

Ann Howells - Two Poems

Flight

Night and sun teeter in perfect balance;
leaves slip on kidskin gloves,
toss goodbye kisses. Geese
gather in raucous vees at departure gates,
carry no baggage.
Woolly bears shake out winter wardrobes,
try on furry coats striped orange and black.
Leather skinned drupes go to seed,
and we ease into whey-colored days,
nighttime stars like faerie lights.
The last rose seems incongruous,
red lipstick on an aged matron.
The time has come to prune,
to strip brash shoots and curious tendrils,
rake heavy blankets of mulch.
Our bed chills with your leaving;
pillow no longer holds the hollow
where dreams stirred murmurs and sighs.
My roots burrow black Texas clay;
you are a blackbird flying free.

In the kitchen of the big white house

she forces grape pulp through cheesecloth
with purpled hands. I dreamed last night
of mice, pink rubber newborns. Folks say
to dream birth foretells death, so I eulogize:
*She added long columns instantly
in her head. She paddled my mother
with a flyswatter, loved to eavesdrop
on the party line, sang loudly and off key.
She stole her sister's beau and eloped
to New York. She never cut her hair.
Blue-eyed and fair, she abhorred the sun.
Green was her favorite color. Merciless
at cards, she remembered who played each
one. When women got the vote she was first
to register, also to get a driver's license.
Never leaving the East coast she traveled
the world through letters from pen pals,
rebaptized a foster daughter in her own
faith, adored men. She saved her best,*

*used her second best. Her canned peaches
won blue ribbons. She read newspapers
daily: front page, editorials, obituaries,
Mutt and Jeff. She was never without
her ubiquitous apron, hair bound in a bun.
Brothers called her a velvet bulldozer—
she was an intricate puzzle box.*

Ann Howells's poetry appears in such journals as *Borderlands*, *Concho River Review*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Spillway*, *THEMA*, and a variety of anthologies including: *Goodbye, Mexico* and *The Southern Poetry Anthology, Volume VIII: Texas* (both Texas Review Press) as well as *Pushing the Envelope*, *Texas Weather Anthology*, and *Great American Wise-Ass Poetry Anthology* (Lamar University Press). She has edited *Illya's Honey* since 1999, recently going digital (www.IlyasHoney.com) and taking on a co-editor. Her chapbook, *Black Crow in Flight*, is from Main Street Rag Publishing, 2007. *Under a Lone Star*, her first full-length, is from Village Books Press, 2016; a chapbook, *Letters for My Daughter*, is from Flutter Press, 2016.