

## College Guild

P.O. Box 6448, Brunswick, ME 04011

# POETRY CLUB III

## Unit 5 of 7

Poems by David Russell Wagoner and Mary Molinary

David Russell Wagoner is an American poet who has written many poetry collections and ten novels. Two of his books have been nominated for National Book Awards. Born in Massillon, Ohio and raised in Whiting, Indiana from the age of seven, Wagoner attended Pennsylvania State University where he was a member of Naval ROTC and graduated in three years. He received an M.A. in English from the Indiana University in 1949 and has taught at the University of Washington since 1954 on the suggestion of friend and fellow poet Theodore Roethke. David Wagoner's Collected Poems was nominated for the National Book Award in 1977 and he won the Pushcart Prize that same year. He was again nominated for a National Book Award in 1979 for In Broken Country. He won his second Pushcart Prize in 1983, and was awarded the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize in 1991.

### THIS IS A WONDERFUL POEM

Come at it carefully, don't trust it, that isn't its right name,  
 It's wearing stolen rags, it's never been washed, its breath  
 Would look moss-green if it were really breathing,  
 It won't get out of the way, it stares at you  
 Out of eyes burnt gray as the sidewalk,  
 Its sin is overcast with colorless dirt,  
 It has no distinguishing marks, no I.D. cards,  
 It wants something of yours but hasn't decided  
 Whether to ask for it or just take it,  
 There are no policemen, no friendly neighbors,  
 No peacekeeping bodies to yell for, only this  
 Thing standing between you and the place you were headed,  
 You have about thirty seconds to get past it, around it,  
 Or simply back away and try to forget it,  
 It won't take no for an answer: try hitting it first  
 And you'll learn what's trembling in its torn pocket.  
 Now, what do you want to do about it?

BEING SATISFIED

Emerson said the eye wasn't satisfied  
 unless it had a horizon to look at.  
 He lived in an unusual kind of space  
 where local effects were cosmic  
 or microscopic, where an evening stroll  
 might end in Samarkand  
 or at the root of a wild flower.  
 He needed to remind himself  
 there were places far beyond  
 The boundaries of ordinary vision.

Suppose you looked around and discovered  
 no horizon from your special viewpoint.  
 Would your eye ask for more? Those who grew up  
 in the woods have felt satisfied  
 repeatedly though they had to walk  
 a long way even to get a glimpse  
 of an open end of earth,  
 and many who were born among tall buildings  
 have gladly done without more than a few  
 quick glances at horizontal emptiness,  
 have left all that to slow-pokes  
 and runaways who never find out  
 where the action is, and still have lived  
 what they call satisfactory lives.

And those of us who grew up in swamps  
 have a hard time knowing what to make  
 of the horizon, don't trust it, think of it  
 (if at all) as some kind of mistake  
 to be overlooked while our eyes are busy  
 at all four corners with more crucial ground:  
 what's underfoot and under water  
 and under mud, we want to know  
 (though we don't expect it to be certain)  
 we haven't missed anything nearby,  
 anything half hidden or seriously hiding,  
 and when we can close our eyelids  
 and feel safe enough to leave them closed  
 and fall asleep, that's when we're satisfied.

Mary Molinary is a contemporary American poet from Tucson, Arizona. Her poems have appeared in numerous publications, including *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Poetry International*, *Verse Daily*, and *Poetry Daily*. Among her many awards are the Omnidawn Poetry Chapbook Prize, The Berkshire Prize for a First or Second Book of Poetry, and the CP Cavafy Poetry Prize. She has won critical acclaim for her use of nature based images and metaphors in poems dealing with the traumas of modern life.

by

Poems Composed for the Left Hand

1.

to keep dementia away  
 most of the doctors say  
 use the opposite hand—  
                   force new learning on the mind

my left hand laughs  
 says it's all silly,  
 doesn't buy the spilt—  
                   brain theory

but being good sport, plays  
 along – works hard against being  
                   awkward

it's my right that slays  
 me – sulking and skulking  
 at the margins – curled  
                   up like a forgotten turnip

Lesser Poem by a Lesser Hand

(moral: Do Not Romanticize This Character or Scene)

an abundance of butterflies  
 & fish, my left  
 hand is Panama, the  
 Philippines---a *purrfect*  
 destination when you  
 need adventure, a simple  
 meal, a retreat from, or  
 tan-brownish skin  
 my left hand speaks  
 English when you need ---  
 will coo a cool breeze  
 into your quixotic ear  
 or across the dawn of  
 your volcanic nipples  
 when you read the ravines  
 & lines of this palm be  
 only a little afraid/excited:  
 my left hand may croon  
 In savage languages scoop  
 you up butterfly and serve  
 you with salt fish & rice

\*\*\*\*\*

*Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes*