

Dog Days

By Larry Thomas

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: More poems from Texas: I must confess, or at least declare, I never thought they were such a sensitive state; when standup comics don't hesitate to liken them to rusted-out trucks, gun wracks and death row. It is a shame I didn't realize they also have such a profound proclivity for poetry. I guess when you're a lone star, "as the brightest in all of heaven." I just stole Larry's last line. Here is a lovely tail of Orion and Sirius and heatstroke—not to be missed. Dare I say, Texas is full of yellow-rose nosegays. HS

Dog Days

after Orion and his faithful dog, Sirius

Of summer days the sultriest,
known for heat and stroke,
these are the days when the dog
for which they're named, tethered
to his wild, eternal howl,
is closest to the Earth

and rises with the sun;
the dog whose slain master,
felled by the arrow of jealousy,
was memorialized in stars
by his lover/goddess of the moon;
the dog who so impressed the goddess

with his faithfulness, searching
hysterically for his master,
she turned him, too, into a star
not only to shine at the starry feet
of his master but to reign forever
as the brightest in all of heaven.

THE POET SPEAKS: *Being an ardent lover of dogs (and other animals as well), I was disturbed for a long time about the common phrase, “the dog days of summer.” It was always used in a pejorative sense referencing the hottest, sultriest, and most uncomfortable days of the year.*

My abiding concern about the use of the phrase eventually led me to research its origin, and, although I was heartened by what I gleaned from my research, I became even angrier about the manner in which the true, salient meaning of the phrase was reversed. Hence, my poem “Dog Days” was born.

The vast majority of my poetry is triggered by the natural world, and I found particularly appealing, early in my development as a poet of seriousness, the work of poets who shared my reverence for Mother Nature, poets like Ted Hughes (former poet laureate of England), Theodore Roethke, Robinson Jeffers, David Wagoner, and Mary Oliver. Such wonderful poets continue to inspire me to this day.

AUTHOR’S BIO: *I am a member of the Texas Institute of Letters and served as the 2008 Texas Poet Laureate. I have published several books of poems, including *As If Light Actually Matters: New & Selected Poems* (Texas A&M University Press Consortium 2015) which received a Writers’ League of Texas Book Awards Finalist citation. I am an eight-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize, and I was longlisted for the 2007 National Book Award. My wife and I are the proud owners of two Long-haired Chihuahuas, Pecos and Piñon. Visit him at www.larrydthomas.com*