

1-1-2011

Poetry

Gregory J. Hobbs

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/wlr>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Custom Citation

Gregory J. Hobbs, Poetry, 14 U. Denv. Water L. Rev. 359 (2011).

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Denver Sturm College of Law at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Water Law Review by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, dig-commons@du.edu.

Poetry

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, and Volume 13 / Issue 1 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.

Q

There's a time for planting in the peach half moon,
pull out your milking stool and sit.
Take out your trowel,
the narrow pointed end's for digging
between the handle and this tip:
there's a scoop for loosening and lifting out the soil
sweet woodruff roots will welcome back
before you're done.

You're on the shorter end of a curving path
in the moon of the stone fruit.
Q of a fountain plays the falling water you hear,
and locusts saw in the trees
evenings you have loved:
spring's a quickening kind of planting time
for nursery stock but, oh my this!
the whole wide milky way.

THE SMALLER THE TURTLE

Through the shell of this see-through turtle I can see you.
You nest within your parent. She carries you wherever
the two of you may go.

You began within her. She brought you forth. Every day
and every night on the outside would bring you closer.
You've always been inseparable

Always will, now you're back inside her. She moves,
you move. Right behind her ears you're holding on her
heart. Mom I'm here.

LINCOLN'S CALL

*"Let us have faith that right makes might,
and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare
to do our duty as we understand it."*

Abraham Lincoln, Cooper Union,
February 27, 1860

Lincoln didn't crave a fight to make it right,
but couldn't short for standing tall
"all created equal" meant all his might

Would have to mean us all, alright.
The Constitution held for less than all,
Lincoln didn't crave a fight to make it right

But the Declaration had us all in sight.
To believe and live the greater call
"all created equal" means all we might

Not something less, and not not quite.
Life, Liberty, Happiness not written small,
we needn't crave a fight to make it right

Live to make us free, propriety's delight
like him our Nation, standing tall.
"All created equal" means all we might.

Now our constitution might get it right,
due process, equal protection vote for all.
Lincoln didn't crave a fight to make it right
"all created equal" means all we might.

ONE GREEN STONE

I'm the green turquoise stone
that wears me. I am tear-

dropped shaped.

I'm the thin coiled strip of
hammered ring silver that holds
me fast

to the circle misshapen by wear
encasing my right ring finger.
I am the

Tuba City pawn shop Navajo
who made and wore me before
my Irish

Grandmother found me, a debt
among the multitude of debts
arrayed in

the Trader's big glass case.
How many times I am loaned,
dispossessed, reclaimed

pawned, borrowed, sold,
enslaved I cannot say. I am
forbidden to talk

about the dead. I am treaty
token, made and broken, worn
for the living.

I bear my bearer in and out of
jail, in and out of courthouses.
I am judge,

jury, jailor, prisoner. I'm my
own accuser, my own dear
witness, my son,

my daughter, their sons,
their daughters.
I wear a terrible beauty.

CURSOR

Cursor pauses at the end of the line waiting for the next word, flashes off and on, on and off, off and on. Breathe out, breathe in, breathe out. Unseen, seen, unseen.

A bright usually blinking movable indicator on display marking the position at which a character can be entered, corrected, deleted.

A vertical plot line on a page that moves horizontally from beginning to end.

He wasn't, he is, he isn't.

INSTRUMENTS

Throats are reeds for humming,
the lungs accordions,
hands for strikers, shakers, bells,
lips for whistling.

Fingers curve for strumming,
feet for tapping time,
tongues for shaping every chord,
legs are built for dancing.

Ears are made for listening,
each contains a drum within,
notes and tones for every range,
love's the spirit singing.

HAZEL PRONG

*He said he couldn't make the boy believe
He could find water with a hazel prong—*

Robert Frost

Some men can learn the boy that's in them by
going outside, listening to the din
and nonsense of crows arguing, then find
a quiet streamside place to contemplate

why creatures so smart congregate so loud.
 Whatever's eating them, or could, appears
 to warrant high raucous advocacy.
 A man who sets to learning the language
 of crows might distinguish between caw and
 answering caw—free assembly involves
 vigorous feather flapping, jawing, struts,
 feints, shrieks and beak rattling. This boy at
 the base of the tree, out of the man, chips
 resilient wood, a goodly instrument.

(In Celebration of Chips Barry)

WED

Marriage, the ultimate raft trip, the ultimate mountain climb.
 Accomplished only through constant attention to preparation and
 small details focused on every step of the way.

Enjoy each step of the way! Enjoy each put in. Enjoy each take out.
 And, in between, all the tweaks and bends and snags and the roar of
 running the really big ones together. And the planting of your flags.
 Wrap your brows in bright bandanas!

Celebrate your individual strengths and weaknesses, for you are meant
 to complement each other, for one to take the lead and the other to
 follow, and then to rest and switch the lead and the followership.
 Snuggle much!

Aim for the high passes, but don't forget the mountain meadows.
 Peaks are great, but you'll have to hustle off them when storm clouds
 grow. Find yourselves a comfortable elevation for laughing and loving!

When hail assails your relationship, as it will, get under the same
 canopy and, if you must be silent, let it never be an angry silence but a
 time for gathering your lips together for saying once again your
 constant vow to each other: "I love you!"

PRISMS

a man sat long with a pool and its prisms

Carl Sandburg, *Pool of Bethesda*

Scrolls in the mouths
of fish read pigments of
your rain blouse

like syllables torn
from your mother's blue-gray
eyes

stored in the snows
of Monarch Pass
snowdrifts

also bear a pregnant red
shed from crossing the
Sonoran Desert

gather and contribute their
spring melt voices, their
healing touch.

I'M THE ANGEL OF MERCY

I set up summers in Saratoga Springs, Wyoming. I'm petite, wiry, grew up on a ranch northeast of Cheyenne, out in one of those deep draws where the Cheyenne holed in for refuge during a big winter. I'd milk to the crack of cottonwood branches snapping off in the cold, working these hands under the warm bellies of mother cows, pulling, stretching, kneading, coaxing the bucket to fill. I've got real good fingers. I can make a man moan with a hurt he doesn't know he's suffered yet. I use the aromatic oils, a blend of Celtic-Turkish music, always start a foot at a time with the tender under arches of his feet, work the entire length of him, always finish from behind with the flat of my palms on his temples, my fingers gently but firmly closing his eye lids.

CACHE AND CARRY

Next time you plan
to picnic
in the desert
load you pack

with 120 pounds
of bottled
water. It will
appreciate
the squeeze of
your very last
drop.

TOPKILL

Process by which
state of the art
experts
experiment with
sand shrimp
and pelican
feathers.

CHECKING MESSAGES

cleaning windows
sweeping pebbles
pruning words
mowing grass
sticking stamps
bagging scraps
stacking dishes
breaking paragraphs
watering petunias
sealing envelopes
reading briefs
refilling bird seed
hanging pictures
opening attachments
booking tickets
ordering tunes
mopping floors
deleting commas.

BONE FEATHERS

As light as balsa wood,
skull thrown back of the arching
eye sockets, beak projected out over
the waves like one of those carved figures
bearing a proud clipper ship into
a midnight bout with
dark waters

This navigator of the winds,
this keen night-hunting sailor who hears
every furtive unseen movement, still so very
still and observant in the tall branches
then at once a swooping fury
talons bared for the
unwary.

FISHING NOTS

A fishing knot
my fishing father never
asked me tie,

the liar knot,
hooks the biggest fish
you've been hooking for,

"deep within a liar knot
a piece of line has crossed over
another piece,"

this line you're using,
slipped from my
tackle box,

without attribution,
though buried in your reel,
bears my name,

"This will act like a scythe
when the knot is

jerked tight,”

when the pressure's most on you
the biggest fish of all
does not resist,

truth will out the slacker's knot,
back it lays and plays with you,
(to the Master Poet's credit)

“saliva allows the twists and
turns to slide over themselves
as the knot is tightened,”

spitting on your friend
the double not a true fisherman
will never engage.

(quotes from <http://www.bishfish.co.nz/articles/general/notknot.htm>)

FIRST LIGHT

Squat on a shaving rock at Zoroaster.
In the gut of the schist gorge,
you cannot see where the sipapu sun
rises to the east this morning

Out of the Little Colorado,
carrying chocolate to the mainstream,
stirs Navajo sandstone and sacred
Hopi salt into the Colorado.

In the minute or so it takes
to extract my razor and cream
from a ziplock TSA hasn't screened,

a turbine-propelled tide from Page eats
at the blue stripes of my \$7.00
Cortez Walmart sneakers.
Down in Phoenix and L.A.?
Get yourselves ready for a nice
air-conditioned day!

I loose my amputated beard
to the current, consign my DNA
to sediment

On some downstream beach
a heron may stand
and fish upon.

Though I cannot see,
I know a few Harvey House
South Rim pilgrims have walked
this very morning
to a ledge high above
the condor's nest,

They see what I see,
wherever the light
touches first
is holy.

NEXT DOOR AMERICA

Happy Birthday balloons
are flying next door

Through the fence,
I spy someone else's
grandnieces

Running round the
back yard of the graying
male couple.

KACHINAS

Spirits of the invisible
forces of life,
dwelling in the lofts
of the San Francisco Peaks,
their sacred home
half the year

In the kivas and the plazas
spruce bough, deer horn,
eagle feather, corn ear,
turtle shell rattle,
become visible
the other half
Carved of cottonwood root
children play roof top
Hummingbird,
Mouse Warrior,
Corn Maiden,
Wolf
Circle countering
circle, the women sprinkle
corn pollen blessings
on the perfect beat
of their glistening
limbs.

RAINMAKER

When the people suffer
for lack of rain,
tap your terrapin staff!

Beneath the shell
of every creature
a hidden spring—

Will be answering!

IN THE AGE OF RESTORATION REFRAMING THE QUESTION

Spring rise and Rocky Mountain rise
rolling to the point of confluence
of the Muddy Mo, the Mighty Mississip,
a flash rolling from the Gallatin,
the Jefferson, the Yellowstone
off the glacier and the winds
across the buffalo plains of
Mandan, Sioux, Cheyenne,

No such thing as an average runoff
rolling down against the warrant given
to Captains Lewis and Clark,
“Find the Continental tie to the Western Sea,”
waves of sediment building, shifting,
scrubbing, transforming sand bars,
opening channels, taking the best
action we can at the time

And tweaking it from the point
of confluence to who we are,
who we might become, fledgling ratios,
a pallid sturgeon feeling our way
upstream to hatch, recover, remain,
sustain our experimental design,
like a metal plate in your leg
bone grows over.

EXCHANGE

An equivalent accommodation
of equal value
arranged before hand

student for student,
teacher for teacher,
within and across borders

to part with,
receive and supply
between two points

without injury to any other,
the bounty of a natural
meander.

CHRISTENING

A Guatemalan Irish American
little Carolina Carys,

your parents met at Notre Dame,
wedding in Antigua

At the former convent
in the courtyard of the Spanish ruins
built on a Mayan sacred site,
candles lit and birds of paradise
we the visitors in that half of
your homeland ancestors.

Welcome little Carolina Carys;
of all the sacraments
you most favored
are

A vessel of blessed
Rocky Mountain water
dipped in the font
of your downy brown hair
we encircle you,
astonished!

LARGE DOSE

Never shake your finger
at a guy who's beaten you.
Only makes you look
both mad and beaten.

Instead, stick your finger
up your nose. You'll hurt
and bleed remembrance.
When someone else

Bests you by winning one,
grin and congratulate him.
You need his medicine
to return the favor.

WHAT FOLLOWS

This is the season of the impossible assignment, keep from

tracking in the leaves when maple, elm and mulberry aren't through with peeling them off. Broom, rake and blower bring only temporary relief, like a dose of ibuprofen does a head cold.

I haven't yet adopted the condo solution—sky up where native willows used to be—enjoy the mountain view and let the city keep track of its pockets of urban forest.

I remain committed to the gusts that tack the bits of red green and gold to my feet when I'm entering and leaving.

DARK'S TOPOGRAPHY

Arriving in the dark
I could not tell the green gold of aspen-turning
is still out

Scimitar blade of razor-sharpened moon
one star over it
Mt. of the Holy Cross too-just
Beyond the killing edge.

East to west many people praying
in the dark

Who is listening?
Owl on a long limb.

Voices rise into the night sky
no gigantic ear will answer them.
Ears are made for listening

Ah! Night you are so gorgeous for this.
So full of wireless-traveling suggestion
just outside the insistent

Noise of closed interiors.

WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE HEADWATERS

Seeing over our shoulders ancestral Pueblos, Utes, Hispanos,
celebrate a major snowfall load any spot of our territory,
say the San Juans or Maybell, fear a snow-eating wind

might suck us dry before our canteen aquifers

and beaver reservoirs might sponge and refill,
mourning too many peaks between here and there
a few billion dollars worth of pumps and pipes might fix,
solace our loss by gleefully donning full dry suits at lunch

for playing on a kayak course, counting at launch those
gauge-numbered outflow credits good against the compacts
we sometimes wish were one-way deals flowing back uphill,
engaging our first amendment right to disagree at all times

with another's need while sitting at roundtables, square tables,
rectangular tables figuring how to serve ourselves and our brothers,
sisters, grandchildren who, after this first month of the first year of the
second decade of the 21st century, give way to our

Centennial state's tenacious future amidst these magnificent
prairie mesa canyon cliffs, needing each other's aid and insight,
prayer for relief following our complaints, more agreement, less
contest,

God-willing, your blessing please, upon this food we enjoy, grown by
others, delivered here by fuel and freight and men and women
thankful for the work, for this good company, preserve, conserve,
sustain, inspire.

