

## Linda Swanberg – Two Poems

### Lenten Rose

Not a rose by another name: *Helleborus orientalis*.  
Dark red buds risk an April freeze.  
Ferns and hostas still asleep.

Deep, resilient Hellebore! Flower of winter,  
you drag the long night into bloom—  
cupped petals splotched green, slate, indigo.

Your compelling beauty equals that of any other flower  
arranged in a vase in another quiet room—  
ancient rhythm turning day to night.

Hour by hour, week after long week, green-fingered leaves  
lengthen after the seed is set. Flower of winter!  
Blooming rose, blooming wine, process of not-so, not-yet.

Not a rose by another name: *Helleborus orientalis*.  
Resilient Hellebore! You are more than a single flower.  
With the wide eyes of my heart, I see winter's blooming night.

### SUMMER SOLSTICE

*For Tim and Elaine, Madeline and Iris*

As the sun sets in the northwestern sky,  
we gather on the porch  
to wait—  
wait for night to shroud us in darkness.  
Then, close to midnight,  
the warm air  
pulsates with life—fireflies!

In ancient stone circles  
priests marked the solstice  
by aligning linteled stones with the setting sun.  
On our midsummer night we sit entranced by fireflies.  
Are fireflies aware of humans in their midst?  
Who can separate fireflies from the dark?  
Near the yews, tips of fireflies glow in gray-green shadows.

An hour passes...two.  
When dawnlight comes, the sun will rise over the northeast  
of Mount Sentinel. (Neolithic man strains  
to hold the sun at a certain hour.)  
Finally we go in—thrilled  
by our dazzling encounter this midsummer night.  
I crawl into bed knowing we are changed forever—  
sure witnesses  
of the dreaming dark.  
Earth's thousand points of light.

**Linda Swanberg** received her master's from the University of Montana in 1977, and now studies with Tobin Simon, co-director of The Proprioceptive Writing Center in Oakland, CA. A lifelong resident of Montana, she lives in Missoula with her husband, Gregg, and Nebelung cat, Blu. Tending a large shade garden has been her main focus for the past thirty-five years. She is also a pianist and beginning cellist. Her work has appeared in *The Cape Rock*, *The Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, *Owen Wister Review*, *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *The Old Red Kimono*, *Steam Ticket*, *The Texas Review*, *Carquinez Poetry Review*, *Talking River*, *California Quarterly*, *The Griffin*, *The Distillery*, *River Oak Review*, *Aries*, *Pearl*, *ellipsis...literature and art*, *Front Range Review*, *HeartLodge*, *Lalitamba*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Quiddity International Literary Journal*, *RE:AL*, *RiverSedge*, *Inscape Journal*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Weber: The Contemporary West*, *Willow Review* and *Euphony*. Her poem, "Heron Island, 1966" was awarded the Willow Review Award.