

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.

