

Voices

DYER-IVES FOUNDATION 2016
48TH ANNUAL POETRY COMPETITION

THE DYER-IVES FOUNDATION ANNUAL POETRY AWARDS

Spring 2016 marks the 48th year of the Dyer-Ives Poetry Competition. Initiated in 1968 by poet James Allen at the urging of John Hunting, the competition seeks to encourage excellence in writing and provide recognition for local work of high quality. Cash prizes are awarded to the authors of first, second, and third place poems in three separate divisions.

Past coordinators include Walter Lockwood, Philip Jung, Larry Manglitz, Barbara Saunier, Patty Bridges, Kimberly Wyngarden, David Cope, Mursalata Muhammad, and Christine Stephens Krieger. It is the dedication and talents of our local community of writers--the time, energy, and commitment to the discovery of talent--that makes this contest a significant annual literary event.

Local professors and poets of note complete the preliminary judging process. This year's preliminary judges were Amy Carpenter-Leugs, Molly Batchik, and Lisa Gundry.

A nationally known poet completes the final judging of our poetry submissions and determines the prize winners. Past judges include Anne Sexton, X.J. Kennedy, Robert Creeley, James Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, Robert Bly, William Stafford, Naomi Shihab Nye, Herb Scott, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Billy Collins, Alicia Ostriker, Janine Pommy Vega, M. L. Liebler, Patricia Clark, Linda Neme Foster, and Mark Doty. Maria Mazziotti Gillan acted as the 2016 national judge.

The Dyer-Ives Foundation would like to thank the Grand Rapids Public Library and Peopledesign for their help in spreading the word about the competition.

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ELEMENTARY DIVISION

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Adventures at the Cottage

by ELLORY CLASON

Everybody looks forward to the day,
The day when we pack up our car
And drive an hour away to South Haven.
Crammed between our bags,
We look out the window.
Everyone knows when we're close
Because the highway becomes a small town
With a blueberry farm
And a small gas station with no bathroom.
Everyone knows when we're close
Because we turn into a narrow dirt road
That used to have a FOR SALE sign.
Shaded by trees we follow the road
Until we come to a welcoming cabin
That looks bigger than it is.
We race out of the car
And run to the old staircase that leads to the water.
We almost trip down the stairs to the dock.
We look out to the water
That glimmers in the sun
Waiting for us to soak up all the new memories.

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Phases of the Moon

by GRAY BUTLER

New moon darkens the night
Making it disappear from the sky.
Shows the children no true colors
and no true happiness
The sadness dwells throughout
And it is weak and unfortunate.
The new moon empties into a darkened hole
Where Things scatter and give off static electricity.
It waits for the phase to start over again,
Feeling the loneliness and misery of the world.
Crescent moon opens a creaking door.
It's a sliver in the sky
Shining,
Reflecting the sunlight
And Crawling through your window.
The man on the moon gleefully smiles
And looks down on this world
That the sun's palace keeps away.
Only on the nights when children want it the most
Do they get it.
The sun wears the half lightened
Half darkened
half moon as a mask
To hide its power.
Its lighted side shines toward sleeping children
Kissing their heads with happy dreams.
Its dark side does the opposite:
Gashes at the children,
Making them think of death.
Gibbous is a fallen warrior,
Chipped,
it shines as well.
Its power isn't limited to this universe.
It gives children hope, bravery, and happiness.
Like an eye in the moment just after you wake up,

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it watches the earth
And sends a darkly cast shadow
To its living target.
The full moon is a bald eagle spreading its wings
Fully showing its power as the guardian of night.
Its light is brighter than the rest.
Like a projector
Watching a world through the window
before you go to sleep.
The sun is happy with the full moon
They both show off their complete forms
And They laugh and play together
With the children
A game of colors
Chasing after one another.

When the Sky Goes Black

by PAUL WISNESKI

and heads begin hugging
their pillows, a shelter
from the dark, a shield for
our minds,
suddenly fatigue melts
over our face like
butter melting the surface
of scorched bread, leaving
a black velvet curtain
over our eyes, numbing
our minds.

Our soul drifts, splashing
through sparkling
puddles of memory
and tripping
from the thundering
of fear, which tries to
imprison us in the coldest,
section of our
conscience, a library
of the good and bad deeds
we've done. The spines
of the books thrash at us
with their titles, biting us
with the dusty pages

Learning to Shine

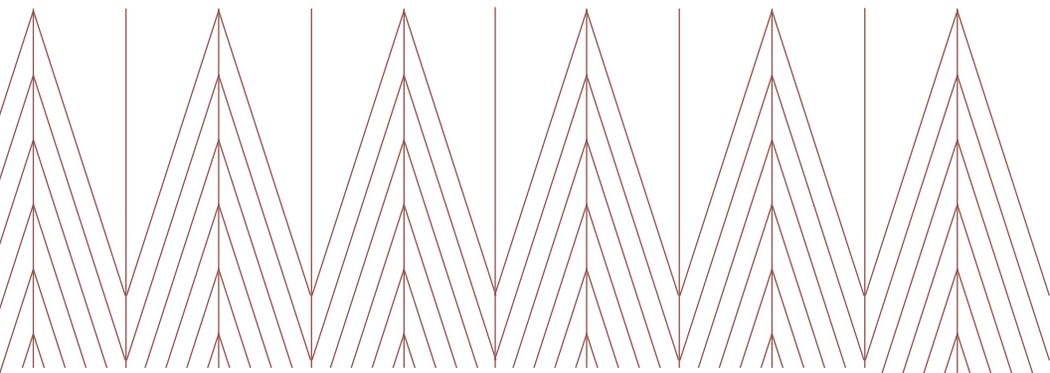
by RACHEL WILLIAMSON

Like a neon pink splatter
On a painting of crows
At night.
Erasable,
Yet aching to be.
The one accident
That ruins the whole painting.
Someone must have bumped the table,
The artist is so upset.
To see that little
Neon pink splatter
Against the black, black, black.
The pink looks so
Wrong.
Like it wanted to stay
Back in the can.
But now it's there
And it will stay.
It best just get comfortable,
It's leaving no time soon.
Maybe it will turn the crows
Into the moonlight.
They will all shine together,
But one just a little more.
The little
Neon pink splatter
Likes its new home forever more.

April

by NURIT GONZALEZ

A beautiful month
Powered by sun and rain
Rain that makes flowers grow
Immediately, strong beautiful
Luxurious flowers.



Trains Are Sad and Cheese Graters Are Mean

by CAMILLE WOOD

So all the things in the world are on the kitchen table,
and it's raining outside.

The grass is sponging up the sound and you're left to fill in the
blanks.

Above the table where I sit is a copper clock with three hands
which pulse beneath its glass face like veins.

You stand at the kitchen sink, facing the rain.

Your hands are slipping in and out of the dishwasher
the dishes wind-chiming is muffled beneath the suds.

You've decided trains are sad.

As a girl you dreamed you were aboard every far-off howler,
the sound of trains stitching through the ribbon of the track was
your lullaby

you thought of all the places you would go,
and the one place you would leave.

Maybe that's why you decide trains are sad,
because they are always going and always leaving.

You say no,
it's the whistle.

That lone whistle that ricocheted off egg-shell walls
like some swan-song that was never meant to be so beautiful.

I listen

the marbled cheese fights against the grain of the cheese grater.

I strike my knuckles match-quick against the grain,
blood beads up and we decide trains are sad,

and cheese graters are mean.

STUDENT DIVISION

Trains Are Sad and Cheese Graters Are Mean

Three Too Many

How to Raise an Anchor

seven continents in the world...

Purple

How to Become a Painter

Three Too Many

by ANNIE LIVINGSTON

I was born into a family of collectors;
my brother kidnaps jokes and holds them ransom,
my sister files through leaves for acorns after every October storm,
and my mother cannot resist the wedding dresses she will never wear,
complete with grooms she will never marry.

You ought to see my mother's closet
the lace skeletons she would ask me to help her into
doing up the buttons always felt like latching a coffin,
I'd close my eyes, hoping to forget whose funeral it was.
Once, she asked me if she looked beautiful; I screamed—
I'd forgotten she wasn't a banshee to run from.
I said she was a vision in white.
I still wish it had been a lie.

I used to wonder what her dresses dreamed about at night:
if they were waiting to walk down the aisle,
or had they been deserted.
Like her,
with three mouths,
six hands,
and not enough to patience,
not enough parent to fold us all beneath her skirts.
Now, I think the gowns are the ones to tuck her in to bed,
not the other way around,
two long satin sleeves to turn off the light,
so the last thing she sees before she sleeps
is the bride she will never become.
But that is the price for collectors, we are all part of someone else's
collection.

And I will always be one,
of three too many.

How to Raise an Anchor

by PATRICIA SCHLUTT

If it's a July evening
and you're hauling up an anchor,
you must start with a single pull: the first
is the heaviest. Pull from your lungs
into your muscle until you bear
with the whole arm. Pull
from the muscles of your ancestors.
Pull out of your deepness
and the lake's deepness. The line
will climb through your fists
heave by heave. Watch the shell
of water husk off the rope
until the waves
release it in an exhale of froth,
until you hold it in both hands:
it has been to the bottom,
and like a promise, it has returned.

seven continents in the world, seven freckles on your back

by SAMANTHA WILSON

travel the world in just months
you laughed in my face

pennies and dimes
do not pay for airfare
and europe is not just a
small swim away

i started small
traversing the grand canyons
the dents of skin just above
each fragile collarbone

california is only 2,300 miles away
i reached the beaches in seconds
when your smile beamed at me
and i felt the sun's warmth

new york was late nights
fairy lights
blue hues of midnight
as you slept beside me

i got more daring as time went on
you never seemed to notice
but my passport filled with stamps
every day we were together

your hands held the mountains
they were rugged and calloused
grooves and ridges
valleys and hills

next was the eiffel tower
gothic castles from generations before

architectures and structures
i was only beginning to understand

but while my happiness grew
yours seemed to shrink
so over sleepy whispers at 3 AM
you were gone after coffee

i don't travel
the world holds no more mystery anymore
every penny and dime saved in a jar labeled 'abroad'
has been left untouched

your body was a map
but i was never a cartographer

Purple

by ELIZABETH LAFAVE

You long for the
majestic hues of kings, queens, and princes.
Those elegant purples
that drape the world in deception,
covering pain in luxury and riches.
Wine soaked tablecloths bleed sangria streams across the wood floor.
Sparkling amethysts and exotic orchids turn too quickly to
deep plum puddles, almost blue-black like
blood pooling beneath your fair skin.
Fragile violet veins delicately web across your body.
Indigo circles weigh down your sad, tired eyes.
No comfort from the lavender pills you take at night.
Princess, you deserve more than purple.

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How to Become a Painter

by OLIVIA HOPPA

First, take the sky when it first peaks over hills in the morning.
Take its golden glow and fold it into your hands.

Then, take the orange and pink haze that follows,
put it in a bottle and seal the lid tight.
Color like this is to never be wasted, don't let it escape.

See how the light hits the green grass?
See the shadow it casts?
Well pick your favorite shade and roll around in it until you
become one with the hue.

All your actions will wake the cardinals.
Quick! Chase their tails until a red feather is inhaled by your
excited lungs. Now, this rich red is a part of you and will never leave.

As the morning dies, the sky gives way to a new born, baby blue blanket.
Rock this new born gently in your arms, wrap your waist and shoulders in this
blanket.
Now rest for a moment.

Brown mounds of fur and spikes appear in the distance.
They are here for you to observe, do not be afraid. Look at how strong
they carry themselves, look at how many different dark blades of hair stick out
from its arched back. Porcupines are a great palate of neutral colors.

You seek one more thing in order to make the masterpiece complete.
Seek a lilac bush. Brush your face against its soft, delicate flowers until you feel dizzy.
Tangled in its aroma, you will find lavender, purple, and cream pigments to add
passion.

The sky is darkening now into a black sheet of diamonds.
What you do next, is in your hands.

This is how you become a painter.

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ADULT DIVISION

Clarion Bell

Estate Sale

When I Got Drunk With My Mother

Origin

Alchemy

Clarion Bell

by TODD MERCER

Son House sings “Death Letter” on the kitchen radio when the phone rings. The worries we weight moments with from superstitious triggers, coincidences. I think you must be okay out there, still walking the earth and not detained behind bars. That’s all I ask if my phone rings when normal citizens are sleeping. I’ll pick up for you, I’ll talk. Just don’t mention “bail money,” don’t say “accident.” Don’t be a bad news messenger on graveyard shift, asking can I come and verify. Can’t and won’t, not my department. I’ve discarded stock in omens. Old men like me don’t believe that disc jockeys choose their playlists based on coroners’ input, based on bookings at detention centers. Son House suggests I brace myself, for what’s likely a wrong number. No sense wasting chest pain. You’re okay.

Estate Sale

by C. A. VAN TIL

Sitting on a padded metal church potluck chair, guarding the cash box,
I watch strangers pick up, examine, laugh, smile, frown, puzzle over
pieces of Mom's life. Bits carefully gathered and cherished: from
kitchen toys to useless but pretty decorative vases, bowls, crystal, pewter.

A graceful pair of wooden, long-necked birds Dad bought her proudly displayed
for decades. Gift from a young husband's love. \$2. Sold.

Four pure white coffee mugs she loved and used daily; once owned, she never
used any other mug. 25 cents each. Sold.

Expensive kitchen mixer paused over, researched on-the-spot via 21st century
cell phone. A woman's \$300 toy sold to a well-dressed girl,
in town for the day, quick trip for cash to a local bank. \$75. Sold.

Colorful nylon play tents purchased for grandchildren—a train, small tunnels,
huge tent. My nephew pulls a bright green tunnel over his head and, giggling,
wanders
up and down the sidewalk, *John—you look like a walking caterpillar!*—until the
tents go
off to new life at a day care center. Sold.

I snatch two of Mom's paintings off the pile of *stuff to sell* and hide them.
The horror of selling Mom's art at a garage sale overwhelms any practical
feelings of paying for the funeral. Mom would never know, but I can't let it
happen.
Continuing loyalty. Not for sale.

Two piles of blue plastic desk organizers, unclearly marked, sold to a young male
teacher—for 25 cents. Mom (a born teacher) would have approved their use in
a classroom;
so I shrug, smile. Sold.

A young woman resembling my goddaughter shyly asks if I'd take \$15 for
a \$20 wooden barrel—on E-Bay for \$40—'cause it's all the money she has left.
She counts her change and I stop her at \$14, *that's good*. Sold.

My niece—beloved granddaughter—excited to see Grandma's costume jewelry,
tosses on a couple of long necklaces, wears them all day, smiles.

Small metal bench from my childhood—Mom never threw it away. \$2. Sold.

Tears threaten as the pawing and perusing edge into my soul; feelings of betrayal,
What would Mom say!, waves of panic are beat back behind a closed door
marked *I'll think about this later*.

My sister-in-law's parents arrive and help haul grisly remains onto the enclosed
porch. An
unexpected gift. My thanks are brushed off—*it's nothing*; but, not to me.

The uselessness of *stuff* sweeps over me many times, followed by flashes of anger;
I grimly determine not to leave this agony to any loved ones after I die.

Yet, with every item I collect a pittance for and put into a crumpled plastic
bag, a picture flashes through my mind. Of a time Mom held the item,
wore the jewelry, carried the purse, used the kitchen toy, watched the movie.

Pictures of her laughter, her smile, her love.

When I Got Drunk with My Mother

by SHELLEY TOWNSEND-HUDSON

Let me tell you about the winter I was nineteen.
My father had died and I didn't know why
we were going to a party, but my friends were to be
there and so were hers.

We drank in different parts of the house.
Eventually my friends left but my mother
and I stayed until the wee hours.

She looked young and pretty then. Over her
shoulder a window held our reflections.
Indistinguishable. My eyes started seeing through
things, my old self through a new self. Though hard
to describe, I saw with better ideas. Back and forth from her
to the glass, I loved her, mysteriously, newly.

22

Origin

by KRISTIN BRACE

The child was occupied with a scab all afternoon.
He wanted to ask his mother the meaning of
katydid, but she was walking a tightrope between
Guilt and No Regret. It looked a lot like
starting the dishes, looking down at the phone
in her hand, trimming the ends of the dahlias
again. In another century, a woman thumps
dough on the counter and the spume of flour
makes her think of a chickadee in the snow,
pulse like tidy stitches, the wings' quick flutter.
She'd always wanted to see a great horned owl.
Great Horned Owl, in all capitals like something
whispered from a storybook. Willow. Shortcake.
Evenings, she cross-stitches the origins of things.
Cassiopeia. Joan of Arc. Every small sacrifice.
Summer keeps her company on the sill.
Honeysuckle. Whippoorwill. Katydid, katydidn't.

23

Alchemy

by JANE L. WHEELER

I watch my mother's ashes
catch the air, scatter and dust
the bark of the sugar maple
she and my father planted
the year before he died.

Come spring I will press bit
and brace against its trunk,
set the tap, hang the bucket
and listen for her voice
in the steady drip of sap.

Gallons of it will
foam and froth
in the evaporator pan
before becoming
the amber of a mason jar.

And what will she say
over morning pancakes,
Sunday's glazed ham
or from the bottom
of my hot buttered rum?

2016 NATIONAL JUDGE, MARIA MAZZIOTTI GILLAN

Maria Mazziotti Gillan is a recipient of the 2008 American Book Award for her book, *All That Lies Between Us* (Guernica Editions). Maria has published twenty books. Her most recent are the poetry and art collection, *The Girls in the Chartreuse Jackets* (Redux Consortium), *Ancestors' Song* (Bordighera Press), *Writing Poetry to Save Your Life: How to Find the Courage to Tell Your Stories* (MiroLand, Guernica), and the bi-lingual poetry collection, *In a Place of Flowers & Light* (San Mauro and Mia Mama). Her work has appeared in numerous other journals and anthologies.

She is co-editor with her daughter Jennifer of four anthologies, including *Unsettling America*, *Identity Lessons*, and *Growing Up Ethnic in America* (Penguin/Putnam), *Identity Lessons: Contemporary Writing About Learning to Be American* (Penguin) and *Italian-American Writers on New Jersey* (Rutgers).

She is the Founder /Executive Director of the Poetry Center at Passaic County Community College in Paterson, NJ, and editor of the Paterson Literary Review. She is also Director of the Creative Writing Program and Professor of Poetry at Binghamton University-SUNY.

Maria received the 2014 George Garrett Award for Outstanding Community Service in Literature from AWP (Association of Writers & Writing Programs), the 2011 Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award from Poets & Writers, the 2008 Chancellor's Award for Scholarship and Creative Endeavor from Binghamton University, the 2008 Sheila Motton Award, Primo Nazionale Belmorio, the First Annual John Fante and Pietro di Donato Award, the Aniello Lauri Award, the May Sarton Award, the Fearing Houghton Award, New Jersey State Council on the Arts Fellowships in Poetry, and the American Literary Translators Association Award through a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. She received the New Jersey Governor's Award for Literary Outreach and The Dare to Imagine Award from Very Special Arts.

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

ELEMENTARY DIVISION

Adventures at the Cottage

“This poem uses the details of ordinary life to involve the reader. William Carlos Williams advocated ‘No ideas but in things,’ and this poem provides an example of his maxim. The poet uses repetition very effectively. Through the narrator’s eyes, we experience the journey in all its details and we feel we have witnessed the events described in the poem. Excellent work!”

Phases of the Moon

“In ‘Phases of the Moon’ the poet takes a very intelligent approach to the subject. The poem is rooted in the imagist tradition and uses poetic devices, such as personification, simile, and metaphor to clarify its philosophical approach. It is apparent that the poet has studied poetic technique and read a good deal of poetry. Great work!”

When the Sky Goes Black

“This imagistic poem attempts to use a very sophisticated poetic technique by working with an extended metaphor. It is also a nearly perfect description of the way all we regret having done, the things that worry us the most, the things that rise up out of the dark of a deep sleep to confront us. We might be able to bury these thoughts under activities during the day, but once we are asleep, we cannot avoid them. Very perceptive and thoughtful poem.”

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

STUDENT DIVISION

Trains Are Sad and Cheese Graters Are Mean

“This poem has a very distinct and original voice. The ideas and feelings are tightly woven together from the start to the end of the poem. The poet uses very apt imagery and slips in a dash of humor as well, but most importantly, the poem is rooted in action and in the relationship between the people and the world. Fine poem!”

Three Too Many

“This poem is haunting in its beauty and sadness. The wedding dresses become symbols of what can never be and they are used perfectly to express the longing of the mother and the child. The sense of isolation and loneliness is palpable. What a beautiful poem!”

How To Raise An Anchor

“This a very tight, well-knit poem. It is a poem that fits its title because it tells the reader how to do a specific thing. I love the repetition of the word ‘pull,’ and the way the anchor becomes the symbol of so much else in our lives, as though with it we can pull up all the past and all the memories that teach us how to be human. Excellent work!”

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

ADULT DIVISION

Clarion Bell

“This poem works very well because it expresses very clearly the emotions a parent experiences when the phone rings in the middle of the night. Anyone who has ever had that 3 AM phone call knows the fear of terrible news that a ringing phone brings. The poet seem unafraid to confront his or her own vulnerability. Good work!”

Estate Sale

“‘Estate Sale’ succeeds because it is so specific and detailed. Each item in the sale has an emotional resonance for the poet and therefore, for the reader. In the end the poem becomes a love song to the dead mother. Wonderful!”

When I Got Drunk with My Mother

“The title of this poem is very intriguing. The poem itself opens with a direct address to the reader: ‘Let me tell you about...’ and it draws us right into the poem’s narrative. In the second stanza the tone shifts, and the poem becomes an exploration of the love between daughter and mother. This love rekindles and grows when the reader least expects it. Very fine poem!”

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