

# 7 Poems by Nanci Woody

*Poetry Editor Hezekiah's note follows the poems. Spacing is poet's own.*

## **Lady Liberty's Lament**

O say can you see  
your tired, your poor  
can you see  
by the dawn's early light  
your huddled masses  
yearning to breathe free

O say can you see  
what so proudly we hailed  
as the golden door for all  
can you see  
the wretched  
the refugees  
on your teeming shore

O, can you see  
blood  
on the faces of children  
dragged along by mothers  
fathers dead  
from the perilous fight  
the rockets' red glare  
bombs bursting in air

O, say  
does that star-spangled banner  
yet wave  
for the tempest-tossed  
homeless  
in the land of the free  
in the home of the brave

## **Ho Hum**

Ho hum to what our country has become.  
Scant scant is our notice when headlines roar  
mass shooting mass shooting  
it's just one more.

Ho hum to the aggrieved and angry man –  
a need to get even, a lust for gore –  
mass shooting mass shooting  
it's just one more.

Ho hum to our Amendment Two. Ho hum.  
Arm the teachers, rabbis, preachers. What for?  
We can't stop mass shootings –  
there will be more.

Ho hum, slogans catchy, as *guns don't kill  
people kill people*. But  
O my God! This time  
it's our children  
bleeding  
on the floor.  
Mass shooting mass shooting  
it's just one more.

## **Silent We Stay**

Go! Raise your torches in the night  
cry death to Jews, minorities.  
We watch as you march by  
masculine voices deep  
chanting your chants.

*Jews will not replace us!*  
*Keep our country Christian!*  
*Keep our country white!*

We wring our hands  
we shed a tear  
we read again Amendment One  
and doubts be damned  
conclude  
your best friend  
is the Bill of Rights  
written by men  
all of them Christian  
all of them white.

## MY LAST AMEN

Kneeling, I make the sign of the cross  
lift my eyes to the statue  
of the Virgin.  
I begin.

Hail Mary, full of grace

The prayer rote, my mind wanders.

*Hail, Mary.  
Are you there?  
Did you know  
all these years  
about the children?  
You're the mother  
most respected most loved  
you would be watchful of  
the children  
full of grace.*

I shift positions, begin anew.

Hail Mary. Full of Grace.  
The Lord is with thee

*With thee?  
And not with the thousands of . . .  
No, Mary, Wait. Hundreds of thousands  
children, defenseless  
abused sexually abused  
by trusted holy men  
holy evil men  
sins concealed  
by other holy evil men.  
Where were you, Mary?  
The Lord is with thee.*

Dear God. I'm trying to get  
through this prayer.

Hail Mary, full of grace  
The Lord is with thee  
Blessed art thou amongst women

*Amongst women? In the church?  
There are no women there, Mary,  
not in the hierarchy,  
so which women are you blessed among?  
The ones with children abused?*

Hail Mary, full of grace  
the Lord is with thee  
Blessed art thou amongst women  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,  
Jesus.

*Jesus, your own son,  
the one  
who blessed the children  
even as his disciples rebuked him.  
Remember, Mary, when he said unto them -  
Suffer the little children to come unto me,  
and forbid them not  
for of such is the kingdom of God.*

*Mary, Mary  
please please implore your Son to come  
again destroy the temple  
of the abusers  
and their confessors  
and their protectors.*

My head drops  
tears spill forth  
as I continue the prayer

Holy Mary, Mother of God  
pray for us sinners

*Now, yes, now  
pray for the sinners  
in your own house.*

*I'm so sorry, Mary.  
I can not continue.*

I stand, say aloud  
my last  
Amen.

## **Paradise Is Lost**

The idyllic town in the foothills watched  
a Hell fire roar through its thirsty woods,  
tear through canyons, leap streams, rivers,  
the fiendish fire fueled by angry dry winds  
opening the gates of Hell in Paradise.

Fiery embers rained down onto the town  
brittle black trees dropped their ashy branches  
on smoldering smoking rooftops, spreading  
fire inside, merciless were the flames.  
Panic! Panic! People rescue treasures,

Pile into pickup trucks. Burning burning  
burning lungs burning eyes burning houses  
old narrow roads jammed with abandoned cars.  
Run! Run from Hell's own fire. Escape! Escape  
*a dungeon horrible, on all sides round.*

Fast-moving frightful flames that might engulf  
them as they ran, dragging along children  
dragging along the sick, the elderly.  
Terror-stricken falling wailing hot hot  
running running *as one great Furnace flam'd.*

Many thousands escaped old Satan's clutch.  
For many more, bones and ashes smoldered.  
Brave brave firefighters searched, dogs in tow  
the rubble hot, while the still-living faced  
another Hellish disaster – despair.

Sick from the black, polluted air, blue skies  
a memory, afternoon sun burns red.  
These poor people paid the terrible price  
for the sins of us all against the earth  
their prayed-for rain coming coming too late.

Too late it is to curse the drought, too late  
to curse your God. Hold back your tears, your thoughts

and prayers. Resolve to better stewards be.  
On earth, what we have sown we now have wrought.  
California was on fire. Paradise is Lost.

*Italics are quotes from John Milton's "Paradise Lost"*

### **If I Could Be Your Instrument**

If I could be your instrument  
enraptured you would cling to me  
such sweet sweet music we would make  
always in perfect harmony.

If I could nestle in your arms  
your mind and heart I'd surely win  
as back and forth you slide the bow  
on your most cherished violin.

Or I could be your clarinet  
the sounds we'd make - oh so sublime  
poets would swoon and grab their pens  
and put our gorgeous notes to rhyme.

Your fingers fondly on my keys  
we'd be as one, together grow.  
Our passion would be plain to see.  
Play me! Play me! Your piano.

Or, I could be your bass trombone  
hands polishing my lovely bell  
sensuous lips on me each night  
you'd ever be under my spell.

Yet, maybe fame we two could share  
our names in lights - famous rock stars!  
As you would nightly pluck my strings  
I'd delight crowds as your guitar.

Percussion, brass, woodwind or strings  
it matters not at all to me.  
Your devotion is what I crave.  
Your heart I want my own to be.

## **A Sweeter Gift**

What gift have I  
to mark this day  
one of countless days  
we have shared -  
days turned to years  
years falling  
tumbling rapidly  
into decades.

What gift have I  
to mark this day  
one of many such days -  
heartbreaking, some –  
yet most filled with joy.  
We have shared  
them all.

This day, by your bedside,  
your hand in mine  
I'll read to you  
those favorite poems  
we've shared  
in happier times.

Housman's emotional lines  
*early though the laurel grows*  
*it withers quicker than the rose,*  
and dear Emily's  
*hope is the thing with feathers.*

Perhaps this day  
I'll end our time together  
with Milton, who tried to  
*justify the ways of God to men*  
though justify I can not  
this suffering wrought upon you.

What gift have I?



Only the gift of time  
though nothing new  
is a sweeter gift  
when days are few.

**POETRY EDITOR HEZEKIAH writes:** Radical, riotous, rebellious: I think that the greatest quality a creative person can hope to have is irreverence—it insists upon a lack of satisfaction and inspires the unreasonable upon which, of course, “all progress depends.” Woody may have something beyond this, parading what is held most dear in, **Lady Liberty’s Lament**. United we stand, divided we fall—‘**Silent we Stay**’ at the peril of all; poignant verse for those who most hate Hate... **MY LAST AMEN**, if it nourishes the spirit, why does the ‘mind wander’—another bean for the pot and one less coin for the plate. “Sing [earthly] muse.” Read on to explore things most touching, tormented and tortured.

**THE POET SPEAKS:** *When I write, I want to elicit feeling. It could be disgust, fear, love, or nostalgia, but something that lingers on the mind of the reader. I do not seek out poems – they come to me, sometimes in the middle of night. I oftentimes think in iambic pentameter and like the traditional poetic forms – sonnet, villanelle, rondeau. I am influenced by the daily news reports, and also by the lives of those close to me. If I had to choose my most important “stylistic influencer,” it would be John Milton. I am in awe of his creativity and willingness to speak out against power. I am especially impressed with Paradise Lost, 10,000 lines of blank verse written when he was blind (and before computers or even typewriters!)*

**POET’S BIO:** *Nanci Lee Woody’s novel, Tears and Trombones, won an Independent Publishers medal for Best Fiction in the Western Pacific Region; a 5-Star Review and medals from Readers’ Favorites for Literary Fiction and YA, Coming-of-Age; a Book Excellence Award, category, Music; and a Top Shelf Magazine award, category, Regional Fiction.*

*Nanci’s short stories and poems appear both in print anthologies and online. She wrote the book and lyrics for a musical, “Hello to Life!” and produced it in collaboration with her husband, a musician.*

*Some places where her poetry and short stories appear are: CWC Literary Review; Sand Hill Review, Fault Zone – Transform and Strike Slip; Tule Review; Poetry Now; Your Daily Poem; Fear of Monkeys; and Carry the Light.*

