

Montepulciano and Caravaggio

by Wally Swist is the 2014 Judd's Hill Poetry Contest Winner

I have thought about you tonight in my savoring
a glass, or two, of a delicious Montepulciano

D'Abruzzo (Vendemmia 2008), along with
a double-cream Brie. However, it would have

been better paired with a Gorgonzola, but I am
not complaining. This particular Montepulciano

offers such a rich palette of various layers of dark
cherry, and spice laced with purple plum,

that open out across the tongue, and in tasting it
I imagine I could be viewing a still life

by Caravaggio, and concomitantly sharing
in the portion of the abundance spread across

the table in the light from beyond the edges
of the painting. The last sentence is an example

of what is known as paratactic syntax, that is
sometimes attributed to the adaptation

of Oriental poetry in English, in which two
dissimilar images, or fragments, are juxtaposed

without any direct connection of one statement
with the other, such as: it is snowing tonight,

and I will step into the storm to sit beneath
the white candelabra of the branches

of the Kousa dogwood. Perhaps a better
example is: tomorrow I will walk across

the snowy fields, and when I stop by the river
in the sunlight, I will think of Caravaggio

and taste the Montepulciano I drank last night,
but not the Gorgonzola

I did not complain being without, since I deferred
to my humility, and left it in the painting.

Ode to February

By Wally Swist

Sweet onions and sardines browned in a skillet in olive oil,
served with the blessing of two day-old baguette and a glass

from a bottle of an affordable Cotes-Du-Rhone, is the closest
I may ever come to *Tushita Heaven*, as I listen to the pouring

winter rain, and am aware I need little else that compares
with *just this* and these blue lights that flash in their nests

of snow shadow from the slow moving traffic I watch
from the front windows of the farmhouse that face the road.

The Toast
by Wally Swist

I have taken
a sip of wine, as you suggested,

and am savoring it in honor
of us both, as if I were

tasting your lips, while thinking
of you. Before I swallow

its bouquet of dark berried fruit
and licorice, with tones

of wild plum, I imagine you,
here, with me—our bodies

irresistibly linked
in a tangle of each other's arms.

Note to the Marriott Motel Maid

At Morning Checkout

by Carol Gordon

I know how it looks.

The blankets stirred;

The tumblers reeking spirits.

It wasn't that countess in Bordeaux,
her elegant assurance that a little glass mid-morning
is essential for digestion,

it was finding wine left
in the bottle, and no stopper.

This brief apology on your kindly
offered note-pad just suggests
that what we smuggle through the lobby
behind these married faces,
pedestrian as trench coats,

what we'll remember while you vacuum
tuck, and disinfect, is nothing undignified,
(yesterday's underpants on the hook
behind the bathroom door,)

but something occasionally retrievable,
like a perfect St. Emilion cork rolled out of sight
beneath the gathered skirts of a motel arm chair.

A Week After Our Daughter's Wedding

We call a Plumber

by Carol Gordon

One thing you can depend on
after a major family event
is bursting pipes. As if
we could maintain these manners
just so long.

Our last quarrel, we've decided
is a draw.

But we console ourselves,
according to the latest polls,
the president's in trouble, too.
His wife appears before the press in pink
with matching buttons. Innocence
does not beguile us.

Weddings do.

We borrow for them,
diet, trim, and tuck it in.

We fall for it, gladly, once again.

On your knees under the sink
you curse the hardware,
the way they do things nowadays.
Who to turn to for advice?
We patch it up. We still have
a leftover bottle of champagne on ice.

WAITING TO TASTE

by Greg Waters

Hemingway was right: the hills do have skin.
Those groves of thick trees—darker—could be tufts
of hair, a birthmark, or a bearded chin.
These stakes, so straight, in the vale before us,
lined like Arlington, are corrective
soldiers, their sole purpose to keep the vines
disciplined...predictable...attentive.
Over the past month the sun did not shine;
its fingers stretch now, coaxing the rebirth
of all within the wet, ripe ground dwelling.
Now released, smell the airing of the earth;
See, almost taste, the wine inside swelling.
The young, now allowed, feel they cannot fail.
Listen: You can hear the hills exhale.

ROSE'

by Pam Malone

Each time I taste Rose'
with its mellow infusion of effervescence
I return to Aix en Provence

You and I at an outdoor café
musical notes with French flair
lifting us in the breeze

The pink blush of the wine
filling us with joy and anticipation
for what will come
after the sunflowers bow their heads
and night descends

POTATO CHIPS AND WINE

by James Scruton

Laying out silverware for a party
the other night, arranging plates
and folding linen napkins,
I was tempted once again
to plunk a bag of chips down
as an appetizer, something
suitably déclassé and crispy,
a little flashback to the mix
of junk food and refinement
on our tiny balcony years ago,
the crunching and the clink
of glasses as we toasted
ourselves, our excellent taste.

What's romance if not delight
in the incongruous, your pearl earrings
and fuzzy slippers this evening,
my silk tie and sneakers?
Now, no guests on the way,
let's rip open some big bag
and eat from our best china,
let's uncork that bottle
we've been saving for
God knows what
and sip like newlyweds
from each other's paper cup.

OTHER MUSES

by James Scruton

Classical poets often invoked the wine muses.

—student misprint

There's poetry in such a misprint,
inspiration red or white, sweet or dry,
muses less courted than uncorked.
Bacchus himself might've named them,
tipsy with verse, words dripping
from his chin—Merlot the taste of history,
Chianti pouring out its dark lyric.
Like the classical Nine, there's one
for every story, any song:
the light comedy of a Pinot Grigio,
melodies of Shiraz, of Chardonnay.
Another glass and I'll be composing
vine by vine, bard of Bardolino,
sage of Sangria, reciting syllables
of my own rare vintage, genius
worth a fortune if I could bottle it.

the wines of war

by Juley Harvey

"the world must know lebanon is not just war. it has another face. it can produce wine, fine wine." -- serge hochar, owner of winery east of beirut, 1985

beirut, the home of the grape
of wrathful vines,
can produce some very fine wines,
their vintners will have us know.
that is, when the wind does blow
towards crushing creation,
instead of stemming destruction,
when the gnarled skeletons
rooted in the earth are sweet
and produce their worth,
instead of nobly rotting,
drawing crying relatives
and retaliation.
how much more plush
the ripe juice of genesis!
though both terrorists
and religious fundamentalists --
different grapes wrathed
in the same bottle --
threaten to destroy the bouquet,
full body and robust soul will endure
in the depths of blood-red cabernet.
all those once-full bodies --
all that tumbled blood --
enrich the soil, to produce
a crisp chardonnay flood.

so julio, ernest,
let's quick off to beirut,
to sip the hallowed wines of war
and go on a toot.
lebanon is not just another ugly face --
imbibe to death; it's not a bad place

to visit. to live
is rather something more.
drink up,
that's what spirits are for.
no wrathful grapes --
just taste the champagne crepes.

poetry and spirits

by Juley Harvey

distilled spirit
filtered through
imagination's champagne.

gravity, mashed potatoes, fine wine, and ice cream

by Juley Harvey

oh, my dear,
we grow too soon old, i fear,
and we have not yet been
enough young,
drunk enough fine wine,
clinked glasses before
harvest closing time,
given tongue
to cheek and song.
you need bifocals?
and i could do
with a month at a spa,
wine included.
oh la de da.
gravity settles all our wits.
it's the graped pits.
weight shifts --

we'll soon all need podiatrists,
as a friend said.
why doesn't age come
when it would be useful --
when you're young?
and youth in age,
with a warning sign.
why can't gravity work upward --
weighty minds are gifts
to psychiatrists,
while weighty hips
are a curse from the dead.
why can't the joys of age
come to the young, who are lithe, blithe
and altogether too dumb
about what is to come?
or, if not that, why can't it unfold
that the more you age,
the less you grow old?
wine helps, at any stage.
oh my dear,
we are not as we were, i fear.
and oh for such a fine fat dream --
downing scarlet golden wine
and eating mashed potatoes,
canceling the ice cream.
why, indeed, do the heathen rage?
not enough tastings
and toasts,
merlot, mead,
chardonnay, blanc de noir,
jeroboams, holy ghosts.
they have suddenly discovered
they don't barrel-age
at all well.
you need bifocals?
and i could use a spa.
well, hell's bells, judd's hill,
and oh la de da.

HOST

by T-M M Baird

all these sundays

with the moon

in my mouth

i've been trying

to ask

what you when

the bones are

cracked, the air

swirling over the cup

where it settles

onto an ocean

of veins

uncapped

for the asking

how you when

the grape plumps

and spills all

the seeds it's

ever known

on the vine
where you
are the sunlight
but scarcely the sun
who's only fire

still at the altar
not to disbelieve in robes which
hold color more than air
but with the plate held high
perhaps to kiss you thank you

who you in the snow-drenched white
unveiling,
what room in the
already full of
air lungs for

the singing

Rain

by Helga Elisabeth Schauer-Mayrbäurl

An evening glow of light peach wisps flow across the bright blue sky.

A gentle wind caresses newly sprouted leaves.

As the curtain of night falls a soft mist dampens the earth.

During the healing dreams of a quiet darkness, drops blow in currents of air.

Ever more frequent are the splashes cascading from the sky.

The air changes and a cleansing cool sets in.

At morning light, a medley of bird song announces a new day.

The fields and trees are damp with the promise of abundance.

Each vine twirls in the joy of new hope.

It's a Celebration!

Life has been brought to a parched earth.

Happiness surrounds the fortunate place that reaps this wealth.

Rain has come once more.

Feed Back

by Bernadette Perez

Vines are maturely raped
Stripped are the delicate grapes
Fomented juice matures in time
Savor the aroma
Swish around the glass brim
Slowly sip from the rim
My pallet is surprised
By the smooth delight
I savor this satisfaction
This is my reaction

USING THE POT HOLDERS SHE BOUGHT IN KEY WEST

by Katharyn Howd Machan

Fox boils pasta.
Lets good growers' dark red splash
into a single blue-stemmed glass
she found at Fast Buck Freddie's.
How to count the hours spent
writing poems alone? She lets drop
the names of places she has traveled,
famous streets that tell tall stories
of writers who have cooked strange

meals for lovers who have come
to eat and drunk whole bottles with
bright labels, stayed until the edge
of midnight tore their stained
tongues loose.

Aloha Floats

by Dana Crotwell

Aloha floats on the senses
plumeria dreams hover between
vines entwined with fruit
hanging heavy with full-bodied love.

Breezes caress the night
and surround our sipping,
our gulps of gladness--
the laughter of friends
separates the silence
and we lounge in vacation mind
with home heart.

Wine Notes

by Sharon Smith

At Trefethen we tasted wine

at a long live edged table

light balancing off wine barrels that surrounded us.

The notes in front of us spoke of “bright,

pineapple, peach” “lingering aromas of cut apple,

gardenia, tarragon, spicy on the palette”

another wine, an “elegant nose of violets,

plums, cherries, hints of forest floor and oak.”

A wine named Dragons Tooth

“shined with the fragrant aromas

of boysenberry, baking spice” then “nutmeg

oak that segued into a long chocolate finish.”

We swirled the wine in our glasses as we read the notes

admired the color, the light and took tastes.

I was curious about their Cabernet with a “balanced tannin

as a backbone.” The Reserve was said to “dance on the palate.”

I like that wine notes are often poetry. At the Trefethen

Winery yesterday, the poetry written seemed

to have truth in it as we tasted each wine.

Perhaps because our day started

with a tour of the vineyard.

Time in front of a vine. Its barked thin

trunk holding up a large fan

of green leaves. Leaves

extending horizontally,

above its trunk. A line of “berries”

at the bottom, not yet grapes.

Trained there to be below so they can be easily picked.

Perhaps because we learned of the history

of closely watched vines, the coddling of them

to produce in particular ways.

Some leaves developed to create shade,

others to bring in the sun.

Perhaps it is learning how much goes into growing grapes

knowing that is just the beginning of the process.

Perhaps it was the fellow

who gave us the tour who knew the story,

the history, who sounded like Jimmy Stewart when he spoke.

Perhaps it was his comfortable knowledge

that lead us into the old wooden room to read the notes and taste.

Perhaps it was the company of friends at the table.

Perhaps all of it made it easy to taste the poetry.

Perhaps the wine was just good.

Rack

by Cheryl Williams

You contain the world
within your wrought-iron body;
German Riesling, Spanish Sangria,
Italian Red, and a white from
a small Napa Valley vineyard.
You've hosted parties,
holiday celebrations,
girls' night, romantic evenings,
and unquestionable grief-filled moments.
You know secrets
that will never be shared,
and you are never depleted for long.

And last, but not least, Ladies and Gentlemen:

two words

by Jone Stebbins

two words:
fruit flies
buzz kill
go away
wine ruiners
asshole flies