white, and I lose
myself in all the grey.

And I absently wonder
at what point you took
your love
away.

Kara Emily Krantz

response poem

Falling Foliage

I love you with a deep tide in my soul,
ebbing and flowing with the moon.
I ache for your understanding,
want to pick the berries of your branches,
but you leave
a bit too soon.

Hungry.

I am hungry for the earth, for the trees, for the sky.
Hungry for a look (I never see) in your eyes.
I'm aching, bereft,
hungry for me.

I love you but I must leave you,
as leaves bid farewell to the trees.
I just pray that you hold on
to the fallen pieces of me.

Kara Emily Krantz

source poem

a clutch of stars
in blurred high mist
the quick caught breath
and clenched tight fist
I know the world is purpling
just outside this kiss
trees reaching high
while the wind whistles low...
the cat sidles by,
grey slope of snow
trees bleeding high
wind whipped whistling low
a moment in my pocket like
candy for the show

J. Marechal

response poem 1

Paint

some wounds
are a haven
a carved out room
in pretty cut
pain in a dress
of frosted cotton
like thunder tucked
in a snowstorm face
its raining bruises
but i sail on
behind this savior curtain
sleeping deep
between
the knife
and the hanging
wall

J. Marechal

response poem 2

millennials

we gather
trusted companions
intertwined souls
sisters
friends
partners in crime

we talk
venting
laughing
worrying
plotting
loving
dreaming

we soak up the sun
every ray,
every beam of hope
bottling up the light
to hold onto in the darkness

we are quiet feminists,
whispering of change
living
breathing
empowered

we enact change
simply
by our existence

we persist.

Liz Decaf

response poem

rain sticks

fingers outstretched and spinning, spinning
rain pirouetting on eyelashes and arabesque
drip-drop to puddles drumming beats into the
sky

muted notes of slipping aquatic
songs that line the pages of the
pavement

and the world keeps spinning, spinning
madly on, to piece of mind and peace of
quiet, a crescendo to the
rainbow

lullabies from the clouds, piano
to earthen tones beneath your
feet

and your words will keep on spinning, spinning
out of ashen skies and mellowed harmonies,
chords to rest then hold, rest and hold –
dawning.

Liz Decaf

source poem

Tranquil placid pools do bore
So pirates take to the ocean for a mate.
Suffocating and lowering each other,
away from sun-kissed bliss
into stormy seas of alcohol
where only bottom dwellers with thick shells survive.
Dry salted tears
fall in cycles as frequent as the tides.
Sick to death of each other,
but too tired to deal with the strangers
who would be willing to walk the plank next.

Andrea Lettic

source poem

Dance Lessons

She taught me to dance
Her lessons inescapable, undeniable
Started early in wordless arabesques
I cringed and curried favor
Learned to agree, wild-eyed
When she proffered her litanies:
I could never understand how hard her life was.
Proffering my wit, my wisdom, my wonder
Each time she stormed in
From a Long Hard Day
I would stand at attention
When I heard the key in the lock
Every nerve a raw antenna
For her unspoken demands.

What steps would defuse her, dissuade her?
What pirouette would please or placate her?
I would bear the scourges
Determined to prove myself worthy
Of her love, her sacrifice, her tolerance.
I was born difficult, placenta praevia
The cord around my neck
Delivered caesarian while my sister
Underwent hip surgery halfway across town
My father shuttled back and forth, exhausted,
And my mother slaved for months over
My newborn self, my sister in a half cast
As her sutures healed.
I always knew I was inconvenient
So I danced daily to please her
What steps would work today, what knots
Would be best to tie myself in?
Knowing full well that if she had to tell me
I'd already lost the game.
I was to be quiet, agreeable, unquestioning
Cheerful, witty, clever
To work hard, justify my existence
Everything must be earned
So I paid the piper daily, dearly.

That was the start of the choreography.
Next we removed my needs from the equation
I learned to bite my tongue
Much easier that way to please
She was always always always right
So I learned to do for her, care for her, live for her.
In the end, I no longer noticed
That I was being danced
Day in and day out
Encores endured across the decades
Her demands the tune that drove me, tirelessly
In new and complex directions
For which she, of course, took credit.
The music stopped when she did
Leaving me lost and breathless
Continuous motion in a pair of red shoes
I can neither still nor silence.

Jody Zolli

response poem

Slow Wheel

What drives the seasons' slow wheel across the year?

How do barren February trees sprout small red cocoons
To silently burst feathered leaves in spring?

Rooted in moist, fragrant moss, what
Furls and unfurls ferns over time
Like slow motion party favors?

What inflates the spongiform flesh of mushrooms
Without benefit of sunlight or even the smallest blessing?

What mystery sends insect-seeded galls to sprout
Among branches that reach a full foot further than last year?

How does a finely petaled flower exude
The delectably soft swelling
Of an improbably large plum or peach?

Is it some concealed mechanism? An inner clock
Pressing hidden hands forward? Or a magnetism
That invigorates all things?

Is it just the moon's vast intangible pull
That causes sap to rise and roots to run?

Perhaps a sacred underground estuary
Pumps life through stems like straws.

Whatever causes the silent sizzle of the sun
That lifts leaves and fronds and fescues
And summons twigs and needles from nothing

Also beckons brambles and spiky thistles
Combs cockleburs from the ground, reminds us
Nature demands only obedience, not beauty.

Jody Zolli

source poem

Photographic Salvation

She kneels before a photo.

A fragment of film.

An artifact—

Corners frayed, curled, buckled.

Color worn, lines blurred.

The holes where ancient reels made magic movement reveal orange flame flickers of time.

The picture—

Brick building, stained glass, wide doors—

a silver cross above the windows, beside the doors.

Bigger than people.

She kneels and prays.

Outside is dark; curfew.

Inside is safe; hidden.

The photo lives beneath the false bottom of a disguised hollow in a desk made by a grandfather more greats ago than she can count.

The photo is illegal.

They say it represents oppression.

They say people killed for its secrets.

They say it destroyed the world, separating people by fire and sword.

They say it needed to be eradicated,

dismantled,

every brick toppled,

each and all of its books erased,

its remains burnt—ashes scattered to the oceans and winds...

(things that could potentially be measured and calculated).

She could be killed, burned, and scattered for having this photo.

They failed their mission.

The rhythm-murmured words they sought to silence still creep from hushed mouths.

Beads and cards and scraps of paper live inside drawers, under mattresses,

and between breaths.

Silent gestures meet subtle nods.

Contraband blessings.

Yes, there was death, and yes, there still is, and yes...

death still happens in the same shadows as prayers and psalms.

Sometimes correlation; sometimes causation.

The quantifiable dead bodies haven't changed.

She breaks the law to pray before an outlawed image.

Because *It* also represented

Freedom,

Secrets that were Truth,

Creation from ash and metal and clay.
It made a covenant *It* would never be destroyed.

And in this safe-promised new world where even a photo of *It* is forbidden...

There is oppression.

There are deadly secrets.

There is destruction with fire and sword.

So every night,

she takes her illicit picture from its hidden home...

She risks her life to kneel and pray

before a photo of Salvation.

Trisha Wooldridge

response poem

Unfinished; perfect

Gaudi's La Sagrada Familia, Barcelona

Gaudi died before completing his masterpiece basilica.

Scaffolding obscures the beauty
in unfinished lines, uncarved faces, unmarred stone.

Nautilus stairs

spiral tighter and tighter
the higher you climb—

Squeeze you out before you can finish your Tower of Babel

I could not have met her at a different time—

my body too imperfect to navigate her sharp curves
and unsupported sections.

Though I was still far from perfect then,

I was perfectly prepared
to be made more complete by her architect's design.

Lesser workers may try to follow

the physics of his curve
the cut of his sculpture
the meaning of his blueprints—

But they are not the master architect who drew the plans.

The Truth of the final opus hidden forever—

meant to be seen, intact, by human eyes
inasmuch as the
Word

it symbolizes is
meant to be Fully Known by human minds.

Before Phoebe's Service, Ayer

It hasn't happened yet, so I haven't seen the body laid out in final rest.

And I don't know if it will be an urn of ash.

But I packed away the neatly handwritten drafts of novels not ready to be read,
put in boxes the outlines and production plans for plays never to be performed,
sorted through to-do lists with items still to be done,
and caressed the spines of books that may have gone unread.

I'll never know.

But I knew you.

You worked to save the whales,
better women's rights,
promote the arts to one and all,
protect the environment...

So much left not done.

In animal rescue,

something we shared,

we say,
“You may not be able to change the world, but you can change the world of one
dog...cat...horse...”
Person.

How many worlds did you change,
make better,
even with
so much work unfinished?

Transferring files, Starbucks

My travel computer is dying.
The files tucked within need safe passage to their newer home.
Uncorrupted.

In basilicas of 0s and 1s
live confessions
I alone
have been allowed to read.
Sacred manuscripts of authors,
“clients,”
who may go forever unnamed,
unremembered...
But for how those unfinished,
roughly hewn,
stories would design my being.

In those blessed bits live also
my own sins,
failures,
crayon-scribbled nonsense
notes of love and hate.
They needed to be written,
and need never be finished,
for their work has been accomplished.

Treasures all.
Dated, filed, saved.

In perfect digital reproduction.
Unfinished, but no less True.

Trisha Wooldridge

source poem