

WRITERS BLOC

GLENVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
V18 N6 / 15 APRIL 2026

WRAPPING UP

Welcome to our National Poetry Month issue, the final issue of the 2025-26 academic year. We couldn't think of a better way to close out the year than by celebrating one of our favorite art forms. This issue belongs to you as much as it does to us. Thank you to all of our contributors and readers, to all the good sports who responded to our weird weekly questions, shared pet photos, and lent voices to our collection of Exquisite Corpse poems. The results are wonderful, and we hope you enjoy them. You'll find the poems scattered throughout this issue. As the semester winds down, we wish you all clear heads, steady hearts, and good luck on final exams. See you August!



SEND WRITERS BLOC SUBMISSIONS TO

melissa.gish@glennville.edu
Views expressed in the *Writers Bloc* are not necessarily the views of GSU.

CONTACT FACULTY AT

www.glennville.edu/departments/language-literature

SOME POEMS WAIT FOR US

Many times, poetry has a way of settling into us quietly. A poem read once, maybe in the back of a borrowed magazine, can slip past our conscious mind and take up residence somewhere we don't often look. We may go years without thinking of it. Then something stirs the surface: an unexpected question, an image that catches our eye, or a word spoken in just the right way. Suddenly, the poem is there again. It may not be fully formed. Perhaps it's just a few lines, a theme, or a name. The poem was never really gone. It was only waiting. That is exactly what happened to our Lecturer of Communication, Jennifer Wenner.

"I was fifteen, waiting for a friend, and idly paging through one of her mother's magazines when I came across a poem that had my name in it. The poem was about a girl on a swing, soaring, and it lodged itself somewhere in my memory. But over the years, what remained was only the feeling of it: the title, 'Jenny, Flying,' the theme, and a couple of fragile lines. I tried to find it once or twice, but searching 'Jenny' and 'Flying' leads you down a rabbit hole of everything but poetry. Eventually, I gave up.

Then last fall, during an interview, I was asked about my favorite poem. I mentioned 'Jenny, Flying,' confessed I only knew a couple of lines, and admitted I had never been able to track it down. My colleague, Dr. Scott O'Neill, was intrigued. He decided to take up the search himself. He didn't have much to work with: a women's magazine, an approximate year, a title, and a those half-remembered lines. He contacted the Library of Congress, and they joined the hunt, but even they came up empty. Dr. O'Neill reported back with some frustration that the trail had gone cold.

I searched the databases one more time. I didn't find the poem, but I found something better: in a different magazine, a title match, and with it, a name. *Dodie Meeks*. Dr. O'Neill searched again and discovered that Ms. Meeks had passed away just this past October 2025, at the age of 100. Undeterred, he tracked down her daughter, Dr. Helen Varner, and reached out. Dr. Varner said she would look for the poem. To everyone's surprise, she found it almost immediately. Jenny, it turned out, was her granddaughter.

We also learned, through Ms. Meeks's obituary, the remarkable fullness of her life. For many years she wrote for the *Galveston Daily News* as a columnist and journalist under the pen name Marcus Dickey. She was an accomplished artist, poet, and the author of six books, including *History of the University of Texas Medical Branch*, *Stone Sings* (1980), *When I Got Dressed Again* (2001), *The Field* (2002), *Pretty Little Girls and Other Men's Wives* (2003), and *A Letter from Marfa* (2006), co-written with Tom Shuford. She also illustrated *A Bouquet of Poems for Children of All Ages* (2013).

A century of living. A poem that survived it. And somehow, it found its way back to me." — Jennifer Wenner

JENNY, FLYING

Her eyes, beneath the lids,
move side to side
Elbows thrust
And she is up —!
Pushing soft down until
Lift-Off
Beating full air with her arms
Airborne.
Someone passing by said
"Dreaming we can fly is one way
to learn to swim."
The murky, warm familiar
Is not the rare, fine high,
O, Little Jenny,
Try.

— Dodie Meeks

The Department of Language and Literature invites you to celebrate National Poetry Month by spending some time with the variety of poetry included in this issue of *Writers Bloc*. We are featuring well-known classics alongside new poems as well as a variety of poetry by GSU students, both past and present. We hope some of these poems will settle into your mind and stay there a while . . . perhaps forever.

WHAT ARE WE UP TO IN THE LANGUAGE & LITERATURE DEPARTMENT?

American Literature Association Conference

Dr. Schuyler Chapman to Lead Panel Exploring Laziness, Leisure, and Labor in Melville and His Contemporaries

We are pleased to announce that in May, Dr. Schuyler Chapman will attend the American Literature Association Conference in Chicago. The ALA is likely the largest annual conference focusing specifically on the study of U.S. literature. It is a curious conference insofar as it is organized around panels sponsored by the various author societies dedicated to U.S. writers. The conference is therefore an interesting mix of scholars who have spent their careers focusing almost entirely on individual authors and scholars who just happen to be presenting work on an individual author.

Dr. Chapman has presented at the conference a couple of times and finds it particularly productive. As someone who does not really focus on any one particular author in their work, he finds the input from those scholars who do to be of great benefit.

However, this year, Dr. Chapman will not present at this conference. This past October, the Herman Melville Society nominating committee nominated Dr. Chapman to organize a panel for them at this year's ALA, and he was elected to the position of panel organizer in November. Dr. Chapman then solicited papers for the panel they proposed—*Laziness, Leisure, and Labor in Melville and His Contemporaries and Followers*—and has recently submitted the finalized panel to the Melville Society, so they can relay the information to the ALA.

Dr. Chapman is very excited about the panel. It will feature work from scholars at various stages of their careers (from grad students to full professors), and Dr. Ivy Wilson, whose work inspired the chosen topic, will serve as a respondent. Dr. Chapman will chair the panel, which means he will have an opportunity to sit back and take in what promises to be some brilliant work.

GSU THEATER: *Love/Sick* on April 23 and 24

Lecturer of Communication Jennifer Wenner has been working with students to bring this “unromantic comedy” to the GSU stage.

The Little Kanawha Theatre and Drama Club invites you to attend their production of the play ***Love/Sick on April 23 and 24 at 7:00 p.m.*** in the **Mollohan Campus Community Center.**

The play was written by John Cariani, an actor and playwright originally from Maine who now lives in the Bronx. He has appeared on TV's *Law and Order* and *Numb3rs*. *Love/Sick* was made into a movie in Mexico called *Enfermo Amor*.

Love/Sick is a one-act, multiple cycle play about love and loss—but mostly loss. Each cycle of the play has its own arc and tells the story of a couple at a crossroads in their relationship. Since each relationship is more advanced than the previous relationship, a larger arc emerges, and the individual cycles work together to create a satisfying whole—one that chronicles the life cycle of a typical relationship from meeting through divorce . . . and afterwards. Full of imperfect lovers and dreamers, *Love/Sick* is an unromantic comedy for the romantic in everyone.

We hope you will support theater at GSU by coming out to see *Love/Sick*. This event is **FREE** though **donations** are greatly appreciated.

Children's Literature Association Conference

Dr. Amanda Chapman to Explore Victorian Chivalry and Boyhood at Children's Literature Association Conference

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Amanda Chapman will present her research at the Children's Literature Association Conference in Pittsburgh this May. Her presentation, “Chivalric Boys Make Good Neighbors: Merry Old England, the Boy Scouts, and the Victorian Public School,” examines how Victorian society used medieval ideals to shape boyhood and masculinity.

During the nineteenth century, British public schools underwent a dramatic transformation. No longer simply finishing schools for the aristocracy, they became institutions dedicated to producing respectable middle-class gentlemen. Central to this mission was the cultivation of chivalric ideals drawn from an imagined “Merry Old England”—ideals that emphasized being a good neighbor and, paradoxically, cultivating a deliberate lack of self-consciousness.

Dr. Chapman's presentation will trace the Victorian cult of chivalry as it flourished among boys on both sides of the Atlantic. She will examine how influential writers like Sir Walter Scott, Kenelm Digby, and Henry Newbolt promoted a vision of boyhood chivalry that deliberately avoided self-reflection. Popular retellings of Arthurian and Robin Hood legends for young readers, including Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883) and George Manville Fenn's *Young Robin Hood* (1899), worked to instill this unselfconscious chivalric code in their audiences.

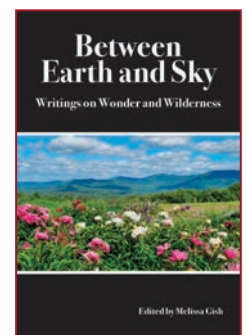
The presentation will then explore how two major Victorian institutions adopted chivalric discourse to shape boyhood: the Boy Scouts and the public schools. Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys* (1908) explicitly positioned knights as the original Scouts and linked medieval chivalry to Scout Law. The public schools enforced a code of conduct they called “good form,” which demanded boys reject self-consciousness. This ethos pervaded both the literature written for these boys, such as Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), and even the Gothic architecture of the schools themselves, which was deliberately infused with medieval imagery. Henry Newbolt praised both institutions for training boys to embody gentlemanly warriors ready to defend their community's honor.

As Dr. Chapman notes, in an era of “Medieval Y2K” and the rising popularity of “knight-centered romantasy,” this is an opportune moment to revisit Victorian medievalism and understand its profound influence on nineteenth-century children's literature and culture.

New Prose and Poetry Anthology

Associate Professor of English Melissa Gish edited a creative anthology that features both established and emerging writers.

Between Earth and Sky: Writings on Wonder and Wilderness is a collection of poems and personal essays that chronicles intimate encounters with the natural world across diverse landscapes and continents. The book includes a poem by **Professor Jonathan Minton** and a personal essay by **Assistant Professor Catherine Kong!**



CELEBRATING NATIONAL POETRY MONTH WITH STUDENT RESPONSES

Contributed by Clayton Short, Music Major

A poem by Joel Glickman called “Walking the Dog Past Two Caged Ducks at Dusk (after Robert Frost)” makes me feel nostalgic. When I first looked into this, I figured that would be like an *Animal Farm* type of poem. But having read it, I think it’s very different; it’s more focused on humans’ relationships with animals. The speaker states, “We give them perfect lives and then / just one bad day.” This obviously refers to the slaughter of our farm animals, which is a necessary part to our life. We value animals as companions, and obviously they’re cute and fun to look at, but eventually they end up dying. I think this can also be seen as a metaphor that we are all like the ducks in this story. We’re trapped in our areas; we have a pretty good life all things considered. But that “one bad day” is also the day we die. We live our lives with people walking by, staring at us. Sometimes they’re by themselves. Sometimes they may be walking with something that doesn’t like you. But all in all, life is good. And eventually when we get too sick, or when it’s just our time, we’re taken away by things out of our control. We’re animals too. We always have been, and we always will be. We just think and process differently than other animals. Those ducks are most likely content in that scenario. But humans aren’t content with that; we search for more and more until we can’t find anymore. Then we are “content” to stay in our pens, but we aren’t happy with it. That’s the only difference between us and ducks: we just think differently. We want more.

Joel Glickman. “Walking the Dog Past Two Caged Ducks at Dusk (after Robert Frost).” *Critters: Poems*, Aji Press, 2022, p. 15.

Walking the Dog Past Two Caged Ducks at Dusk (after Robert Frost)
Joel Glickman

She’s leashed but leads me where she will
yet hasn’t come this way before—
this alley, by someone’s back yard,
the corner house. A wire pen

is holding two ducks, standard white
and orange billed, standing tall
and still and watchful in the day’s last light.
They make soft sounds or else I might

have failed to see them there just now
as we walked by. A friend once said
when speaking of his own livestock,
We give them perfect lives and then

just one bad day. And as we watch
them, they are looking back at us.
The sun has set, and my heart sinks
down in my chest, as I am not

absolved of sin against their kin
who graced so many Christmas days
of mine, brought to the table with
white wine, and crisped with cherry glaze.

WHAT IS AN EXQUISITE CORPSE, AND HOW ARE SOME OF OURS DIFFERENT?

An exquisite corpse poem is a collaborative work where each writer adds to the piece without seeing what came before, usually only the last line. Born from the Surrealist movement in 1920s Paris, the technique was invented by André Breton and friends to unlock unconscious creativity. We took it a step further: our contributors—many of you!—wrote lines in isolation, with no one seeing anyone else’s contribution at all. The results are surprising, strange, and entirely unplanned.

Trouble Comes on Kitten Paws: An ‘Exquisite’ ENGL101/102 Poem

Trouble comes on kitten paws, tightly over flesh,
so smoky and so smooth, so bold and dark—
a grieving river fading into the night,
a broken compass that cannot guide.

How daring to be different, how daring to be lost,
a hollowed out tree that cannot grow toward light,
an honest father figure who jumped the fences,
sprinkled with evening moonlight, restless, bright.

White wedding dress layered with silk,
baked with cinnamon sugar, washed and worn—
washed the dishes that were in the sink,
found the cookies that were in the kitchen, every one.

A hollowed out tree, fish eggs bold as grief,
the restless open road stretching into dawn—
trouble comes on kitten paws, soft as disbelief,
and fades into the night, and carries on.

Everything is ‘Exquisitly’ Figureoutable

Scattered lightweight clouds aimlessly surf across the tranquil sky,
rooted but still drifting listlessly, like a water lily in a flowing stream,
fog spools through a steel ribcage in slow, labored breaths,
the cool wind blows from the east,
and this early spring weather cannot make up its mind.

This is the way home—
rolled tight like a sleeping cicada,
out behind the slouching wood shed.

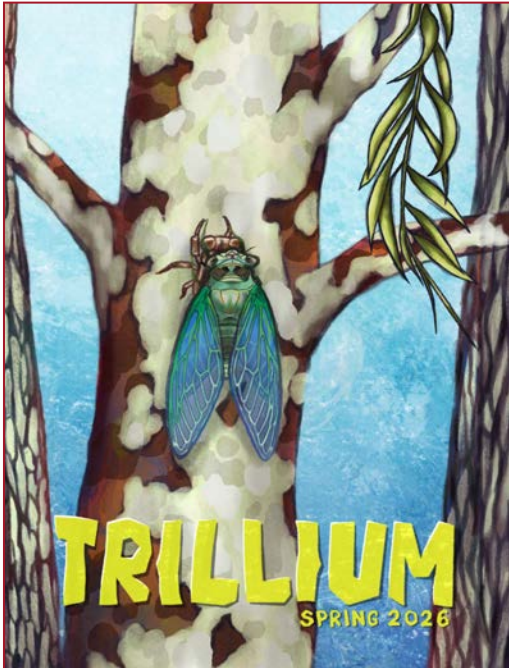
I’ve grown to hate that perfect pedestal
from where the greatest are bound to fall—
the Empire has brainwashed the public by pretending to be the Rebels,
someday it will all collapse under the weight of information,
and they mocked my eyeliner game at the dissident brunch.

But the nightmares come instead.
I am that cave in the silent creeping snow
that no one survives.

As each day goes by, the trees begin to bloom,
there are buds on the trees and spring has started,
it’s beginning to smell like summer outside,
the squirrels and groundhogs are having a ball running up and down
the hillside—
everything is figureoutable.

WHAT IS THE *TRILLIUM*?

The 22nd Annual **Trillium Reading** is **tentatively** scheduled for **Wednesday, April 29, at 4:00 p.m.** in the Robert F. Kidd Library. Keep an eye on our social media and your campus Outlook for updates.



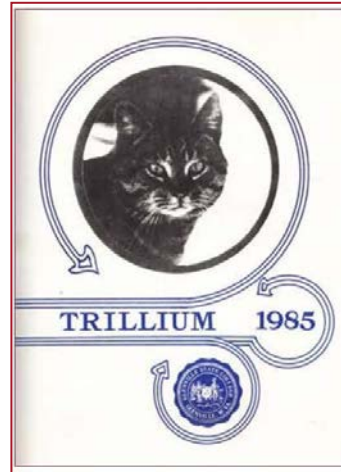
Some of you may be asking, “What is the *Trillium*?” The first issue of the *Trillium*, our school’s literary and arts journal, was released in the spring of 1980. Assistant Professor of English Martha Hopkins Keating served as the first faculty advisor. When Ms. Keating left GSC (now GSU) to take a position at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, Professor of English Dr. Barbara Tedford took over the role of *Trillium* Advisor in 1985. Then Dr. Gayle Burkowski stepped into the role of advisor in 1999. Burkowski and recently hired Dr. Jonathan Minton co-advised the 2007 issue, and the following year, Minton went solo as advisor. He has been the *Trillium*’s advisor ever since.

We asked Dr. Minton to tell us more about the *Trillium*. He explained, “There are some things that have remained consistent with the *Trillium* since its inception in the 1980s. It has always been first and foremost a showcase for the creativity of our students, faculty, and GSU community, and it has always been student edited. I am, however, very proud to see a steady improvement in design and the production value of the *Trillium* improve each year. I’m also very happy that we’ve developed a strong and healthy collaboration with the Department of Fine Arts. We routinely include artwork from their students and faculty, and we have an annual *Trillium* art show in addition to our reading.”

When asked about some of the challenges he faces as the *Trillium* advisor, Minton revealed, “The biggest challenge has been budgetary constraints. Until recently, the position of student editor was volunteer-only, and for a long time we didn’t have enough of a budget to do a proper perfect-bound cover. Fortunately, this has changed.”

In discussing the value of keeping the *Trillium* alive and well at GSU, Minton said, “I think a literary and arts publication is essential to the health and vitality of any college community. We include student and faculty work from across departments, so the *Trillium* truly is a showcase. And what the *Trillium* showcases—storytelling, poetry, fine art, and design—are skills that are very much in demand in the world and the workplace.”

POETRY FROM THE PAST



Marshall Robinson was the editor of the *Trillium* in 1984, the year his poem was published. He graduated from GSC (now GSU) in 1985.

Untitled

night noises low and muffled
 rub through half darkness
 into pre-dawn.
 half-morning mist glides across
 glisten-wet pavement as
 a block of light slides through
 an open doorway,
 a man stumbling after it.
 closing door sucks back angular light.
 raspy mutterings fade out
 leaving the man alone
 staring like a statue
 at his feet.

Mary Wildfire was a creative writing student in 1994, the year her poem appeared in the *Trillium*. She graduated from GSC (now GSU) in 1999.

August Daydreams

November cold will silence
 thrumming wheezling bugs
 and stop
 the stream tomatoes
 streaming through my sweaty house.

November cold will cure
 Tom’s pollen misery
 and fill my shrunken spring.

So I yearn for the first hard frost, and then
 I’ll dream of April.

LOOKING BACK AT POETRY FROM THE *TRILLIUM*

With plans to become a secondary English teacher, Betsy Utt graduated from GSC (GSU) in 2001, the year her poem appeared in the *Trillium*.

Familiarity

Familiarity
 Warms like a sweater
 enveloping
 like skin
 Not needing
 voice
 or sound
 silence swirls around
 us like fog
 eyes closed
 our lips
 hands
 our everything
 knows
 just where to be.

Autumn (Carter) Norman graduated from GSC in 2007. Her poem appeared in the 2008 issue of the *Trillium*.

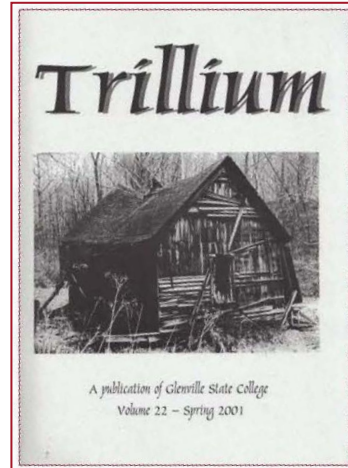
The Way Hands Move

The way hands move
 over bones they are reading Braille,
 each dip, each joint
 the outline of words.
 I want that feeling,
 the way hands move
 through water-- five bright trout
 Searching for food.
 The knowing of eyes
 is not the knowing of hands.
 The way hands move
 is unknowable.
 A sky of dark water,
 trout swim bone to star,
 linking them forever
 the way hands move.

James B. Minney graduated from GSC in 1987. His poem was published in the 1985 issue of the *Trillium*.

Untitled

I saw her one fine day.
 so beautiful, so dark.
 I picked up the ant,
 and ate her like some aardvark.



With a double major in English and Psychology/Sociology, Brandy L. Smith graduated from GSC in 2008. Her poem appeared in that year's issue of the *Trillium*.

Euphemisms

try to erode my humanity
 with your euphemistic labels
 pacification, body count,
 dehumanize those people,
 those who lived and
 breathed like you
 and me, go on,
 tell me again of
 Hitler, charismatic,
 crazy from syphilis,
 who massacred,
 but you forget those
 red skinned genocide
 by mentally sound,
 fearful white men,
 you forget so many
 there is no number
 for those dehumanized,
 you forget writer
 of history books
 about that
 middle passage,
 why do we euphemize
 these deeds, because
 they are not so much
 like you, like me?
 like millions of
 white Jews? is
 it because the
 Native, the African
 are more american
 than you - than me
 they bled, they died,
 they red they black-
 we white.
 we lied.

CELEBRATING NATIONAL POETRY MONTH WITH STUDENT RESPONSES

In celebration of National Poetry Month, we're featuring some poems alongside responses from a few students—not critical analyses but rather genuine reactions. We asked them to simply share what the poem made them think, feel, or remember. What are your impressions of these poems?

Contributed by Elizabeth Oldaker, Online Undeclared

A poem by John Garmon called “Horses of Yellowknife” makes me feel a sense of calmness in my heart. Garmon uses horses as a symbol to describe the weather in his environment, and for some reason, the way his words flow makes me feel very peaceful. The imagery and personification in this poem completely envelopes me. In the poem the speaker describes “speckled wizard horses / Galloping from dreams come / Drumming light footed over rocks.” In this scenario I like to think of the horses representing thunder, like how you can tell an intense storm is coming your way by the sound of the thunder and lightning. The Native Americans often used animals as a kind of symbolism for the unknown, like the weather and spirits. They believe everything in life is connected and everything has a spirit. The title character of the Disney animated film *Pocahontas* says, “I know every rock, and tree, and creature has a life, has a spirit, has a name.” The Native Americans took something so complex and turned it into a story that shows the beauty of life and nature. Could you imagine not knowing what a thunderstorm was? I could not; it would be so scary I would go into cardiac arrest or something. Garmon takes something that could potentially be a dangerous and scary situation and makes it a tale of beautiful spirituality and imagery by making that connection to life and the energy that flows all through us and around us. Reading this poem, I cannot help but think about how often we overlook or neglect nature and the planet we call home. I wonder what the world would look like if we all could live harmoniously with each other and with the world around us.

Garmon, John. “Horses of Yellowknife.” *Aji Magazine*, no. 11, Fall 2019, p. 86.

Horses of Yellowknife

John Garmon

Nights when spirit mountains
Far from Yellowknife grow cold
Brutal wind flows down seeking warmth,
So we hear the wild horses
That do not exist
Crying like weeping souls
Of indigenous children.

When speckled wizard horses
Galloping from dreams come
Drumming light footed over rocks
Skirting deep imaginary canyons
Where precarious boulders threaten
With their lucent nonexistent hooves
Tapping softly glowing on bare pebbles
Rolling slightly away under high nostrils
Steaming frost in the dark.

Their manes lit up
Backs shining in down
Blowing wind
Whinnying and whinnying
They gather and gather
Until one mighty herd
Rumbles down through l at land
Where slow domestic settlers
Yawn nervously awake,

Feeling from sleep
It seems their rooms move
In a hard winter earthquake.
Then they call out,
The terrible storm is a white
Tsunami blizzard,
A herd of ghost horses
Passing on in snow
Dying with the wind
As the aurora borealis
Swims up into the night
Like stallions undulating
In weaving clouds.

Aces Over Eights

Here you are again,
Ready to play this tiring game.
You lay down the same hand,
while fear weighs me down.
Do I play a pair?
Or a full house?
Or do I fold in fear?

Aces over eights, how clever.
You play the same hand, over and over.
Don't it get boring?
Why can't you let a dead hand die?
Pick a new hand to play.
Or are you not so original
that you need Billy's hand to win?

— Megan Snodgrass
Art Major



LATE TO THE PARTY



Bree Barnhouse

Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit

“This is my dog, Tink; she is an English bulldog. I think she is three years old. Tink loves to eat food and to play, but she loves to sleep more than anything . . . which is why she missed showing up for the Pet Day issue.”

CELEBRATING NATIONAL POETRY MONTH WITH STUDENT RESPONSES

Contributed by Megan Snodgrass, Art Major

“The Messages” is a poem by Wilfred Wilson Gibson from a book of poetry called *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War 1914-1917*. The poem is about the whispering messages of soldiers from World War I. At least that’s what I get from it. The feeling and aching I felt while reading this was suffocating. It definitely painted a picture for me; I felt like I was there in the trenches myself. The speaker kept repeating the same thing three times, which made me believe that instead of messages, they’re memories.

“I cannot quite remember.... There were five dropt dead beside me in the trench – and three whispered their dying messages to me.” He was quoting someone who was coming back from the trenches. The soldier was, according to the speaker, “more dead than alive, stone-deaf and dazed, and with a broken knee.” This soldier seemed to be at the point of death when he returned from the trenches. When I said it paints a picture, it really does paint a picture. I can see a man, a soldier from WWI who is close to death, hobbling back to his troops.

The speaker states “Their friends are waiting, wondering how they thrive – waiting a word in silence patiently.” This makes me think that the soldiers who died in the trenches are waiting for their friends who fought with them. Heck, it makes me feel like their spirits are wandering, waiting to see their fellow soldiers again in death. Or maybe the friends of those five soldiers are waiting for words from them about their time in war. But going back to that repeated line, I’m thinking that the soldier could be hysterical from seeing so much death. I mean, if it was me, and I saw my friends and fellow soldiers drop dead beside me, I wouldn’t be okay. I would probably go insane after seeing that much death.

The book was scanned and collected in the Internet Archive, and the brown tint of the pages reminds me of an old book of Shakespeare’s poems and plays my dad got me from a thrift store. Ironically, both are books of poetry, and both have death in them. Hamlet, Sonnet 71, and even Romeo and Juliet have death in them. I remember sitting in my dorm reading Macbeth from that book of Shakespeare. That honestly was probably my favorite memory I have.

Death can change a person. I lost my grandfather not too long ago, and it took a huge toll on me. It’s fitting to bring him up in this response because he was a soldier. He served in Korea in the Army. He didn’t tell me everything, but I can only imagine the death he saw. I’m sure that without his faith, he probably would have ended up like the soldier the speaker in the poem talks about. Yeah, he would tell me a little bit about Korea, but not a lot, which I understand; he was surrounded by war, so of course he wouldn’t want to talk about it. Death and war can change a person.

Gibson, Wilfred Wilson. “The Messages.” *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War 1914-1917*, Houghton Mifflin, 1917, p. 236.

An ‘Exquisite’ Limerick

There once was a glaring of cats
who collected our sins like old hats.
The cool wind blows east,
Gilgamesh wants a feast,
and the squirrels are having a ball on the flats.

The Messages

Wilfrid Wilson Gibson

“I cannot quite remember. . . . There were five
Dropt dead beside me in the trench — and three
Whispered their dying messages to me. . . .”

Back from the trenches, more dead than alive,
Stone-deaf and dazed, and with a broken knee,
He hobbled slowly, muttering vacantly:

“I cannot quite remember. . . . There were five
Dropt dead beside me in the trench, and three
Whispered their dying messages to me. . . .”

“ Their friends are waiting, wondering how they thrive —
Waiting a word in silence patiently. . . .
But what they said, or who their friends may be

“I cannot quite remember. . . . There were five
Dropt dead beside me in the trench — and three
Whispered their dying messages to me. . . .”

For this exquisite corpse we fragmented the lines, rearranging them.

‘Exquisite’ Egg White Strips

Out behind the slouching wood shed,
fog spools through a steel ribcage
in slow, labored breaths.

Rolled tight like a sleeping cicada,
I am that cave in the silent creeping snow
that no one survives—
but the nightmares come instead.

I’ve grown to hate that perfect pedestal
from where the greatest are bound to fall:
the Empire pretending to be the Rebels,
Gilgamesh and Achilles each wanting a good time,
will history ever forgive these literary strays?

Scattered lightweight clouds
aimlessly surf the tranquil sky
like egg white strips floating
in a cooling pot—
cracked open on a randomly busy April morning.

Rooted but still drifting,
like a water lily.
The cool wind blows.
It has been so windy lately.

As each day goes by,
buds on the trees,
smell of summer,
everything is figureoutable.

This is the way home.

PLAYING WITH FORM

Poetry can be written in countless forms—just ask Jonathan Minton! Each form has its own rules, rhythms, and surprises. Some poets count syllables; others count lines or words. Still others let repeating phrases do the heavy lifting. The short forms are a wonderful place to start if you want to dabble in writing poetry. They are compact enough to finish in a sitting, but they are also demanding enough to make you choose every word carefully. Here are some ‘exquisite’ short form poems.

An ‘Exquisite’ Couplet (2 lines)

Labradors are the best breed of dog
pretending to be the Rebels

An ‘Exquisite’ Tercet (3 lines)

The squirrels and the groundhogs
make things pretty
at the dissident brunch

An ‘Exquisite’ Adelaide Crapsey Cinquain (2-4-6-8-2)

Feckless
man-child wanting
my pass to paradise
accidentally cracked open,
brainwashed

An ‘Exquisite’ Haiku (5-7-5)

buds on the trees now
the cool wind blows from the east
smell of summer comes

An ‘Exquisite’ Tanka (5-7-5-7-7)

the cool wind blows east
rooted but still drifting, like
a water lily—
this early spring cannot make
up its mind; neither can I

An ‘Exquisite’ Sijo (3 lines; 14-16 syllables each)

Out behind the slouching wood shed, fog spools through a steel rib cage. I’ve grown to hate that perfect pedestal from where the greatest fall. This is the way home—rolled tight like a sleeping cicada, still.

An ‘Exquisite’ Sedoka (2 tercets of 5-7-7)

But the nightmares come
I am that cave in the snow
that no one survives alone

as each day goes by
trees begin to bloom again
but still drifting listlessly

A bit longer form, the sonnet is a 14-line poem with a strict structure that poets have followed for centuries. It originated in 13th-century Italy and was later brought to England, where Shakespeare made it famous. Each line follows a rhythmic pattern of ten syllables with alternating soft and strong beats. The poem builds around a single idea or emotion, then shifts perspective near the end with a twist called a “volta.” Think of it as a structured argument with a surprising conclusion. Focused and powerful, the sonnet remains one of poetry’s most enduring and recognizable forms. Here is a series of sonnets crafted from your contributed lines by Jonathan Minton:

‘Exquisite’ Sonnets for Spring

1

As each day goes by, the trees begin to bloom,
makes things pretty. The cool wind blows from the east,
rooted but still drifting listlessly, like a water lily
in a flowing stream. It has been so windy lately.
This is the way home, but the nightmares come instead.
I am that cave in the silent creeping snow,
a hollowed out tree that cannot grow.
scattered lightweight clouds aimlessly rolled tight
like a sleeping cicada. Fog spools through a steel ribcage.
I’ve grown to hate that perfect pedestal
from where the greatest are bound to fall.
I shall collect your sins and have them as my own,
just to give you my pass to paradise.
Everything is figureoutable. A grieving river is also dark.

2

It’s beginning to smell like summer outside
Scattered lightweight clouds aimlessly surf
across the tranquil sky, like the egg white strips floating
in a cooling pot after a boil, which I accidentally cracked
open on a randomly busy April morning.
There are buds on the trees and spring has started,
and this early spring weather cannot make up its mind
The squirrels and the groundhogs that I can see
outside my office window are having a ball
running up and down the hillside.
Out of all the collective names for cats,
my favorite is “a glaring.”
Trouble comes on kitten paws.
Labradors are the best breed of dog.

3

Sprinkled with evening moonlight, baked
with cinnamon sugar, fish eggs are also bold,
bold, so smoky, and so smooth. How daring
to be different: a white wedding dress
layered with silk tightly over flesh,
washed dishes that were in the sink.
They mocked my eyeliner game
at the dissident brunch. The Empire
has brainwashed the public by pretending
to be the Rebels. Gilgamesh and Achilles,
each a feckless man-child wanting a good time:
One likes Enkidu, the other is into Patroclus’s ways—
will history ever forgive these literary strays?
Someday, it will all collapse under the weight of information.



Ars Poetica

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds.

*

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind—

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs.

*

A poem should be equal to:
Not true.

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—

A poem should not mean
But be.

— Archibald MacLeish

These are poems by students who transformed existing texts by blacking out words and letting hidden verses emerge from the page, an activity called “blackout poetry.”

I Know the Truth

after William Carlos Williams

I have drunk
the whiskey
that was in
the decanter

and which
you were probably
having
for your affair

Forgive me
it was bold
so smoky
and so smooth

— Aimee Huddleston, *Regents Bachelor of Arts*

The Fabric of Forever

after William Carlos Williams

So much depends
upon

a white wedding
dress

layered with silk
fabric

beside the eager
bridesmaids

— Payton Barnitz, *Dual Enrollment*

**FOLLOW US ALL
SUMMER ON
SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Scan the QR Code to
find us on Facebook.**



**Follow us on
Instagram: @gsu_languageandlit**

**Revisit the Little Kanawha
Reading Series
on YouTube: <https://qrco.de/gsu>**

Writers Bloc will return in September

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Exquisite Corpse Poetry Activity! I hope you all enjoyed seeing your words dance and play!

Payton Barnitz, Dual Enrollment
Mary Brinker, Dual Enrollment
Laura Cain, English Education
Amanda Chapman, Associate Professor of English
Schuyler Chapman, Associate Professor of English
Ashley Crook, Education Major
Savannah Decker, Dual Enrollment
Macie Duvall, Education Major
Raelynn Fields, Dual Enrollment
Ryleigh Fink, Dual Enrollment
Jodie Fisher, Landscape Specialist
Dravin Gibson, Lecturer of Art
Brogann Henry, Dual Enrollment
Aimee Huddleston, Regents Bachelor of Arts
Catherine Kong, Assistant Professor of English
Larry Lemaster, WV 65 Plus Program
Jonathan Minton, Professor of English
Logan Neal, Dual Enrollment
Bella Russell, Dual Enrollment
Kaytie Sargent, Education Major
Megan Snodgrass, Art Major
Connie Stout O'Dell, Dean of Teacher Education, Associate Professor of Education
Kaycee Tennant, Dual Enrollment
Emily Turner, Records Assistant III
Fiona VanMatre, Dual Enrollment
Mike Vozniak, Assistant Professor of English
Kaitlyn West, Business Major
Alijah Williams, Math Major