



Seeing Beauty

Red Wolf Journal

Winter 2015/2016 Issue 8

Irene Toh & Tawnya Smith,
Editors

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Cover artwork: Sandro Botticelli, *The Annunciation*

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... I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things...

– John Keats

SEEING BEAUTY

Suddenly, without expecting it, beauty is there. Yet ultimately beauty is a profound illumination of presence, a stirring of the invisible in visible form ...”
— John O’Donohue

Beauty is a woman like Miss Universe. Ha! Or is Beauty the woman you love and behold? Beauty is, in fact, what you see. It is personal. Hence it lies in the eyes of the beholder. Where do you see beauty? That is the question for pondering. True beauty has been transfigured by time. When you see a particular landscape that has been imbued by time, like the ancient rocks of Sedona, you perhaps experience a sense of stillness, solitude and silence. You are receiving time. Yet in receiving it you are steeped in its timelessness. Furthermore, nature seems to be a direct expression of divine beauty. You see beauty in the natural landscape—mountains, rivers, trees, whatever—and the creatures—hummingbird, snow leopard, salmon, whatever—that inhabit it. It is everywhere around.

That the beauty of these creatures, including human beings, shall eventually fade and finally die, whose frail presences shall fade into eternal absences, where does that leave us? Wreckage, loss and absence. These truths wrought within us a sense of their beauty rooted in time and yet somehow transcending it. Mortality enables us to see darkness in light, and light in darkness. We remember their colors. How we felt in their presences, enlivened as if a thread of infinity held us and it was through them that we have felt most alive. Then there is our ability to imagine them when they’ve become ghosts, an ability that makes us feel loss keenly and yet the act of summoning these ghosts fills us. Thus beauty is ether—sullied by ghosts, clothed in memory, revisited by imagination. What is beauty but to have known fullness?

Beauty achieves forms that are expressions of the human soul. So beauty is form, and form beauty—a variant of Keatsian truth. The quest for ultimate truth leads us to beauty. To quote O’Donohue, “We were sent into the world alive with beauty. As soon as we choose Beauty, unseen forces conspire to guide and encourage us towards unexpected forms of compassion, healing and creativity.” We heal from our woundedness, are transfigured through feeling, suffering. Then the beauty of our own human soul becomes luminous. Beauty is, says O’Donohue, “the illumination of your soul.”

How do we begin to see beauty? When our souls awaken and begin to recognize the concealed beauty of our mystical world, our stance changes to one filled with reverence and longing. We become attuned to nature’s rhythm—day and night; the change of seasons. Beauty makes us love. Love discloses another’s sacred and secret identity. It allows us to see one another in the soul’s individuality. I see you. An African greeting, “sawa bona”. The response is “Sikhona” (“I am here”). The exchange means, “until you see me, I do not exist and when you see me, you bring me into existence.” The beauty of the human soul seen by another.

How do we begin to see beauty in suffering? When we experience unexpected grace, in whatever form. Our cover art, Sandro Botticelli’s *The Annunciation*, depicts the Virgin Mary being visited by the angel, Gabriel, receiving the message that she had been impregnated and would bear the son of God. That is a moment of grace and significance, made timeless through art. Isn’t life more meaningful if one is given a sense of some higher order? That kind of spirituality is surely how beauty resonates with soul. Is there beauty in mystery, you might ask.

Nature-inspired poems, creaturely poems, love poems, spiritual poems—would you have it within to find a note of sacred beauty somewhere? A reason to celebrate saying “I am here.” Above all, presence is beautiful, real or ghost.

... Have you noticed?
how the immense circles still,
stubbornly, after a hundred years,
mark the grass where the rich droppings
from the roaring bulls
fell to the earth as the herd stood
day after day, moon after moon
in their tribal circle, outwaiting
the packs of yellow-eyed wolves that are also
have you noticed? gone now.

Mary Oliver, "Ghosts"

We present our poetic quest.

Irene Toh and Tawnya Smith, Editors
Red Wolf Journal
<http://redwolfjournal.wordpress.com/>

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I think that by beauty, you don't just mean something that's pretty. You mean something that makes us human.

— Ara Dellaira, *Love Letters To The Dead*

The Monks in My Head

by Holly Day

my garden makes me think of God, of
the Alsatian monks toiling endless to create
climbing, bright-faced clematis that would spread
all over a wall, taking tiny yellow down-turned flowers on thin
upright stalks and unleashing something holy, wholly
new twining plants with palm-sized flowers in shades
of blue and white and pink and purple.

my beer makes me think of God, of how
hours of studying and painstaking labor
in the basements of Belgian monasteries helped improve
guttural meads flavored with clover and honey
how those monks must have thought they'd bottled something holy
when they tasted their own creations, kept them secret and hidden
from the hungry flat-ale-swilling masses outside.

The Wooden Man

by Holly Day

a man made of wood would be a much more practical being
than a man made of flesh, a man with knotted arms
coarse flesh, rough bark, rooted to the ground
unable to leave. I imagine the women
of those long ago forests carrying
new babies in their arms, determined to forget
who the single sperm on that single night
came from, I see those women

holding their babies up to the best trees
the old, tall ones with birds in their crowns
squirrels in their crooks, rabbits under their roots
saying, "This is your father," spinning elaborate
but believable tales of strong, beautiful, dependable dryads
visiting sleeping children during the night, planting
dew-damp and sap-scented kisses on tow-framed foreheads
whispering the secrets of the forest in their tiny
sleeping ears, and how the tree outside your door

is the thing that makes this home.

The Rescue

by Holly Day

my father's hands parting
the water, trying to see
past leaves, dead fish, floating branches
diving down and finding
nothing

every time the wind blows the curtains in
every shadow that doesn't belong
where is she

thirty years later and I'm still
waiting for her ghost

Missing Keystrokes

by Holly Day

typewriter lies dead in the corner
on the floor, keyboard split, askew, like a mouthful
of angry teeth inlaid with
carefully-set pieces of ebony screaming
“hit me again you
qwerty motherfucker”

typewriter burns bright in the corner, tapering
flames darken the single sheet of paper still
stuck in the dented rubber roller one
word burns brighter than the rest taunts
“happily” asks “are you happy now”

Holly Day has taught writing classes at the Loft Literary Center in Minnesota, since 2000. Her published books include *Music Theory for Dummies*, *Music Composition for Dummies*, *Guitar All-in-One for Dummies*, *Piano All-in-One for Dummies*, *Walking Twin Cities*, *Insider’s Guide to the Twin Cities*, *Northeast Minneapolis: A History*, and *The Book Of*, while her poetry has recently appeared in *New Ohio Review*, *SLAB*, and *Gargoyle*. Her newest poetry book, *Ugly Girl*, just came out from Shoe Music Press.

Chains I Must Break

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

I am in a hurry to wander by,
to love and praise world's beauties,
before, all at once, they cease to be.
I must love mainly the sad ones,
that were not loved
not by lack of lovers
but by lack of love.
So proud of my want,
only will praise some wild
and lost in hidden waterfalls,
after untrodden ways.
I will break my heavy chains
and soon start my journey,
avoiding one chronic sadness
and the trampling of the ways
I will pass by.

Foreboding

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

By suddenly noticing the largeness of the horizons
and all beauty they unceasingly frame our world.

By tender and dreamlike resting tonight,
seeing her face before asleep.

By enjoying full air all the day long,
missing it when she approaches me.

Surely, I must be in love.

But with whom, I have no doubt that
nor to the walls should I reveal.

A Cavalcade and a Prayer

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

Outdoors, on sunny days

and blue a sky,

I ride the wind to see all beauties that are spread

by all this earth.

Indoors, by night and before asleep,

I pray and kiss these walls that gently have sheltered

the rest and dreams of a man born in old a caste,

now in oblivion; they that live only by the sake of love,

having learned anything else,

nothing more.

Sudden Love

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

When I saw you and faced your beauty,
you did not know that I ignored love.
Nor did I.
But you dared with adventure of youth
and, fearful, surprised, seduced, I was loved.

Love came, all of a sudden, firm and bold.
Despite not expected, lodged as beloved son
who, long absent, returns to the paternal home.

You stared at me and your lips and eyes said words
I had never known and never listened to: I love you.
By these words, like a blessing, you joined us forever.

I remember that I felt as if I was caught in a rain,
one of those admirable summer rains,
that shakes winds and frightens with thunderbolts
but cleans skies, shines hearts, refreshes the soul.

With love you blew slumbered coals
that I had never supposed would exist.
Flame lit and rises, higher and higher,
maybe reach even our hidden heaven.

Take care that flame just warms it, do not destroy,
nor reveals to suspicious and envious human eyes.

Old Days

by Edilson Afonso Ferreira

Once happiness touched me and I am sure
anyone never will take it from me.

Its touch has branded me with a living fire,
impregnating me with so stellar a light
only very little of us have been afforded to.

I am sure that for life and yet beyond its borders
we will remain cherished by the joy and beauty,
for ours were some days of pure hearted a love.

Mr. Ferreira is a Brazilian poet who writes in English rather than Portuguese, in order to reach more people. Has been published in online or printed venues like *Cyclamens and Swords*, *Right Hand Pointing*, *Boston Poetry Magazine*, *The Lake*, *The Stare's Nest*, *The Provo Canyon*, *Amomancies*, *Subterranean Blue*, *The Gambler*, *Whispers*, *Every Day Poems*, *Indiana Voice Journal* and some others. Short listed in four American Poetry Contests, lives in a small town with wife, three sons and a granddaughter and has begun writing after retirement as a Bank Manager. He is collecting his works for a forthcoming book.

My Heart Will Know

by Christopher Hileman

Do I like lemon cucumber? Do I? This is Rodney's
Question for me tonight as I last minute trim the unruly
Clematis on the trellis that guards my open door.

There is jasmine there too, and in my heart the spring
Memory of the blooming duel of beauty and perfume
Dances with his question of me. He offers me food.

While I fill the bin with trimmings that go in the morning
To the mulching place the city offers for my shed greens
I think on a neighbor who is kind. Rodney is kind to me.

We settle, Rodney and I on tomatoes. In the gardens
He tends there are armies of tomatoes and I know
I find kindred in the ripening of these fine red soldiers.

I shall eat a squad or two and my soul will fill and my belly will
Fill as well. I am told there is tonic in tomatoes. Oh yes.

And my heart, oh my heart will know I've been invited home.

Asking

by Christopher Hileman

It is such a silly question. Why would I ask?
I sit under this late summer tree in the dust
Of autumn coming. I seek you, seeking truth.

I watch for the turning leaves, as if I could see
Green depart and drier colors stay behind,
As if finding that is finding you, or truth.

I call for you to approach, to take me up
As if you would provide spring's return now.
Can we fly above, skip this winter's coming?

So in this late season's light I am a holy fool
In love with you, with truth, entranced in song.
I have called for you, called for life beyond.

Yes, a holy, silly question, now that I have asked.

We Will All Fly

by Christopher Hileman

Today a bird sang and amazed, I understood.
My heart birthed so many small white flowers
That the perfume around me was intense, overwhelming.
Each flower seemed perfect but I looked much closer
To discover the small spots, discolored and hopeful-
Not perfect but instead a flowering hopeful perfume.
The bird sang and I understood the hope in her song.
Even this wondrous bird with just one feather broken sings.
That is how I knew the secret was revealed to me.

If ever there is a perfect moment, a time when one
Small thing is actually revealed without blemish to be
What it is in all purity beyond all need of hope
Then gravity will cease in the joy of it and the world
Will end, amen. We will all fly then on singing wings,
God's Permission granted to us at last,
Permission to soar in that holy sky.

Christopher Hileman moved to Oregon in 1973. He has retired to live on the volcanic bluff overlooking Willamette Falls in Oregon City, Oregon. He ascends the stairs from his basement digs to improvise on his Yamaha keyboard or the house Playel grand when the calico cat releases him from below. The part-Irish Wolfhound here likes him.

Castlerigg Circle

by Nancy Iannucci

A howling sound of sorrow
wound around each stone
surged by the blow of the
great northern wind,

echoing in remembrance
of a tradesman's aching

breath, a Neolithic gasp
that exhaled from primeval
lungs in heated, penetrative
spirals encircling his maiden's
long, moss-scented neck;
he pursued her silken hair
like a Rapunzel trail through
busy Beltane trade gatherings.

One year he constructed a
small platform of stone
in the center of Castlerigg's
bustling fair on which his maiden
would dance and sing for all
the days of the gathering,
a performance he stopped to watch
before bartering his chisel and scraper.

Year after year after year
he paused to see her
graceful spin atop
his stone like a wind-up
music box, around, around,

and around until the gatherings
ceased and the two

disappeared
only to resurrect, transformed
in an excavation of
rubble language spoken
in dust, axe head, and bone.
Learned linguists pen specious
tales of Druid altars and
virgin sacrifices ruled by the
mood of the moon.

In vain
The winds off of Thirlmere
and Helvellyn endeavor
to disclose the unsung truth
of a tradesman, his stone stage,
and his beautiful maiden performer.

Process notes:

I am drawn to myth, fairytales, fables, folklore and legends; therefore, I often find myself conjuring stories in my head in connection to ancient sites such as Stonehenge and Castlerigg. Who knows, perhaps a tale such as this did take place.

Nancy Iannucci is a historian who teaches history and lives poetry in Troy, NY. She has always been entranced by the mysticism of life and the fine line that exists between our world and the mystical. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Three Line Poetry*, *Red Wolf Journal*, *Rose Red Review*, *Faerie Magazine (FB photography)*, and *Mirror Dance*. She is currently working on her first chapbook.

From Your Shoulder

by Christopher Oak Reiner

Yes,
I do
love to
touch and
lightly trace
the subtle slope
from your shoulder
down to your breast,
the way your skin lies,
like silk laid softly down
from the shoulder of a great
and graceful mountain – the very
mountain whose grace can best be
understood by knowing this about
you: this sweet slope from your
shoulder to your breast. For
only by knowing this can one
know how grand yet lovely
soft and fragile can be
the shoulder of a
mountain.

Grace

by Christopher Oak Reinier

There is in the grace
of your woman-ness –
your voice –
a light caress, yes,
but in your body's word,
a lilt, not consciously
addressing...
but quietly...
and sometimes nothing –
or a simple gesture,
a small gift – like a
swallow flying
lightly on a breeze –
needing only the arc
of its flight.

Katy Did

by Christopher Oak Reinier

Katy did,
and Katy does,
and, yes, I like her way.
What she did she does with love.
That's all I need to say.
But I'd say more,
if words could carry dynamite,
if ways of speaking were like laughing music,
if grace come walking quickly from a distance
could be described: light, swift, certain, wild –
a shadow in the corner of my eye,
bursting into starlight,
and smiling all the way.
Oh heart!
How many strikings can you stay?

Christopher Oak Reinier lives and writes by the Russian River in Sonoma County, California. One of his poems, "October Morning on the River", was published in the *Red Wolf Journal, Summer 2014*.

Beauty

by Roslyn Ross

Beauty butterflyed my mind,
stroked soft across my smile
came light to rest with endless
grace, wings folded round my soul.

A moment sitting silent,
brushed gently by life's breath
and then she soared to sunlight's song
and left my self bereft.

Seeing Beauty

by Roslyn Ross

Intangible, yet recognised, revealing form and place,
identified, realised, transforming mind and heart,
through energies unseen, unknown, undiagnosed,
so does beauty birth in glory, suddenly defined.
To track the path and purposes of that made manifest,
to find the course that it does take toward perfection,
is something which cannot be done or demanded,
for the sublime creates itself in hidden, unknown places.
When soul connects to that which births in glorious shape,
then comes the moment for which the mind does seek,
and that which is called art, eternal, ephemeral, so real,
does stand before us, silent, and yet to all does speak.

Roslyn Ross is an Australian writer, journalist, editor and poet who has been writing poetry since she was a child. She has lived in many countries around the world and been inspired by the variety of experiences she has had.

Élan vital — Evolution of My Soul

by Debi Swim

In the Sedona hills someone built a wood covered platform and added plastic chairs. It looks out on a Buddha statue sitting on red dirt and scruffy growing things. I sat with him in the dry heat of the day, he quietly placid faced and I pensive, still. I had just seen the Chapel of the Holy Cross slender, reaching toward the clear open sky from a clutch of rock. My sister says the ancient rocks hold a spiritual vortex, place of healing, crystals, finding one's self and center.

Shaded from the sun in the shadow of Buddha I think of Sanctity.

She speaks of the line of light snaking up the slopes of chanting, drum beating, singing, worshipful souls in the late evenings sometimes. People don't want a religion but they desire a connection. In the pure peacefulness of an open sky dotted with a billion stars there is a feeling of Otherness there. A deep-seated desire for union with, understanding of, acceptance, wholeness, a filling of the emptiness we call a spiritual journey.

Our lives are a journey toward what has always been waiting for us to find.



Image via Wikipedia

Debi's note: I visited my sister in Sedona and was impressed with its beauty and sacredness.

Sea of Matrimony

by Debi Swim

We've sailed these seas for many a year
set out with high hopes of conquest
following maps and word of mouth
to treasures of jewel and gold
to love both pure and bold
to quests meant to be retold.

Through squalls and storm
both calm seas and becalmed
we've kept our head and heart.
And the fire that once burned
is rekindled for the return
to home with bounty well earned.

Note: Written in response to Red Wolf Poems' Prompt 93.

"Write a poem in which you are out at sea, in a place of no name, before you make landfall. Maybe it's a place where beauty is present only by being absent. Or where beauty is apparent but there is only absence. Sure you've been in a place like that."

Resurrected Words

by Debi Swim

The sound of goodbye.
The final lingering look.
It will never be enough
I'll want one day more
and then one day more,
so much left to leave, to say,
so I must fill my days with
what will fill your heart
with remembrances
pieces of me written on paper
to make you sigh, smile, relive
our best selves, childhood,
dreams and our awkward moments...
and though in the end it means
very little to the world it will matter
maybe to you, family, a few friends
and I will be somewhere smiling
perhaps as you read and together
we'll laugh though you'll only hear
the crisp flip of pages and whispers
of words... I'll come forth
a body of proof
to my existence.

Note: Written in response to Red Wolf Poems' Prompt 94.

"I was thinking about David Bowie's "Lazarus". It was released on 17 December 2015 as an advance single from his twenty-fifth studio album, Blackstar, which was released in January 2016. The music video was shot in November 2015 in a studio in the New York City borough of Brooklyn. David Bowie died on 10 January 2016. I also read news that Bowie curated posthumous albums. Basically the bloke

lived out his artistic vision up to the point of death and beyond. If you're a true artist, you ought to do that. There is no other choice. So go on, do your Lazarus poem."

Evolution of Inspiration

by Debi Swim

Just for arguments sake, let's say,
there are a million words in English
to choose from, winnow through,
shift like flour, cogitate over for exactitude
of meaning, shades of consideration.
From a fevered few come the pure
elixir of, draughts of, casks of heady phrases—
ambrosial scrumptiousness. A potent breath.

Who whispers in my ear a magic incantation?
What sharp stab of pain birthed such beauty
that pierces my soul with splinters of grace?
A muse? A ghost? A fairy, elf or gnome? Gift of God?
Divine wind, Ecstasy, altered state of consciousness?
There must be an ether field of dead poets' dreams
that seep into my insentience to school my tongue
in winsome ways of poetic petit-four delights.

Note: Written in response to Red Wolf Poems' Prompt 96.

"Have you ever wondered, considering the infinity of poems one is capable of, where the heck they come from? Is there in fact a collective unconscious as Yeats believed? That we could retrieve this pool of meaning through reading, isn't that marvellous? How the hell are we supposed to retrieve than through reading and writing, you tell me? So reflect upon all I have said. Write, see what you've retrieved."

Moments of Plumb

by Debi Swim

This morning I awoke and felt...different, not merely happy, not just rested, but lighter, buoyant. I've felt this way a handful of times in my long life and it is always difficult to understand, let alone explain. So, I just enjoy these rare, rare days of... whatever this is.

Then, this morning, I knew. I knew I fit into this small part of the universe where normally I am just slightly out of sync. For these brief moments, I fit snugly into the puzzle board (the wooden one that the pieces fall from so easily), straight, tight, aligned, instead of my usual wonky fit.

Ever out of sync
befuddled, awkward, askew
finally harmony

Note: Written in response to Red Wolf Poems' Prompt 98.

"Writing after all is an act of courage, and of faith, and all of which would be pointless if not for love. Lover of truth, aren't we all? Isn't that why you bother to read at all? So let your poem come to some point of truth. An epiphany of sorts. What, you do have epiphanies don't you?"

Debi Swim writes primarily to prompts. She is a wife, mother, grandmother and happy WV poet. Blogs at georgeplacepoetrybydebiswim.

The Gaining of Wisdom

by Alan Toltzis

Stuffing one last bit
of moist green leaf into his bulging maw,
caterpillar felt something
new—
he was full.

His fearsome, snake-eyed skin
stretched
and split
as he spit a filament-wide hammock
that solidified in midair.
More goo buttoned him to a twig
among his lacy chronicles
of nonstop feasting.

Muscular, peristaltic wriggling
rid him of his last rag of beauty.
It fell away
revealing the luminous, ringed sarcophagus
that was always within.

Immobile and shielded,
he would never eat again
or crawl,
or spin.

By knowing what was inside him,
everything
was about to change.

Process Notes: The poem itself went through a lot of change and revision. It started as an exploration of whether we can truly be aware of another's needs. I then started wondering about self-awareness and if we could anticipate our own needs as we change and grow. That led me to the caterpillar and the striking differences as it changes from caterpillar to chrysalis. The poem ended up saying something different about beauty and how it can hamper and then lead to self-discovery and appreciation of differences.

Alan Toltzis is the author of the book of poems, *The Last Commandment*. His work has appeared in print and online journals including *The Provo Canyon Review*, *The Red Wolf Literary Journal*, *Poetica*, and *Burningword Literary Journal*. Visit him online at <http://www.alantoltzis.com>.

That it will never come again is what makes life so sweet.
– Emily Dickinson