THREE POEMS

ANN GOLDSMITH

The Poetry Collection is proud to celebrate National Poetry Month with the publication of both Max Wickert's and Ann Goldsmith's *Three Poems*, the ninth and tenth in a series featuring the work of poets living in Buffalo.

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THREE POEMS

ANN GOLDSMITH

Driving by the River

Yesterday I drove the Skyway in heavy fog:
Haloes around the steel mills' paschal flames,
Bridge abutments drifting like barges. Today
The trees are holding spring in their mouths.
Fishermen in a line thread themselves
To themselves, gazing down;
Gulls tear the air into scraps. Soon
The shad will spawn as the tree with their name
Floats its bronze-edged lace over old pastures.
The sweet carrion scent will draw the first midges.
Asparagus stalks will stand bundled
Like dynamite in market bins,
And after them, the full-bellied melons.

It will be a good year for blueberries,
Bad for corn and peas. Good for work; bad for sleep.
My father will not stoop among the marigolds
Nor sing of harvest moons in the moth-grey dusk,
Ash long on his cigar, his white floss hair
Kindling under the porch light. The barn will be painted,
The path to the brook reinvented without him.
We will weed and prune, transplant in mid-summer,
Let the hornets claim the last windfall.
The seasons arrange themselves.
Already in April we know
Which roses were winter-killed, what crops will bear.
We know for whom this will be a hard year.

NOTHING IN LILAC HUES

Whoever you are, wrote the Austrian
poet, *step out of the house you know*
so well
into the infinite

and raise a tree there against the sky

so you can look at it and for a moment know
you have placed
a new thought in the universe.

Here I am, I would like to reply, *I am ready—*
but my thoughts are too watery
to hold their shape
especially against the sky
and I'd lose my balance
trying to raise
even a bonsai or baby pear.

There was a day, late spring—
the trail cut like a wire
across a slope
so sheer
you could lean against glacial rubble
on one side
while on the other

space came right up to your hiking boot.

Here, the cracks and grains of the up-slope
grazed my shoulder
streaming past my right eye
like deer in a tunnel

while off to the left, nothing in lilac hues
shook itself out for miles
until it washed up
against the far peaks.

And I had to sit down on bony ground
until my soul came back to me

for it's all very well
to have one eye open on the back lot
and the other
on celestial courtyards
when you're lying in bed
or stepping through your tight doorframe

but when you're newly married
and climbing high with your husband
and he's up ahead
and you've never done any of this before

and the sky isn't pale anyway, but more like
a cauldron, and you don't dare
take your hand
from the rock beside you, I say

go ahead, look up and think
what fine image
you'd raise and how you would place it

if you had a free hand, your man
beside you, and swinging doors
to every room
from here to timberline

but first, consider

the wide planes of houses
the rooted fragrance of forests—

then get down to the valley floor any way you can.

NEGATIVE SPACE

The dark wind blows on everyone
—Tony Hillerman, *Skinwalkers*

is over the cliff
under the wellspring
under and over the thief's last words

is bone shadows on a white sheet
imprint of hoof in March mud

a dark wind dragging us
from the perches our fingers cling to.

Emptiness replete, it is
the ragged outline of home

where I went looking for you
behind the mountains
when wood lilies parted the grass.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ann Goldsmith is a graduate of Smith College and holds a PhD from the University at Buffalo. She won the Quarterly Review of Literature Prize for her first book *No One Is the Same Again* in 1999, and published a second collection, *The Spaces Between Us*, in 2010. She has taught at several colleges in the Buffalo area and served as poet-in-residence at the Chautauqua Institution. She lives in Buffalo, New York.

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