Robin Linn

I see poetry as an art of ideas, and as a visual person, I like to use colorful details in my work. I’m quite interested in playfulness, layers of meaning and intentionality in poetry. Probably because of music’s importance to me, I’m intrigued by poetic sound play (i.e., Gerard Manley Hopkins, Harryette Mullen, and Atsuro Riley). I’ve always written with some internal rhythm, whether or not I’m employing a rhyme scheme or strict meter.

I frequently write abstractly, favoring process or journey over concern for concrete destination, but I also enjoy researching for subject-specific works. In this collection, the persona poem, “Embouchure,” required my understanding of the trumpet’s basic anatomy and being able to imagine its point of view as having been played and part of a glamorous scene, and then being idle and hoping to be utilized again. I believe that poetry can’t help but be somewhat autobiographical. While I don’t aim to write confessional or even overtly narrative poems, my work is full of clues about my own identity—such as passion and attempts to balance realism with idealism. Regarding artistic identity, I think the practice of poetry, like other fine arts, requires us to bridge and weave some of our obvious reality with a more fantastical reality. In one respect, poetry writing incorporates much subconscious data; in another, the act of creating itself is an escape from the everyday world.

I love poetry’s seeming infinity, its multi-dimensionality and how it can elasticize language, as well as its power to engage and transform its readers. When some inspiration takes me into the imaginative world, I love following that, knowing that I don’t know where I’ll end up or what space might be encountered. It can be perspective changing to go through that process of being open to what internal or external stimuli or awareness might happen to influence my work at the time.
ROBIN LINN

Embouchure

for Pam & Charlie

A glum trumpet I’ve become,
post-glam, unmissed.
I long for studied lips to ply my mouthpiece,
play the go-between
for impelled gusts of air that funnel
rapt through my chambers
and for long supple fingers to grill
my valve pistons.

Though I’ve been subdued
in a scuffed wooden case, lackluster-laid down
to rest in pale velvet, I’m still
a brass dream. Enthralled at least in memories
indelibly coated,
invisibly dipped in the buzz of laughing breath
strewn with sweat drops, cigarette ash,
dim corners, spotlight-stoked
pulse of the crowd.

Ice clinks in glasses shone round
my doing it up with dreamers like me, the great ones
and those emulating the great,
sassy, ageless, horn gods of swelter.

My hopes of being revolve around being (as earth
around sun) possessed, and revived by
that someone: I’m dizzy
dreaming of repeat.
I can feel future rumbling,
a thunder of sweet notes sent through me,
cascading to stir listeners’ ears, flutter hearts
in their throats (bring their feet to the floor).

This time, it’s by my request:
More, more, of the using, the hallowed breath, thing Supreme.
**The Hummingbird Swoops**

Oh! To feel a swoosh
of pulse, giddy and faster
(are you near?),
not unlike extending strongly one and then the other leg to skate forward to momentum (lunge deep),
head happily into a flourished swirl:

exhilaration, cheeks flushed iridescent
in certain light, as the gorget
of the ruby-throated hummingbird.

Backwards-capable and even upside down,
emerald-vested avian evades
North America’s first frost. In early fall
logs flight miles in the thousands, crossing Gulf of Mexico
to winter havens like Brazil and then returns
to a spring-thawed New York country lodge,
where hosts anticipate its glittery but winded arrival
with feeders hung outside their parlor window.

Self-piloted and yearly undeterred, merely thumb-sized
bird pumps air, its tiny heart fully engaged,
delicately made and beating (seeming to us humans) wound-up wings.

In summertime it seeks to meet its
object of affection, red-throat’s
minute flappers flutter-draw a giant U,
loop vertical, drop, and then rise up again,
mechanics visible whirr air;
rapidly U-ing to entice
white-throated female—

reminding us of hidden things.
Potential caught mid-cycle, locked away
yet alert, somehow, still, for speechless kindling:
soft spots within our future-fevered flesh
this long-building, harbored
wishes for direction; travelling from glance to rhythmic regions,
the glow and fast and slow,
intractable connection.
Non-Flight Poem

My poem’s dented by numbers.
The debt of being alive and anxious
eats moth-holes in the silk of my cocoon.

Just when I get the urge to lift,
feel my ability swell, and think I
really will flap my wings large this time,
I feel the glass parameters of a jar.

Clover fragrant grasses are my fantasy;
amidst my possession by earthly
consumption, I fantasize
about cohabiting with my kind:
flutterers in various stages
of rich succinctness, pale grey lavender
fluorescent-tube pink to thunder sky violet.

My container’s unmoved by fringy edges,
however, and, tauntingly see-through too,
much like this conscious state of knowing
I have wings at all but can’t see yet
how to break out and loop the trees.
Ring (for 4:18)

Theatrical, this sentence to a corridor trod up or down,
feet motion, body-weight, stir-sprayed dust.

Light circles as a fitful moth (bright tunnel mostly legend):
everyday faith is by feel and fine dust ingested,
labor of lungs and limbic system.

God is love, we read,
unconvinced and jaundiced, tossed by winds…

6:07, the town church bell has already sounded
its Pavlovian clang cueing arise.

From wrinkled sheets lonely bodies unfold,
creased as flowers in a Bible by pluck and capture,
palmed sediment of parents’, lovers’, children’s sorrows;
their own hope stirred and salted, tried, Job-like–

revived somehow by spring’s delivery, brazen green,
each lot’s painful squeeze anesthetized,
sweet stirred by half-emerged rosebuds. Then…

God is Love.

4:18, a porch breeze cool and personal reminds my skin of touch.
Hidden birds chitter-caw, chitter-caw, gossiping.

Another disgruntled believer has fallen
prey to Bitterness:

his wide-jawed wolf, winsome pin-striped suit…ensuing shreds.

All would-be repairmen: we nurses, poets, father figures, teachers,
handfuls of cotton, ether, pencils, blueprints, hooks and eyes…

We/they take turns resuscitating Innocence, salvage what’s left of days,
chase fervently the sight-smell-taste of blood away,
flood sickrooms with lavender,
pantomime Hope in relay.
Horse Catching (for the New Year)

Is it possible to know
when you’ve fallen off the horse
though you didn’t understand yourself
to be horseback to begin with?

Is lackluster a valley one never lows
for, but falls off their horse there,

wonders why the smell of earth
suddenly has gotten that much closer?

Space
appears to have closed in, here,
on the ground, body huddled or splayed
as something rejected, chucked from the ring.

Is pluck what rouses all pummeled fighters
back to dance-jab-sweat, rodeo clowns
back to thwart bulls, working stiffs
back to the sketches of their own agendas?

Perhaps the question’s bruised, blood red,
some might add “herring”—look
here—not there—grapple with Newton’s laws,

avoid issue of headway, that motion’s ceased.
Cold rain froze overnight, beaded into ice glaze

on the car windows. Off the slippery horse
someone, at least one, has slid or been
unwittingly bucked into sand, or better yet
cactus—

each keen spine a wake-up.
If you’re asking my advice,

Get up, relish the taste of grass and gravel
in your teeth, lick your scratches and scheme.

The horse, you can hear him snorting, smart-ass,
teeth-bared, whinnying in glee at your comedic
delicacy; he’ll be by again soon…daring you
to mount him.
From the Latin *Retrogradus*

A path runs through the watchful crowd,
Upon it, fearless, struts tall thin girl

Decked in retro 2010--
She shoulders a chained and quilted Chanel,

Ladylike purse atop military over-shirt That wraps and ties;

Art-deco sequins swirl a tank
In deep-veed vintage silk beneath.

High-heeled combat boots on tights
Allure in leather buckles above the ankles

Over laced-up leather shaft…
Lace up, they say, and buckle in, for glam,
Flirt coyly, the idea: pin-ups and soldiers all-in-one….

Tall thin girl two on the runway swaggers
Cocky, her khaki hunting vest shiny with buttons

Nods to metal flak jackets,
While her tweed wool full-leg trousers

 Might well salute more than roomy hemlines,
Sassy yes, and states of some legs that didn’t make it home the same...

Announcement! Trending now:
Skinny sweaters reminiscent of Hepburn,

Satchels, cross-body and ox-blood accents—
Please note not only costly militaristic interventions of the world,

But also competing turfs, inner-city neighborhoods, art made of rebellion
As next tall thin girl floats in graffiti-covered pants
And a patchwork cape in shades of camel, her hair a long bob,

Late 60s style, with fringe, and her lush-lashed eyes,
Uniform like each tall thin before her,

Determined, straight ahead, beautiful.
They mean business.
**Fruit**

I am screaming, and wonder who
can taste the avocado anymore
at the outdoor Mexican café when lusty
revved engines hustle by, and the smoke

of last year’s love affair still cloaks
the post-intermingled sullen air. Salt
melts farther down Margarita’s glass to oblivion.
Seems we’re less fond of our Ps and Qs:

the need for control plus calm fake smiles,
the known comfort, conspiracy-of-silence
outgrown. Ripe words dangle, daring lips to open.
Deep in her purse, the mirror waits to breathe.

Sliced avocado’s lush green so pretty a contrast
to ceramic plate’s sun-dressed cobalt, it attracts

yet another summer fly… Here we are again,
the same but not the same at all, hearts juiced

like citrus by means of our world—
train wrecks or snipers, unrequited valentine
teeters on the doorstep, a toddler
impatient in its crib screams. For hours

we soap and twist our hands at the sink, hoping
we’ll best only bad germs, attract more hardy
love, feel good about our deeds, find
a place to be upright and too, in good conscience,

lay down our heads. I am the someone, like you,
who still licks the salt, tastes the sweet tang
and feels the citrus burn into my fine-cracked
fingers when I squeeze the limes.
Please tint me

On high, light-edged clustered heart
joined to others (stemmed in agape)—

yet a petal alone… and longing for
a twine to wave with me daily.

Please God in the midst of necessity
and inspiration, please tint me

rouge-sappy in love all together.
Motion in sweetness, slow ease,

wise and kind, as sprouts a leaf—
photosynthesized to ardent see-thru;

dense-webbed and life-forced rich
from center through veins sustaining us…

Fragrant the leaf of such love,
cup running over, streamed goodness—

wet erases complications, renews
ideas of fresh building, fills creases in palms.

Notions take cue to resurge.
Cruel heaps of debris smoke and burn

separate by their nature's intention.
Togetherness, meanwhile, other's fine purpose.
Poem After a Line From Jon Anderson’s “Quentin Boyar’s Grand Canyon Decision”

In the consequences of your longing, ticked-off minutes slouch to fritter, days catch flame and fade to ash—for instance you blow off the reading of a poet from DC at the hip semi-local bookstore due to what you call exhaustion, egged on by your shadow, inadequacy. Tuesdays into the next, like bananas bought slight green ripen, sport brown specks spreading into eventual rot. You fancy a new watch, like the ones that divers wear, rubber strap and rotating bezel, water resistant to meters of sea you’ll never be found in unless you’re suddenly swept into wealth or win a cruise. In the aftermath of sweaty dreams, where you keep almost hooking up or you never can quite make out the face—groggy frustration settles on your Cheerios, which you try to ignore as you gobble quickly to avoid the sog. Your boots are thick and practical, they keep you planted like a tree that doesn’t Ka-Ching in coin, but leaves high interest plastic, your shrink bills, your wishes, truly, to light up, burrow in and down scotch-like each milligram of the moon’s radiation so you might shine or just rest, somehow, satiated.