

Select Poems

Sotol

Larry D. Thomas

It stands erect
on the rocky slope
of an arroyo

like a squinty-eyed sentinel
guarding his stubbornness
of survival.

An evergreen rosette,
its tapered, spine-clad leaves
were woven by Native peoples

into mats and baskets.
It stands erect,
this obstinate master

of the art of parsimony,
its grand heart so valued
by the Natives

they baked it in an earth
oven, pounded it into thin
patties, sun-dried them,

and, oftentimes with them
and them alone, if
they were lucky,

eked out the two
brutal decades
of their lives.

Larry D. Thomas was the 2008 Texas Poet Laureate.

At the Serbian Orthodox Church

Jasmina Wellinghoff

From his perch on the icon screen
Christ looked cool and divinely serene
while the Mother of God appeared
to be gazing at the tourists;
I forget what the other saints were doing.
Three women prayed, huddled on their knees
just left of the Royal Door,
words pouring like gurgling brooks.
In this house of worship they looked out of place
amid the sightseeing shorts-and-sundress crowd.
While the guide spoke of glories of the past,
great frescoes and mighty kings
gold-leaf on angels' wings,
art of another kind was on the women's lips.
To pray like this
must be what we all viscerally seek.
If I knelt by their side
if I tried to speak... maybe I, too...
But the guide said it was time for lunch,
the bus was waiting.

A Cold Affront

John Grey

This song of love
is put on hold
for the weather is changing,
the wood must be brought in
from the side porch,
stacked beside the fireplace.

This morning's not about
flesh and blood
but cords of oak and maple,
andirons, the rusty poker
eager for the fray.

Yes, you warm my heart
but one more degree drop
in the outside temperature
and that will no longer be enough.

To get through late fall
and then that insidious winter,
I'll need flame on my side,
boisterous orange dewlaps
flapping in the grid.

No, the song of love
is not exclusively
a summer melody

But the chill is real.
And real is where
we left love off
the last time.

Packed Close

Eugene "Gene" Novogrodsky

My blood, my kin,
My family, my close friends
Circle the wagons,
Our kind,
Self-preservation,
Survival.
No one will look out for you.

I listen, almost convinced.
After all, dogs eat dogs...
Fences stretch.
Guns are loaded.
Food hoarded.
Water purified.

But I want some space between the closely packed wagons,
Just enough to let some "others" in...
Yes, inside...