

Beautiful Day

poems

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Atlanta Review: *To My Beard*

Barrow Street: *Banks*

Blood Lotus: *When You Hit the Stones*

Bryant Literary Review: *Doing Seventy on the Highway*

Centrifugal Eye: *Glass Ghazal*

Chronogram: *Beauty*

Columbia Review: *When I Heard on the Radio*

Contemporary American Voices: *The Path*

DMQ Review: *Why I Stopped Going to the Chiropractor*

Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review: *Pomegranate*

Mudlark: An Electronic Journal of Poetry & Poetics: *Horse Ghazal, Cow Ghazal, Wine Ghazal, Sky Ghazal*

Natural Bridge: *House Ghazal*

Poet & Critic: *Slug, I Read a Poem Today about a Spider*

Rattle: *A Dialogue with My Daughter Through the Window of Her Dollhouse*

Review Americana: *To the Deaf Student in My Poetry Class before I*

Play a Recording of Dylan Thomas

Salmagundi: *Smoking*

Skidrow Penthouse: *Pocket Watch*

Slant: *To My Favorite Corduroy Jacket*

Umbrella: *Beautiful Day*

Words on Paper: *The Author Mural above the Coffee Bar at Barnes & Noble*

Contents

PART I

Pomegranate	13
I Often Walk to the End of the Road	15
Mailbox	16
When I Heard on the Radio	17
The End of History	18
I Read a Poem Today about a Spider	19
Why I Stopped Going to the Chiropractor	20
The World Through the Glass Wall of the Cardiology Pavilion	21
The Path	22
West Point Cadets on a Training Exercise Fly over My House	24
Depressed	25
Doing Seventy on the Highway	27
A Dialogue with My Daughter Through the Window of Her Dollhouse	28
Smoking	30
Banks	32
I Wanted to Know What Poetry Is	34
The Schools of Poetry	36
My Grandfather on My Mother's Side	37
Next to the Old Mountain Laurel	38
Invisible Blue	39
Late	40
Corrections	41
Beautiful Day	42

PART II

When You Hit the Stones	47
Slug	49
To the Deaf Student in My Poetry Class before I Play a Recording of Dylan Thomas	50
The Author Mural above the Coffee Bar at Barnes & Noble	52
Ode to Coffee	54

Pocket Watch	56
The Frog	57
To My Beard	58
To My Thumbs	59
To My Feet	60
To My Eyes	61
To My Favorite Corduroy Jacket	62
Horse Ghazal	64
Cow Ghazal	65
Wine Ghazal	66
Glass Ghazal	67
Sky Ghazal	68
House Ghazal	69
To the Rabbit I Killed on the Road This Morning	70
Beauty	71
E Equals Em Cee Squared	72

For Joan and Emily

PART I

Pomegranate

When I was eleven or twelve,
I was easy to make fun of.
I was tall and comically thin.
I wore glasses, thick ones that made
my eyes protrude like a frog's eyes.
I had buckteeth and a big nose.
On rainy or near-rainy days,
I had to wear rubber overshoes.
I was called "four-eyes" most often,
I was called "the frog-face" sometimes,
and once or twice "four-eyes frog-face."
Once some older kids following
me home, punched me hard in the back.
I heard one say to the others,
"Hey guys, look, four-eyes can take it."
Three days later Mrs. Pogrow
told the class to bring in something
special. Because I couldn't think
of anything, my mother put
a pomegranate in a brown
bag and told me it was the real
apple that Adam and Eve ate
in the Garden of Eden. On
my way to school, I took it out
to look at. It was ruby-red
and heavy and hard as granite.
I thought that's how it got its name.
I ran the remaining four blocks,
busting to set the record straight
about Genesis and the fruit
all of the Bronx had gotten wrong.
Arriving at the playground gate,
I saw the puncher and his friends
waiting for me, smiling those small,
feared, hated smiles. I paused. And then,
my secret weapon gripped fiercely
in my hand, I charged in. I was
Samson slaying the Philistines

with jawbone of pomegranate,
I was Thor swinging his magic
pomegranate hammer, I was
Superman punching bad guys flat
with steely pomegranate fist.
So lightning bolts flashed from frog eyes,
thunderbolts boomed from bony arm.
It was the only time they did.

I Often Walk to the End of The Road

I often walk to the end of the road
to look at the abandoned farm.
I like to look at the field
as it goes back to wilderness again.
I like to look at the grass grow
higher and thicker around the barn,
embrace it with its hairy arms
as though welcoming back the wood.
I like to look at the barn turn more
and more gray. It sags in the middle.
It reminds me of the last old horse
that years ago stood as still as a barn.
I like to watch the earth at work.
So slowly, so patiently, so deliberately
the earth works. I like to watch
the earth turn the blue farm machines
to brown rust, turn the red farm
machines to brown rust, turn
the green farm machines to brown rust.
I like to look at her work with metal,
which is mortal like us. "No hurry,"
the earth smiles at me as I watch
her work. How patient she is
with them, with the hay wain,
with the tractor, with the plow.
"No hurry," she smiles. "No hurry."

Mailbox

My neighbor's mailbox has a broken jaw.
It hangs there. It can't be closed.
Which means when I pass by,
I can see if there's mail in it or not.
Most of the time there isn't.
When there is, it's one or two envelopes.
White or blue. Flat. They look like bills.
Never a newspaper. Never even a catalog.
I envy him. But I also feel sorry for him.
I keep telling myself I'll write him a letter.
Just so he'd get something other than
those flat blue and white envelopes.
But I never do. What would I write?
Dear neighbor, This is just a note so you
could get something other than those blue
and white envelopes. Sincerely, Your
neighbor. I think I'll just keep doing
what I've been doing all these years.
Return his broken wave with my broken wave.

When I Heard on the Radio

When I heard on the radio
that the student who was asked
by the college interviewer, "If
you could be an inanimate
object, what would you choose?"
had answered, "A revolver,"
I first thought of Emily Dickinson's
My life had stood a loaded gun,
and then I thought how I would
have answered. "A telescope,"
I said out loud, to no one, for I was
alone in the car driving home.
"A telescope is both phallic and
an instrument for advancing man's
knowledge," I said, once again out
loud, offering the reasons for my choice.
At home, I asked my wife, "If you
could be an inanimate object, what
would you choose?" "A basket,"
she answered, which surprised me
because my wife is an accomplished
classical pianist, and I was sure she
would answer, "A piano." At night,
in bed, in the dark, we lay next to one
another, my telescopic hand in the
basket of her palm and fingers,
the only sound the clicking of an
insect's wings against the window
screen, like an empty revolver.