

The winner of Judd's Hill Poetry Contest 2017 is Michael Fallon's "In Plate Glass."

Judge Leza Lowitz (visit her at www.lezalowitz.com) commented:

"I loved this poem's economy of tone-- great sense of atmosphere and celebratory feeling. The concept that gathering together over wine (and a meal) brings us closer to each other and can elevate and illuminate, was apt and beautiful."

In Plate Glass
by Michael Fallon

Outside the steady drum of rain.
Across the road, a gray mist among ferns and maples.

We sit inside, the five of us, around a table,
Laughing, arguing, drinking wine.

Slowly the air turns violet. The light from our cabin glows
On wet trunks, on the undersides of leaves.

As the wall of windows goes pale with steam,
Blackens into night, we are all there,

Doubled in the glass; our transparent selves,
In some bright and distant room,

Beyond touch, among the lit drops,
The floating candles.

Above our heads, glasses shine with darkness
And we drink it down. All of it.

Good wine.

To A Summer Fly
by Michael Fallon

O summer fly who dances on the rim of my glass
Swoons on the vapors,
Tumbles in,

Only to float on your back, blow about in slow circles
Before your wet wings sink
And drown you,

Do not think I have not meditated
On your fate--as I flick
You and your brothers out,

Pour myself another drink.

Letter to a Friend
by Michael Fallon

O the mist rising from the dark water,
Waves lapping the pilings,

You and I lying on the dock, looking up,
A bottle of wine between us...

A moon cresting the tree line.

by Katharyn Howd Machan
How Easily the Wine Pours

from the chosen sacred bottle
curved like Helen, deft as Penelope,
glass the deepest inscrutable green
of sea where Skyros promised safety
for Achilles, his mother's fingers
invisible shadows on a baby's heel.
Did Cassandra envision all?
Ariadne abandoned by Theseus,
monster raging, then the startled call
of Dionysus, wild god of grapes,
finding suddenly his true thirst:
the bride who could dance the vineyards
to their shared words: *Be the first.*

by Katharyn Howd Machan:

Pan's face: redolent!

underneath his fingered pipes
belly calls *More wine!*

Sunset
by Katharyn Howd Machan

Finches, cardinals, chickadees, wrens
light to taste black seeds' sweet meat
as I sit sipping dark red wine
poured from vineyard's strongest glass.
Deep summer. High cicadas' thrum,
black crickets' call for dark.
I'm a poet alone and writing.
Old-but, oh! these hungry wings,
horizon's gold, that spark.

Dinner Guest
by Anna Harris-Parker

Some nights
I pull from my closet
strapless silk
with a drop waist,

pair it with silver
high heels and pearls.
I rehearse small talk
between sips of Syrah,

politely return questions:
One brother—younger.
And you?
I chew quietly,

remember my posture;
enter my room, alone.
Return the dress
to its naked hanger.

After Dinner
by Heidi Seaborn

It starts with boarding a plane—
a flat sky, then damp, thick luxurious clouds
beneath a halo of stars.
Somewhere crossing the plains of Saskatchewan,
Spain I cross over
into our space, a starred plane,
a dimension unto us, hemmed by time.

Walking the earthen vineyard path, unsteady
in heels, heady from dry white wine,
secrets split open like ripen grapes.
Nakedness caught in a camera's surprise flash.

Your warm dry hand
pulls me into your night.
Venus stands out amongst a field of stars.

by Lita Kurth:

In Vino Veritas #1

One wine had a lovely look
A mildly green transparency
The review declared it tasted like
both apples and oranges
a doubtful claim, but it was probably
exquisite.
Surprisingly for someone
who drank Food Maxx wine
she also liked oysters
on the half shell and would have liked
this pairing very much
if someone else were buying.

In Vino Veritas #2

Another wine looked like a cross
between pee and pea soup.
The bottle was fat. They said it tasted
like pith
which she had to look up:
soft or spongy tissue.
Yuck.
She'd leave that one alone.

In Vino Veritas #3

The reds! A very beautiful, almost black
bottle of pinot noir
described as tasting like a basketful
of different fruits
which, again, she doubted.
But what a beautiful wine and bottle.
She was willing to believe
it was easy drinking,
though kind of hard paying.

Bottles come in so many shapes
and yet not quite enough. She didn't prefer
the ones with straight down sides.
Too masculine.
What she really liked
were very skinny, very transparent
bottles, like one of the fancy shampoos.

FINE LIFE

by Linda Maxwell

It was that perfect Sunday at Robert's
That we would all remember
After our class reunion weekend,
Had recast us into adulthood.

The church-goers, still starched and full of incense, wearing thin skirts and slacks,
Preceded the Eagle band talent, in matching maroon shirts from Friday's mixer,
And, alas, Saturday night's celebrants, spilling out of someone's smoky van;
Beatles' CD still singing *Revolution*—well, you know.

Robert, our Navy pilot,
The guy you wanted on your civics trivia team,
Steered us through his silver vats,
The thriving vines, the waiting tables.

He sat with the scholars, those hat-wearing business people,
Talking of tannin and texture, crispness and skins, acidity and casks.
They impressed their wives, asking about capital, investors, profit, picking time.
Shirley B. ran a charity that needed a fun-run sponsor. Would he consider a contribution?

Barbara, like a good hostess,
Unwrapped platters and napkins,
Poured precious wines into polished glasses,
While we sipped and sifted through imperfect memories.

Evening's inevitable veil sent us almost-senior citizens back to our rental cars and rides.
Even baby-boomers have someplace to be on desert nights before darkness cools Camino
Nopales.
We pet Rosé the retriever one last time, murmur a million thanks between hugs and hasty
purchases,
Goodbyes and last glances, prayers that our time ticks longer than the tender grapes,
dusty in the fields.

Alone, flying home, the bottle rests with the checked bags,
Aged, fearlessly fragile, like our assorted bodies.
White chardonnay—or was it red cabernet?
Fluid, velvety, fruity, sweet, crisp,
Always ready, always improving.
Like faithful seeds in the water and the sun
Like our souls that anticipate the final, loving harvest.

the grapes of flash
by Juley Harvey

the grapes are
burning!
the wine is
burning!
so sweet the wildfire smell —
whence cometh help
in a glass by itself,
as we look to the hills,
now red-fire-wine hell.
we look to the hills
and still hear
the sound of fury crackling,
fire music siren maidens,
fire-breathers anonymous,
hot dragon flies
of sword-swallowing ash,
billowing toast.
hot wine soup,
chardonnay fricassee —
i like mine at room temperature,
but the room, she explodes,
strange mushroom canape,
capping the mulled-wine day.
great grape rape,
wine grope.
uncorked harassment, strip cheese.
sweet ash air —
sweeter than the water
we drink, the thoughts we think,
more bittersweet,
taking dreams
and combining them with elements —
dom perignon's "come quickly!
i am tasting the stars!" —
yeasty, fruity,
in flaming oak barrels —
a little tart kickstart to the heart.
but they have legs!
run, toto, run!
and a nose
for the tempting and toasting.
and a hallelujah chorus
that arose, when the vines
still stood. —
no trampling of
the lost chord lord here,
though the devil
appeared in the details
of a good disguise.
i think of the wineries
in which i once
labored lithely, blithely spirit —
domaine chandon and the lovely
discount on jeroboams,
inglenook with the starry-eyed luncheons,
my interview with robert mondavi,
even fondly of ernesto and julio,
and wonder what becomes
a legend toast,
what firebrand
has passed by
or consumed

heredity,
like a passover
blood-ghost?
drink my blood,
was the christly command.
oh, that we could,
in this sweeping epic holocaust fireband.
dragons fly
and die
in a coat of grape,
it is to wish for love
and to get only rape,
to try a vined path,
and find bittersweet wrath.
what disappears
will come round again,
new vintages,
as the earth reopens her heart
and hearth,
heals the cabernet rages.
bette davis once said, "there comes a time
in every woman's life
when the only thing that helps
is a glass of champagne."
oh my california,
you've ventured out
in your fine fire-dress,
and forgotten your shoes!
wineglass blues.
symphony of the stars epiphany.
there will be more.
hold up your glass.
cinderella's shoe will pass.
"three things in life I shall never attain:
envy, content, and sufficient champagne,"
dorothy parker said.
the evacuees saw stars,
all night. but with real
glowing pain, not sham or champ.
still, they will come back,
like the gnarled vines,
like the fired wines.
hail the human spirit
and the grape
divine.
with grace,
many of the grapes
didn't burn,
and we are thence returned
to reluctant
heaven.
where life is
a cabernet away,
old friend,
so sing a song
of sauvignon.
and save the real pain
for another way.
champagne today.
with mead, honey, life sometimes drips.