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Selections of Poetry

Gregory J. Hobbs

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POETRY

JUSTICE GREGORY J. HOBBS, JR.

In Volume 3 / Issue 2, Volume 5 / Issue 2, Volume 7 / Issue 2, Volume 9 / Issue 2, Volume 11 / Issue 2, Volume 13 / Issue 1, Volume 14 / Issue 2, and Volume 15 / Issue 2, of the *Water Law Review*, we published selections of poems by Justice Hobbs. In the tradition of updates to previous publications, we hope you enjoy this additional selection.

SWIFTS

Our lives are inconsequential
Little black swifts with backpacks
From Colorado caves and waterfalls
Flying to Brazilian rain forests
Recording how they fly 4000 miles
And back on their own
Alongside so many others
Who in their own lifetimes
Glory in incomparable opportunity
To sport and dart.

PRECIOUS GIFT

*The shortest distance between two points
is not a straight line. Every step we take
is on an arc of great curvature.*

*Frank Waters (Masked Gods, Navaho
and Pueblo Ceremonialism 434)*

This guardian rain god with forking
snake encircling the entire body
of his belly-to-knee leather kilt wrapping
is looking at me with protruding eyes
rimmed with white bands
extending well beyond his forehead.

His left foot advances beyond
and in front of the right.
He is dancing!

Deer hide strands hanging from his belt,
this dancing god has fur strapped
about his shoulders—
it must have been a cold winter
up on the San Francisco Peaks

And the chill of this spring
will soon break into summer heat
as corn stalks rise to their task
of bearing sustenance
to the people.

His moccasins are scuffed
from many years of dancing in the plazas
of the pueblos of the three mesas.

His beard falls full and amply
across and down the full expanse
of his chest, like so many strands of
the black life-sustaining rain given
by the storm people.

Four Eagle feathers sprouting
out of the top of his head
reach skyward.

SEWING KIT CHOCK FULL OF A FEW SILLY RULES!

Pack good!
Play fair!
Listen up!
Have fun!

Hang on tight when the Captain says so!

Stay hydrated!
Look out for each other!
Respect the critters!
Love the River!

Don't lose your sewing kit!

COFFEE! COFFEE! COFFEE!

Day begins on the river with birdsong,
resurgent willows, cliffs and shadows,
surging sun poking through a notch
in a butte face, Coffee! Coffee! Coffee!
french toast and bacon.

Down come the overnight habitats,
ingeniously rigged and shaped to embrace
the sleepers dotted about this beach
washed a grain at a time from the West Elks,
Eagle Nest-Gore, the Never Summers
and countless unnamed washes and arroyos
contributing redrock sediment of ocean eons.

We are off and away, a striped cucumber-
looking bug alights on my left arm, climbing
towards my elbow feeling his way through
the filament forest of my limb, I flick him
in the direction of the tamarisk grove
he and his fellow beetles are defoliating
in favor of the resurgent willow sharp tooth
beavers cut their lodges out of, see
their dragging chutes plowing down
the sandy banks.

A Cooper's Hawk on river right watches
us navigate the shallows. Noon's a hike
to granaries of the gone Ancient Ones
who've left hands imprinted on a cliff
face wall, a boy and his mother or
father and daughter waving welcome

Feathery hands bridging a thousand
years of river flow (thundering at times)
that languidly turns another today as
in the river we drift this hot afternoon
tucked in life preservers bobbing past
a row of shoreline judges rating our
water ballet!

No plug ins,
just the current of the Colorado
bearing us on.

LIKE THE GRANDE

May you like the Grande
embrace our hopes and livelihoods,
may you follow up wherever
she may lead

May you stand in her shallows,
flip the tippet of your most recent hatch,
reel in the nascent morning
every twilight's evening

May her subjects and her tributaries,
sand hill dune and crane,
barley, willow, chico, potato
bless and keep you firm and well

May your work complement hers
in every bend of every day and may
your thirst for the good of others
fill your drink joyously!

TRAVOIS

We are standing on sacred ground
along a stream in the Black Hills,
Strider the Magnificent looks on expectantly,
You hold a picnic clean-up garbage bag,
I loosely hold his unhooked leash.

Yellow blossoms on long green stems
bloom all about you. My right arm embraces
the ache you feel in your right shoulder
every time you try to hook up some kind
of backwards.

In the music of this stream we can hear
our people talking to us. Every place we
go pours out of the medicine wheel's
artesian source the tracks of many
a travois passing through.

BOAT HOUSES

A torrent of words pours the floor,
seasoned curing casts its sturdiness.

From there the author builds with I-beam
experience, supplied from scattered stockpiles.

Roof beams are riveted to planks others
have used in various crafts.

Wallboard, trim, and cabinets, hundreds
of other refinements worked, reworked, finished.

The ark of an A-Frame forms a watershed
you can harvest good drinking water from.

THE DELTA

Sailing to Liberty Island we board a USGS vessel,
zip up our luminescent safety vests,
and head upstream.

The native salmon and delta smelt attempt—
confused—to do the same.

A system of levees, sloughs and sunken peat
islands, ship channels, by-pass flood channels,
irrigation and drainage pumps, control gates and
aqueducts displace their native estuary.

What is the legal Delta and what is not?

How do we prepare ourselves for a food fight
and flood flight in the midst of climate change?

Can a series of set-back levees help?

In this we attempt to un-confuse envisioning
the tides of our intersecting futures to
follow the fish to Liberty Island.

CLIFFORD STONE

River cobble in hand, I drew and flung
 upon the waters an object no smoother,
 nor firmer than the current delivers, eroded
 from a crag. My aim was true, only because
 I reached no further than what I could feel
 and touch after all the grinding and pummeling.
 An ellipse appeared and proved a constant
 proposition: that we can be less than one
 in unanimity, from my fixed point to
 your fixed line, and yet achieve proximity
 in durability and purpose. What it means to
 govern is to unite upon an increment,
 no more perfect than each of us might see
 possibilities are numbered in the generations.

(In celebration of the 75h Anniversary
 of the Colorado Water Conservation Board)

BROOKS A FIRST LAUGH BLESSING

With this laugh you belong to your
 family's stories, songs and prayers

You flow out of the Aegean Sea,
 the Klamath and the Little Colorado

Nourishing tributaries, salmon-seeking streams,
 Born for Water, Salt Woman, Odysseus, Yurok

The sacred mountains of your homeland are
 many, in loss and love journey well, be blessed!

Each morning the sun rises because the earth
 carries each of us around, every day we pass light

Into dark, without being able to see the other side
 you carry your own child's first laugh, now and forever.

(For Brooks, Daniel Cordalis, Amy Bowers and Family
 on the Celebration of his First Laugh Going Forth)

WHAT I LEARN FROM MY MOTHER

I'm 68 today. She's 94.
She's bent and sore, eager and reverent,

I'm ever more thankful for the way
she prays, conversationally,

"Take care of Greg, help him be
a man, help him help others."

That said, she takes to the phone,
"Give your sister, your brothers, a call."

The only way to answer her prayer
is to get to it right away,

Seeing what there is to see, wherever
you might be, along the Panama Canal,

At Bethany Beach, the Yellowstone,
Chugach Mountain tow rope in hand

Dragging you to the peak trying to
keep your feet together as you head up,

Always holding out her father's image
to you and talking up the Holy Mother

As she prays her very next help you
strength with her latest, "You can do it!".

RALPH CARR PROMISED REMEMBERED

Welcome to Colorado! Bring all of Colorado in!

We share a common heritage forged from all too many
common experiences. Despised, dismembered, exiled,

Enslaved, seeking refuge in a homeland of promises
remembered: Before the law, each and all, created equal

Entitled to celebrate the many bonds of our ancestries
as for a more perfect Union continuously we strive

Liberty and Justice for All, in the image of Amache
and the columbine

Mountain, canyon, mesa, plain, mother, father, daughter,
son, chartered by and through the Great Divide.

ACCEPTING HELP

So many January mornings
of Colorado slanted lines

of Saturday sunshine
have sliced my writing desk

I despair of capturing a sliver
of any bit of any one of them.

I find shifting my position helps.

WETLANDS

Sometimes it seems the maximum daily load
of our worries,

bills arguing for resolution, bell-weather
changes to the climate,

the din of others diverging from our own too-
closely held perceptions,

clogs our filtration systems.

Perhaps the art of cleansing particles interfering
with our digestive systems

requires nothing more than a good appetite
for sharing a repast together,

the past is always changing that's why
we gather now to share

one another's virtuosities.

BEND IN THE CROOK OF YOUR ARM

I'm the ripple on the sand
the leading edge of the snow line.

Desert tortoise water pocket,
Tide pool sea anemone,
Fishing heron dressed in blue,
Pussy willow swelling full.

I'm the stellar of the jay,
The ring around the moon,
The bullfrog's croak,

The cricket's fiddle.

I'm the ripple on the sand
the leading edge of the snow line.

I'm the baby crawling backwards,
Fliers and their flying goggles,
I'm the push cart's forward rim,
I'm the dancer's swirling hem.

I'm the mountain man
A long line of mountain men,
I'm the homesteading woman
A long line of homesteading women.

I'm the bend in the crook of your arm
Bend in the crook of your arm.

LADY JUSTICE

Welcomes you.
On her shoulders
she balances you.

Palms upright,
She walks with you.
All that grows

Walks with you.

ARIZONA RAIN AND SNOW!

Roof top harvest
aquifer

Cactus Wren arroyo,

Rain and snow you
sweet and lean

Desert river Arizona
you once knew.

Desert river Arizona,

Roof top harvest
aquifer

Recharge you
sweet and lean

Cactus Wren arroyo
Arizona, Rain and Snow!

OH MARCH SATURDAY!

Your light's a perfect appetite for bulb
and spike and sprout. Unfold you now!
Just beneath the surface of the grounds
we might retreat to—withering drought,
embittering cold, paralyzing doubt—
you cannot hold yourself back!

You part the cracks of our certitudes.
In the shine of your spade you warm
and collapse our respiratory illnesses.
Oh March Saturday! Help us not malingering.
Crowd out the noxious crabby spaces
lurking in the shadows of our absences.

Help us be healing rainmaker containers
you harvest from the shanty tin of our no-not
cannot will-nots. Insist upon us the water
droplet plowshares of a barrel cactus
and the company of the wild yellow rose
loving every bit of barren ground.

You cannot hold yourself back!
Your light's a perfect appetite for bulb.
In the shine of your spade you warm
crowd out the noxious crabby spaces
loving every bit of barren ground
and spike and sprout. Unfold you now!

HEY ARIZONA, GOOD MORNING!

Heading for Spring
We're imploring the snowpack
The rivulets the rivers

Rise, swell up, come together,
Release your sweet music!
Salsa our discombobulations

Rattle our fixtures
Unhook our discomfitures
Scramble our attitudes

We're coming at you Arizona!
Paddle, life vest, every kind of craft
We're howling your way, Arizona!

Get ready your fiddles
Your flagrant vitalities
Your powerful abilities

Light the signal beacons
Sing your day and night chants
Let all your voices loose

In praise of water holes
and every sprig and spring
we're launching your way, Arizona!

BRING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN!

We're on the verge of Spring,
Bring our young people in!

Throw open the schoolhouse doors,
Let the Four Corners shine on them!

Light of Hogan doors opening East,
Light of the Pine and Mancos Utes

Light of the San Luis People's Ditch
About to gurgle a Sangre de Cristo.

Hang out the welcome sign of a good snowfall,
Adorn the frame of each of their dwellings

Mind and heart, meek and wild,
grand and challenging.

Front to back ranges, spine of the Continent
North to south ranges, pack them well,

Pack them on our backs if we must!
And when their limbs are strong enough

Will them on their way, there's nothing
We can do that isn't given us to do

To help them along, that isn't given us
To do, to help them along.

HERE YOU CROW MOTHER, HERE!

Gather you snow clouds, gather!
Baldy to Rayado, loose your precious treasure!
Agua Fria to South Ponil, up the Cimarron
quiet turn and good turn depend on you.
In every part of this great country, young
men and women are hitching up.

Lay you down on Black and Bear, on
Clear Creek's mantle, the sweep of your
sweet sustenance, raiment to the forest,
murmur to the side pools. Feed the voices
of fellowship! Rain upon this ground
your dearest opportunity!

MANY CROSSINGS

Not one is lost
though many find
a different way,

Correct the manifest!
Before we go, we follow on
imaginary lines

Others drew and others
crossed, but temporarily.
Nothing's numbered

But doesn't relate to
another, and nothing's
written but isn't once

And future increment.
All in all's unique and
perfectly complete

In pieces capable
of being rearranged,
but temporarily.

Not one is lost
though many find
a different way.

**I HOLD FOR GLORY
GLORY BE**

The tulip spear
The crocus spike
The Iris blade

Arm with these!

I hold for glory
Glory be

The pumpkin patch
The triton conch
The Marianas Trench

Consult with these!

I hold for glory
Glory be

The pinyon tree
The honey hive
The Northern Flicker

Traverse with these!

I hold for glory
Glory be

The crescent moon
The ram's curled horn
The Southern Cross

Mark these boundaries!

I hold for glory
Glory be

The highland fling
The nickel whistle
The sandal walk

Govern with these!

I hold for glory
Glory be.