

TCPL  
POEM IN  
YOUR  
POCKET  
DAY  
ANTHOLOGY  
2022

He's so courageous that he sleeps on a bed made of fire.

He's so courageous that he eats rocks for breakfast.....and dinner, too!

He has more courage than the devil on a bad night.

He has more courage than he does mismatched socks.

He is caveman.

He is...me!

*Rich Recchia*

They are most skilled at loving  
and at being loved.

They are magical, precious beings,  
journeying through life.

Time is their rocket  
fueled by laughter, and dreams that wait  
for them  
in the sky.

They peer into tomorrow,  
and ask, "what new worlds can I explore?"

And at the end of each day,  
they power down and tuck themselves  
into the arms  
of those they trust.

Their loyalty is stronger than the sun.

They twinkle and shine - a gift to the  
universe -  
a perfect night in this darkened world.

Children.

*Peaches Gillette*

You asked me to cut your hair for you, the darkest hair I've ever seen piling up on the white porcelain floor of your bathtub, falling from your head, falling from the teeth of the electric razor. It's still the coldest room of your otherwise one-room apartment, and you're sitting, shirtless, on your knees with your head down. I think of you now, in the shower, rinsing the stray strands from your shoulders in your cold bathroom, and I think of myself laying in your bed, warm, writing this poem while you're getting clean, all of it, the hair, the words, you, me, all seashells cast out, washed out to the ocean, picked up and picked over by more hands than we both have seen in our lives and tossed around in that big, blue bowl by the tides. All of it will find its way back to the sea.

*Greta Unetich*

## **Swiss Border, December 1938**

As it was told to me  
Four of them packed hurriedly  
At 3am  
Stuffed cash in bags  
To fund exile in Palestine  
Or Switzerland  
Or anywhere they could get  
When soldiers searched the car  
They found in grandpa's valise  
His Iron Cross  
Those soldiers  
Let  
Them  
Drive past

*Michael Dixon*

Between  
The pages of  
One old library book  
Paper songbirds nest waiting for  
Release.

*Carrie Cuinn*

Dream caught and rinsed and fried  
Breath blurt bursting through kissing  
    tonsils

A nocturnal ledge step, sit, somersault  
Red and blue danger disco dance  
Scrunched closed eyes and arm out  
Sudden sleep snores  
Rising from a familiar narrow, long,  
    white bed, not mine,  
Again.

*Veronica Haunani Fitzhugh*

The bride in me collapses,  
a day-after tent that was caught  
in a hilltop storm  
before it could be torn  
down.

Now

I have my inner fire,  
which of course flickers  
at the whim of winds,  
blowing shadows at my sins  
and burning in an off-  
spring.

The stiff fall grass will still be in my  
hanging dress.

*Audrey Baker*





## **ptsd**

when my heart beat faster  
and i held my breath  
i heard his pitter-patter  
and i begged for death

when i ran to survive  
and i never looked back  
i sought respite  
and i still felt trapped

when i was finally free  
and i relived it in dreams  
i cried myself to sleep  
and i remembered nothing is as it seems

*Jane Bowman*

## **Life's colors**

He is blue or red or yellow or green—  
sad or angry or frightened about life,  
or envious of his neighbors, his spleen  
turned toward anger, as a menacing knife.  
Where does an aging man find peace? "I'll build  
some new and greater monuments," he pleads.  
He seems to have some plans yet unfulfilled,  
and wants to find some way to meet his needs,  
among them finding courage in the mess  
of what existence sometimes gives to him,  
the essences which sometimes turn to stress—  
or accept it all as nonsense, a whim.

Pattern his world with colors which employ  
other things possible: courage and joy.

*Roni Fuller*

I think  
perhaps  
it is easiest to love  
someone who  
clearly needs it.

How do you do  
with letting this be seen?

*Emily Walsh*

## **Jane Doe**

She fights not for freedom, not for glory, not for gain

The struggle remains internal she fights herself

Who she can be, not who she is, or who they want her to be

She takes to the streets feeling the masses

In a sea of protesting people she finds herself

Strength above all else, caring, bold and full of heart

Fearing only a future unchanged

*Sean McKean*

## **Portrait of a Girl, 1942**

*Based on a Jan Lukas photograph of Vendulka Vogelova, a few hours before she was transported to a concentration camp.*

I am the mirror for one who speaks;  
these fresh gaps are wind in the linden trees,  
cotton flowers of life.

I am the mirror for one who is trembling  
like a child who has noticed too much, eyes  
hard olive pits. I think about how life  
cracks when the vanity glass overturns  
our hands. Sharp pints in bars. Uneven edges  
of ale. Crisp indignities of foam.

I am the mirror for all who choose  
not to speak. I crack  
in the dark. I shine in the snow.

*Millicent Borges Accardi*

### **what's possible**

A long time ago, in an  
auditorium lighted orange red on a warm winter's  
night

I heard Maya Angelou talk;  
her voice alone was worth the price of admission.

From my cushioned blood-orange balcony seat  
I drifted in and out of my own troubles, circling  
beneath and above her grave words: take care  
she said,  
make note of the human spirit, and of its virtues:  
kindness, compassion, charity – love;  
but regard the greatest of them all – courage,  
for without it none of the others are possible.

*Gary Rasp*

## **Cause as Case for Courage**

Do all true events ensue from your adequate  
Prior cause? Or did my cough and sore throat  
Just randomly occur? We may have to quit  
Kissing if this ill came from germs. Scapegoat

Theories don't always make action feel better;  
Some spreading plagues, like our brave love,  
Might come before or after. Such wet weather,  
So harsh lately, may have made phlegm move

In these sticky viral gobs. Claims nagging Mother:  
We've caught colds because our water heater's set  
Too low; dial it up to steam heat, buy a dishwasher.  
(She'd love to eat with us, then run it her next visit.)

Courage to notice correlation is a slick scientific cure;  
But which truly causes what? Let's blame love's allure.

*James W. Hamilton*



## **The Library Card**

When I change my name  
The Librarian tells me  
“Congratulations.

It's a big step. I've  
Never done this before.” I  
say, “neither have I.”

*Matt Dankanich*

## **The Yellow Bus**

Nikita is 12 months old.

His mother is a sniper.

She holds his chubby little hand,  
stroking it gently with her thumb.

The bus is full of snipers,  
waiting for her to board.

Finally, she steps onto the bus,  
waving goodbye to her son.

He smiles back at her.

The bus, along with many others,  
leaves Kyiv for the countryside and the war.

Who is the most courageous? Him? Her? Them?

*Ronda Roaring*

## **Two Bells**

A ringing echoing singing and thundering  
Over and under and through the air

A jingling thrilling and jumping and cheering  
All who hear it in the square

The crashing correlates the creaking clock  
Finding the time at the rhyme of the dine

The dancing dresses the denizens dear  
With the joy of the season, that sweet  
summer ear

*miles*

You still have to show yourself  
After you molt

Musty  
Odorous  
Hot as coals

And if you choose instead  
To deflect critique:  
Of your pale new wings  
Of your reddened leaves

You still have to show yourself  
Refusing to molt  
Unable to breathe

*Ro Adams*

### **Holding the Fox**

she remembers how her grandmother died  
that snow-deep January when she was twelve  
and knew nothing of how emptiness  
can call and call for ghosts. The fox  
is red with a moon-white belly  
and softly she strokes its winter fur  
as it grunts and snorfles, then settles down  
to make a sound like crooning. How  
to protect a small creature so wild  
that does not know its own danger?  
Her grandmother's hair was warm red, too,  
and her own hangs like cold fire.

*Katharyn Howd Machan*

## **It is not courage**

When someone tells you their truth

It is not courage.

When you reach out in the morning to the  
grumpy teen

It is not courage.

If you lose sight of a plan and make a change

It is not courage.

If a friend offers advice you might not like

It is not courage.

When you learn to overcome that obstacle

It is not courage.

In all of the above it is Love.

Love of self, love of others, love of life that  
make the choices possible.

*Elizabeth Stuelke*

old man's small steps –  
how distant

the bus door

*Ruth Yarrow*

solid as a red brick wall  
deep rooted as a tree,  
of which once all were saplings  
until they came to be

a newer version of themselves,  
wrapped in roots and layers deep  
they looked for strength inside and delved  
to find the nerve to keep

walking down the dark lit road  
what waits there you know not  
but know now if you do not go  
then this was all for naught

fear may travel side by side

but you will weather, and abide

*Claire Fisher*



## **I've Got This**

I saw her sticking it,  
One level up.  
I tried and tried,  
And my solution came up.  
Practice on a line,  
Don't want to give up.  
Soon I will be like her,  
One level up.

*Grace Q*

## **Smiley Face**

I was scared and nervous,  
But then my fear went away.  
I was bright as a cheerful flower.  
Maybe the sun will go down,  
And maybe I'll be blue again.  
But I will always keep my smiley face on,  
And be a happy girl.  
That's how I get my courage.

*Sloan Q*

## **the tree that ate up the world**

it has its roots rather deep  
i shudder at the thought of  
picking them out of the deep  
of the ground

but that tree is sucking  
up life up litter up death up critters  
it's a dying thing that tree  
and everyone marvels as it  
keeps on living

but it's my job to uproot that tree  
and save for these dastardly feelings  
i would have been done by now  
but still i shovel, i hit, i pummel

at the tree that ate up the world

*Ana D.*

## **Bloom**

You are delicate, nimble,  
Wind is the peaceful music you dance to.  
You realize  
Your rhythm is different than the rhythms  
    around you.

But like poppies in June,  
You will bloom, little flower,  
If they do not nourish your power,  
Get louder-  
You will tower  
Above all the ordinaries.

*Zadie Wang*

## **Chesterfield**

He walks beside the green-  
running shoes: gray tangerine  
a fading cadence born  
in Chesterfield

Not an OPEN sign in sight  
'neath the stitch 'tween day and night  
in his mind he strides alight  
through Chesterfield

His pale shadow soars the 'walk  
glides the buildings like a hawk  
as it chucks its final flight  
yon Chesterfield

*Jan Best*

Can't you see?  
Denying your heat  
Is to muzzle the tides.  
There is more than one  
Way to be strong,  
And you—  
You are the roaring ocean.  
Passion and fury overpouring,  
tempests seething ice.  
Deep below, vents hydrothermal,  
The beginner of life.  
So let your heart roar loud,  
Loud, for all of us to hear,  
And take what the water gave you.

*Andreas Candelario*

## **APRIL SNOW**

In the dim early sun I saw their mark—  
Diffident, dizzy imprints in the snow  
On the back porch, where breakfasting they go:  
Chipmunks and finches, cardinals and larks.

Here in the fragrant kitchen, warmed with tea  
I with ungrateful thoughts rebuke the cold  
And am in turn rebuked by blue and gold  
Feathery flighty things content to be

Fed a few nuts and seeds this April day  
Dusting their wings before they fly away.

*Susan Weitz*

## Refugee

You crane  
your neck  
to see  
again  
what once  
you did  
call home.

*Ellen Hirning Schmidt*



## **The Call**

We cowered  
behind electric screens, doors, masks,  
isolation stretching the very limits of sanity.  
In our long torpor the old rules were forgotten.

But now the time has come—  
The herald's horn beckons us to emerge,  
abandon our barren husks,  
burst forth with new life!

So we begin again with fresh and liberating purpose:  
Bravely meet all beings with kindness.  
Never recoil from the spectre of fear.  
Help the helpless.  
Embrace your dream, trust its inspiration.  
Boldly plant the seed of love.

*Eva Marques*

## **Castle on the Hill**

No glass in the windows, not since 1971 or before. Your brickwork on the grass, inching Jenga blocks on the windiest day in March. I know which had my name on it, kissed it with my eyes. The old pool once with a trellis, Bakelite sunglasses, lap hankies, feathery ferns, walking 300 miles barefoot just to say it. Stay on this ground—crusty iron swallowed like mixing spoons in cake batter, pump parts and green nails, bathtubs that somehow never age. Could be underwater. You can imagine a place for decades and never get it right. Something like heaven—a dozen doors opening and slamming, making it hard to think. You better believe I will go to you again, fix time, stand on the deck, cannonball in my swim cap, nod to all pieces put back together, and finally climb the roof, like I never thought I could.

Rachel Coye

## **Courage Built for Two**

The child pushes on the pedals  
The shiny new wheels go round and round  
The father, holding tightly from behind  
Smiles as he finds that he can  
Let go and watch his five year old  
Dare to ride into the future.

*Linda Keeler*

## **Prevention**

One more day  
providing a lifeline  
through the phone,  
Praying  
once again  
my love will banish your demons  
just long enough  
for long, slow breaths  
so the day will end  
with tears unshed,  
and you still alive  
for a goodnight hug  
and muscles  
that have forgotten how to relax.

*Suzanne Brody*

## **Courage is the last to jump.**

Brave goes first  
with lion's heart and james brown swagger  
two-timing the gritty treads  
bending the board like a ruler for a slap  
leaping broad, flying high, splashing hard  
exploding in laughter.

Courage goes last,  
with fish-gill breath and victim's heart  
owls eyes and turtles feet,  
a step, a drop, a splatter,  
a cry of relief.

*Leo Tohill*

## **Ekphrastic on a Starbucks cup sleeve**

They cut off her fins  
when she discovered she could swim  
past the slimy green jetty to find  
more of her kind.

Now steeping in vile reminders  
of what they've taken – why the sly smile?  
Funny thing...  
She hasn't told them she can sing.

*Emily Cotman*

## **Courageous Fighter**

She paved a path for feminism

A leader in the women's suffrage movement

Tirelessly fighting for the 19 Amendment

While flags with purple, yellow and white soared high

She marched along while birds of blue and yellow

flew through the sky flashing the words "VOTE"

One day she went to the poll and tried to vote

Susan B. Anthony is courageous.

*Allegra LaFalce*

## Ocean Blues Yellow

Yet strange things have been known  
to occur...a child's coloring book,  
the play of light and dark against a wall,  
may spring out in hardy bloom,  
ignoring colorless boundaries  
to climb sea cliffs in heliotropic health.  
But for too long I lived  
as a pale, yellow foraging sponge  
upon the ocean floor.  
I didn't know that yellow was also a color  
for a rose,  
    and noon  
        and lions.

*Carolyn Clark*



## **AT LEAST**

If you try and fail  
At least you are trying  
If you sing and forget the words  
At least you are singing  
If you walk and stumble  
At least you are not sitting and doing nothing  
If you have a goal and do not reach it  
At least you are doing what you can  
To make your dreams come true  
At least keep moving  
That's the best thing to do.

*Janie E. Bibbie*

## On Surfing

What does being afraid do for you?

...it does nothing.

I see you from below,

you see me from above.

I am the wave that I create

Within fear and emotion.

The churning blue from underneath

Lifts us all in the end.

A blue line of life and death,

Beauty in a wave.

The deeper I go, the more I see

And my balance breaks

On the hazy line between the known,

And the wild.

*Jenni Kivisild*

## **THROUGH FEAR**

Talking is hard  
Especially around others,  
Walking about like  
I actually belong,  
Not erroneous in  
Nature, burdensome to  
All, crushing weight  
Of loneliness, doubt,  
Fear, anxiety chained  
Bones, but I  
Can't stay hidden.  
I must venture  
Forth, every single  
Day, despite everything.

*K. Young*

## Turning Earth

Beneath the moon, rain, and starlight,  
I bend.

Kissed by my feet, between my toes,  
There among humus, black and brown,  
Turned in red clay, my ancestors,  
Inspired courageous seeds to open.  
Dreaming me.

*bev abplanalp*

More than slaves, the enslaved  
You want me to forget, to erase history  
They were human beings  
Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers  
A few kin to their masters  
Self educated, writers, fighters  
Seamstresses, innovators, farmers, charitable givers  
Carpenters, ministers, great orators  
You said they were dumb like animals  
It was a lie  
My God how did they do it?  
Travel surreptitiously from Ol Virginia to upstate NY  
They had the stuff heroes were made from

*Francine Wilson Jasper*

## **Brazen**

When the chaos starts, it startles the cat awake.  
Two blue jays are losing their minds among  
the dying maple trees in our backyard.  
Their furious calls burst like fireworks.  
If the jays were human they'd be frat boys,  
jeering, preening, swinging baseball bats  
and holding these small trees hostage until  
the red tailed hawk that perches just beyond  
flies away to menace someone less enraged.  
Even as the raptor glides off on a current,  
the echo of their screams remains in the chirping cat.  
Take no rest, no prisoners, take the world hostage  
if it means protecting what small part of it is yours.

*Melanie*

## **Prowl**

Suspended from its shoulders the cat stalks  
the grasses

Too short to hide it

Seconds ago the birds escaped

Squirrels sprang, mice disappeared

Now is the test of patience and stupidity

Menace and need

No sunflower is worth a life

Sprinkled on the ground risking the spring

Of claws grip and teeth.

*Maude Rith*

At the zoo, I notice animals speaking to a reflection.

The panda says: "you're not smart enough,"

The mole-rat says: "you're not attractive enough,"

The meerkat says: "you're not tall enough,"

The hyena says: "you're not funny enough,"

The fox says: "you're no lion,"

And the owl says: "you're alone."

These quotidian beasts look at this mirror and say: "that's you."

And so I look back, and say:

"You are fun-loving, you are resourceful,

You value community, and you love your family,

You are clever, and you are wise."

And despite them, I speak to the person at the next exhibit,

Because courage is looking at yourself through someone else's eyes.

*Kal Smith*



**( april 2020 )**

New month, new me?

Ha ha we'll see.

Truthfully, I feel upended...

I'm drifting through a dream.

The days pass, the numbers rise.

When I look at myself, I see fear in my eyes.

And so I seek nature,

run to sense it fast.

Thirsty for my antidote,

it helps the anxiety pass.

Birds warble, creeks gurgle,

tiny blooms are peeking through.

Nature perseveres and I know we'll make it too.

S.M.C.

Celebrate National Poetry Month  
and put a Poem in your Pocket.

**Tompkins County Public Library**  
101 E. Green Street, Ithaca, NY

**Library Hours**

9:00AM—8:00PM Monday—Thursday

9:00AM—6:00PM Friday

10:00AM—5:00PM Saturday

1:00PM—5:00PM Sunday (seasonal)

**Curbside**

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**Virtual Poetry & Prose Open Mic**  
**Thursday May 5, 6:30—7:30PM**  
**Zoom**

**Come share your poetry with  
the community!**

