



# Red Wolf

A first anthology of prompted poems

*To kindred spirits*

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California . Singapore

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## Prologue

**We Write Poems** is an online community for folks who like to read and write poems. We encourage and support like-minded people with an interest in sharing and growing their ability to write poetry. Primarily we offer weekly poem prompts as the vehicle around which we may gather and share our writing.

A note about our history. Neil and I met online when we started participating in the Read Write Poem prompt site, writing poems in response to weekly prompts. The site was chockfull of poetic inspiration and had an enormous following. When the site became inactive in May 2010, many felt a staggering sense of loss. A few of us decided that we wanted to continue writing poems to prompts. So it was out of that desire that We Write Poems was born. Our weekly prompts started on May 5, 2010. Three years have yielded a veritable bounty of poems. Weekly prompts have helped steer us on the path of the writing life. Encouraged and empowered, we continue to journey into the wildness of language and imagination. Constant writing has helped nurture a growing maturity in craft. It's a long haul. For each and every poet whose work had been inspired by a WWP prompt, this first anthology is our way of thanks and sending much love.

We honor participation, honor expression in all its manifestations. Every poem is an act of subjectivity, and a guiding light in that the poem touches some core within the writer and reader. And guess what? The act of sharing brought to bear on writing and reading a prompted poem is another kind of light. Some folks like to think "inspirational", although maybe we just simply say, "like rain." Imagine a roomful of participants reading out their poems by turn. It's personal. That's what this anthology is meant to be too. So please keep that in mind and heart as you read. Understand that we each write and learn from wherever we begin our "craft of writing life" as we find it. With that preamble, kindred spirits, let the poems roll. It is with much pride that we present our first-ever anthology to commemorate the poems you wrote. We wish you a most delicious read.

Irene Toh & Neil Reid

December 2013

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/>

Do you know how poetry started? I always think that it started when a cave boy came running back to the cave, through the tall grass, shouting as he ran, “Wolf, wolf,” and there was no wolf. His baboon-like parents, great sticklers for the truth, gave him a hiding, no doubt, but poetry had been born—the tall story had been born in the tall grass.

Vladimir Nabokov

## C o n t e n t s

Prompt 13: Little Red Riding Hood revisited

Neil Reid, **red wolf** 1

Nicole Nicholson, **Tears & Teeth** 3

Irene Toh, Flowers, **Cake & Wolfskin** 5

Prompt 38: Morning wake-up call

Elizabeth Crawford, **About the Dead Woman and Waking Up** 6

Prompt 40: Triptych relationship

Annell Livingston, **God's Little Garden** 8

Prompt 44: Make your own wordle

Tawnya Smith, **Quixote** 10

Prompt 52: Take it to the limit

Pamela Sayers, **A Red Dress and High Heels** 11

Prompt 58: double double toil and trouble, or  
making poem soup with a nail & rock, or  
a little cocktail of wordies

Richard Walker, **Priorities** 12

Prompt 90: Keepsakes like a breath

Paula Wanken, **Mementos and Memories** 14

Prompt 92: Big shoes

Donald Harbour, **These Shoes** 16

Mariya Koleva, **Who will wear those big shoes?** 18

Prompt 102: Poem spirits

Marilyn Braendeholm, **Phantom Sounds** 20

Prompt 108: Face up to it! The body, a series, part 3  
Walter Wojtanik, **He has his Mother's Eyes** 22

Prompt 111: The naming of things  
Alexandra Palmer, **Untouched** 24

Prompt 120: Color us a poem!  
Gautami Tripathy, **Confessing ochre is never far away** 25

Prompt 121: What do hands do?  
Harshal Gupta, **Hands** 27

Prompt 123: Poem leftovers  
Andra-Teodora Negroiu, **Coverlet** 29

Prompt 124: Dear Poets of WWP  
Uma Gowrishankar, **Where I hold your name** 30  
Sara McNulty, **Epistle to Janis Joplin** 31  
Julie Mehr, **An epistle to the ghost of Nick** 32

Prompts 127 & 128: Becoming landscape  
Hannah Gosselin, **Captive of the Song** 36

Prompt 130: Osmosis  
Marian Veverka, **A World that Will Never Pause** 38

Prompt 134: Time counts  
Vivienne Frances Blake, **Restoration** 40

Prompt 135: My life as a poem  
JulesPaige, **Composite** 42

Prompt 139: A moment unexpected  
Margo Roby, **It Only Takes a Moment** 44

Prompt 143: Le Premier Bisou  
Judy Roney, **First Kiss** 46



Prompt 145: Wind yells while blowing  
Denise Janikowski-Krewal, **Freeze Frame** 48

Prompt 158: Playing Sherlock  
Stacy Lynn Mar, **Alice in the Sky** 50

Prompt 165: When do we grow up?  
Joseph Harker, **Telegraph** 52

Prompt 170: What context?  
Debi Swim, **Wild Winds** 54

Prompt 171: Write less!  
Barbara Young, **Aunt Sister, Revisited** 56

Prompt 177: “The Road”  
Roslyn Ross, **The Road** 58

If there were no poetry on any day in the world, poetry would be invented that day. For there would be intolerable hunger.

Muriel Rukeyser

**Prompt 13: Little Red Riding Hood revisited (by Irene Toh)**

Write a poem that revisits the Red Riding Hood fairy tale. You can change the story, or question the assumptions behind the fairy tale, e.g. why doesn't the wolf eat Red Riding Hood in the forest when he first met her?, why does the author allow fantasy, such as that the wolf can be cut up and grandmother and Red Riding Hood emerge unharmed, or wonder what Red Riding Hood stands for, such as if wearing a red hood is significant, or question the innocence of Red Riding Hood, e.g. why does she not go straight to grandmother's house as her mother instructed but chose to wander? Or you may revisit another fairy tale altogether!

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2010/07/29/thursday-prompt-13-little-red-riding-hood-revisited/>

red wolf  
By Neil Reid

red wolf  
red wolf  
darkly we whisper  
come come  
out to feast  
follow broken  
trodden leaves  
we leave for your ears  
your eyes your  
scent to twirl  
between  
sun setting dark  
be  
your nature  
expressed upon  
high trilling voice  
i n t e r l o p e r  
maker of paths  
breaker of roots  
trespasser

breaking loam  
sundered peace  
(horrid girl)  
fetch we whisper  
limbs tell air distilled  
follow feast  
fallow lust  
u n d o i n g  
says our wish dishing wish  
darkly boughed  
and please  
dancing fangs arrow swift  
unclutched  
but alas  
cunning comes  
in eddies unwoven  
ways unpredictable  
unwritten looks  
the victor writes  
rocks into  
your stomach  
dark limbs transpire  
by our very  
leaves we shout  
so so far  
unfair

Tears & Teeth  
By Nicole Nicholson

Occluded forest, the hood over my head:  
green fingers folding together,  
brown bark teeth in a damp musky mouth,  
Bavaria's finest. With your pen, you  
cover me in red, and call me virgin:  
color me blood, and call me bruise.

Fresh incense of needles dying below my feet,  
snap and crackle green, evergreens casting  
a princess' path for me upon the forest floor. I walk  
a virgin sacrifice from path to path: the script's  
already been written for me. I follow it  
letter by letter, curve by curve: somewhere,  
the sentence will end where veins intersect at the  
junction underneath my breast, the tunneled mountain mound  
where my heart is buried alive. The wolf  
seeks to resurrect the living from the dead.  
As I walk, I watch  
half-moon teeth marks quiver below my surfaces  
like little leviathians, backs arced and ready  
to dull their hunger. This is first blood  
begging for rapture before it ruptures. I am  
only missing Quetzalcoat's feathers for this walk,  
given a red riding hood instead: a replica  
of the door and crest between my thighs. And

I know how this tale ends. The basket  
is just a prop; so is Grandmother. The god is  
wolf and serpent chasing each other,  
trading pyramid for forest. Blood calls  
for more blood: but you insert the woodsman  
to wipe the blood off your own hands. Shall you  
split open a thirsty god and deliver me? This

tale is older than you, curled up inside the code that built you,  
little scaled and feathered lexicons that hiss inside your ear  
and tell you how the story goes:  
virgins walk the woods and come back blood. It has  
always been this way.

Flowers, cake & wolfskin  
By Irene Toh

Was it any good? Good grief, did you want  
something you couldn't have?

Were you in constant danger of turning  
into a wolf? Make a meal of a deer?

Beside bare collar,  
you could have eaten her in the dark.

Later. Maybe later.  
Time takes care of details.

When you rode behind her, you thought,  
leave your boots, cowboy.

Let sunlight play in her hair. No pistol.  
Only a handy pair of scissors.

Time was the third clutching a handful of nosegay.

We listen to your ravishing story.  
Follow the tail of bushy predicaments.

Fairy tales spin in our heads.  
You made me smile long after the story ends.  
Scissors snipped open.  
Grandma had cake and wine.

Succour comes, unexpectedly.  
Huntsman went home with wolfskin.

## **P**rompt 38: Morning wake-up call (by Neil Reid)

*Let's get physical*, as Olivia once sang! Use your poem to describe in best detail how it is when you awake in the morning (or whenever is wake-up time for you). Be specific and concrete please. Make this real (or as real as you poetically dare). Describe your body and mental process. Describe the room. Be free to focus on some more specific aspect(s) of your transition into the day, but keep it rooted in the real experience. Always, please allow your muse to play as it wishes to, however this week we invite you to feel the physical roots in your life. *How do you know you're awake!* Is the process swift or a snail's pace? Do you lounge in bed for a while or leap feet first into the day? Look for details and describe your experience in the poem you write.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2011/01/20/prompt-38-morning-wake-up-call/>

## About The Dead Woman and Waking Up By Elizabeth Crawford

The dead woman felt something move.  
She didn't know what the something was, only knew she felt it move.  
The dead woman was still, had been still for years, still for far too long.  
Just there, like waiting, she supposed.  
The dead woman remembered all the waiting.  
Waiting to go to school, to grow up, to attend her own wedding.  
Then waiting for the first child, and for that child to go to school.  
The dead woman remembers waiting for all of her children to grow up.  
Waiting for them to get married, then waiting for the grandchildren.  
She remembers waiting for retirement, then waiting in the doctor's office.  
The dead woman remembers waiting for death.



## More About The Dead Woman and Waking Up

The dead woman wonders if she has waited too long.

She has waited for dawn, but doesn't remember seeing such a thing, too busy making breakfast, getting everyone else ready to go, to be on their way to somewhere else.

She knows she has waited for sunrise to give her its blessing, to tell her to rise, to fill her day with her own creation, to tell her story, paint her portrait, weave her tapestry, sculpt her soul.

The dead woman knows she is dead, but that death is also waiting.

She knows she has unfinished business, things waiting for completion.

She knows she has done what was expected, always waiting to fill the next expectation.

The dead woman knows there is a second chance, one that can not be wasted.

She concentrates on moving: first one finger, then another.

Feels herself rising and knows she will sing the sun into being.

She is ready, now. There will be no more waiting.

The dead woman is awake.

## **P**rompt 40: Triptych relationship (by Irene Toh)

In honor of the Chinese New Year, this week a prompt about the essence of relationship! In Chinese metaphysics the universe is comprised of the trinity, “heaven”, “earth” and “man”. Imagine three tablets laid and bound side by side (although three sheets of paper will do for us); label the first, *heaven*, the second, *earth* and the third, *man*. Now begin or echo or discover three new words, one for each, that link in *relationship* just as the initial starting words also do. Then repeat, and repeat again. Make as many sets of three words as you wish. Be as literal or imaginative or playful as you wish (no rules! no right/wrongs). Notice the new relationships as they come to you. What “next” might each suggest, or just let your poetic imagination fly! (As “intention” is to “flight” is to “your blue eyes”, as example perhaps.) Show us the wonder of relationship, the core of it, be it either universal or personal, or both. Good fortune with your poems.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2011/02/03/prompt-40-triptych-relationship/>

God’s Little Garden  
By Annell Livingston

She opened her eyes  
Struck by color  
Red, blue and yellow  
Noticed the under belly  
Of the furry striped bee

She heard the sound of  
The rustle of the bougainvillea  
Made the sound with  
Her tongue  
Her breath

Offered her hand  
To the red dragonfly  
Looked closely

To see her looking back  
In recognition

Saw all that was in the garden  
Azaleas, roses, lilies and iris  
She gave them names  
And pronounced them good

## **P**rompt 44: Make your own wordle (by Elizabeth Crawford)

This prompt will entail a few steps. First, find the lyrics to a Gordon Lightfoot song titled “Don Quixote”. Randomly choose twenty words from those lyrics, more if you wish. Then use those words, at least ten of them, to create a poem, just as you would do with a wordle list. You might wish to cite the song and songwriter somewhere in your post. This song was chosen because it is rich in imagery, tells a myth-like story, and has a variety of words to choose from.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/prompt-44-make-your-own-wordle/>

Quixote

By Tawnya Smith

Beneath your hands her breasts are tarnished earth;  
they tremble not from passion but tilting  
with memories, long oceans of memory.  
See those other reaching hands -- wise-wrinkled,  
familiar and cruel-gentle. See them tilling  
for child buds and vulva petals that cringe  
and weep with inexperience. Shame crippled,  
betrayed, undulating screams roil under  
the mantle for years and years . . . until now . . .  
your hands plow the earth with conjugal worth.  
Your lips baptize her lips with sacred fire.  
Your tongue sips and sucks silence from her heart.  
Your phallus fills her womb with living water.  
Earth erupts and Dulcinea is free.

**Prompt 52: Take it to the limit (by Neil Reid)**

What are the limits, fences, boundaries you choose to stay behind? How do they affect your choices? Do you occasionally step over, across, or slide beneath them? Is there one place in your life experience where you push beyond those limits? What happens when you do? And what do you feel when you do that? Do you make limits in your poetry writing? Are there personal taboos of words or experiences that you steer clear of? Write about limits you have set, or ignored.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2011/05/04/prompt-52-its-post-your-poems-day/>

A Red Dress and High Heels  
By Pamela Sayers

Life has never been inadequate, but  
still you've grabbed edges of infinity  
to move perimeters  
so they aligned in the mind  
of a flightless structure  
as it was perfectly endeavored

Many days have passed  
when I felt nothing  
until I saw a bloom sprouting  
from a small opening,  
life began again

Stars are merely aligned against  
the sky for gazing.  
So we may wish for something immense

I should've worn the red dress; then  
I would remember what I've forgotten or  
entwine it away forever

**Prompt 58: double double toil and trouble, or  
making poem soup with a nail & rock, or  
a little cocktail of wordies (by Richard Walker)**

This week a cocktail of prompts, courtesy of Richard Walker! One, select a *prompt* from a site like Poetic Asides, Writer's Island, Sunday Scribblings, or One Single Impression. (Maybe even select two, letting them modify the other in some way!) This will be the topic or theme of your poem. Two, select some *words* from a site like Three Word Wednesday or A wordling whirl of Sundays. Now consider the intermix of your theme/topic and your words. How might those words help you explore, expand or define your theme? Or does your topic further open, leading down unexpected avenues as you play with your set of words? Trust your poetic intuition and imagination! Please don't feel restricted to the "current" theme/word postings for these sites referenced. Use prior postings if that's what most serves the new poem you're beginning to envision. Make your poetic cocktail something comfortable, or something challenging – all your choice.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2011/06/09/prompt-58-double-double-toil-and-trouble/>

Priorities

By Richard Walker

it's difficult sometimes  
to know if what I do  
is aligned with my priorities  
life is erratic  
like it's charting a course for me  
that doesn't seem guided  
by fate or design  
I look for omens  
signs to show me  
that I'm doing the right things  
even the occasional bad omen would be okay  
something to fight against  
an obstacle giving me

a short-term goal to focus on  
something to measure myself by  
but the fact is I don't believe in omens  
signs from above or below  
what's here and now  
in the middle matters  
teaching young people  
writing poems  
making my small portion  
of this erratic life  
brighter and more beautiful  
at least I think so  
that's the question I started with  
isn't it?  
but then I look  
at my boys  
and see what is reflected  
in their luminous eyes  
and everything seems  
true and good  
what I know  
and what I do  
the things that are me  
appear congruent  
and I wonder  
why I question myself at all  
I should take that  
as a good omen

## **P**rompt 90: Keepsakes like a breath (by Gautami Tripathy)

Gautami Tripathy writes, “I wrote a poem out of nothing and everything. We hoard keepsakes of material things apart from our memories. And I tried to create a poem from that memory, keeping out material things.” Her resulting poem, “stolen moments”, well demonstrates her prompt suggestion more than can otherwise be easily described. Please read her very evocative poem and take that as your seedling inspiration for what you write yourself this week. Yes, we keep material tokens of moments we recall, yet they are only mere visible tips above the sea beneath wherein lay the actual feelings and memories held in more silent fondness and regard. Find those elements inside yourself, let them come drink some light.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/01/19/prompt-90-keepsakes-like-a-breath/>

### Mementos and Memories By Paula Wanken

What happens  
when I want to forget  
old times, old places?

Trinkets and knickknacks  
fill the corners  
of my room and spaces

they can be boxed up,  
thrown out,  
given away.

What about memories  
that fill my mind  
like a movie, on play?

Those can be  
stuffed  
into the back of my heart



yet how do I keep them  
from  
tearing me apart?

How can I stop  
the sound of a laugh  
or the moon from being full?

The sweet smell  
of lantana,  
or the sound of water's lull?

What do I do  
with mementos  
intangible?

Will they ever fade  
into memories  
more tolerable?

## **P**rompt 92: Big shoes (by Donald Harbour)

As they say, any safe “harbour” in a storm! These times, these lives, this world, there are charms yet also toils and tolls. And we’ll quote Donald Harbour directly for this week’s poem prompt.

*I have the foolish dream that one day there will be no discrimination against race, creed, or color or physical form of being. That all humans and creatures of the earth will respect one another and live in peace and harmony. Then I woke up from the dream to face the reality of the human existence. My prompt is about world civil rights. Yeah I know, heavy stuff but then if not you who will wear **These Shoes**?*

What shoes might you see for us to wear, what understanding gained, what resultant appreciation to be given breath? That’s our poem challenge.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/02/02/prompt-92-big-shoes/>

### These Shoes

By Donald Harbour

what feet have walked in these shoes,  
where have they traveled untold miles,  
have they trod a hot dusty plantation road,  
bruised and burdened by years of burden,  
have they felt the blisters of the field,  
the pain of the long hoed furrow,  
what misery have they withstood, these shoes  
wading the rising stream of history,  
stumbling across conflict's slippery rocks,  
crossing the granite steps of destiny,  
have they trampled over barbwire,  
heard the whistle of bullets, death’s sting,  
their soles sodden and soaked in blood,  
tripping on the remains of fallen heroes,  
have they followed the path of freedom,  
marching in the name of righting wrong,  
washed by the fire hose of ignorant bigotry,

what do these shoes know that we should know,  
has their leather and thread held,  
binding the resolve of a nation to be better,  
to be something more than religious zeal,  
weathering the greed of the money counters,  
patching their wear with a people's conscience,  
have they taken up the challenge to leaders,  
demanded that what is written will be truth,  
that all that exist are equal in life, in creation,  
is it only for poets to ask where they have been,  
will others find the answers in their soul,  
who will pick up these shoes and wear them,  
who will continue this magnificent human journey,  
who will believe in the brotherhood of all creatures,  
who will wear these shoes?

Who will wear those big shoes?  
By Mariya Koleva

We are all lined up  
In front of the check-in,  
So early one morning,  
All freezing and dumb

Hand luggage is packed,  
So neatly and  
All bags are arranged in decorum,  
Waiting.

Almost there,  
Just a family before me,  
Just a step from the free zone  
With heating, coffee and soft seats.

I see the mother transfer diapers  
from a suitcase  
on the verge of breaking open  
to some bunch they surely  
call "hand luggage";  
baby's milk dripping from a bottle on the floor,  
little boy clinging to dad.  
Dad running fingers through  
his thinning coal-black hair  
speaking curtly in a  
language I do not recognize,  
No doubt urging mommy  
to hurry.

Next at check-in desk,  
They are ready -  
All piles piled in order,  
So to speak, acceptable.

We, behind, smile to almost breathe our warm freedom,  
Until the officer spots  
their passports...

Half an hour later  
we are all still there,  
except for the check-in officer  
who comes and goes away,  
“To make some checks,” she says,  
“Because there might be problems  
With your visas.”  
She’s eyeing them from top to toe.  
And asking them if they’d come back  
And when, and how  
And why.

Oh, most important, why?

The father speaks but little English.  
The mother is so dumb and numb,  
The boy still milk-spills from his bottle,  
Then sits and crawls all over it,  
And she pretends she  
Doesn’t notice  
That lump in her throat is  
the one of despair  
and humiliation  
she’s not wanted there,  
she’s a wrong nation.

And no one needs English to guess  
that a passport defines you as human  
or else.

## **P**rompt 102: Poem spirits (by Neil Reid)

Write a “spiritual” poem. You have some sense of what *spirit* means, and that’s what we mean – *what you think spirit means*. You define what and how your poem will address this understanding we each carry in our pockets. Think “like clay” upon your poem potter’s wheel. Is it the spirit of existence and life, the poem-spirit that lives in your fingertips, or the spirit that asks, *why did the chicken cross the road?*

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/04/12/prompt-102-poem-spirits/>

### Phantom Sounds

By Marilyn Braendeholm

She was the last to leave the church. She watched  
the others depart one by one, some were weeping,  
some consoling those fogged with grief, but now

she sat alone on a thin-legged wooden chair,  
her hands placed neatly on her lap, her fingers  
plaited tightly together like an intricate wooden

puzzle. Patiently, she sat just as her mother  
had taught her, in respect of a holy place and God.

No whispering, no fidgeting,  
no scratching, no wiggling  
and, stop that, child, no giggling.

Quietly she waited, all alone except for a small  
wooden oblong box with a framed school photo  
of herself that was encircled with sickly scented lilies.

She listened to birds chirping; it loitered soft  
as an echo along the stone floor of the church,  
the sound of cars in the distance, and she thought

she heard children playing, too. Yet here she waited,  
sitting, looking at the altar, the tall white candles  
smothered and smouldering, and she grew increasingly

impatient, restless and annoyed that the bright light hadn't led her out of here yet. She kicked the chair with the side of her foot, and she grinned -

She loved the sound of that echoing thump.  
Again.  
A bit harder.

The sound bounced a base beat through the church.  
Again, and again, day after week after month  
after year, more and more and louder again.

**Prompt 108: Face up to it! The body, a series, part 3 (by Neil Reid)**

We've asked you to write a poem about your *feet*, then *fingers*, so what next? Well, your *face* of course! Getting closer to home? Don't you feel more like "who you are" is more about your face? And while we might question the real truth of that... still, we'd bet you may have some feelings that way. Write a poem about your face. How able are you to tell us the "story" of your face? Can you be impartial, observantly honest, or is that even important anyway? What might your face want to tell us about your life if only it had a voice? But then, oh yes, it does! *Will you let it speak?* Or perhaps your face would like to share its own point of view about your days right now, how it is to "face the day"? Or what about family? How does your face carry forward your family spirit? While your face has always been you, your very own, yet how much has it changed since you were a child? These are only the merest hints of how you might approach this poem prompt – and as ever, please go ahead, surprise us with your own personal and poetic take upon this prompt! There is certainly no one single or "right" response to this prompt. Your face, your choice!

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/05/31/prompt-108-face-up-to-it/>

He has his Mother's Eyes  
by Walter Wojtanik

This sad smile has come honestly  
from trial and error, and every glaring  
mistake, was one made in  
denial of all that I could be,  
this ersatz writer; poetic-wanna-be.  
But, if it's in me, it must be true.

And these ears appear to me  
to be oversized and the wisest explanation  
comes from the frantic tug  
by the nuns in school; a rule of thumb  
and forefinger, and the lengthening  
seems to linger longer, the stronger they were.



This chin has seen its share  
of craggy facial hair and crass pokes  
with close fists; a glass jaw  
that any southpaw could crack  
and still lack the seven years bad luck.  
The jawbone of this ass was not meant to cushion.

The protruding proboscis is not worth a damn.  
The only thing this nose knows  
is how to sniff out the business  
in which it did NOT belong. The road less traveled  
is straighter and more true in comparison  
to this garrison of snot and sniffles.

But the one attribute I possess that I cannot despise,  
is the sight I've seen through my mother's eyes.  
With every vision and cry she expended  
in her unending heart, I start to appreciate  
the gravity her shoulders carried; the gift  
she bestowed on me at birth. Everything I see inspires me.

All that went into me as far as these eyes can see  
are all the things that bring an albeit sad smile to my face.  
And in case you wonder, that is purely me!

**Prompt 111: The naming of things! (by Neil Reid)**

Ready to catch your breath? This week, the most simple of prompts – merely one single quote! Please respond to this quote in any manner you wish (and in the form of a poem of course!).

*What if there were a hidden pleasure  
in calling one thing  
by another's name?  
~Rae Armantrout*

That's it. Go write.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/06/21/prompt-111-the-naming-of-things/>

Untouched  
By Alexandra Palmer

He called her all things smooth and buttery  
Honeysuckle, gummy-bear, syrupy  
Feeding her graciously on words nectar  
Always brewing, slowly pouring syllables  
But his tongue dared not touch the name of hers  
Never cut itself on the sharp contours  
Of the edgy sounds in tune with her soul  
Ragged and beautiful like truth itself

## **P**rompt 120: Color us a poem! (by Neil Reid)

John O'Donohue (1956-2008) an Irish poet, philosopher and Catholic scholar, wrote in *Beauty, The Invisible Embrace*:

*The presence and experience of color is at the very heart of human life. In a sense, we are created for a life full of color. It is no accident that we abandon the world when the colors vanish and the reign of darkness commences. Night is the land where all the outer colors sleep. We awaken and return to the world when the colors return at dawn. There is a beautiful word in Irish for this: luisne – the first blush of light before dawn breaks. Gradually, the colored horizon of dawn gives way to daylight.*

It would be easy to say pick a color and write a poem. Perhaps better said would be “color a poem” Stay within the lines or stray outside and let imagination play. While color adorns the earth with beauty... so it does in the small corners of each of our daily lives. So, color us a poem!

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/08/23/prompt-120-colour-us-a-poem/>

Confessing ochre is never far away  
By Gautami Tripathy

that slow descent was my undoing  
I held your hand  
my fingers embracing yours  
in the orange haze of my mind  
nothing was more beautiful

my spectacles slipped to the ground  
crushed under our combined emotions  
life's journey lost its meaning  
in the ochre sidelines

I despaired to get closer  
and closer and closer

that smile was my nemesis  
I got lost in the golden light

sold to you, I hoped  
to be etched into you  
to be crushed in that mind  
disintegration of self was so welcome

sounds of hues of orange  
still speak to me  
even when I am searching for you  
essentially to find you by my side

*"you never ever disappear  
yet I fear, yet I fear  
I might clear out  
as my mind rests on the fence"*

## **P**rompt 121: What do hands do? (by Neil Reid)

We have already done several poems on different elements of our physical human bodies. This week we're asking you to have a second look at your hands. However this time we'd like you focus exclusively on a specific point of view – *what do hands do?* (Meaning in the sense of verb, rather than noun.) Look not to describe hands as an objective “thing”, some attachment to the architecture of you, but what motion, what actions, what intimate roles do they play within your life. Might they almost seem to have a life of their own? Describe your hands as verbs! Hands are certainly one of the more expressive conduits for who you are. *Simply observe any common day.* Who stirs the morning cup of coffee, who brushes your teeth, buttons your buttons, greets with a handshake, strokes the family pet, stirs the soup, comforts the ill or upset. scratches your head in wonderment? Merely some very mundane examples. Look see what maybe less commonly gets conscious attention from you. We suspect you'll find your hands more busy than first imagined. Tell us what you find. The format of your poem, that part is up to you. This week we're looking at looking, and taking our hands out for a drive – and they're at the wheel.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/08/30/prompt-121-what-do-hands-do/>

### Hands By Harshal Gupta

I reach out for your hands  
when the world falls around me  
when the ground starts to sink beneath me  
I reach out for your hand.  
As your hands clasp mine  
the strength in me comes alive  
Quiet calm is brought to me  
till I am complete again.  
Your touch defines a peace beyond reason  
which my heart yearns for so much.

A simple word from your lips  
takes care of my each and every wish.  
Like a cool breeze and a shade of tree  
for a man walking in desert  
My soul finds peace and becomes calm  
When I reach out for your hand.

## **P**rompt 123: Poem leftovers (by Neil Reid)

How's your desktop look? Cluttered with bits and pieces from poems begun but left aside, fragments of this and that, even a line or two that seemed a good idea at the time, unfinished now. So we'd like you to look, find those lost and leftover poem pieces and see what you can join, simmer together, including what might first seem unrelated, and transform their gathered lines into a new whole fresh poem now. So clear the counter, collect your spoons then look for new relationships from old words and ideas. Poem stew is on the menu this week!

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/09/13/prompt-123-poem-leftovers/>

### Coverlet

By Andra-Teodora Negroiu

Put down your fascination -  
red half-moons crescent in your bones  
and wear your skin in crimson tones  
of forged imagination;  
they sneak inside your callow eyes  
and improvise bright butterflies  
in pendulous gyration.

Put down your fascination -  
the wooden flecks are whittled through  
and moebic carvings birthed in queue  
attempt their first migration;  
they liberate her bones of flesh  
and weave her tapestry afresh  
in spectral-thin translation.

Put down your fascination.

## **P**rompt 124: Dear Poets of WWP (by Julie Mehr)

What is an epistle poem? While it sounds rather archaic, daunting and formal, an epistle poem is simply said... a poem written in the form of a letter. In fact, the great appeal of epistolary poetry is the freedom it gives to the poet to express his own views or to take on the character of a different person. A poet can address the epistle to a real or imaginary person, to the world at large or to a bodiless entity or an abstract concept. Epistles can be intimate and colloquial or formal and measured. They can be philosophical, declarations of love, lessons on morality or lists of errands. One simple, yet near perfect, example is William Carlos Williams's "This Is Just To Say", likely a note originally written to his wife. <http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/09/20/prompt-124-dear-poets-of-wwp/>

Where I hold your name  
By Uma Gowrishankar

Dearest, what happens to words that drop between us  
like dust to build a hill; the curves and loops of letters that  
travel to my throat to stifle me into silence, breathlessness.

I emerge from the lake, clear the algae that fall over my eyes,  
but find you have turned away. And the sand has wiped my name:  
kisses and caresses went to print my name there in you.

I hold the emptiness in my palms, hollow of words take the  
shape of pain. I hold your name in my mouth, roll it in my tongue,  
let love soak through my bones as I rebuild you breath by breath.



Epistle to Janis Joplin  
By Sara McNulty

Dear Janis,

Tiers rocked back and forth,  
everyone stood swaying,  
dancing, shouting for more.  
I was there, thrilled to be  
a part of your magic.

Petite woman with voice  
that roared, broke, stretched  
syllables into heartbreaking  
blues. I admit I never could  
develop a taste for Southern  
Comfort—not for lack of trying—  
but I climbed inside your voice,  
and lingered there in the high notes.

You were never meant for Port Arthur,  
Texas. You were never meant to die.  
I wish I could have met you, but know  
that your music and crazy laughter  
lives on in me.

An epistle to the ghost of Nick  
By Julie Mehr

Remember, Nick?

You winked, called me a sweetheart,  
while someone else scoffed in skepticism  
and laughed, *'well... he doesn't have to live with you.'*  
But I hugged your words, kept them close to my heart  
even if you were a rather cantankerous old flirt.

They cut down your trees, Nick.  
*'Would you mind terribly?'* I wonder.  
Or, would you be glad for me  
that they no longer shade my flowers  
and drop their brown needles in my garden?

I miss you Nick.

Why just the other day,  
and with another neighbor,  
your name came up in conversation.  
*'Now where's his card?'*  
When found, I had to rub my eyes a bit  
to see through the fierceness  
into the face of the gentle man  
we both called friend.

We reminisced, my new neighbor and I,  
at the thought of those old coveralls  
and felt beret that so proudly adorned your lanky self,  
no matter what the weather or occasion  
no matter what the time of day.

*'Like Betty who's grown to look like  
the pug she walks every day,'*

we chuckled together and surmised that  
you were an artist who resembled your art  
and seemed as old as time (meant in the most loving way).  
Craggy, stern, and keen facial features  
could have been chiseled from stone or forged from the metal  
you shaped into sculptures that decorate our town.

*'Oh, Nana, is that Ariel?'*

my darling young granddaughters would ask  
when looking out my kitchen window at your mermaid sculpture.  
Did I ever tell you Nick?  
That provocative, egotistical iron lady hanging  
from your flagpole and lovingly adoring her reflection  
in that handheld mirror  
caused me some real consternation when  
having to answer their question.

While mildly annoying when we first became neighbors,  
I came to adore the view out my kitchen window.  
Watching you come and go on that well-worn path  
between house and studio through clutter and dilapidation  
was comforting and reassuring.  
Did you know how often I saw you make that trek,  
as I stood working at my kitchen sink?

Then one morning you weren't there  
and we all immediately knew.  
They said you died during the night.

I miss you, Nick.

With me as eager listener,  
you had so many stories to tell.  
When soft-spoken and kind,  
you were so very likable.  
When too opinionated and judgmental,

as often happened you must admit,  
the vitreous vernacular could put many aside.

You were both this town's nemesis  
and its greatest institution.

I worried for your loneliness  
when Alice died.  
Loved how you called her 'little bit.'  
Shared the exhaustion of sleepless nights  
that found you reveling in times long gone.  
Hoped to comfort you with a good meal  
when you accepted my dinner invites  
and understood when the doorbell never rang.

I'd bring over a bowl of soup and say  
*'Enjoy, Nick!'*  
You'd smile your thanks  
and we'd nod in understanding.  
The next day I'd find a bundle of rhubarb or  
bouquet of lilacs upon my doorstep.

They cut down your trees, Nick.  
*'Would you mind terribly?'* I wonder.  
Or, would you be glad for me  
that they no longer shade my flowers  
and drop their brown needles in my garden?

~julie

## **P**rompts 127 & 128: Becoming Landscape, Part 1 & 2 (by Neil Reid)

First, this week let go the notion that you're producing a poem. Find and choose some more quiet spot in your natural environment – some place convenient for you to visit, maybe a close by park with trees, maybe even just your backyard, someplace where you can simply sit and observe.

Early morning dawn or evening's dusk would probably be best, most fruitful for observing the birds and animals, even bugs, that consider this space their home.

Even before you go to "visit" your spot, notice your own state of being. Calm yourself and enter quietly so much as you're able to do. (Try not to "splash" your way into the scene.) Remember, you are also being observed. Sit and simply observe anything and everything. There's no goal, nothing to "do". Just observe. Is there a wind? Are the leaves moving? Are there birds you can see, or ones you can only hear? Other animals? How about insects too? Use all your senses.

**Take your observational notes and turn it into a "poem".** Maybe some of you found a strength of voice from allowing observation to come more to the front. The challenge now is to "bring that home" to a poem you'll write. Make your poem in any form you desire, yet so much as possible keep true with that more *raw and natural voice*. We might suggest keeping your poem less anthropomorphic – birds or bees, or clouds and rocks, or dew covered grass need not express themselves with a "human voice" – they have voice enough all on their own. So "listening" remains an important attribute to include for this week's poem. Maybe even your notes with the slightest polish would make a perfect poem about the qualities and life of our natural environment.

Or if your initial response was already more of a poem, look to how you might simplify and refine the "natural elements", and bring them even more forward for your poem now. We, as the writers, we're never actually removed from a poem. We do reflect ourselves in all we do. However, we can also learn to more quiet that voice and allow something else a stronger presence.

The challenge of this combined observational exercise and poem was to hopefully expand and deepen our "listening" to the environment in which we live our lives.

One assumption given was that the natural world is already well full and in relational engagement – *not just some random happenstance*. Because we as humans commonly feel as "safe" as we do (whether true or not), perhaps we easily overlook all the natural activity at our fingertips.

So this second week we asked for your poems to either emerge from your observational notes or if you already had a poem in hand, perhaps simplify and further refine the “natural elements” within that poem – all the more to allow that other natural voice to determine what you write.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/10/11/prompt-127-becoming-landscape-pt-1/>

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/10/18/prompt-128-becoming-landscape-pt-2/>

Captive of the Song  
By Hannah Gosselin

The sky is colorless today,  
void of any shade of gray or blue  
and too bright to be white.

Branch ends bob up and down  
trees are conducting an orchestra of quietness  
inspired by invisible waves of wind.

Tentative, the birds sense my presence  
lilting songs are held captive,  
still in red feathered-bursting breast.

Amber round droplets seep deeply  
slow through thick layers of umber pine-needles,  
earth's thirst is gradually quenched.

Skittish, a gray squirrel recognizes my scent  
tiny toes claw and scamper up the nearest tree,

it halts and rushes forward in tail-twitching eruptions.

Suddenly the silent canopy cracks,  
abrupt rays of sunlight filter through;  
rain-kissed, tops of leaves are lit  
revealing afield shine of diamonds.

Rising eyes find yellow, orange and red-  
autumn's embers are aflame with the swift glow  
and golden hops are heavy on the bine.

## **P**rompt 130: Osmosis (by Neil Reid)

This week we want to look at a common, if less conscious, method of learning (and of course, here, about the craft of writing poems). Imitation or mimicry. More specifically, and of a most “natural” mode, we want to engage the process by “osmosis”. That’s a fancy way to say you tend to emulate what you read – what you read, the craft of the form, the language, tends to inform and represent itself in what you then write. Now to attempt direct copy, that would be stiff, uncomfortable (both to write and read), and long term of little lasting productive value. So here’s the simple process we’d like you to try. Select some writer you admire (especially if their style and/or language is not so much like whatever is your own), then spend some time reading their work (poems or prose don’t matter at all). *Just read, don’t “plan ahead”*. Let their style soak in for a while (a few minutes or days, as you desire). Then write your poem, allowing that “flavor” to have its way in what you write. Again, no worries if you feel a bit like you’re just doing mimicry (that IS what we’re asking you to do!). The subject and form of your poem, that’s up to you. (In time, what you newly incorporate will change some by who you are and become genuinely your own.)

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/11/01/prompt-130-osmosis/>

### A World that Will Never Pause

By Marian Veverka

“...Thy woods, this Autumn day, that ache and sag  
And all but cry with color!”...

Our October world can take our breath away  
A blazing row of sugar maples, sumac smoldering  
At their feet. All intertwined with popple gold –  
Nature’s own embroidery

Along each roadside purple asters nod  
Their stems conceal the fading goldenrod  
Beyond the fields, the oaks stand somber but bold  
Their heavy leaves now purple-russet hold  
Fast to the branch until the deepest winter snows  
Far away on such a sunny afternoon, nature knows



This last gasp of summer, dwindling tunes  
Of fiddle-playing crickets, ignorant that soon  
All music will be silenced by the night  
Of frost and cold that spares nothing in its sight

Today the sky protects, that fiercely blazing blue  
Gather then, this last of summer days for tonight the view  
Will disappear –winter’s winds are waiting, cold and rough  
“World, world, I cannot get thee close enough!”

Poet’s note: This poem is based on Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “God’s World.”  
The lines I stole, the first and the last, are enclosed in quotation marks.

## **P**rompt 134: Time counts (by Neil Reid)

This week we'd like you to read the following (rather poetic) prose and notice how the lines develop and deliver a sense of story over change through the seasons. In your own manner and specific topic, please write a poem that gives witness to the changes of time and season. Write to create a vivid sense of that transition through your poem. Changes might be direct and obvious, or subtle, seeming unrelated perhaps, even as they are part of the experiential process anyway. So, go look at time and seasons, and use them to frame something else you want to describe. We think that reading the following excerpt will make more clear what we're suggesting for you to observe, and what to write.

*One month went by, and the snow vanished.*

*Two months went by, and the world turned green.*

*Three months went by, and flowers bloomed out of the earth.*

*Four months went by, and all the twigs on all the trees in the forest grew stronger and pressed themselves together, and the birds sang so loud that the woods resounded, and the blossom fell from the trees.*

*Five months went by, and the woman stood under the juniper tree. It smelled so sweet that her heart leaped in her breast, and she fell to her knees with joy.*

*Six months went by, and the fruit grew firm and heavy, and the woman fell still.*

*When seven months had gone by, she plucked the juniper berries and ate so many that she felt sick and sorrowful.*

*After the eighth month had gone, she called her husband and said to him, weeping, 'If I die, bury me under the juniper tree.'*

*excerpt from the story, "The Juniper Tree", from "Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm, A New English Version", by Philip Pullman*

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/11/29/prompt-134-time-counts/>

## Restoration

By Vivienne Frances Blake

In the Musée Christian Dior today  
I found reminders of the nineteen fifties me:  
a wasp-waisted ballgown,

like the one my mother made for my first dance  
and Miss Dior, my first grown-up perfume.

So, a different imaginary friend, please,  
a different self – younger, prettier, whole,  
with effective short-term memory –  
I want the me I used to be.  
If she can't be found,  
my present friend will stick around.

My present friend is fear:  
fear of pain. *T'a mal où? Partout,\**  
fear of loneliness, of nothingness,  
the end.

*\*where does it hurt? Everywhere: This is a common question when old (literally old)  
friends meet.*

## **P**rompt 135: My life as a poem (by Neil Reid)

Is your life a poem? (Do you wish it weren't?) Do you wish your poems, as well your life, were more or less expressive of yourself? What is the gift of your life? What words does your life use to express you as you go about day to day? What would that poem have to say? (What do you wish it would say? Are those two different statements?) While we might, and do, perform some shadow puppet shows, holding ourselves one step removed from actual revelation in a most personal sense – *honestly, our lives have no place to hide!* The emotions you swim within, the thoughts that draw themselves across your face, your attitude when it gets dark and late, when someone says, “spare a quarter?”, or even what you ate for breakfast – it all counts. It all expresses your presence here. *What color shirt or blouse did you choose today?*

*Gandhi's message was his life, and yours is your life.*

What message are you giving the world, through your actions, how you live, how you treat others, what you accomplish, how you choose to be, every moment of every day. Are you an angry rant? A ballad? An epic poem? A sonnet, a limerick, perhaps haiku? If your life is a poem, what will the essence be?

So this moment, you get to be deliberate and direct – so much as you care to be.

What's under the cover of your book? *What is the poem inside?*

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2012/12/06/prompt-135-my-life-as-a-poem/>

Composite

By JulesPaige

words are my breath  
the pages are my lungs  
ink my blood

thoughts are electric  
the eyes witness  
my mouth an orator

Intertwining triangles  
lilting, listening, translating,  
tongue tripping, twisting

sentences for senses  
visions more or less - escape  
from dream into reality

while disconnected rhymes  
create their own rhythm and the  
muse is momentarily sated

## **Prompt 139: A moment unexpected (by Julie Mehr)**

I was talking with a friend last week about her situation with her husband's health and she was describing an all too familiar scene (familiar because I witnessed it myself so many many times). Her husband, mostly because of failing health, continually falls asleep in her presence. Sometimes his head is on his chest even at the dinner table. She was describing the literal, physical aspect of what she saw and, of course, the emotional response that she feels as she witnesses her high school sweetheart and one true love aging beyond his years and much before his time.

This might seem a bit depressing but is just illustrative of the setting we'd like you to consider and write about in your poem. *Here's the key.* How often do we happen upon someone we care about when they aren't aware of our presence? Write your poem of such a moment to both describe the physical elements and your own emotional experience of that scene.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2013/01/17/prompt-139-a-moment-unexpected/>

### It Only Takes a Moment By Margo Roby

I lean in the doorway for a moment  
watching him demolish an attacking  
demon, his entire focus on the monitor.

A blue and bronze robe, from Bali, covers  
his expanding stomach, around which I  
have to reach to hug him, now. He no longer

has a full head of hair for me to play with  
although there is enough at the back  
for my fingers to scratch. A cap covers

his head keeping the setting sun out of his eyes.  
His cap of choice has an armadillo head  
sticking out the front -- stuffed toy variety --

its stumpy ribbed tail sticks straight out  
the back. I smother laughter and reach  
for my camera phone.

## **P**rompt 143: Le Premier Bisou (by Julie Mehr)

*Le* (the) is masculine because *bisou* (kiss) is masculine, as is premier (first). Voilà!

The First Kiss. *Mais ouz!* And, just who doesn't remember their first kiss? Was it romantic? Was it just plain awful? Were your eyes open or closed?

*A good book increases my heartbeat as if I'm prey, melts my insides in anticipation of a first kiss, immerses me in its depths.* ~Carmen de Sousa

Did your first kiss live up to such eager anticipation? No matter if the experience was positive, negative or something in-between, there is nothing quite like the first kiss. Even though you're taking a plunge into dark waters, first kisses are so full of possibilities and there's no way to tell what would happen unless and until you take the plunge. With a Happy Valentine's Day upon us, let's do some reminiscing. In poetic form take a plunge and ... describe a first kiss.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2013/02/14/prompt-143-le-premier-bisou/>

### First Kiss

By Judy Roney

The team rushed you off, out of sight.  
Sounds of steady stream of commands,  
then hissing, suctioning machines. Filtration  
of fear all around.

No one said a word to me. No eye  
contact. I closed my eyes, didn't ask,  
didn't look, mumbled, Please God,  
before oblivion.

I could see you from time  
to time through panels  
of glass and the hum of your  
breathing machine. Lights



blinding. You were too vulnerable,  
dependent on machines, wires, and tape.

Finally you were brought to me,  
blue clad nurses an entourage  
coming to see the union  
of mother and miracle child.

You looked strong, wondrously  
made. Ten fingers, ten toes, all the right  
appendages. They handed you to me.

I engulfed you in my arms,  
couldn't see for tears but I found  
your precious cheek. That kiss  
has lasted my lifetime.

## **P**rompt 145: Wind yells while blowing (by Neil Reid)

I'm sure you've written poems about sky or sea or mountains or clouds. Most often we phrase it as, "the sky", treating sky as an objective thing. Some cultures treat natural elements in a different way. They are addressed as "entities", perhaps with a consciousness, rather than purely dumb inanimate things. Here's what we'd like you to try. As a simple experiment write a poem using natural elements and remove the objectifying "the" from in front of the elemental names. Do this in a new poem you write, or even edit an old poem with this simple change. By example, write...

*Sky spoke loud this day (instead of),  
The sky spoke loud this day*

See if you notice a change in emotional energy and perspective by doing this. Does it change how you feel in relationship with this element of reality? Do other possibilities begin to emerge in your thoughts? No, you don't need to change every natural element in your poem, maybe just one or a few. Try to think of these elements as "entities" with their own attitudes and desires, even if not human ones. Maybe your ability to observe will become open to new possibilities.

Why? Language not only says how we perceive our environment, it actively shapes the possibilities – allowing some, restricting others.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2013/02/28/prompt-145-wind-yells-while-blowing/>

### Freeze Frame

By Denise Janikowski-Krewal

Snow fell hard  
To the earth  
Boulder strength  
Feather touch  
Blocking my path  
Shaking my footing  
Drawing admiration

Along with disdain  
As in any other strained relationship  
Snow is challenging work  
Romanticized by a movie  
A greeting card  
Even a fearless assassin  
Breaking backs and spirits  
Snow is a seductive and unreliable lover  
Invigorating the senses  
Appearing and vanishing  
At Snow's own whim  
But, once held  
Is always remembered

## **P**rompt 158: Playing Sherlock (by Irene Toh)

We're bombarded with messages. You're in a train and you start reading slogans. Brands & slogans occupy mind space. Some slogans stick like crazy. Loreal's "Because you're worth it" for instance. Or it could be a made-up slogan. Because there's this crazy notion that the universe sends out signs. So perhaps there's an intersection between these man-made signs/messages and your protagonist's path. Perhaps your protagonist has a dream and it erupted from the unconscious to the landscape he/she sees. Your protagonist begins to notice. Whatever it is, the protagonist is going to follow the clues. Clues to what? Well, get the narrative going. Connect the dots. Where are the clues? Then like Sherlock whose brain scans, processes and decodes details like a nifty computer, you assemble a poem with these telling ambient bits and bobs and arrive at...an epiphany. Now who's playing Sherlock?

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2013/05/22/prompt-158-playing-sherlock/>

Alice in the Sky

By Stacy Lynn Mar

Red ribbons caught in the wormholes  
Of grandma's warmed wooden floors,  
Absent the apparition  
Of white rabbits and all-knowing men  
In tall black hats who would  
Roll her into their palms like modeling clay  
Before swallowing her soul.  
There at night, the cold of lonesome  
Stuck into her eyes and thighs  
Like tiny toothpicks, each one hungry  
For the taste of some girl's madness.  
And, closed eyes to the fury,  
She dreamed of clouds,  
Those invisible ice caves of the sky  
Where one could live and die inside

Without ever having their face be shown,  
She felt she could exist that way.  
But here, between the floorboards,  
She became an instrument to time,  
Company to the mill worms in the basement,  
A beautiful, spinning spectral to rival the morning dew.  
Until they found her finally,  
All blue and swollen as a bent tick,  
Eyes open wide as if to administer  
A final night glow into the cellar not unlike  
Those dark sunken rooms  
Where old men hide their jars of body parts  
And journals full of twisted words,  
Syllables jutting as wildly as a tree branch gone awry.  
And her fingernails, each one  
Torn from the beds of their flesh  
As if in death she hung there  
Scouring the uncovered depths of her hands  
For some secret.

**Prompt 165: When do we grow up? (by Neil Reid)**

**P** *have you had those times (or still do), no matter your age or experience, when you yet feel of yourself a child's ignorance, not really ready to stand your ground?*

**what does it mean, growing up? how will we know if we are?**

as a writer? how long do we play with not-knowing, like what we say doesn't yet count, isn't really worth attention, make any difference we can care about?

simply being a certain age, does that make you grown-up?

or does becoming a parent, like saying, look-see, I made a child of my own so then I must be grown-up now? really?

is being grown-up a mathematical progression? an accumulation of merit badges?

is it merely physical? emotional? how about spiritual?

**answer as a writer writing.** (answer as a person *personing*.) (both?) (play!)

directly how you reply with your poem, all yours to imagine. playful or serious (or both in one?). all your writer's choice.

*free associations welcome. how are we like or not like honey bees?*

*is the flower ripe? is our honey sweet?*

*(do serious questions require serious answers?)*

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2013/07/11/prompt-165-when-do-we-grow-up/>

Telegraph

By Joseph Harker

Once my heart has been  
long enough with one person  
I no longer believe  
in its artful conversion  
of blood to magic,  
its thrummed relief.

Instead it grows  
staccato, all punctuation.  
That's the way a heart goes  
after elation.

I find it announcing  
its own arrival: chewed wood  
wrapped up with wire,  
the kind of up-to-no-good  
which in sufficient storms  
catches blue fire.

## **P**rompt 170: What context? (by Neil Reid)

So she thoroughly taught him that one cannot take pleasure without giving pleasure, and that *every gesture, every caress, every touch, every glance, every last bit of the body has its secret*, which brings happiness to the person who knows how to wake it.

One of the tasks a poem can (and should?) enjoin is to examine and transform the context of what it has to say. This is a process of rediscovery! Often don't we find fault, say some particular statement is given "out of context" so its seeming meaning is untrustworthy. However with poems isn't this the very loom upon which new associations are discovered and expressed? No fault but blessing instead! Here, for this prompt, we're giving you one whole sentence (but only one) yet ask you to respond directly only to the phrase as highlighted above. That in itself is one small step away from the original context. *What are the secrets of every gesture, every caress, every touch, every glance?* The "context" is for your poem to say, and best, find multiple ways in which refreshing context changes the meaning for what you write. Now remember, keep in hand from last week the notion that, *no one has ever written this*. Context can take the familiar into new uncharted territory. *Allow a hand to become a bowl, a glove, become a wish, become a message unfound, become...* When you take a walk in the woods, expect the unexpected, but better yet, just observe what comes to you (appreciatively). If poem words seem reluctant to change, then you change your setting, the place, the time of day, and one change may lead to another. Good writing.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2013/08/15/prompt-170-what-context/>

## Wild Winds By Debi Swim

Across my cheek, gently, in slow, warm caress  
you stroke, then all over, every touch a learned finesse.  
I close my eyes and savor this moment too quickly gone  
yet, you stoke such longing in me with your come on.



Day by hot, heavy day, I look for you. Every glance  
out the window is a query. Do the flowers dance?  
The grasses bend? The tree tops sway? And as you move  
in a rush will you return the same way? Do. Prove

you love me, me alone with each tender gesture  
you swathe me with yearning, a yellow splendor  
that covers me, beckons me, to throw in with you,  
and go, footloose, unfettered. Oh, how you woo

my stale, sad soul to follow you to exotic places  
turn my back on home, duty and familiar faces.  
This my heart's secret craving that blows  
fierce ... I want to be whooshed away, wild Derecho.

## **P**rompt 171: Write less! (by Neil Reid)

Poetry has never been about demonstrating a volume of words, but rather their quality in essence to *say more with less*. So that's where our compass is pointing this week. You may discover saying less is far more a challenge than it might seem. And it is not a process that will land in only one try but become a lasting companion to your writing life.

Rather than writing a new poem we'd like you to take some previously written poem of yours and apply the notion of elemental editing using fewer words. Take some time, rushing will not work, and read then read again. Look at your poem with a generous and fearsome eye and ear! What words actually contribute to the message the poem wants to impart? Really look and listen. What contributes, keep those words. What does not, remove. Be fearless.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2013/08/22/prompt-171-write-less/>

### Aunt Sister, Revisited

By Barbara Young

She withdrew subtly. Missed Christmas,  
was scarce in May, July, October.  
Spring, Joe saw her at Gethsemani.  
They talked in the sun. Merton,  
and crows. Mary Oliver. Until bells  
called the monks to prayer. In her way,  
she quoted: about hawks and locks,  
keys and cell biology. He guessed,  
now, she might have looked tired.  
In the plain hospice room, her nurse  
raised her to the family, translated sighs,  
explicated fingers' plucking at the sheet, left  
when she dozed. They waited then  
and together watched gray, distant  
clouds curtain rain across farthest hills;  
near ones. Until vegetation by the window

quivered from scattered drops,  
and darkened.

**Prompt 177: “The Road” (by Pamela Sayers)**

Today I’m going to ask you to write about “roads”. Using myself as an example: twelve years ago, my husband and I made a decision to move South of the Border. We packed a few belongings and started on an adventure. I have no regrets, though there were times I thought: “Oh, what have I done?” Ultimately, most days here are a treasure because there is always something to make me think, and make me smile, if not on the outside, surely on the inside. So this is your prompt, dear poets: Write about the “roads” we take in life and where they lead us, or the turns we take that make us wonder about the whys, wheres and hows of our decisions.

<http://wewritepoems.wordpress.com/2013/10/03/prompt-177-the-road/#comment-7086>

The Road  
By Roslyn Ross

Shadows shorn from shouldered shapes declining,  
drawn from rested elbows of the turning path,  
draped across the lap of listless sun and sorrowed earth,  
casting darkness, mottled, through reflected light,  
to hold the image constant, drifting, dappled shades,  
which lead the way to distant lure and dreaming sight.

Potential held within the arms of curving branch,  
that moment on the road to hope - horizon's call,  
where what lies far beyond does promise more it seems,  
and yet, is harsh reflected, burning silent on the dusty road,  
in contrast sharp and rigid, captured in the glare, unsheltered,  
sweltered, aching in unforgiving vision, as freedom is bestowed.

## Epilogue



**red** says, oh the forest is dark and deep and miles to go before I rest. won't you ease my fears, warm my limbs? a poem would be a cloak just fine and right.



**wolf** says, oh the forest is dark and deep and miles to go before I eat. won't you grant me the mercy of your words? yes, your poems are good to eat.

## The Cast

**Vivienne Frances Blake** finished seven years of online studies with the Open University in 2010, culminating in the pomp of a degree ceremony. Life became rather dull until the stimulation of poetry prompt sites like Poetic Bloomings perked her up again. She is potty about poetry, a fair few having been published, and passionate about patchwork, family, friends, music and a quiet life. Vivienne and her husband have just downsized to a tiny house in another small village in Normandy, France, where they have lived for the last twenty years.

**Marilyn Braendeholm** lives in the UK surrounded by flowers, grapevines, bubbling pots of sourdough starter, a Springer Spaniel, and a small camera that she keeps in her pocket. She never buys clothing without pockets. Her work has found homes with *Poetry Quarterly*, *Curio Poetry*, *Mouse Tales Press*, *Four & Twenty*, *Fib Review*, *Sprout Magazine*, *Camel Saloon*, *Jellyfish Whispers*, and several international anthologies.

**Elizabeth Crawford** has been writing poetry for over thirty years. That's a surprise as she was not raised to know anything about it, but only first encountered poetry when she entered college in her late thirties. It became her first love thereafter. She has been published in small and large presses, and one of her poems anchored an anthology that was nominated for a Grammy Award. We Write Poems was one of the first poetry prompts sites she found online, and it is responsible for much of what she's written over the past three years.

**Uma Gowrishankar** is writer and artist from Chennai, South India. Her poems have appeared in journals such as *Qaartsiluni*, *Buddhist Poetry Review*, *Whale Sound*, *Catapult Magazine*, *Curio Poetry*, *Words Dance* and *Carcinogenic Poetry*. Her short fiction has been published in *Pure Slush* and *Postcard Shorts*. Presently she is writing a novel in collaboration with a writer friend.

**Hannah Gosselin's** song is one inspired of the natural beauty around her. She seeks words early and feels complete in the daily practice of heart-spilling-ink to page. She finds that there're poems begging to be written, hidden-waiting in the still seeded center of a dandelion-there's so much poetic potential. Hannah was awarded

a diploma by the Institute of Children's Literature located in West Redding, Connecticut, "Writing for Children and Teenagers," and has been previously published in *Prompted, An International Collection of Poems*, and *Poetic Bloomings-The First Year*.

**Harshal Gupta** is currently at the end of a rocky teenage life. He does engineering as a study and indulges in daydreaming as a passion. Writing poems and short stories help keep him calm and attend those little things that can sometimes in life, cause an uproar.

**Donald Harbour** lives and writes surrounded by the beauty of Maumelle, Arkansas. That is really all that you need to know about me, he says. It is the poetry that matters. This wondrous existence speaks to his soul inspiring him to put what he observes and experiences into poetry. He wishes that the reader of his poetic efforts find comfort in the words, an added depth to their self-awareness, and a greater appreciation of life.

**Joseph Harker** is a linguist-poet making ends meet in the Northeast US. He's been featured in various journals and things (like *Assaracus*, *Hobble Creek Review*, and *Qarrtsiluni*), but you're most likely to find him noodling around on his blog. Take him out for some snooty fair trade coffee and you've made a friend for life.

**Denise Janikowski-Krewal** is a Midwestern writer of poetry and short fiction. She currently lives in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area. Her work has appeared in *Annapurna Magazine*, *Cowboy Poetry Press*, *Red Fez* (under a pen name) and *Tuck Magazine*. Her debut poetry book, *Spotted Overcoat, Poetry on the Lam*, was published in April 2013. She can be found at "the lost beat" blog where she collaborates with her cousin and fiction writer, Tom Janikowski.

**Mariya Koleva** is Bulgarian and writes poetry and fiction in English, though she is not a native speaker. She works as an editor, and sometimes still teaches English literature and translates for a living. Writing simply came along. Since 2010, when she joined the happy poeming community of *Poetic Asides*, she has been gaining strength and momentum. A couple of her verse and short stories appeared in some

e-zines. Two successful NaNoWriMos left her with a lot of work on her hands, and a plethora of ideas in her mind.

**Annell Livingston** grew up in a tidal zone, on the south coast of Texas. As a child, she loved to draw and paint, to cut and paste, to sew and stitch things together. She loved color. In the early 1960s, she studied with Lowell Collins at the Lowell Collins School of Art, in Houston. It was just the beginning of her life's engagement with art. In the 1980s, she taught classes at the Art League of Houston, and at the Watercolor Society of Houston. She also coordinated several collaborative programs for women artists. In 1994, she moved to Taos, New Mexico, a land of high mountain desert, a beautiful place to work without distraction. She is in the studio every day, having learned that "to be an artist," it is a lifetime study. Because the goal of the artist is illusive and just out of reach, there is no "getting it," but the journey continues.

**Stacy Lynn Mar** is an American poet. She has authored four collections of poetry and has been published in over 35 online and print poetry zines. A professed psychology nerd and bibliophile, she divides her time between motherhood, grad school, and her love of words. She is also assistant editor for the upcoming women's zine, *Pink. Girl. Ink.*

**Sara McNulty** has lived in Portland, Oregon for four years now, with husband, John, and their two dogs. Born and bred in New York City, Sara has embraced the Pacific Northwest as her new home. Involved in an overabundance of online poetry sites, she has been published in a number of small press journals, and is a member of Voices in Verse, a poetry group that meets once a month. Publications include, *The Avocet; Poetic Bloomings; Brevitypoetry; Underground Voices; Flashquake; Still Crazy; Writers Digest 79th Annual Poetry Competition; Fifth Annual Writer's Digest Poetry Awards; Poetsespresso; Melisma; and The Oregonian.*

**Julie Mehr** struggles daily with growing older as vanity prefers to ignore the looking glass. Retired long ago from teaching, she puts to good use her English degree by sharing memories with family and friends on her blog devoted to the art of memoir, *The Nanalogues*. A quandary for this mother of three and 'Nana' to seven, since writing good memoir requires knowing how to remember. Ah well!



Somewhere between memories and posts, she lives with love and devotion for the beauty of the Pacific Northwest and the quaintness of the small waterfront town she calls home.

**Andra-Teodora Negroiu** is distinctly right-brained underneath her left-brained exterior. A native of Bucharest, Romania, she forged some roots in the USA, where she lived and studied for over three years. She is currently in the middle of repeating this process in Germany, where she works as a first-year resident in Obstetrics and Gynecology and takes long walks in the (never-ending) rain. In her free time, she is fond of reading and writing poetry and eating mint-chocolate chip ice cream.

**Nicole Nicholson** is a storyteller who collects stars, planets, occasional stray comets, photographs, old films, trivia questions, myths, legends, orphaned lyrics, dreams, and nightmares, and turns them into poetry. Her poetry has appeared in *Hyperlexia*, *qarrtsiluni*, *Arwe in Autism*, *The Art of Autism* (2012 edition) and *We've Been Here All Along: Autistics Over 35 Speak Out in Poetry and Prose*. She has published three chapbooks, including *Novena (remixed)* in 2013. Nicole regularly blogs her poetry at Raven's Wing Poetry and about autism at Woman With Asperger's. She currently lives in Columbus, Ohio with her fiancé.

**JulesPaige** says that words are like 'jewels on a page.' She is a poet, writer, crafter; daughter, sibling, friend, partner, mother, and grandmother. Enveloped by the magic of word placement on paper since she was eleven, over four decades ago. Found the blog world a few years ago, jumped in with both feet and has enjoyed meeting new people from all over the world who share her passion. Still enjoying her amateur status from her home in southwestern Pennsylvania, USA.

**Alexandra Palmer** (a.k.a. The Happy Amateur) is a literary translator and an aspiring writer. She tries to follow the motto she created: Live for the Love of it. Born and raised in Moscow, Russia, Alexandra now resides in Baltimore, MD with her husband, their two kids and a family dog Ralphie.

**Neil Reid** lives, breathes, writes. The rest is less certain, changeable. He likes cats, but a dog will do. Has neither, just poems instead. He'd rather walk than be entertained. Rather write than eat. Sometimes lies. A west coast boy by birth and

habit, but habits change, moving north to cooler climes. He smiles about that. Foolish, oft we suppose, even believing that internet publishing is real enough. Doesn't care for poems that sit alone. Writing with intent since 1996 and resident with his blog in 2009. Co-administrator of We Write Poems, a poetry prompt site.

**Margo Roby** retired from teaching to focus on her writing. She is busier in retirement than she was teaching. Besides keeping a creative writing blog, *Wordgathering*, there is the reason for her retirement (aside from getting away from grading essays): her poetry. She is writing, submitting, and being published. Life is good. And, she is having a blast.

**Roslyn Ross** is a journalist by profession and now works as a manuscript editor, a portable profession which suits her peripatetic lifestyle perfectly. She is Australian, but for the past twenty-five years she has spent much of her time living overseas including Antwerp, Belgium; Bombay, India; Luanda, Angola; Cape Town, South Africa; Johannesburg, South Africa; Lusaka, Zambia; Vancouver, Canada; London, United Kingdom and currently, Lilongwe, Malawi - this last being her current base. She began creative writing about twenty years ago and she has completed five novels and one work of non-fiction based on her four years in Angola during the civil war.

**Judy Roney** lives in Plant City, Florida, with her husband and Lexi-dawg. She has been published in various anthologies and journals.

**Pamela Sayers** is an English teacher living in Mexico for twelve years now. She is a commercial artist by profession. Almost four years ago, writing became her life, not one day goes by that she doesn't learn something new. She lives with her wonderful husband, Michael and their four dogs, a cat and a bird. Life is good.

**Tawnya Smith** (a.k.a. Yousei Hime) has focused on haiku for over five years now (with occasional adventures in other forms). Through haiku she tries to zoom in on what is around her. She looks for a scene, a moment. She works about five miles from the Texas coast. The wind blows every day. Every day there is something new. Even when the sky is blue, the wind blows and the waves roll. It takes careful attention to see it then to capture that newness.

**Debi Swim** joined a local writing group about two years ago and has been seriously writing, reading and studying poetry since. She is mother to three adult children and grandmother to six grandsons. She lives in West Virginia with her husband, Kyle.

**Gautami Tripathy** teaches English and Mathematics in New Delhi, India. Yet writing poetry comes easy to her. There are so many aspects about herself that remain unknown and poetry becomes a way to explore herself. Where it will lead her she doesn't yet know and wants to continue to discover. She thrives on the unknown.

**Irene Toh** lives on a tropical island. She started blogging her poems in 2009 and has shown no sign of stopping yet. She believes writing to prompts and being part of a virtual poetic community work a kind of potent magic in making poems appear. She writes about fall and plums, spring and lilacs, summer and fishes, winter and bears. Mostly she's inspired by the moon and the stars. She is co-administrator at We Write Poems, a poetry prompt site.

**Marian Veverka** has been writing poetry most of her life. At the age of ten, she won one dollar in a poetry contest sponsored by a newspaper in her hometown of Cleveland OH. She has since won Ohio Poetry Day and other awards. After graduating from Cleveland public schools, Marian attended the University of Kentucky for two years. She then returned to Ohio, married and raised a family of six children. When her children were older, she returned to college at Bowling Green State University and earned her BFA degree. Marian loves books and reading. For over thirty years, she worked part time at the Port Clinton OH public library. Her poems have appeared in many literary journals and magazines. She lives near Marblehead OH, on the shores of Lake Erie.

**Richard Walker** is a husband, father, teacher, and writer. He teaches in a public elementary school in San Francisco and loves teaching poetry writing to his students. He writes a novel every November as part of National Novel Writing Month, but writes poems throughout the year.

**Paula Wanken**, a transplant from Midwestern USA, to South Texas, is an administrative assistant by day, and poet by night. In December 2010, she began writing for her blog "echoes from the silence" with no clear direction as to the nature of her writing. She was surprised as anyone when her words began to take the shape of poetry. Since then she has become an active participant in many online poetry prompt sites and has had poems included in two anthologies.

**Walter Wojtanik** started to hone his writing skills, composing music on his keyboard at age 13. His lyrics could stand on their own, but the scope of his words reached further than being merely a poet, having penned several stage plays (all performed in his native Buffalo, NY). Currently, Walt is working to complete his first full poetry collection. He has co-authored *Poetic Bloomings: The First Year* with Marie Elena Good. Walt enjoys the theater, classical music, obsesses on the Beatles and Chicago, and spending time with his daughters (Melissa and Andrea) who share his appreciation of poetry.

**Barbara Young** is aging without grace in Nashville, Tennessee. She likes puns, cats, and fantasy; is prone to depression; drives a car that's larger on the inside than out.

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.  
There is no happiness like mine.  
I have been eating poetry.

Mark Strand

## Blogroll

Vivienne Frances Blake, Vivifrance's Blog (<http://vivifrance.wordpress.com/>)

Marilyn Braendeholm, Chalk Hills Journal (<http://miskmask.wordpress.com>)

Elizabeth Crawford, Soul's Music (<http://soulsmusic.wordpress.com/>)

Uma Gowrishankar, My Garden (<http://umagowrishankar.wordpress.com/>)

Hannah Gosselin, Metaphors and Smiles (<http://wordrustling.wordpress.com/>)

Harshal Gupta, Impressions (<http://harshalgupta.wordpress.com/>)

Donald Harbour, Donald Harbour Poetry (<http://woodennickel.wordpress.com/>)

Joseph Harker, Naming Constellations  
(<http://namingconstellations.wordpress.com/>)

Denise Janikowski-Krewal, the lost beat (<http://1lostbeat.blogspot.sg/>)

Mariya Koleva, Max (<http://phoenix-em.com/mariyakoleva>)

Annell Livingston, Somethings I Think About-Annell  
(<http://somethingsithinkabout-annell-annell.blogspot.sg/>)

Stacy Lynn Mar, Warning the Stars (<http://warningthestars.blogspot.sg/>)

Sara McNulty, purplepeninportland  
(<http://purplepeninportland.wordpress.com/>)

Julie Mehr, The Nanalogues (<http://nanalogues.wordpress.com/>)

Andra-Teodora Negroiu, Maelstrom on the Moon  
(<http://maelstromonthemoon.blogspot.ro/>)

Nichol Nicholson, Raven's Wing Poetry (<http://ravenswingpoetry.com/>)

JulesPaige, Jules Longer Strand of Gems  
(<http://juleslongerstrandsofgems.wordpress.com/>)

Alexandra Palmer, The Happy Amateur (<http://www.thehappyamateur.com/>)

Neil Reid, Bearly Audible (<http://bearlyaudible.wordpress.com/>)

Margo Roby, Wordgathering (<http://margoroby.com/>)

Roslyn Ross, poems, prose, painting, pondering people  
(<http://rosross.wordpress.com/>)

Judy Roney, I'd Like To Say (<http://judyidliketosay.blogspot.sg/>)

Pamela Sayers, wordsandthoughtspjs  
(<http://wordsandthoughtspjs.wordpress.com/>)

Tawnya Smith, Shiteki Na Usagi (<http://tasmith1122.wordpress.com/>)

Debi Swim, Georgeplace Poetry by Debi Swim  
(<http://georgeplaceblog.wordpress.com/>)

Gautami Tripathy, rooted (<http://firmlyrooted.blogspot.sg/>)

Irene Toh, Orange is a Fruit (<http://orangeisafruit.wordpress.com/>)

Marian Veverka, Marianv Blog (<http://marianv.blog.co.uk/>)

Richard Walker, Sadly Waiting for Recess (<http://sadlywaiting.wordpress.com/>)

Paula Wanken, echoes from the silence  
(<http://whenwordsescape.wordpress.com/>)

Walter Wojtanik, Through the eyes of a poet's heart  
(<http://wojisme.wordpress.com/>)

Barbara Young, Briarcat (<http://briarcat.wordpress.com/>)