

Joan Colby – Two Poems

PRESENCE

Without absence, presence
Cannot be appreciated. As we say
Sorry for your loss what we mean is to
Honor your presence in this grief.
To outlive our parents is the natural order.
Today a year-old child sitting in a moving car
Was shot in the head by a stray bullet. Today,
You bury your mother who died at 92.
There is no way to measure sorrow
Despite rationalizations of
Addition or subtraction. There are only clichés
Of time and healing, all relative. Our neighbor
Planted a pine tree in memory of his father,
Then Com Ed sheared it to a monstrosity
Of anguish. Perhaps that's what is meant
In the long scheme we talk of
Knowledgeably as savants who recite
One thing only which they cannot explain.
On television, a woman shields her face to say
That child did nothing, nothing. Just sat in her car seat
As they drove slowly. We will gather
Next month when the peach trees blossom
To remember your mother. Our rehearsed tributes
Pattering like rain upon that old blood earth,

GOOD NEWS

Cannot be trusted. The second day
When the pathology arrives.
The doctor sheepish in a retraction.

The boys horsing around, celebrating
On a rooftop. Six stories into the
Gape of pedestrians.

The winning filly that breaks down
A furlong past the wire.
When you tell me

I should be glad, I cross
Fingers, don the red dress of luck
Though it is not becoming

With its hue of arterial blood.
When you think I should be dancing
With my hands full of money

I foresee banks burning, a woman tripping
In the street, the road ragers

Joan Colby has published widely in journals such as *Poetry*, *Atlanta Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Gargoyle*, *Pinyon*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Spillway*, *Midwestern Gothic* and others. Awards include two Illinois Arts Council Literary Awards and an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship in Literature. She has published 17 books including *Selected Poems* from FutureCycle Press which received the 2013 FutureCycle Prize and *Ribcage* from Glass Lyre Press which has been awarded the 2015 Kithara Book Prize. Three of her poems have been featured on Verse Daily and another is among the winners of the 2016 Atlanta Review International Poetry Contest. Her newest book *Carnival* was published by FutureCycle Press in 2016. She has another forthcoming from Kelsay Press in 2017 titled *The Seven Heavenly Virtues*. Colby is a senior editor of FutureCycle Press and an associate editor of Kentucky Review.