

2010 POEMS

Judge Jane Hall's Comments

The "question poem," with its intimate connection of voice and reader has universal appeal. A fine example is Gary Cooke's winning poem "Where the World Began" with a depth and freshness as if his question might have been asked for the first time.

Especially lovely are images of clouds that "glide or tremble / depending on the season" as he fills in a landscape that creates a protective mantle for the rest of the poem.

Cooke says his poems "reflect the mysteries and wonders of life that happen in particular moments, poem-photographs of those moments". Particularly effective snapshots are the lines "dirt at her feet deep with love" and a question "neither lips nor wind can make it change?", unexpected combinations of the concrete and ethereal that strengthen the spine of a poem. He is a trustworthy poet.

Submissions to the Judd's Hill 2010 Poetry Contest ranged from Haiku, Tanka, classic and shaped forms, to humor, reminiscence and nostalgia. This is a stylish collection in so many ways, as can be seen on these pages. Congratulations to Gary Cooke and to the dedicated poets and wine-lovers who contributed work this year.

Where the World Began by Gary Cooke

What if this is where the world began,
this vine shaped like a mother,
her two arms lifted high, tendrils
of new growth extending toward heaven,
the sun backlighting the leaves
so they glow with divine fire?

Look at her weathered face
and skin, standing there
all those years, the dirt
at her feet deep with love,
her roots digging down
to the riches only she knows
are there. Above, clouds
glide or tremble, depending
on the season, rain falls to earth
and rises again in the great ritual
of time passing.

What if this is the whole story,
and neither lips nor wind
can make it change? What if
the light in these green and yellow leaves
and the light in the red tree spreading above,
is the first light to reach earth,
and we stand here, our blood
in every grape, and we are part of
how it begins again?

WINE by Christopher Buckley

*I like to drink wine more than I used to—
Anyway, I'm drinking more . . .*

—Don Corleone

All day, the twine crisscrossing my heart—
the way, in the '50s, you'd tie up
brown paper parcels for the post—tightens
by degrees . . . but at last, in our lawn chairs,
in the late afternoon shade of the pine,
the first glass—a bruise-dark cabernet
or black Umbrian, complex, big-bodied—
loosens the knot and lets me breathe out
into the sky, far enough away
from the world to love
the honey suckle swimming up
the stem of the air, the pink foxgloves
aligned like tiny Venetian cups.

Each sip

calms my blood like wind quitting

over a pond, the light trickling down
the plum leaves, the ruby shimmering
of the hummingbird's throat.

I look west

over the haze of foothills, and I am on a terrace
above a small estate, its vineyards stretching
into an amber dust, off to the horizon
where I can feel the few clouds stationed there—
going red against the sun, sweet as Sangiovese—
lifting lightly from my chest.

Drinking Champagne by Christopher Buckley

When he first tasted sparkling wine, Dom Perignon
imagined he was drinking stars . . .

bubbles like pearls, rising through liquid the thin
color of beaten gold.

Overlooking the sea, the moon dribbling out

its dabs of light, fingering

the silk trees' old thoughts. That may be as close

as we are likely to come

to celestial rewards. If I didn't know better in my bones,

I'd swear I'd be the one

to get out of here alive, the one to forgive the stars

for misleading us all this time.

On the Occasion of Wedding Anniversary #27

by Alana Sherman

Whenever my marriage goes awry
I never bother to question why
I merely reach for a bottle of wine
And very soon everything's looking fine

When fights disturb connubial bliss
I don't seek analysis
I beg your pardon Sigmund Freud

But a Pinot makes me less annoyed

A simple Chateau-neuf-du-pape
Can bring a wrangle to a stop
And every sip of Chardonnay
Ensures another anniversary

So here's to Vin, both white and red
They help preserve the marriage bed.

Anniversary Poem by Alana Sherman

Here I am in April sunshine
heedlessly downing the Veuve Cliquot
I am drinking too much because we are
no longer young and madly in love—

(It's the madly part I always miss.)
I shouldn't cry, it would alarm our guests.
Our friend Donna, recently engaged—
reveling in new domesticity—

has by the mixing and sifting of ingredients
made us a pineapple upside down cake.
With each sugary and acid bite I know
my life with you is all I ever asked.

There really is nothing more I want—
Youth is a stupid thing to grieve.
For as long as we can be together
I will be happy with this life.

THE WINE TASTING by Barbara Crooker

The connoisseurs meet to drink and compare,
roll redness on their tongues,
inhale the heady air,
rate and bicker.

Watch them make their lists:

there's a noble Lucent
and a crisp Charisma, estate bottled.
Perhaps they'll include some old Patina
or a robust Lamborghini.

What about a Raddichio--
such a prominent nose!

Or sweet liqueurs--
a golden Mellifluous,
a delicate Gallinule.

Around the oaken library table
they sit and compare
weigh and measure
the savor and bouquet
of such a chosen few:
a Roseola '68
an Annelid '80
or a Clairvoyant from any even year.

First appeared in West Branch, then in *Obbligato* (Linwood Publishers, 1992)

Notes Of Earth by Jill Koenigsdorf

Wild grapes, probably started by imbibing crows
Drape the back fence-
their dark clusters frosted with what some might call
Bacchus dust.

I like to squeeze the warm pulp into my mouth-

toss the skin to the ground & wait
for delighted ants
to cart it away.

The leaves on the vines-
Row after row for miles-
California's best gander of Fall Foliage
are beginning to turn-
Mirroring the burgundies and clarets
that will eventually fill the glasses.

Out the gate &
Past the sturdy Roan mare grazing on
Dried mustard and anise -
Up over the hill-
winding through the old oaks-
the dappled sunlight and acorns of
Oakville Grade and Trinity-
Connecting
Two valleys sharing a vinaceous past.

I spill out into a land of stories-
The Vineyards:
Survivors of immigration and Root Louse and Prohibition.
I sit on a sunny terrace & imagine
the thousands of hands that have nurtured
these grapes-
the history in the luscious liquid
swirling in my glass.

When the sniffers speak of
"Fleshy" or "Finesse,"
"Big" or "Complex,"
Honeyed, hard, up front-
I see the human counterparts
To these adjectives-
Generations walking these rows
seed to bottle to cellar.
And when I hear "notes of earth"

I cannot help but appreciate
The whole cycle-
All of it-
catching the light
there in my glass-
All of it-
ready to be savored.

The Invention of Champagne by Lola Haskins

The damp stones radiated dark.
Mon dieu, said the monk,
who had made a mistake.
I am drinking stars.

Blessing the Grapes by Arlene Mandell

Which shall we sip with our feast
of grilled quail or barbecued salmon--

Cabernet with floral notes of violet
Merlot with flavors of tart cherries
or Syrah, inky purple with a hint of smoke?

Let us now bless these vines that bring forth
such delights while recalling that first
taste of the grape in a Brooklyn third-floor
walk-up, its intense sweetness, the roasted
chicken and apple sauce from a jar

a feast highlighted when Grandpa Louis
from Kobrin, Russia gave me
and my brother each a Roosevelt dime.

Tanka Wine by Darrell Lindsey

a dragonfly
pauses on her kimono
at twilight
perhaps I, too, should linger
as she sips her glass of wine

to let moonlight
caress your dreams
in the pampas grass—
the mere thought of it
must rival Li Po's wine

Three Women in White Robes, With Red Wine
by Patricia Monaghan

We have a single photo from that night:
fresh from the pool, hair in wet ringlets,
cuddled into identical white robes,
heads tilted together, glasses raised
in a toast to friendship as the sun
sets in a blaze of red behind us.

No one could mistake us for the girls
we were when we met, those wild ones
up north who drank beer from pitchers
and would dance with almost anyone
and rarely saw dawn from the daylight side.

In that photo, it's hard to see our eyes,
set in their thickets of tiny lines. But I remember:
how they still flame with joy and wildness and-
in you, my oldest friends-unquenchable desire.
I know our juice is richer now, more
intoxicating; our laughter is fuller-bodied

now but just as sweet; I understand that we
are growing into fullness just like aging vines.

De Gustibus by Patricia Monaghan

Turns out the ex-wife's favorite wine
is the same as mine--the one I'd fancied
my secret, my weekend escape--that
little local sevyal blanc, sharply sweet.

I always said she showed good taste
in leaving him: leaving him to me.

So what's the problem? More good taste.

Nonetheless, I think I'll find another wine.

Transubstantiation by Patricia Monaghan

Sunday. End of summer.
Cloudless sky. A flight of geese.

And the day's epistle reads,
"I bud forth delights like the vine,

my blossoms become fruit
fair and rich, I am the mother

of fair love and of fear and
of knowledge and of holy hope,

come to me, be filled with fruit,"
for it is the vigil of the virgin

ascending, the day we climb to
the bishop's vineyard. Just weeks

to harvest, grapes rich and fair.
The sumac flames, the geese cry out,

the asters bloom, the apples fall.
From soil and stone, the vines ascend.

Untitled by Rachel E. Pollock

brass-rail bellied-up at the wine bar
drinking with my manager
across the goal-line of a day's crazy work
a parade of the smackable
no alcohol permitted on the premises
we fled

the man uncorking is a failed running-back
blond and broad-grinned
with a heavy pouring paw

the malbec swirls, and it's first date flutters

not for my boss
nor the blond ballplayer
me and the mysterious stranger, the wine:

a night filled with music,
dark fruits and jewels, wood smoke,
folded tentcloth

we look at one another,
we three people,
and smile
our cares stolen by liquid evening
and jubilation

SEASONS END by Sandra Ervin Adams

Underneath an arbor of leaves
on vines woven together by time,
I saw the sun peek through.
I reached up, picked plump Scuppernongs
from the fruitful roof
of Granddaddy's canopy.
He kept his hands busy:
built houses; grew tobacco,
gardens, and grapes;
made homemade wine.
My tiny teeth and tongue separated
the sweet fruit from its skin.
That ended up in dirt.

Inside the house, he sleeps,
looks thin, does not speak.
Before December is over
I will have waited in the hospital lobby,

crying when I hear the news.

Come next fall
I will return to his arbor
to pick the grapes.

Published in *The Lyricist*, Campbell University, 2006

OFF SEASON by Sandra Ervin Adams

A sign bearing grape clusters
leads me up the lane
to a Carolina winery
pressed between farms –
royal land, a grant from a king,
to my family centuries ago.

Looking left, then right,
row after row of vinery:
naked, gray, waiting.
The fruit of last year's crop
fragrances the air while it
ferments in fat, red barrels,
soon to sit in a warehouse.

A white-haired, refined gentleman
invites me into the foyer
of the chilly main building.
Muscadine, Scuppernong, Concord,
sealed in bottles and exhibited.
A remodeled tasting room will host
those who tirelessly tip their glasses,
parley the pleasures of their palates.

Published in *New River High Tide*, Council for the Arts, 2008

Helen's Haiku by Helen Ruggieri

a yellow leaf
describes the course
of the wind

Wine So Sly and Fine by Lynn Veach Sadler

Aesop's fox sought grapes
settlers cultivated vines
wise want wine for health

Cellar in the Sky by Lucille Gang Shulklapper

This much I remember:
you, on your 50th birthday,
handsome in a gray tailored suit,
electric blue shirt, flowered tie,
me, swathed in burgundy velvet,
whisked to the 107th floor
of the World Trade Center,
in a rush of air , humming motors,
pulsating motion.

We flew faster than the planes
we glimpsed with eye gulps of headiness
when the doors opened into
Windows on the World, one restaurant
leading toward another, the Cellar in the Sky,

glass enclosed, like a giant glass of wine,
we swirled and sipped from, swallowed.

We savored the deep red Amarone,
it's strong character and flavor, its name
sounding like slant rhyme for the Italian word
"amore." Later, we bought a case and drank "love"
over and over again, the way I remember
the morning the planes struck, over and over again,
when the cellar and the sky reversed themselves.
But never the word "love,"
nor the full-bodied wine of our lives.

Appears in: In the Tunnel: Chapbook published by March Street Press

Ode to the Niagara Grape and Wine Festival

By Kevin Patrick McCabe

Comes Dionysus to our festival?
The god of wine and mirth, but also sorrow,
For while his nights with joy and song are full,
We feel his presence altered on the morrow.
At night we shout and drink and dance,
And try our chance at new romance,
But comes the morrow and the shining sun,
Which eyes of night would very gladly shun.

The long day in the vineyard is our lot,
To pluck the clusters of the teeming vine;
But with the harvest gathered, toil's forgot,
For when the vats begin to fill with wine
A festival the gods decree,
To praise their bounty gratefully

Is our concern, and that none feel unblessed,
Together we shall celebrate the feast.

Hail, Bacchus, hail, who gives to man
A better joy than thinking can,
A fruit so juicy, plump and sweet
Our appetite grows as we eat.
A liquor of such splendid worth
That the immortals come to earth,
And leave their nectar in gold cups
To crink what every mortal sips.

Great son of Jove, do you intend
With us this festival to spend?
For you taught men to plant the vine,
To harvest grapes, and make the wine;
For such a blessing come at least
To be partaker of the feast,
And when you come we promise too
A song of praise to welcome you.

But Dionysus, in the ancient woods,
And hidden valleys ringed by shining mountains,
Leads forth the satyrs, nymphs, and forest gods,
By dusky groves and streams and murmuring fountains,
To revel there until the sun
Banishes night and nightly fun
And with his curious eye ascends the heavens.
Then turn the revelers to their mossy caverns.

And now the festive day approaches nigh;
Our plans mature and hasten to conclusion:
The marchers march, the bands play, and all try
To bring arrangements to a happy union;
For when the celebration comes,
And we parade with horns and drums,
May feelings of unease be nowhere near,
But may all things combine to grace us here.

Come Bacchus for the bright sunshine

Has brought its blessings to the vine
And the sweet savour of the grape
Does gently in the air escape.
The fruit begins to ripen now,
The purpling dye begins to show,
The harvesters are in the field,
And soon the vines will give their yield.

But what delays the lazy god?
Perhaps a maiden in the wood
Has caught his eye; perhaps he sleeps
And still in dreams his revel keeps.
O Bacchus, wherefore do you wait?
For you will come, I fear, too late,
For, see, the festival's begun,
The vines are bare, the harvest done.

But Dionysus, through the vineyards fair
And soft Niagara landscape, gently sloping,
Now leads his singing, dancing, followers
By country ways to where the march is grouping.
He joins the festival parade
And songs of triumph then are played
To welcome here the bounteous vagabond,
Who blesses all the people with his wand.

His praise we sing who gave to men the vine;
We celebrate him first, who first was giver,
But we do not forget the grapes and wine
Which every year our husbandmen deliver.
Of vineyard workers let us sing
And praise the produce that they bring,
Which tempted Dionysus to our lands
And gave our Festival all a feast demands.

Word Tasting by Cheryl W. Wilke

I read and study the poems of
the masters. I swirl them inside
my long-stemmed glass. Watch
for the color and clarity. Breathe
in deeply and note their smell.
Oak. Berry. Flowers. Citrus. I roll
the words in my mouth and
under my tongue. Then I launch
them into the spittoon where
they defy the odds
of gravity
and fall
into
perfect
order
again.
Little
did the
masters
know
that the
carefully
selected
words
they
stomped,
fermented
and bottled
would lend us mortals
the pleasure of tasting eternity.