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Poetry

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Poetry

POETRY

JUSTICE GREGORY J. HOBBS, JR.

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

OLD GOOSE DOWN

Old and blue
this sleeping bag
has slept me many a hill,
out in the open
on a big moon night,
unzipped by the bank
of a stream

And deep in the chill
of a winter campout,
my head in the cramp
of an arm
going to sleep,
pin prickles of heat,
feather the goose

And I'm down
in the duff or the strand,
where trails give pause
to burdens I'll bear
I leave not a trace,
but the land, good night!
and the stars.

NUMB LUCK

Ever been fishing a high mountain lake
when it's you and the dog and the sleet?
Fish are all hitting whatever you've got,
you're drenched to bone whittle and teeth?
Hound won't quit shaking the wind's biting slash,
she's chasing down fish as fast as you reel.
Mountains are howling your crazy dumb luck,
you cluck of a numb gone fishing young fool.

WET SHELLS IN PAPER BAGS

Next time I get to the beach and my granddaughter exclaims
"GoPa let's go out and get some shells!" I'm taking a paper bag
instead of a red plastic pail. Any color of one of those pails
gets filled up too fast, and can't nearly match the pastel inside
of a periwinkle between a granddaughter's fingers. If only
we could get a little further on before the sand dollars
pile our buckets down and we have to turn around.
Forget about the hurricane, the shards, the littered dry ones
the dunes inhabit. We'd put our toes back in the sheen line
and drop the remnant of the most recent wave, slicked
to the arch of a conch, straight through the holes
in our paper bags, one-by-one.

DEFINITIONS

Succeed means to come after and to overcome.
Lincoln enters on the Gettysburg battlefield
with a few brief remarks he carefully crafted.
Dr. King hears him. Today on Colfax Avenue
down Capitol Hill from City Park to Mt. Evans
descendants of the Centennial State,
born of the proposition that more perfect
heads west from Illinois and recommits many
of the same imperfections as went before
yet marches on, pour into the Civic Center
wearing kids with Obama tee shirts
on push board wheels.

ORGANIC GARLIC OFFERING

Pick a spot of Colorado
sun below the ditch

October morning
plant them firm,

To root your hopes
set them loose

But turn
some water in.

July's the harvesting,
Purple Glazer, Silver White

Music Pink, Romanian Red,
Chesnok, Inchelium, California Early,

Heirloom pungent, easy peel
good for salsa, pestos

Eating fresh and clean
saving this good farmland.

RESONANCE

May the reeds of every organ
praise this greening April morning;
May bread be raised and passed around
for all who hunger, hurt and grieve;
May all our voices not be stilled by
iced up-mouths and dried-up springs;
For all-in-all is waking up the widow willow's
brass quintet, her intercession antiphons.

US

Maker-creators, the Founders (O, do not worship but revere them) place into play a constitution of living separations. Down the hill from James Madison's mansion at Montpelier, a pathway connects two graveyards. Within a gated perimeter, side-by-side monuments praise Dolley and the Constitution's architect. Across the way beneath the redbud and the dogwood earth depressions, like a bill left owing future generations, mark the nameless-owned the author of Federalist No. 51 ("the end of government is justice") does not free. On such grounds, archeologists reveal the Republic's slave-quarter foundations but for which there'd be no need ("if men were angels") to pursue a more perfect Union.

MY SANDPAPER

The grinding side of it
has struck most of the rubbing raw material
Some place retrieval can't reach,
and I am left a smoother
finishing side.

THE RECIPE

Cranberry walnut bread,
Tart red cherry Michigan jam,
Eggs done easy scrambled,
Water boiled sausage links,
Amy's organic tomato salsa,
Bright light of a Colorado wife
And cattle dog end-of-May
Sunday morning.

THE SECRET'S OUT

I'm the side yard faucet.
An itsy spider hangs down
the dew drop strings
of my leaky
headgate wheel.

Though they've used the might
of their right hand wrists
to shut the leak,
I'm adverse to watergate
plumbers.

The power goes off just
long enough,
they have to reset
everything.
Webs they do not see

Are not invisible.
Go outside.
In the morning light,
in the shine the spider
works between.

TEN O'CLOCK AND ALL IS WELL

Always on this mountainside,
I hear the voices of those who pass before,

Released from worry,
they listen and watch over us,

In the pebbles, in the dunes,
in the softer earths of the sapling aspen

And the Autumn cottonwood,
in the ever-changing clouds,

Mooring their returned sailing ships.

Welcoming respite,
they do not judge but accept,

Their assembly embraces all
and all is home to them,

Children with their pails,
oceans come and gone,

Rippling pathways,

flyways,

They keep no right-or-wrong lists.

Speak no separation diphthongs,
they do not grieve their own dear losses,

For you are restored to them,
on the rails, in the gloom and in the fog,

They maintain the outer riggings:
ten o'clock and all is well.

PERIODICS

Seed bank's depleted. All along the watchtowers, we looked the other way. Big Robber Jays flew in, pecked away the storehouse. Led by Mr. Kites, we got used to gliding along the reef watching our Puffer Bellys multiply. Cheap gas, fantastic itineraries.

Dismissing the law of matters and energy, we imagine seas will rise and deserts spread only in some other person's country. Select "O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like the chaff before the wind!" (Psalm 83) instead of "Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy." (Psalm 82). Forget to rage against the dimming of our own lights.

Antidote to exclusionary interpretation, our profoundly resilient constitution apparently thrives on periodic drought and intermittent rain.

CONCERTOS

When the morning light
derives itself
so unfiltered,
dawn over the eastern mountain
 spreads her wings
 so celestially.

Shadows of the night before
emerge, lock arms,
and shake their troubled sleep
 so resolutely,
 Bach concertos.

OUT IN THE SOUTHWEST TODAY

Out in the Southwest today
Navajo teachers are preparing their lessons,
out among the red-facing buttes
and dry arroyos, out in the air that sees itself
a hundred miles out of the Bisti Badlands,
fantastic figures, straight from the earth,
emerge and begin speaking.

What surrounds these teachers instructs them
in the many ways a monster-slayer must work:
listen well to the ancestors, name every fear
and every blessing by their proper names
(Thirst and Celebration), put on your turquoise
and imagine with your students all
that's sacred walks with them.

WATER LEX

"Water Policy"
Necessity.

"Water Works"
Invention.

"Water Education"
A Long Walk, A Good Canteen.

"Water Law"
Any Growing Thing.

SPARKS

They give you a soldier's funeral,
riderless horse, helicopters, gun salute
hero of Anzio, liberator of Dachau,
Colorado Supreme Court Justice,
Water Conservation Board Director,

No-nonsense boom and salty orator
your sum on old-soldiering, "Hell,
old soldiers just don't fade away,

they die like everyone else,"

The Military chaplain salutes your ribbons,
ticks them off by name, all the campaigns,
names the ribbon still in the works for rescuing
your wounded man in the mouth of Nazi guns,
so astounded they would not cut you down,

Your Granddaughter stands to tell how you'd stock
tarantulas, lizards, snakes and doves in the house
especially the wounded, nurse them back to health,
and how you liked to say "Noble instrument, the violin."

(in celebration of Felix Sparks)

HERE WE

*Here we, in our impatience of the steps,
Get back to the beginning of beginnings.
Robert Frost, West-Running Brook*

Any given morning the judge will go to work,
hear cases one after another,
do her best to listen

Based on evidence and what the law instructs
make the judgments that must be made
within the discretion allowed

Fit the persons who come before him the best he can.

Any given morning the judge will go to work,
case numbers become names,
names become persons

Persons who can only hope the person
with the power of judgment
may see and understand

What it really means to be judged fairly.

SEAL OF A FAITHFUL HEART

*Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise.
Emily Dickinson #1129*

Spry embrace—very tenacious
her mind moves directed—
so she may find the tipping point
within the argument

And let all witness recommit—
no counterfeit design
when Lady Justice balance holds—
sword and scales even

For when a seasoned memory
round the circle gathers—
all the ferment all the scaffolds
reconstruct Dominion—

Sinews—sovereign reasoned discourse
human heart and mind fired
by the people's need—constant work
you Lady Liberty!

(In celebration of Chief Justice Mary Mullarkey,
20 years on the Colorado Supreme Court)

LAWYERS FREE FALL

Fall into the argument like you would a poem.
The lawyer's art,
after all the fits and starts,
words put to an artful thought.

MIGRATION THEORIES

Isn't it possible that more experienced hummingbirds who have been through the same passes will continue to lead the rest of us on? Pack up your sleeping bag little fellow and carry your own weight. Use all of your senses. Touch, taste, see, smell, feel and, above all, use that sixth sense most jurors discover even though they do not understand the judge's instructions, common sense instinct.

Follow mountain ranges and coastlines; take advantage of updrafts and other wind patterns; avoid geographical barriers such as large stretches of open water; take shorter leaps. Unless you're an albatross don't throw yourself off the cliff hoping for a two-thousand mile vector that will land you plunk atop your next nest or a lost ship that's under full sail making a trade in time winds.

Geneticists assume the primitive brain controls migration; its timing and response, a patterned trait even in non-migratory species. Ah, *contraire*: to navigate and orient oneself around town after driver training requires an awareness of all that surrounds you, plus unimpaired responses to traffic cops. Simply put, complexity.

Even caged birds display a preferential flight direction that corresponds with the migratory direction they would take in nature, even changing their preferential direction at roughly the same time their wild conspecifics change course. Washington Park gets packed when the sun comes out in sports bras. Unwary tourists like the trail off the south rim to Phantom Ranch until it's dark and the only way out of the Grand Canyon is back up. The Park Service doesn't have enough Rangers for all necessary rescues. If you don't have wings, even if, start early and don't stay out too late.

SISTER OF THE ROSE

Sister of the rose,
the Lord of all fruit
in the image of the globe
has made you.

Hangs you from a tree
whose leaves are scimitars
whose blades may shrivel,
curl and fall, whose sweet

Attracts the borer worm.
 Hale red haven and freestone
 for the word in you has become flesh,
 savor, taste and be glad!

HARVEST

These are the days the peaches come in. Red, ripe and delicious they frequent the mesa along the Colorado River at Palisade. Families passing through produce these elders of early September. One variety, the clingstone, won't make the effort. The freestone will.

The 14th Century Persian poet Haifiz wondered "How did the rose ever open its heart and give to this world all its beauty?" Answer, "It felt the encouragement of light against its being. Otherwise, we all remain too frightened." Sister of the rose, siblings of the peach encompass apples, pears, quince, loquats, almonds, apricot, plum, cherry, raspberry, blackberries. What's a loquat?

Settling into one's location doesn't mean withdrawing from community. When mopping the long floorboards of her home, Jane Kenyon found a long gray hair not hers in the water pail. On her knees, depressed, her spouse dying of cancer, she felt she was adding her life to the "motions of other women who have lived in this house."

The harvest of the years can bring us elders home, inside and out. "It is the message the birds click in the trees," says Naomi Nye, "Someone is coming, there are people yet to meet whose names are not written in the world of the dead."

To drive the Navajo out of their canyons, Kit Carson cut down all of their peach trees. But he could not kill the peaches. Ancestors who had walked before them walked with the people every step of the way into exile, celebrating the promise love and justice make to all ages. May you return to the peach-planting mesas of your homeland.

AT BISHOP'S LODGE

Ignite a split of pinyon fire blocks
 in burnt sienna, September rain
 may keep us in.

It could be snowing up on Baldy,
 let some updraft frets scorch a
 playing fraction

Of this cord,
 head upon a pillow back,
 and no retardant.

**SAN JUAN OUR WAY OUT OF IT?
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CORN**

The river is our elder,
our mother and our father,
celebrate our elder, celebrate we,
the children of our elder,
we, the brash, the sometimes rash,
the often-bewildered hatchlings.

Dispersed, flushed and overheated,
how do we find our way back home?
Perhaps we need a temperature control device,
a mixing mechanism. Perhaps we need to invest
in all our con-tributaries, marshal our basin-wide
counter-intuitives. Preserving our many ways

Of knowing and perceiving, perhaps we can
San Juan our way out of jeopardy.
Some treatment might be available, even though
we don't understand the cause or effect.
Why be so uncertain of our capabilities?
Don't we know the ancestors watch over us?

Don't we know we migrate back and forth within them,
and they within us? Don't we know a trade route
of immense worth passes through Mexico?
A water frog with turquoise eyes dwells at the mouth
of a spring at the base of a cliff in Casas Grandes.
Shall we dwell in the great houses of our many communities?

(In Celebration of the Colorado River Symposium,
Bishop's Lodge, Santa Fe, Sept. 16-18, 2009)