

Susan Grimm – Three Poems

Barbed Wire Stewpot

1. Yesterday you wrote about a fish, today an island. John Donne will come dunning for his piece of the prize. That's to say this will be done. That's to say this will be a poem. (Numbering already. Elaborate assumption.)
2. Someone is knitting this poem in a laborious way. She would have to count stitches, her head remaining bent at all times. It's a good thing this isn't the French Revolution or any revolution at all. Her lips compressed. Her ragged ends. If she could only finish this off.
3. If it's a dream there's peripheral dark even in the heat of the day. Stage lights klieg over pitiful textbooks, lost underwear. Someone is chasing you. There's some music box sound.
4. If this is a poem, you're more than usual alone. Just you and your membrane, you and interior alone.
5. You might not remember. Is that disturbing. Dreamflix where you're always the star. Sometimes, Spillikin, you have to watch. Some patchy action. You wake up with wax fruit.
6. Is it in color. Did everyone sing. Are you sticking your head through the tissue paper backdrop. It was a Busby Berkeley of a musical poem. Staircase, the years parading by, representative motifs.
7. Fire ants. Hula dance. Migrating birds. The steamer is too far to recall.

At Home in the Middle of the Room

Went to the beach and swam after my stupid cowardly inward negation last night. Lying on the beach in autumn, waves smashing in stereo. The over-all rightness of my body, head propped on my shoes. A dapple of clouds, my eyelids almost closed with gossamer threads.

At home in the middle of the room. Under the rug there's a trapdoor. I keep my distance, fling chairs and lamps against the wall. Don't approach the rucked up edge, the pattern repeating in hypnotic scrawl. There used to be a piano. There used to be the table with a scrolling pattern of birds. I'm not sure we should vacuum—the sound like a cyclone grinding against our ears. Quit fussing. Easy, chair.

The lake is a blue hypnotized rug with undulations and sparkling zombie waves. All around a ring of clouds. All around shuddering. Small flat bottomed clouds pulled along on a string. The birds first loose, then ordered, tugged up to comb the sky.

The roof withdraws like a startled guest, like a bird snapping its head from the snake. At home in the middle of the room. Don't throw yourself on the floor. Don't roll like a drowning tree, like an unsecured log uphill from the river bed. In the middle of the rug, a sense of the pinwheel's turn. A cup forms like a Pleistocene sea. Going down, choking the hole, growling against boards and edges. Spindrift. Tornado of doubt.

The fussy budget ferry with its schedules and ropes. Don't drive over the edge. Don't bump other cars. It grinds across the lake unable to whittle a groove. All around it, troughs slapping and seagulls eyeing the crew. Blue shirts. Their hands on the lines. Dock it smooth.

I no longer spring to my feet, sprint, leap from the porch in protective fear. When we played on the floor. Blocks fell. Books flapped like contented doves. The rocking chair with its hitching gait lurched like a playground swing. Underneath. Is it open. Was it always there. Is it dark, stark, particular in its sinkhole brand of horror. One can get used to anything.

Longing to return to the lake. A white curl. A hard blue jag. There's some sawing away at our joy. Our cheeks red as if slapped, our hair standing on end. Passages and caves. There's the sound of rushing water.

Footing. Knee bone hitch. I've forbidden any pictures on the walls. The ship's deck twirling, slumped. Dread, an uncertain baton that thumps your head. Can't we slip the lock, turn back the clock. Drop the couch on it. Slouch away from our lower region thoughts. Is this room attached to a house. It seems rounder. A telescope of disaster. A funnel to ease the winnowing down. A vault of displeasure. A silo of want. The thresher moves across the nap.

At the Lecture on Scudding: If poems were journals/moved like clouds

The white sifting is back as if something is being cleaned. Frosted as if it's been powdered with sugar. This morning the ground like

a pfeffermusse. I have not yet seen a robin but only the bright snarl of a blue jay chuffing through the chippy brown in my backyard.

What actions might be staged there under the hypotenuse of electric lines and the sticky boughs of the pear tree which in a high wind thinks

about plinking. And the square box full of things no longer in use—heavy ladders, rusted trowels, old leaves that have rolled in and hidden behind

heat-abused paint cans and broken pots. I would not want to memorize this lecture, the mind like a canteloupe whose fibers must be scraped,

the seeds ignored, the textural memory of the rind. Value theory: I desire. The way the ground was so soft with rain but not mud.

The ground sinking under the foot like a meaty cloud or a marshmallow with grit. First the disappointment of Don Quixote and now this.

Suddenly talking about a real poem. It gets interesting for a minute.

Susan Grimm has been published in *Sugar House Review*, *The Cincinnati Review*, *Phoebe*, and *Field*. Her chapbook *Almost Home* was published in 1997. In 2004, BkMk Press published *Lake Erie Blue*, a full-length collection. In 2010, she won the inaugural Copper Nickel Poetry Prize. In 2011, she won the Hayden Carruth Poetry Prize and her chapbook *Roughed Up by the Sun's Mothering Tongue* was published. In 2014, she received her second Ohio Arts Council Individual Artist Grant.