

2005 POEMS

Seven Ways of Looking at a Corkscrew

Tina Schumann

Oh, you little purveyor
of necessary violence.
Always drilling towards the sweet stuff.
Domestic augur, supplier of sin
and swirl. I love you.
I love you because
you make me say the words:
Montapulciano D'Abruzzo,
Pinot Noir, Barbaresco.
Oh, you tool of ancient knowledge.
Minimalist of the pull and pop.
Cool and steely under pressure.
Teach me to float above the vine.
Give me reason to be hard.
Train me to lie dormant in a glove box.
Oh, you one trick implement
so happy to oblige.
How have I discarded you?
Took you for a con?
Blamed you for my habit,
and thrown you to the drawer.
Praise be to you and the cork,
a partnership sublime and mature.
Adults in an adult situation.
Let's make a bond today,
I will succumb to the juice
and you will mark the way.

Hang Time

Jen Karetnick

*It is not a song
Of the Scuppernong
From warm Carolinian valleys,
Nor the Isabel
And the Muscadel
That bask in our garden alleys.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

It was not a song
but a muted ring,
dearth of sound against the rim
of the rusted basketball hoop,
looped with grapes,
that enticed the occasional game.

Unforeseen growths,
both pole and vine
sprang from the same patch of ground
in an abandoned lot
where cats marked the court
with their fragrant lime

and skeletons of squirrels
hid under nearby leaves for seasons.
The grapes hung like the long-gone
net, a single bunch the ball
would sometimes graze
but not dislodge. Stubborn beads,

they turned from lima bean
green to bitten-lip red
but stayed as small as the evergreen
berries we were told were toxic
to all but some birds. Still,
one of us scaled the backboard

after the umpteenth botched lay-up
and just before the sixth
grade and late August storms
began like accidents. The grapes were
hard, thick-skinned with resistance,
and we spit the strange, sour pips

into the grass, called for foul
shots and drank lemonade.
Stripped of its only harvest, the vine
never saw bud break again,
and it would be decades
before we could stomach Jersey wine.

FIVE WINES

Philip Dacey

*"...complex and approachable,
and finishes well."
- from a friend's letter*

The chianti is dark and serious,
privy to a secret
it would rather not know
but must keep;
burdened by silence,
it has lost its sense of humor.

The chardonnay has developed
a habit of bright cynicism,
never quite overbearingly so
but you may find its flirtation
with excess to be thrilling.

The syrah
refuses to let anything
trouble it, smiles at adversity,
sports a happy-go-lucky tilt
to its tannin.

The merlot
has the steadiness
of an accountant who
triple-checks his figures,
though what saves him
is his self-irony.

The beaujolais
is a prankster, often
catching you off-guard,
reminding you of your vulnerability
when you get too full of yourself.

Feet

Maureen Tolman Flannery

From the confines of a turbulent dream
my feet begin their mutiny.
They curse and kick off covers,
bored with fleece slippers and scratchy woolen socks.
They have dreams to touch down on.
They want to wander without direction,
choosing each next step
solely for the softness or the warmth,
the shade of green
or the glint of mud or dust
or sand or grass.
They go in search of steel drums
and other naked soles
kneading the bare earth like bread dough.

They long to feel the ooze of black river mud
forming furrows around sinking toes.
They want to stomp and crush grapes
in sun-hot oak vats,
wine rising around nails like blood from stigmata.
They would dress in high-heeled glimmery silver
and tango on cobble stones behind the brothel.
These fugitive feet,
graceful in their own memory,
gentle as rain under layers of stone,
recite to each other
cantos of bucolic verse.

Evening Ritual

Peter Nash

"How about a glass of wine?"

"I thought you would never ask."

Gift of the earth

Alice Folkart

There is no dearth
on this dear earth of vines
and roses' sweet dream breeze
to seize our hearts.

Glistening grapes held
high by gentle hands,
harvesters carving the salty sun
run among the vines.

The great carts roll,
whole filled with
fragrant fruit to press,
no guess of what's to come

from these blessed grapes,
but if God smiles
the trials through
for you, a laughing wine

to gladden hearts
in winter's dark
beside a fire
when no lark sings,

bring back the scent
of summer's heat
and heal the heart
that's bent toward love.

Dinner Piece

Andrena Zawinski

I'd like to take you
out to dinner. We can go
to Cafe Mallorca, have paella
served in cruise ship proportions,
flan laced with Portuguese liqueur
you can't buy locally. I'll have
them part the quiet with
a contrapunte. Canta canta
companera. I'll hold hands
above my head, click my fingers
for good service.

I'd like to have
dinner with you. I can cook
a cajun broil, spiced in remoulade,
some peaches and brandied cream
on the side. You can tell me how
I look like someone you once loved
or wished to love, and I will serenade
you with a bit of Beausoleil: *C'est toi
que j'aime, bebe. Regardez moi.*

I'd like to make you
dinner, dish up a little
artichoke pesto, drink Chianti right
from the flask. You can make
the small talk about Italian weddings
where you moved in on some
young crush with Mediterranean
eyes, Maria Callas crooning
un bel di, vedremo.

I'd like to have you
in for dinner, eat raw
oysters and clam soup in bread bowls,
papaya with champagne to clear
our tongues at the end. We'll burn
candles for a sultry light and press
into the sheets cheek, hip, thigh, lips.
As if upon a natural course, we will run
like whispered syllables of rivers do, lining
natural boundaries between countries--
where ahead uncharted distances lie
tough and juicy as pomegranate.

Wine Tasting

Fredrick Zydek

We have come from small-town America to learn things about palate and perfume: why the first must that flows from crushed fruit makes the choicest wines, why certain molds are destined to be celebrated, why after fermentation the wine is drawn off into casks called tuns to gather in its bouquet.

We sample rubyred California clarets with roots reaching back to Bordeaux, France, a sparkling wine from the American catawba, sauternes from Napa Valley, Burgundies from Enumclaw, Washington, and Chiantis drawn from grapes grown along the Missouri. They are given adjectives like sassy, alarming,

subtle, brave and chipper. We are shown how to slosh a sip over and under our tongues so every insinuated flavor, every nuance of taste can call attention to itself. We are shown how to swallow first the wine and then a slow breath of air to enhance and prolong the wine's charm. We are told to serve dry sherry with appetizers

or soup, dry white wines with oysters or fish, meat courses accompanied by any dry red wine, dry whites with creamed dishes, Burgundy with fowl or game, port with cheese before dessert followed by a sparkling or sweet wine with fruit. We are connoisseurs when we leave the place and own urges to be missionaries for Bacchus.

Vintage

J.D. Smith

Held up to the light
like a diamond
in a jeweler's loupe,
or a candled egg,
a grape assumes the aspect
of a breast veined
by living to a certain age,
distended with a wealth
that strains the skin
as if to break out
into the wide air's caress.

Yet, as gravity
pulls that roundness
away from itself,
toward the round earth,
the stretching flesh
may still offer itself
for pleasures taken,
as reverence demands,
by pressing slowly
and with thoroughness,
and by sipping, for hours on end,
the wine of its long sacrifice.

Confession by Ho Xuan Huong, translated by John Balaban

Before dawn, the watch drum rumbles.
Lonely pink face among mountains and streams

addled but alert with a bowl of fragrant wine
as the moon sets, just a sliver not yet full.

Moss seems to creep across the earth's face.
Stony peaks pierce the belly of the clouds.

Sick with sadness, spring passes, spring returns.
A bit of love shared, just the littlest bit.

Autumn Landscape by Ho Xuan Huong, translated by John Balaban

Drop by drop rain slaps the banana leaves.
Praise whoever sketched this desolate scene:

the lush, dark canopies of the gnarled trees,
the long river, sliding smooth and white.

I lift my wineflask, drunk with rivers and hills.
My backpack breathing moonlight, sags with poems.

Look, and love everyone.
Whoever sees this landscape is stunned

Ho Xuan Huong, "Spring Essence," was a second wife or concubine, and one of Vietnam's greatest poets. Her family name, "Ho", is composed of characters meaning "old moon," and she often incorporates the moon in her poems as well as wine, as she does in these two poems. She was born around 1775 in a time of civil war and probably died in the 1820s.

From Spring Essence: The Poetry of Ho Xuan Huong, translated by John Balaban
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Sommelier

Zilka Joseph

The way it hits the mouth
he says, counts.
Holding only the stem,
he raises the perfect glass
to the yellow sun filling the vineyard,
swirls the breathless, just freed
pinot noir,
and first smells, then sips
the black cherry kiss of it,
lets the velvet full-bodied flavor
with rosemary tones, immerse him.

How it tastes depends on
where it grows, he says,
like the Cote D'Or, or Napa;
and the right rain, shade, mist, sun,
the breath of slope and soil-
the Gout de Terroir,
not forgetting some sweet spice,
bitter herb,
the vintners' choice of oaken barrels.

When he says
the way it hits the mouth
depends on the glass-
I taste his smile,
see my lips blow curves
into glasses,
feel my heat
shape flute, goblet, cup,
and I know then
how the dark wine
closes its liquid eyes

as I lift it to my lips,
and it wonders
what my aroma will be,
how smooth the shape of my palate,
and how its mouth will read
my roundness, and if it will savor
the complex tones, the hidden taste of me.

ANACHRONISM, for Anacreon

Barbara Adams

Married.
Drank red wine.
Broke the glasses.

Had children
like pumpkins on a vine
waiting for Halloween
to see their faces.

Love all
forbidden fruit---
steak, chocolate cake,
whipped cream, sex for fun,
red wine.

Listened
to Mozart, Dvorak,
Beethoven, Shostakovitch.
Drank red wine.

Remember when
the ocean was clean,
comics were funny,
only Camels were smoked.

Remember worrying
about getting knocked up,
not getting a husband,
getting fat, not AIDS.

Learned "Fern Hill" by silly heart,
Fell in love with life
and half in love
with easeful death.

Now.
Drink red wine when I can
with dying friends.

Drink brandy alone
at bedtime
learning "Sailing to Byzantium"
by cussed heart.

Baby Brix
(for my son)
Nicole Jones

Prosecco smiles,
bubbly and sweet
the sun beams from deep blue

softer and slower
the warm air sways
through shadows too lazy to fall

an afternoon nap
a green summer dream
ripening on the vine

Jubilate Agno, 2005

After Christopher Smart, 1722 - 1771

Leejay Kline

For I will consider my glass of wine.
For it makes a man a slave and master of the grape.
For we worship the god in the grape in our own way.
For we do this by sighs and the smacking of lips
 though it be unseemly communion.
For we hold our glass forward in supplication
 that it be filled again and to be sure
 the wine has good legs.
For we make our thanks with eyes closed.
For this we perform in ten degrees.
For the first we raise high the goblet.
For secondly we observe the light through the liquid.
For thirdly we bring forth the goblet that
 its rim should encompass our nose.
For fourthly we sniff.
For fifthly we sigh, but we are not finished.
For sixthly we sip but forbid to swallow.
For seventhly we squint while the liquid
 rolls on the back of our tongue.
For eighthly we swear we have never tasted blackberries
 in wine.
For ninthly we do sip in sincerity.
For tenthly we nod our approval
 or spit.
For having considered our thanks we rest our eyes.
For as we rest our eyes, wine
 considers its neighbors.
For it looks upon them with the benevolent kindness
 of a teacher to his pupil
For the volume of beer required to achieve wine's grace
 is exceedingly much.

For drinks with pineapple slices and tiny
umbrellas do offend us much.
For these pink and blue drinks will bring
us to wine's grace in a sip.
For two sips will bring us to a lesser grace.
For three sips will cause the lady to
call her boyfriend over.
For a boyfriend doth despise a flirtatious drunk.
For wine is the instrument of the storyteller.
For wine moderates tears and warms laughter.
For a shared bottle of wine will never result in
public urination.
For Saint Paul recommended wine for thy stomach's sake.
For Coca Cola is never served at the Eucharist.
For only white wine with fish and red with meat
is nonsense.
For red wine with my tuna steak and white with
my lapin a la moutarde is dandy.
For warm wine, even at room temperature, is
a bad idea, sayeth my French son-in-law.
For any Beaujolais Nouveau, even though it have
the strong scent of bananas, is better
than anything Beechwood aged.
For God hath discussed wine often in the Bible.
For God hath never mentioned Perrier or Evian.
For Evian spelled backwards is naïve and this bears
reflection.
For God hath blessed wine in its varieties.
For my father once made his own wine.
For he invited his friend Henry Moss to test the product.
For Dad and Henry drove the Nash on the
Baltimore & Ohio tracks for a record 1.75 miles.
For the B & O was early and the Nash went
into the Big Walnut Creek.
For Mom locked the door and Dad slept
on the porch.
For I have inherited my love of wine from
my father though he be not of my blood.

For that is a long story and it is late
and there is no wine in the house.

Transmutation

Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer
Word Woman

Every day, our bodies alter-
new cells, new wrinkles,

a new scratch that becomes
a new scar. Within a year,

we are entirely new. Only
older. Every evening,

by candlelight, we fuel the change
with the thick pulp of citrus,

deep red of the vine, dark green leaves,
the mature golden germ of wheat.

Our bodies become the menu,
translating each bite into elbow,

anklebone, thigh and grin. Watching
you rise, I feast on your limbs.

With each day, our skin becomes
more like the well-ripened mango-

loosened and rumped, mottled,
while inside we work on sweetening,

making the long journey
from flesh to nectar to wine.

Wine

(in the Arabic-Andalusian mode)

1

At Dinner

At dinner last night I opened
the ten year old bottle of wine
I had been hoarding.

Extravagant!

Extravagant?

I've waited a lifetime
to have you at my table.

2

In Expectation

"Upon your return
from your journey,"
said the magician,
"I look forward to sharing
a glass of wine."

Toward that day,
the wine grows rich
in the bottle —
& in the heart too.

3

The Banquet

At the banquet of friendship
the hearts of the guests

became entwined

& in the wine they shared
the stars were drowned,
each bubble
a little beating heart.

& even when the day brightened
each star,
each bubble,
each heart
cast a fullness of rainbows.

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El Vino

(al modo arábigoandaluz)

1

En la Cena

En la cena anoche abrí
la botella de vino de diez años
que estaba guardando.

¡Extravagánte!

¿Extravagánte ?

He esperado una vida
para tenerte a mi mesa.

2

En Espera

- Cuando regreses
de tu jornada -
dijo el mago -

anticipo compartir
una copa de vino.

Hacia ese día
el vino enriquece
en la botella -
y en el corazón.

3

El Banquete

En el banquete de la amistad
los corazones de los comensales
se enlazaron
y en el vino que compartían
se ahogaron los luceros,
cada burbuja
un pequeño corazón palpitante.

Y aun cuando esclareció el día
cada estrella,
cada burbuja,
cada corazón
centellaba una plenitud de arcos iris.

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Words from Wine

Timothy Walsh

Was it from a wine press, then,
that all this flows?
That rickety wine press Gutenberg rigged
into a printing press,
the movable type interchangeable as grapes?

Do we owe to wine, then,
these great harvests of words
pressed into vast yields of books,
portable as bottles,
precious as spring water flowing through
a thirsty land?

Do we owe it all to the vine
that we shelve our books in libraries
as we cellar our wine in waiting rows,
putting up words and wine against our future need?

Was it the wine press, after all, that has made us
into such drunkards of the word
that we imbibe by the hour from folded sheets
of paper,
turning pages like doors that open up
fathomless spaces within ourselves?

EARLY SPRING EVENING

Anne Harding Woodworth

Last night the horizon beyond the sun
called the revving up of season:
earth to be churned, stakes straightened,
a whole vineyard to be re-tied.

Today fatigue swarmed you during the field work,
with a click in your knee over bumpy boots
and wheel ruts. Your joints swelled, breathed inward,
slowed the last eleven steps to the backdoor, laces loosened.

Tonight wine coats the side of your glass.
You swirl. You taste. Calm spreads, like batter on a griddle,
always wider than you think it will be,
slightly sugared and smooth, like sap rising.

