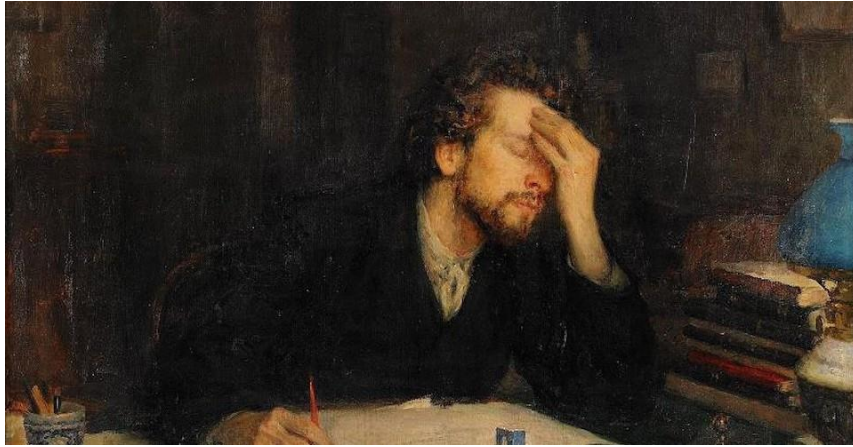


Osher Poetry Anthology

Volume III

August 2022



The Osher Poetry Group has been meeting weekly since February 2020. After just a few weeks in person, we moved to a Zoom room. We have studied many poets, hundreds of poems. We've used the poems of published poets to teach us and as inspiration for our own work. Here we are pleased to share some of what we've written during these difficult months of isolation.

To celebrate the second anniversary of the Osher Poetry Group, we decided that each of us would write a line that would become a poem. Janice [Moyd-Kane] assembled our lines into the poem "Tribute to Brenda". Brenda has been our leader, our inspiration, our guide to the world of poetry since day one. Our gratitude is infinite.

Tribute to Brenda

*Love, friendship, and comradery create a glorious Valentine's heart
Your Love for the Poets is contagious, it takes us down a road we
hope never ends*

Poetry is our window to the world

*Brenda, you resurrected those wonderful, previously suppressed
creative juices of my youth; for this I thank you*

*We weave our gratitude in a comforter of feather down words,
encased in softest blush rose silk-testimony to how your choice to
share joy, opens creativity in others*

*Sweethearts, Valentine's day is for hearts, roses and Love—the love
of poetry*

And we love you, Brenda--befitting the Holiday

The Osher Poetry Group

February 14, 2022



Fay Ashby

My mind used to be full of creative thoughts and nonsense ideas. During the pandemic, this time of deep emotional upheaval, I have felt empty. I tentatively zoomed into the Osher Poetry group in late May. Thank you Brenda Baer and the other poets for making me feel welcome. I have learned and been inspired by your creativity.

Summer

A single drop of moisture

Forms at my hairline,

And calls to its friends and family

Join me on this slide

Then a wall of water flows down

What fun for them,

SWEAT!

Metamorphosis

She inched along

doing what needed

to be done

She was a dutiful child

faithful wife

loving mother

diligent employee

dedicated single parent

But she never seemed to fit in

then

with the children grown
retired from her job
her time was her own to
use as she saw fit

No longer seeking validation
She found her tribes
A museum with offbeat art
And people just like the art

Another group who taught her
how to write
and embrace her uniqueness.

People wanted the caterpillar back
But
She has found her wings and she is learning how to fly.

SEEDS

In the beginning
there was the sensation of falling

from a great height
falling together and then apart

our origins unknown but all from the same place
our destination firmly programmed

Each had a specific power and purpose
some with more than a few

We were seeds
Power & purpose wrapped around love

We landed and began our work where we were planted
Each knew their capability and function

We were all healers
Using natural growing medicine and love

But we were also builders
Adding to what others had done

Not tearing others down
we all were teachers

Sharing our stories
With those that came after us

We were all artists
Beautifying, all that we came into contact with

Everything flourished
It was good

Then came the destroyers
Power and purpose with no inner core

They spread out and took everything that was not theirs
Where we planted they mowed

Where we tilled
They laid cement

Where we purified they polluted
Finally they poisoned the very planet

We all lived on and needed
They planned to inhabit another planet.

We went underground
To rejuvenate, restore

To heal from the core
They tried to bury us

They were full of greed and ignorance
They were not smart enough

To realize we were seeds.



Brenda Stevens Baer

When I was an undergraduate, poetry was an enigma: incomprehensible when, as an English literature major, I was forced to talk about it. But now it is, to me, the most important of all literature genres, offering each poet a chance to rummage for their truth and to marvel when finding it in the work of others.

Making Art

with a nod to Stephen Sondheim

Making a hat
is not easy,
is not for those
who would sleep late
then go out for brunch

But if you are an earnest soul,
begin with a little yarn
and some needles
or words
that prick like needles

make a hat
a hat a hat a hat
from anything —
from white gloves
and sticky Japanese
watercolors

perhaps a crown of sound,
a symphony of fuzzy octaves
with harmonious earmuffs
and a tuneful brim
tipped to the crowd.

How about a clay chapeau?
make sure
to leave room
for a head inside
a head that looks
something like your own
maybe with a mole where you
don't have one
one blue eye, one brown

Look, you made a hat.
flawed and
forever incomplete. . .
now do it again.

For Lyuba Yamichuk, Ukrainian Poet

Not yet thirty when life turns a street corner
and becomes death
and you must write about it.
Not yet thirty, burdened by
the idea of a motherland,
pining for apricot trees
flattened by Putin's tanks,
your job is to preserve her with words.

Not yet forty,
you give blood for the wounded,
tape your windows,
train to defend Kyiv
as your friends flee
into Poland with their children,
backpacks crammed with diapers
and terror.

Nothing more urgent now
than the next sip of water,
the next whine of incoming slaughter,
the cemetery,
a blue and yellow flag.

**The Clergical Robe Shop Inc.
Belair Road. Baltimore.
Christian Owned and Operated.**

Homemade sign out front says:
PRAISE THE LORD CLERGICAL ROBES
CUSTOM MADE HERE
BY HANDS ANOINTED JUST FOR THIS

Angela opens the barred door and wanders
inside the building with two front windows
barred and crammed with credit card logos
and purple hats with white embroidered letters that say
Praise the Lord.

Inside, in the cool dark, sits a middle-aged woman wearing a shiny red wig;
she is eating a corned beef sandwich behind a counter made of cheap paneling.

And, blinking in newfound dark, Angela says,
“These are my hands.”
She holds them close to the woman’s face,
turns them repeatedly. Palms up. Palms down.
The woman slowly, reluctantly releases her sandwich
to the mustard-smearred waxed paper it came in.
“I want them anointed,” she says, “like the sign says out front.”

“Really? Why do you want them anointed?
Do you sew?” She’s probably heard the question before,
maybe even from this person
interrupting her lunch. She told Maurice
this was the wrong block for the shop,
but he had a friend who had a friend...

“Don’t you see what I could do with anointed hands?
Look out there. See that cold and dirty street?
See those people shivering, waiting for the bus at the corner?
Do you see them?”

The woman wearing the shiny red wig sighs
and says, “Yes, I see them, but...”
“My hands could warm them.
My hands could feed them.
My hands could wash them.

And my hands could save them
if they were anointed.
Don't you see?"

The woman wearing the shiny red wig
oozes out from behind her counter.
"Praise the Lord, darlin'," she says.
"The anointed who work here
are those who have a holy calling
from God to make clerical robes,
not to help people."
She flaps her arm toward the street
where the wind is beginning to toss
big drops from a winter rainstorm.
"That is all."

She herds her questioner
toward the door.
"Maybe you would like
one of these?"
She points to a purple hat
in the window.

"No, no. No hat today.
No hat today.
No anointing today,
no anointing today,"
she sings softly as she
is ushered through the doorway
into an eddy of neon orange menus
escaping from the Chinese carryout next door.



Esta Baker

The day was February 14th, 2020. Valentine's day, a day for lovers. After reading the "Introduction to Poetry" by Billy Collins, I was in love. With poetry. And Billy Collins. And still am today.

Outback

In the bush
the gums
home to laughing kookaburras,
the mango's fallen fruits
feed the gallahs
who, at sunset
cast a pinkish purple haze
over Ulara's
ever-changing red dome.

Roos and joeys bound above
witchy grubs
baking in the hot sands
where opals are on fire.
Guanas steal your tucker
majestic mountains of ants
overlooked
while
a dip under the falls
fails to wash the outback away.

Touch

The heavy old green military canvas
 hung
 between the stately blue spruces
 in summer.
Dripping after rains

but
never hiding the tears
of his unwanted touch.

Benedetto*

His Zen,
a jazz voice
decades long,
painted sketches
of humble beginnings
for
kings and queens.
Their power
clung to his words
bowing reverently
to life's landscapes.

- Tony Bennett

Birdspeak

Instead of chirping, warbling and trilling,
what if birds could talk?

*Watch out for the next-door orange tabby lurking in the bushes.
The garden lady has a compost pile filled with worms, Robin.
You damn wrens, stay out of my gourd!
Let's splash in the mirror puddle.
My blue feathers are prettier than your muddled brown ones.
Yellowbelly, stop that infernal drilling, I have a headache.
Momma, watch me, I can fly. I can soar on a gentle breeze.
How sweet is the honeysuckle nectar?
Suet or feeder, feeder or suet, I just cannot decide.*

Under a full moon,
the night watchman owl keeps an eye on a drowsy child.
A sweet lullaby please, nightingale.

Soaking

Soaking in a tub
of tears,
Their salty brine
stings her soft skin.
Bubbles of pain rise
Burst. . .
without deliverance.

Last night

A silver sliver
dangled by a thread
invisible
above outstretched fingers,
shadowy silhouettes,
stretching
reaching for that star.
While
winter fairy dust
played peekaboo with a passing pouf
of a wish come true.



Rick Connor

I put off investigating reading and writing poetry for a long time. Now feels like the right time to begin the adventure. I'm so grateful for the welcome, support, example, guidance, and inspiration of the Osher Poetry Group.

Mangia Mangia Abondanza

Every Sunday, tutti la famiglia, totally Italiano

Mangia, mangia abondanza

Grazie, grazie
Nonno, Nonna
Prego, prego
Buon'apettito.

Vino bianchi
Antipasti
Vino rosso
Rigatoni.

Mangia, mania abondanza

Basta pasta, meat-a-balla
Roasted rabbit – tastes like chicken!
Insalata olio d'oliva
Saluti tutti la dolce vita.

Café latte
Holy cannoli
Amaretto biscotti, zabaglione
Ciocolati, tiramisù.

Mangia, mangia abbondanza

Mama mia la festa finito
More vino bianchi, more vino rosso
More holy cannoli, zabaglione
More café latte, more cioccolati

Buono notte, buono notte
Arrivederci, arrivederci
Mangia, mangia abbondanza
Abbondanza, mangia mangia.

Quiet Cafés

All I wanted was
a clean and quiet café
to write a poem
while the coffee was hot
about an annual physical
a clean bill of health
etcetera.
Yet here I am

at a dirty table
at a noisy Panera's
among old people
younger than me.
I was probably thinking of
clean and quiet cafés
from another time
in Yellow Springs, Stephentown, Great Barrington.

But I complained there too of
stingy housemates, bossy bosses
of someone sitting sideways slurping soup.
All those kinds of people, those sorts of things.
I remember looking at young people
younger than me
to wonder was I the only one

not happy with life as it was
with a clean bill of health, etcetera?



R. Frederick Crider

For decades, I have loved writing religious poems in classic hymn form. They use carefully measured lines and recurring rhythms, with frequent end rhymes, the same pattern being repeated stanza after stanza. In this way they can be set to equally carefully measured tunes intended to be sung in Christian worship. I still love doing this, and always will.

Then, I found this poetry group where there are no such restrictions in form. Believe me, this took some getting used to...but now I love it too! One form enriches the other. Thanks Brenda and Osher poets.

Ode To Andrew

We are in our eighties.

He is twenty-eight.

Some of our get-up and go, got up and went.

His hasn't. Already he's been promoted to Driver/Operator.

There's more snow than the other day.

In his rotation this is an off-day.

We're retired with lots of steps and a long driveway,

He's a firefighter with a pickup truck, snow blower and shovel.

It's too cold for us even in our parkas.

He gets too hot in anything more than a hoodie.

It would take us a good two hours.

He finishes well under one.

The check which he receives with a smile, includes a tip...

an investment for staying in our own home longer.

EATING TOGETHER

1.

"God is great and God is good,
Let us thank him for our food...."
probably sounds quite different to God's ears
being raised in at a table in the Donetsk
than it does at a table in Timonium,
especially the conclusion...
"give us (*please, please*) Lord...our daily bread."

2.

Some have too little food,
and that is not good for them.
Shame on us.
Some have too much food,
and that is not good for them.
Shame on them.
But, turning shame into sharing
would be good for everybody.

3.

Dogs at the Yard, steaks on the grill,
invite us eat, like nothing else will.*
But something more's there, than merely the food...
people together, in one festive mood.
(*unless you're vegetarian of course)

The March at Rittenhouse Square

With shouts of angry voices raised
in passion and frustration,
the ranks of weary marchers bared
a troubled, fractured nation.

The Court had changed a settled law
which had allowed abortions.
In protest, mostly women, screamed:
"Our bodies! No restrictions!"

I froze when asked "Come join our march"
reflecting my confliction:
Supporting women, often poor,
who need to have this option...

... while rejecting this for casual use,
as merely contraception.
While we debate when life begins,
affirm love's procreation.*

**The word "procreation" is often used in theology and worship to claim that love-making is to participate in God's ongoing acts of creation. This may result in the conception of the gift of a child, and/or the conception of the gift of a deeper union between two people.
Rittenhouse Square is a park in an upscale section of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*



Janice Dykacz

I moved back to Buffalo for retirement (and old age). I grew up in Buffalo and know the language of the clouds here.

The Clouds Overhead

In summer, in Buffalo,
The magical clouds are
Like wisps in the wind
Lighting the sky
Moving and sashaying
To and fro.

The promise of summer
Always tantalizing
Frolicking in the sky

And in winter, they are
Heavy slates of grey in the sky
Foreboding
Telling us to be careful.

Not to go too far.

Winter is here.

So our lives also fluctuate.

Enjoy the sun

While it is near.



Carlton Greene

Osher Poetry Anthology

I have been in this august group of budding poets for nearly three years now and I continue to learn the ins and outs of writing poetry; the artistry, the subtlety, of composing poems that tell a story so that all who read it can understand where I'm coming from. Sometimes it can be frustrating for me, and a bit depressing, when I am seeking inspiration on composing a poem to admit after several hours that this is not what I really wanted to say or how I wanted to recite it. In the old days, the famous poets, would crumple up the paper and discard it in the fireplace. I am forever grateful for the computer in this regard. More importantly, I am appreciative of the critiques and suggestions of our group, under the superb guidance of Brenda Baer, which makes us all more skillful in composing our Poems.

Inspiration for A Poem

Sitting in my room, Lights dim,
Engulfed by quiet, melodic Music,
TV Off, thank God!
Working on a new poem, free verse Perhaps,
A poem to tell a story in a few precise words.
Words that need no long explanation beforehand.
Sometimes rhyming, but not a necessity,
Words recalling family and friends,
Old relationships, lovers, flings...
Some sadly long gone now.
Sometimes I wonder if I said "I love you" enough
To those I should have, I thought?
Oh well, I can do it tomorrow, or the next day,
I reasoned far too often.

Did I "let loose" and encourage those I love to do the same?
Did I do the Snoopy Dance with them,
When our joints were less creaky?
Or did I just sit and watch others reach for the sky?
Did we dance and spin and dip and dive for the treasure?
Did we love with abandon, emotionally and physically,
Or hold back for fear of being hurt or trashed,
Or fear retribution by the deity?
I say let's dance, Let's sing now!
Let's jump as high as possible.
Furthermore, let's jump in unison, holding hands,
So we can touch the low lying clouds together,
Maybe even reach the moon.
Let us be vulnerable in love and be glad in it.



Michael Magrogan

Too much abstraction can obscure the meaning of a poem or leave it for the reader to interpret it as the reader sees fit. My purpose is to combine an image with a thought and a clear one (thought) at that.

A STOPPED CLOCK

The Clock Stopped.
And, I carried
 Its Inner Heart
To my Clock-Shop
 Friend, Charlie.
In his West Virginia Voice,
He says, "The Har spring's gone" —
 a death pronouncement and eulogy in one.
Its life's work done,
Its soul worn from years of service.
He hands it back and says, "Throw it in the trash yonder."
Seeing my head down and my hands fingering the brass,
He says, "I'll give 'er a quartz movement...good as new.
I'll keep better time."
Still fingering the dead brass movement

In my hand
With the kind of look
I've used for gravesides.
I say,
"I can't,"
And leave,
Remembering the "ticks" and "tocks"
Will No More.
Time Will Stand Still.

AFTER LOVEMAKING

Now,
It seemed lovely,
Crisp clouds
On a chromium sky.
The air Spring thin.
But,
This was
Not
How it started.
Thick,
With rolling thunder.
Upturned leaves
Promised
And Delivered
Muggy torrents.
Steam-cleaning the earth.
Sweat poured and
We slid
On one another
Frictionless, but
Still exhausted.

Then, we both noticed
 New air, and
Sat up
 Staring,
 Closed-eyed,
To feel it slide over us:
 Sleek cars in a wind tunnel.

Bringing in the Plants

For Winter

The first was The Fern
 Commanded by its Size.

Witch fingers folded

 To fit the tub/

I wanted to douse it, crudely,

But,

It said, "No,"

And I conformed, Knowing

 Nature's Voice,

Demanding Patience

While it Adjusted

 To our world,

 Knowing

Like Humans in old age

New Things

Take

Time.

The Birthday

Some

Birthdays,

like

Crystallized memories

start

as

Volcanic eruptions—

luminescent.

Projecting

Heavenly fireworks

into

Night skies.

Dropping

In saffron

arches,

Hissing

in

Seas of forgotten tears

To form

Silent ebony grandeur—

A new reef

To feed

Rainbow-colored

Thoughts.



Ann Marie Morin

To become a wordsmith, desire, practice, and instructions merge and invite a fledgling writer. I never pondered word selection and placement as I do now. It is an absolute
delight!

This group welcomes attempts, encourages, and claps so readily as one explores one approach then another. We each grow in this environment, this process.

Heartfelt kudos to each participant and our delightful leader and teacher,
Brenda! What an enticing journey!!

JUST THIS MOMENT

Just let me hold

this moment,

Of friendship's warmth

Which soaks into the innards

of my heart.

When laughter and acceptance

fill our conversation .

When

Time
stands
still

And

Life whispers,

“What a treasure you are!”

For just this moment,

My heart's thirst for acceptance
is quenched-

For just this moment

Time stops

and

My heart beams from the inside out.

We as Gifts

“Each of us is a word of God spoken only once” **Peg Dolan**

We gather-

We, children

of different dances,
willing to open
tight shells of self,

We answer with

Compassion.

We choose to risk,

to share giggles

and heartfelt talks,

to discover we are no longer

alone

Love pries us

open.

With its warmth,

our tight hearts

expand with hope and trust

Grandma Said.....

With a gentle voice,
She shared secrets
Not to preach
But to coax life skills

“Matching never matters

Not really. .
Chairs don't need to match
Nor
Plates and cups
Nor
Cutlery"

What makes a difference-
-warm words of welcome,
A ready Laugh,,
Ease of being
Acceptance of "the other",
The different one"

"Come, dear" she softly said-
"Value yourself
Prepare ahead
Rest beforehand.
Know that "the things"
of a meal, matter less.

Listen intently
For
Each one has a story
Each has wisdom-
Be a student of life.

Platters can be overflowing
Or
artfully but sparsely arranged.
Your menu isn't as valuable
As your approach

Allow yourself to
Participate
To enjoy
Vibrant conversations
Use words to kindly
clarify and probe.

Graciously acknowledge

points presented,
Seek to weave camaraderie-
Shared experiences served up
With gales of good will and laughter

the moments together
are sacred
The moments together
Are gifts -
What matters is 'the now' . "

The Yellow Tarp

On the pavement, all alone,

a yellow tarp lays, still as stone.

The delay interrupts

and gobbles up

hours without thought.

We explore alternatives,

We return,

we wait.

Bit by bit,

Cars crawl,

Responders motion,

Lights whirl.

Each one acts on

An urgency,

A need,

A heartache.

For there, on the pavement, all alone,

a yellow tarp lays, still as stone.

A lone body, covered.

A motorcycle, crushed.

A car, dented -

A story, familiar yet unique.

With quiet, somber movements,

Each participant chooses to

honor a life-

Without personal knowledge

honor a grief-

Without personal connection.

For

on the pavement,

all alone,

a yellow tarp lies,

still as stone.



Janice Moyd-Kane

Writing poetry has been such a great outlet for me. Allowing me to speak of my grief and share it with others rather have it fester within and completely destroy me. It has made me pay attention to the simple things in life and be grateful for the small things.

Dementia

Dementia has become your best friend,
without you even knowing it.
Convinced you with his cunning ways to
share all your secrets.
Promising not to share them
with anyone including you.
Promising to love you
like no other has.
Convincing you everyone except him
is being deceitful.
Filling you with his drug
of forgetfulness
Drawing you into his den of iniquity.
Becoming someone we don't recognize
or care to know.
Leading you down the path

of no return.

Without warning his path of corruption

turns into contentment.

The drug of forgetfulness

Allows you to be

Inattentive to the pain you're in

Oblivious to the fact you are dying

Dementia, maybe you are

Her best friend after all.

Hope

Seeing your smile,

the glee in your eyes

Watching you play in the sand

Carefree

No woes

Challenging the waves

as they whip you about

always going back for more

Expressing your feelings

without hesitation

never holding anything in

A Delight

A Comfort

Assurance that Life

Is worth the living.

My Dreams

In my dreams grace is,
given freely by all.

I speak the language of the broken hearted,
I drive a car off the cliff and fly.

I am gifted always knowing What to say,
How to say it and When to say it.

I hear your voice,
with clarity and force.

My brilliance as a seamstress
allows me to recreate the warmth we shared.

We fly together forever, only taking the lead
when one or the other becomes tired.

Falling from the roof,
I never touch the ground, only soar to greater heights.

We have no problem breathing under water,
as love fills our lungs with air.

I can't complain:
I know what true love and devotion is.

It's gratifying that I know what it means to forgive
and to make amends.

I wonder when will I not wake up before I
Hit the ground.

As soon as war breaks out,
I awake with tears in my eyes

I'm a child of my age,
And I wouldn't have it any other way.

A few years ago the sun went down.
never to rise again.

And just last night the Lion roared,
You can live again.

Nothing Better Than You!

I have discovered there is
Nothing better than you
Always there for me
Always caring never judging
Always walking beside me
Putting someone in place
Just at the right time to see me through
How do I know it is you
I know because of the flowers and the trees
I know because the birds in the air
Your word reins true
The floods the fires the pandemic
You know it all and take care of it all
So why wouldn't you know me
My faults, my strengths
You take care of me
There is no one like you
Nothing better than you



Nancy Rothman

How lovely to Zoom once a week with my poetry friends – keeping each other buoyant amid the whirlpool chaos of our lives.

Make Believe

Barbiecore Decor appeals
to my rather weird aesthetic.
After all, if certain adults
now surround themselves
with all things Disney,
why shouldn't I glory
in the bubblegum pink
of a never aging
fashionista.

Okay, I confess. I do
own one mint boxed
Audrey Hepburn,
'Breakfast at Tiffany's'

Barbie doll. That is it.

At least until I can get
my hands on the new
Jane Goodall iteration.

But I digress.

I actually have an excellent
start on the decor – pink
sheets, rose embroidered
purses hung on the walls,
flamingo everything
everywhere.

How fabulous that today
in my dotage,
I give myself big girl
permission to be
totally, unequivocally me.

Retribution

'Fires, Literally Exploding'**

We turned our backs
for far too long
hoping climate change
was a myth,
or perhaps would cause
only incremental damage.

Now, not only is
the American West parched,
streams and reservoirs
resembling the deserts
of Mars, but Europe
sizzles as well.

London, of past
moderate temperatures,
can scarcely breathe,
Buckingham Palace guards
close to fainting
in their bear pelt hats

and buttoned up red coats,
while the forests of France
and Spain cannot
be contained, bursting
into flame on the pyre
we ourselves have created.

**HuffPost Headline

Sepia Time

Small photographs
of the late 1940s
peek out from
an 8x10 frame,
each bounded by
gold glitter ribbon.

My mother
and her two sisters
show off their young
families. Babies,
toddlers, husbands—

all with such promise
and hope for
a brighter tomorrow
than the Depression
and World War II
had conditioned them
to expect.

Yes, Russian Communism
menaced and
the H-bomb approached,
but in the moment,
these first generation
Americans desired
only the suburban
dream – house, white
picket fence – the clink of
the milkman's
early morning gift.

Spiraling

On a clear, cool June day,
I drive up the scenic route
towards the lush green
of horse country,
where long ago
the rich built mansions,
held fox hunts, and balls—
imitating the British
far across the sea.

I skim over a reservoir
and fly by vast woods
on twisty roads
beneath old growth trees
that hover protectively.

Emerald paddocks
appear, and sweating,
dark thoroughbreds gallop
down the slopes—
manes glowing,

nostrils flaring,
freedom in their strides.

And suddenly,
I too feel that freedom,
their joy in an
extraordinary day,
when time cannot
claim me as hostage,
if just for this one
precious moment.



Henry Westray, Junior

I have been a member of the Osher Poetry Group since it started two and a half years ago. In this creative space all of us have shared our hopes and dreams, and most intimate thoughts in Spoken Word. I feel this group has been that needed critical ear and treasure chest of support, which continues to spark growth in each of us as poets. Our voices now beat loud and strong in poetic verse and hearts leap with such a love for poetry, that it will ring our truths with gusto throughout our lands. I would be remiss if I did not thank all the talented and creative friends in our Osher gang. Thanks. I come to value our friendship; I've been touched by your work, and I have learned much from each of you. Last, I would like to give a big heart-felt shout out to Brenda Baer, under her talented and warm guiding light, we all have become more seasoned poets. All I can say is what singer Donna Summer didn't, "She worked hard for **no** money." Now... that I have earned a few brownie points, I hope Brenda will forgive my overuse of rhyme, in the past and in its use in these paragraphs (Sorry, insider joke!) Goodnight!

I hope this selection of poems is like my Grandma's Sweet Potato Pie: Ingredients taste heaven-sent and are rolling-pinned together with love. Henry

Dusty Roads

Route one

My life has been a dusty road
Unseen things have often blocked my view
Perilous road blocks to climb over, slide under, go around or just push through
Dust bowls are gone and as I move on

Like a new born I feel brand new
If I only knew it was God's hand's pushing me through
My dusty roads to you

(This poem was inspired by the title of Zora Neale Hurston's Autobiography,
"Dust Tracks on a Road" and is *dedicated to her posthumously*)

Freddy Gray
Murder by Cop

A gray cloud hovers over Baltimore
White marble steps stained a bloody red
Frightened... featherless seagulls shiver
As black bodies are dredged from muddy harbors
Neighborhoods mourn another murder by cop unmasked
Black lives not worth a commode
Cop convictions gone according to code
Not guilty
Not guilty
Not guilty
Not guilty
Not guilty
Not guilty

A Milk and Honey Life

All I want is a milk and honey life
A world where Black folk's dreams
Are not frozen and fossilized

In my dreams
Just as I'm about to catch
That Milk and Honey life
It skips away hand and hand with milk maids

Too many Black bodies dangling
On edges of bullets and brain-dead dope
Monumental life deeds deferred with no hope
Mountains of madness occur
Moment by moment in dying neighborhood wars

I want a Milk and Honey life
Where souls are pasteurized free of
Germ infested racist hate
Purged of micro-assaults to the soul
A life where pain does not pollute
My struggle for a better life and freedom

I want the sweet taste of honeycombs
Running through my hair
Hives of hope to fill my heart with such great ideas
That would make even our wisest ancestor's envy
Because they're so powerfully rich with promise

All I want is A Milk and Honey Life

This poem was written to honor one of my young Black male patients who entered the hospital with mental health issues, exacerbated by extreme weight loss. His somatic problems were due to his steadfast refusal to eat food, having an obsessive desire to only drink milk and honey. When I asked why he was not eating solid food he responded, "I only drink milk and honey, because I'm tired of being Black... It's just too hard."

The Gift

May your days soar with inspiration
Drenched in dazzling domes of hope
Seasoned with sun beams of delight

Let your nights be blessed

Bathed in warm seas

Of sleepy time dreams

Covered by a soft peaceful blanket

Patently stitched and quilted

By grandma's loving hands

From patches of royal ancient wears

Wrapped in a quiet restful sleep

