

POETRY

AT THE

BACKYARD

July 10, 2024
Tahoe Poetry Collective



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Three Eagles

Scott Green

Driving with my 8-year-old daughter
Through Martis Valley
We see three bald eagles in flight
Large against a slate gray sky
Of moving clouds - they fly

Ahead of the storm
Riding drafts and winds
One after the other.

Scott Green

*Martis Valley, CA May 2012
for Gavin*

I followed the boy
towards the stream.
Clouds spit rain slowly,
thunder rolled,
eagle soared.
We stepped over sage and coyote brush.
Ceanothus
We came to the stream,
it narrowly split the grass.
Steadily flowing past,
ribbon of water.
No water would course its path in a month or more.
Its ribbon would vanish before
a Julian moon would visit a
Sierra black night sky.

The boy stood by the stream.
Holding an arrow leaf,
He innocently asked "is this a willow?"
Stream flowed
we followed...
I beckoned him to the small rise.
Black soil
rich loam in a sandy place.

An out crop of gnarled rock.
Lichen covered
Not good for mortars.
Not good for grinding.

But there the boy saw them.
1 2 3 4 tools

Artifacts left behind.
Stone artifacts
lithic tools.
Bifaces
Obsidian
Basalt

Left long ago
still there.
Placed by hands no longer working
no longer
gathering
cutting
weaving
mending
holding
helping
carrying
cradling
nursing.

Tools made of rock, placed upon rock.
Thousands of spitting storms ago,
millions of raindrops
snowflakes
hailstones.

The boy
9 years old
Starting new memories in new places,
left alone in time.

Escuela

Birdie

Escuchar al maestra

Listen to the teacher

Ser seguro

Be confident

Crear tu mente

Believe your mind

Usar lápiz

Use a pencil

Eres muy inteligente

You are very intelligent

Leer mucho

Read a lot

Aprender cosas nuevas

Learn new things

California

Birdie

Carros

Cars

Aguila

Eagle

Lago

Lake

Increible

Incredible

Francisco

Francisco

(h)Ogar

Home

Rios

Rivers

Nidos

Nests

Ir a California para la vacacion

Go to California for vacation

Ay arboles

Oh trees

Various Poems

Aimee Lowenstern

COLECTIVO DE POESÍA TAHOE
SERIE DE VERANO 2024

POESÍA EN EL BACKYARD



12 de Junio, 10 de Julio, 14 de Agosto, y 11 de Septiembre
(segundo miércoles de cada mes)
6:30 - 8:00 pm

Envie trabajos para lectura antes del 1 de cada mes a: tahoepoetrycollective@gmail.com
CELEBRADO EN: TAHOE BACKYARD, 8428 TROUT AVE, KINGS BEACH





Nautical Twilight

Cheyenne McGregor

The day I tried to belong
to the birds, I watched
the source of the bleed
seep out into some foggy mist.
I began to pick at the scabs,
until one flock of the feather
twisted out each tooth of mine,
one by one by one,
& dangled me
from the Sycamore branch.
She squawked, how dare you?
How dare you look for me?
How dare you play medic?
How dare you mimic God?
We will never be confused to be one and the same.
You are better among the cows, or the sheep,
or perhaps the swine.
So I was passed along,
Past the murky mist
Past the groggy groves
Past the fields of frolic,
Past my time and into that nautical twilight

Eulogy by Poetry

Cheyenne McGregor

An oil painting, a gunshot wound— bears the same sweet citrus. A eulogy, a poem, do bleed the same color, that vile, wondrous, putrid, sweet, pathetic, red. These are life promises. I see Virgil on my doorstep washing into someone I don't recognize under my porch light. Cut me violet, slice me seagreen, birth me, lily of the valley. Within the bud, you will discover the most truthful of deceits and the most facetious of lies. Flashes of what is tangible do not impose on the dreams of children, and thus you cannot scare me. I have found a way to behold the lover at their darkest and kiss their cheek as they nibble what is left from the bone.

Lace Over Glass, Glass Over Lace

Cheyenne McGregor

To live—
Is it to dance in the aisles of daylight hell
& delight in the laughter swelling up and
Out of me?
Perhaps, to cry out loudly when the desire
Makes all other desires obsolete?
Do you care not, how I grimace when the
cold breeze sweeps across my skin?
Does it change anything at all that I love,
oh how I do love, even in this light?
I swallow the beast
Upon blue robin glass plates
Upon seamless clean mirror faces
Upon kaleidoscope visions of Godsmack
It will suffice,
It will crucify,
It will switch.
It may not be enough,
& yet, it is me entirely,
So there may be blood.
I watch you through lace over glass
You echo me through glass over lace
I cease this being, momentarily
I am suddenly a dream.

An Origin Story

Joanne Mallari

Origin's not a single point, untraceable. –Andrew Collard

I could say my origin
was this morning when,
tilting my head to the sky,
I saw the continuation
of my breath flowing
from a moment in 1999:
the first time I released
a butterfly, I fell in love.
Or I could say my origin
was the birth of this body
in 1990, when I looked
more like an old man.
It makes sense if I think
of this shell as a laterdversion of my lolo
who loved music. I listen,
now, to the sounds of 1960
preserved on vinyl.
What was it like for Lolo
to hold his son for the first
time? What beginnings
and endings did he foretell
in the moment of his
continuation? I, childfree,
reimagine the ways
I continue. I, unmarried,
reimagine the ways I love,
though its definition

has always been slippery.
My grandparents tell me
love is a song in 4/4 time.
My parents tell me love
withstands like sandbags
bracing for a flood.
In this version, let love
transform like vapor
into rain. Let love undo
the chrysalis I've been
weaving since 1999.
Let love listen, then add
syncopated rhythms
to a song in common time.

Dear Mary,

Joanne Mallari

Today I drew your name from a deck
of divine feminine oracle cards.
If I could have lunch with anyone
from the past, it would be you.
I want to know: How do you say yes
to what feels light? When does
your body move according to gut
instinct or muscle memory?
When the angel Gabriel came to you,
did he give you enough time to sink
into your knowing? If we are made
in the image of God, then is God
also on a journey to unbecoming—
to unlearning old patterns of non-consent?
Did you really give the angel
a full-body yes, and if you didn't,
how did you manage the crisis?
Today I finished Glennon Doyle's
memoir, and I learned that the Greek
root of crisis is to sift. At twenty-eight,
I left home to sift through my priorities:
Who is a daughter without duty,
and is it okay for a daughter to follow
her desire? In Glasgow, I wrote poems
about searching for God, and now
I realize I was actually looking for you.
Outside a church near my Airbnb,
I pushed the buzzer to get to God's
representative, but no one answered.
I imagine the conversation we would've

What Asexual Women Want

Joanne Mallari

—After Kim Addonizio

had if you had come to the door: I am lost
and unworthy of my own desire,
I would've said. Women are warriors,
you would've answered. And warriors
fight for everything worth having.
Maybe I did run into you—just not
inside the office of God's administrator.
You were the moon at the foot of my bed
that night. The way you showed up
reminded me we are never without light.
Sometimes the moon is the best light

to sift by. In my mind's eye,
I pick up a handful of sand on the beach.
I feel the granules slip through my fingers
until all that's left is what matters—
a piece of shell that used to be someone's
home. The piece of shell is an invitation
to come home to myself.

I want a dress that's emerald green.
I want it to show off tattoos I've been hiding
since I was twenty and thought
that love must always equal sex.
I want my brows sharp enough to tell you
what I'm thinking, and my pubic hair
to form a landing strip just for me.
I want my car to make it to 300,000 miles.
Anyone who's gotten close enough will know
that nothing gets in the way of this woman and her Honda.
I want my hair to look like I still give a damn—
I want you to know this is what asexual looks like.
I want life-ruining conversation over a cup of Reno Fog.
I want the invitation, but I don't want to come to the party—
the hypocrisy is not lost on me.
I want to take up space at a table for one.
I want to people-watch long enough to see the ugly
and the beautiful parts of humanity.
Last week, I looked out a window just in time
to see a college student drop off donations
in the middle of moving out. In the next breath,
one driver flipped off another during the slow
crawl up Virginia Street.
I want to live long enough to see a priest wash a transgender woman's feet.
I want to see bell hooks' vision of love come to fruition.
I now know that true love looks like a dog on its back,
vulnerable enough to show you its belly.
And I want my next tattoo to be out in the open.
I want the artist to draw a string of paper cranes about to take flight—
mother cranes and daughter cranes who carry their dreams
in the architecture of their wings:
No mother, no daughter.
No gravity, no flight.

I'm Waiting for the Right Moment to be Spontaneous

Courtney Cliften

I like boys who paint their fingernails
and girls who don't wear sensible bras.
I always ask my therapist how she's been doing.
I want to be honest about my sex drive.
I want to put mirrors on every surface of my house
so I can picture myself naked whenever I want.
Whenever they give me those little cups
to piss in, I get some on my hand.
Once, I counted the legs of a dead centipede,
just to be sure.
I have four little beautifully-scienced pills
that I eat every morning like a ceremony.
They keep me predictable and parched.
I like soup so I tattooed "soup" on my arm.
I like my sister so I call her to harmonize
with my comfort tone.
Anytime my heart beats too heavy, I listen
to YoYo Ma's Bach Cello Suite No 1 in G Major.
If you knew enough about me,
you'd want me to call my mom too.
And when my favorite sweater
started to unravel at the seams,
I kept wearing it anyway.

My Final Elegance

Courtney Cliften

I sip flat champagne out of a coffee mug
and put on a record. Nothing edgy,
just like,
something I picked up in midtown
because the hot cashier said it was a hot record.
Last night, New Year's eve, I didn't drink at all,
just drove my friends around to various bars
with various people talking about whatever
people talk about when they're expected to talk.
Except nobody talked to me. I suppose
I'm good at that—being unapproachable
when I want to.
We parked the car at 11:56 and stared at our phones
until we saw fireworks in the distance.
At 11:59.
Time is never right. It's not even real.
Like,
I am old, but I am not even 30. I will be,
and then I will just be essentially the same
as the day before, when I was 29.
Do you know what I'm saying?
I was dumped last year.
I guess that's why I woke up to four poetry collections
splayed across the side of the bed he used to sleep on.
I don't mean to be dramatic about it, it's just that
everyone was in love last night and kissing
and dancing, and I was thinking about the time
I tattooed the wrong word on his calf
but he ended up liking it better, and when
he brushed my hair and took off my makeup
with a wet rag so I could stay in bed
shoveling popcorn into my face by the fistful.

My friends are always talking shit about him,
told me that in the new year I'll realize for myself
how lame he is.

Like,

as if the new year will erase the heaviness just because
the calendars are all new.

"Heaviness" doesn't seem like the best description.

Let me try again: it's more like:

emptiness.

Like,

relating best to grayscale. Like if you cracked an egg
and the shell just disintegrated and rose like smoke
out the cracks of my shitty apartment's stone walls.

This was never meant to be a breakup poem,

but here we are.

My feet got so cold last night, I almost

let my friend Penny put my toes in her mouth.

Max accidentally went live on his Instagram,

and sent a text that just said "Joe Biden."

Christina did the adorable thing where she adds dots
to the outer corner of her winged eyeliner

and

somebody looked at me for too long

so I mouthed "I hate you" in his direction,

but I'm not sure if he understood.

Anyway,

the bottle of champagne only cost \$5

and it was a screw top, which is anticlimactic,

but stores better overnight in my fridge,

which I praise today while I stay in my underwear,

kill the batteries in my vibrator and try to think

of a new year's resolution that will keep me alive

long enough to be 30.

But like I said, time isn't real (like infinity).

((My brain has an infinite heart,

but it's never been absorbed)).

I didn't eat anything today (again)

but I promised my therapist I'd quit this habit

so I'm reminded of Melanie's garden

as I usually am when I think of food

I'd like to eat

or people I'd like to love.

I'd like to be like Melanie, grow older

without children, have a house

full of books and a garden

full of peonies and tomatoes.

I'd like to wake up on the first day of a new year

and feel time's warm breath on my neck

like a song I wasn't tricked into liking,

like

an actual champagne flute with a fragile

but attractive stem.

I'd like to believe in the concept of time.

Like,

it could sweep the heaviest seasons from my eyelids,

use its little units of measurement to file

the too-sharp thorns of the flowers into fingers

clutching at my throat. Gently.

Like

not enough bubbles.

Release Theory

Courtney Cliften

After Ocean Vuong

This is the worst day ever
I accidentally stepped on a beetle at 6am
The air in here, stiff as a dried petal
I lost my place in the book and immediately
thought of masturbation
How it's impossible to return to myself if I think
of anything other than what's right in front of me
My phone vibrates, another poll pretending
to know what goes on in the heads of America
What we'll never have is anything we left
in the backseat of our father's pickup truck,
the gummy bear, the last time I made my brother laugh
pretending to eat the baitworms from the Styrofoam cup
I'll hook the worms for you, he said
We sat on the bank for a while, casting and reeling
One by one he knocked the trout skulls with a stone
When he caught another one, I reached for him—
not my brother, but the fish
and gave it back to the river.

“Leading to the Light

Chad “Sir Hayes” Hayes

I'm thrilled that the world is waking up.
Woke to the greed and all that's corrupt.
But careful yee who decides to fight demons,
not become one in the process thy self.

If we judge those who are still asleep,
we're not as awake as we think.
All of us were born asleep
Even Buddha the enlightened one,
didn't wake up until his mid 30's.

To hate those who hate may seem like its right,
but 2 wrongs dont make a right.
The only reason to look down on someone is to admire or compliment their
shoes.
To be enlightened is to be a guiding light,
To show the way but not force it.
A person convinced against their will,
Is of the same opinion still.

How people treat you is their karma,
How u treat them is yours.
Now that doesn't mean passive just not be aggressive
It's killing with confident kindness.
Because always remember,
try if they will they'll cut all the flowers,
But they can not stop spring from coming.
Our job is simply to plant seeds of harmony,
But thats not the day of harvesting.

Just be the change you wish to see in the world,
And watch how the world that we see will change.

Blue Shoes and Other Poems

Emmy Brett

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

Lucky Enough (poem) from The Great American Bar Scene

Zach Bryan

Merry Christmas from the Homeless

Casey Roy

The first time I tried giving to the homeless, I left completely horrified. You see, the first time, I picked a bad place, a bad time. Firstly, I was nannying kids at a park. Secondly, it was the public park bathroom. I remember I had an extra uncrustable P.B. and J. sandwich, and some extra goldfish in my backpack- so I placed it at the foot of her open stall like a fool. Here comes the horrified bit- she threw a verbal fit and forcefully threw the food back at me, the way tomatoes get thrown at you in theory if you do really poorly on stage. It was the same amount of food thrown any normal day at work for me, except I prefer the cute innocent and forgivable toddler over the elderly woman on drugs. Heartbroken, I vowed to never again help the homeless. Then I moved into a van. By choice. Thus making me one of them. Homeless. By definition we were the same. With time, the past five years in the van, I'd like to think my definition on who needs "help" is improving as I am learning how to judge a bit better maybe.

Like the flip flopping fish I am, I did not keep to my word and of course I've continued to help others. Heres an example of a time the flip paid off.

This random interaction happened with this gal once I dont think I'll likely forget. Two years ago, late summer and pre-covid in Carson City.. It was also late afternoon, which in the Great Basin means an average of 95 degrees in the shade. Hotter than Satan's new cat if you will. I was waiting at a redlight to exit a park, when I noticed this gal who looked the same age as me, walking across the street barefoot in front of this truck. The truck and I were the only two cars around because this is Washoe County not Orange County. So anyway, the truck driver for whatever reason, either shits and giggles or more likely the anger and sadness from his own life spilling over into hers. So he decides to lay on the horn in reaction to her walking in front of him, and scare her. The light turns green, he drives away where as I put my car in park, grab these \$12 Haviana sandals from right next to me

(I only own three pairs of sandals, but I prefer to wear my rainbow sandals 99.9% of the time.) Again she had no shoes and is clearly now upset from the scare, so after grabbing the shoes I jump out of my car, door probably left open, engine running, I run up to her in a rush and say "Hey girl, do you want these? We look really similar in shoe size." "Yes!" she replies "Thank You!!"

She was absolutely beaming. Her cheeks pink, eyes glittered from almost tears, that type of glow is contagious therefore I am now beaming, we are both grinning so hard, I almost didn't notice she had almost no teeth left. Did I set that up wrong? It's the truth. No teeth needed. Then she asks me a question "Can I give you a hug?" this time it was my turn for a big "Yes!!" We then hug the way you'd hug a really really good friend you haven't seen in a really really long time.

I wrote down a rad definition once out of this book I cannot remember the name nor author of. I do however remember the concept of the book, It was dedicated to the word Hygge. So I googled the term just now. The translation of this Swedish word "Hygge" is defined as "enough, sufficient, adequate, just right." I think about this concept daily, I want to memorize it for myself remember and share. So here is the quote I wrote from out of that mystery book.

"Sheltering each other-

To hygge is to build sanctuary. The most basic security that we can provide each other is shelter- physical and psychological. We shelter each other when we invite people into our homes, when we give time; when we listen well, or provide a bed for the night; when we offer privacy, a winged arm chair, anonymity, a tent in the garden, a night in a hostel."

To wrap up this piece, I must finally admit the true reason I originally set out to write this. I did not get any of you anything for Christmas this year. When December 1st happened a couple weeks ago, it was simultaneously this crazy full moon, I couldn't sleep, so I wrote out my gift list, what I needed to shop for everyone. Firstly and most fun to shop for would be my Nanny,

kids. So many kids I nanny that I'd love to spoil. Then their parents, what would I do without all of you. Of course I can't forget my own parents and siblings. My friends. My mechanic. The owner of the laundry mat I go to weekly. Then there are the baristas....so many baristas! So you see, My gift list exceeded my budget ten fold. I simply couldn't this year. So instead, throughout the month, throughout the past three years, you could find comfort in the fact I have been truly passionate in partaking to provide Hygge to those right in front of me. I've tried in the past to take pictures of these experiences but the portraits wouldn't do justice and it feels forced to give and ask for credit. Tom Waits says "I have always believed the way we affect our audience is more important than how many of them are there."

Dear reader, you should know, it is solely because of the people in my life that I have been inspired to hold onto love. Dear reader if I sent these words to you, you have also at one point, given me that huge ear to ear grin. That rosey cheeked, contagious, no teeth matter type of hope and love, and I hope this verbal story shall pose as a fine gift that may be enough for now. Because I would give all of you the stars and the moon if I could. Merry Christmas from the homeless.

Legacy of a Lone Star

John Merryfield

When I read the letter
I feel like binge eating
a bag of Doritos
He's coming home
on hospice, it says.
I thought it was some sort of strange
two-lined haiku
with an awful Aha moment.
He's coming home on hospice.
And when I arrive, he is home,
floating on a poppy flower
far above the world
The end of life sky of Texas poppies.
And now I'm kissing men and women I recognize
but can't remember names.
Grief sweeps open a gate of many kisses.
Grief is a dysfunctional family.
Leeroy
Tony
Aunt Creamie
Saint Tomas
remembered
like baseball trading cards.
Hurriedly, I scribble down the code
to the money safe and hear someone holler
it's a civil war
don't be startled by all the guns.
The gun stash and the paperwork stare at me
like the dark eyes of a father
and now I see the sunlight through his leaves.
I see the filament shadows
of his suburban neighborhood.
I see a map drawn in the mud.
I will destroy every gun in the safe
even though I've heard it said
that guns aren't the problem.

A Prayer for My One Good Eye

John Merryfield

Can you hear the bugles overhead?
They are sandhill cranes
on a downwind jibe
or they are vehicles
on highway 95.
I'm in a hotel room
in Tonopah, Nevada
thinking about how
the world doesn't need
another lonely poem
written by the
founding member
of the melancholy
poet's union,
with one good eye that sees
only half the story.
Tonopah, what a place to try
to unwind oneself
surrounded by the cigarette smoke
and the side-swiping sliding trombones
in the east-bound lanes
and the quiet children
in their back seats
and the black telephone wires
with neither birds nor snow on them
just droopy black lines
like words we wished
we said to our loved ones.
I say a prayer for my one good eye
I can see the migrating
sandhill cranes.

Sand Dunes and Small Places

Teresa Breeden

You know the softness of sand,
how it gives beneath weight, each foot
enfolded, sliding. You know that should you fall,
the sand will accommodate you, intimately—
warm grains trickling in
through buttonholes, eddying
between skin and fabric.
Each grain is sunlight
confined. Enveloped, you sink,
one leg cocked towards the light.
You consent, this warmth
worth the discomfort of
being scoured raw.
The sand heats you even after
your feet have felt pavement. It curls
in each alcove, a teasing reminder,
slightly grimy from sweat.
You might forget falling,
but the small places remember—
eye creases and the corners of lips,
your navel, the mat just below—
a century of sparks, a tongue of dust
on the polish.
You've seen the sand dune's lip,
the cutting edge of intersection, that coitus
of smooth and sharp. You know
what I mean.

Bread and Salt

Teresa Breeden

For Sophia; April 28, 2007

We first met at the outdoor amphitheater during Shakespeare's Follies.
I was drinking a margarita and you, slight
as the salt dust on my lips, were too.
I remember saying, "I can't possibly," wishing I were wrong—
our first joke together, your first taste of dramatic irony,
as the stars slid from their caves into the fresh night.
When you grow old enough
to carve the air with words and tell a second joke
I mean to explain myself to you—
That you are my longest day of the year,
the twilights leading there, my morning
without frost, dew-drenched.
I hope to be both absorbed
and reflected in your eyes, want to be
your salt and bread.
For now, you sleep pressed against my chest, limp
with trust. Seeing so clearly what was gained
makes me wonder what was lost.
As the nights shorten and you curl against my body,
I wonder if to nurture is reflexive, and I wonder
which of us really is helpless here.

3. The Fruit

Put your shoes on
but her skin is sticky with peach.
It hurts my words. She bares her teeth, shows me
the pit, cupped, cracked across the center
We are out of time for words. I grip her wrist.
Wash hands. I pull her to the sink. And then,
Shoes. On.
Each threaded strand of fruit
clings, bending, the pit at the center
It comes easy to some,
composing for another's pleasure.
For others, it is metal.

2. Coyotes

that first boy in that first truck, skin
prickling like a new star. What I imagined
was mine, pulled like a curtain over remorse.
Lowering my face toward what I never, frightened
of nothing but myself.
Memory changes the event
like believing, without suspicion
I could invent a child, even though
I know, when coyotes yip in the night
something is about to die.

1. The Garden

leaf, flower, needlespray
Never decide while eavesdropping.
A petal, unrolling itself to sun,
hands drift open; mystery contained
my belly a swollen drupe.
It's what I dreamed for my daughter. Another's passion.

My terms. Then I met her.
What does essence reference, when time is of?
lateforwork, lateforgymnastics, lateforschool
Sobs. A voice bleating,
scattered in a splay of catclaws.
[Pull sandals into the spokes of a sun]
Put your shoes on
[Twirl thrice; hop like a cottontail. Taste the floor.]
Spinning-the-wrong-way fixer-upper.
Lamp-smasher, berry-masher, worlds whirling
toward some end or beginning.
Is collision ever quiet?

Mid-July on the Living Room Rug

Teresa Breeden

*"My heart that was rapt away by the wild cherry blossoms –
will it return to my body when they scatter?"*

~~Kotomichi

Rugs are best known to the foot, rarely,
if ever, considered by fingertips or back,
flared nostrils or parted lips.
But here I lie, out of season
yet unseasonably
scorched by bloom—
my body, suspended like light on water
over the silken
nudge of cherry blossoms.
My lungs blister; branches etch
my thighs. I float, buoyed
by sleek petals pressing back.
Lost to craving, I can only count
the tornado of each breath
and wait—
my lips a part
of each inhale, my heart astride
the reckless breeze.

Today I Saw My Father Cry

Teresa Breeden

Today I saw my father cry
the sun, at most, was wax, and I, dressed,
put together for summer
was unprepared
to walk such rain.

A Collection of Poems

Jesse James Ziegler

Reno Poet Laureate

The Best of Both Worlds

A Letter to Myself at Just the Right Time

Drawbridge

For Whoever Needs It

Poetry At The Backyard



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