Taylor University
Pillars at Taylor University

Making Literature Conference 2019 Conference

Mar 1st, 1:30 PM

My Best Poems

Brett Cortelletti
Malone University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pillars.taylor.edu/makingliterature

https://pillars.taylor.edu/makingliterature/2019conference/cw7/1

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus Events at Pillars at Taylor University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Making Literature Conference by an authorized administrator of Pillars at Taylor University. For more information, please contact pillars@taylor.edu.
Now When Jesus Came, He Found that Lazarus had Already Been in the Tomb Four Days

and his will had been executed. Lazarus’s pound of oil was left to Martha, but Mary disputed the will, saying that Lazarus was ill and if in proper health would have left it to her. Whatever the tax collector couldn’t take was left for his father who used the denarii to wipe away his family’s tears. Then there was a little hiccup when it turned out that Lazarus wasn’t so dead after all, and he wanted his stuff back. The High Priest, who got an almost brand-new lawnmower out of the ordeal, thought about having Lazarus re-killed for good measure, but decided that one death was good enough to validate the will. Now Lazarus had nothing but his second life. He sat across the room watching as Mary anointed Jesus’s feet with the oil he bought as a souvenir on his trip to Cancun. For a while Lazarus bummed around, sleeping on couches that used to be his until everyone got tired of his freeloading. He lived out the rest of his days in a trailer park where all the lottery winners moved after they’d squandered what they won. When Jesus died, nobody mentioned a will, and when he heard that Jesus had resurrected, Lazarus rolled his eyes.
Mowing the Lawn on a Thursday Evening

Sometimes I fantasize about being killed by something beyond my control--

something final, but quick, like my daughter murdering me after I refused to pay

for her semester abroad in Amsterdam. Or maybe I could be crushed by a semi

when the driver failed to check his blindspot as he merged onto I-71 South because

he was preoccupied with Mindy on the sex-line, describing her latex corset to him. Or maybe a plane could crash into my yard as I’m mowing it. I’d never hear it coming with my headphones basting “Detroit Rock City” to drown out the hum of the mower. There was so much of the yard left to mow, there was no way that I would have been able to finish it all. The next morning the homeowners association would be up my ass about the botched lawn, but now I’m dead and the yard is on fire, but honestly, it’s a relief.

Thank you, pilot, for ending it all before the KISS song got stuck in my head.
Word of my Death

Started as a rumor in the heart.
After the final pulse, the last

of my oxygenated blood carried
the news through my veins. The
town crier left the aorta and tucked
my capillaries into bed and asked

my brain to not worry and told
my stomach a white lie, saying,

*finish what you’re doing and save
the rest for tomorrow*. The red blood
cells waited in stagnation and
the white blood cells raised white

flags, surrendering to the decomposers
to come. Everything was closed

and I left the place a mess for
the next owners to clean up.
He volunteered to distribute communion at church. During the offertory he slipped away without giving anything and entered the room that probably has a Latin name for ‘where the sacraments are kept.’ He fastened the velcro on his robe, lashed the rope around his waist,

and stepped onto the altar as the pastor broke the bread saying, “Do this in remembrance of me.” He grabbed the tray of pre-portioned wine servings and stood beside the pastor like a dog on hind legs. The first member of the congregation approached him: “Blood of Christ, shed for you.” His voice cracked. After twenty recitations, the words became sounds, “Blud ov Kryst shedfur yu.” Some said “Amen” and others said “Thank-you.” He had never thought to say thank-you before. Would anyone really say thank-you to Jesus after He let His punctured hands bleed into their plastic shot glass? Or were they thanking **him** because when he gives out the sacrament, it’s not the blood of Christ, but only cheap wine, yet they thank him anyways for trying to his best to make it sacred.
Ars Poetica With Egg

Stand in a cold rain long enough to contract a fever of 102°, place the egg in your mouth and leave it there. Once the fever subsides, sanitize the egg with a swig of tequila. Remove the egg from your mouth and reach for your grandma’s largest hoop earing and submerge it in fire until it glows red and plunge it through the eggshell and let it cook the egg from the inside out. The egg is done when the yolk is solid and any uncooked egg white has leaked through the cracks. Eat it alone in a room without windows with the lights turned off and repeat that innovation is worth the pains of creation.
On the Origin of Phrases

I like to imagine that on some sunny day ten thousand years ago, a guy was skinning a cat, starting at the head and working his way down the spine when another guy walked up to him and said, "You’re doing it wrong.”

Our hero instantly responds, without sarcasm, "There’s more than one way to skin a cat, Keith.”

Keith realized that he was being an asshole and left. A day or two later, our hero was crushed by mammoths while hunting, and Keith felt pretty bad about the whole thing. He decided to immortalize his friend by sharing his cat skinning wisdom. Thousands of years later, nobody really skins cats anymore, but the saying lives on. Good thing, because if it didn’t, then our hero’s suffering would have meant nothing.
Classical Conditioning

I have begun asking my closest friends to punish me for all of the inconsiderate things that I do. They stapled my lips together when I beat someone to the punchline of the joke about a fly six inches above the water and they poured wax down my ears for not paying attention to my daughter when she tried to tell me what she learned about the functions of the ear in science class.

They chide, “If you don’t listen to others, it’ll be because you can’t hear them.”

For years, I couldn’t be trusted to not put myself before others, but now I’m trying to remember that other people are people too.

I’d be surprised if I made it another week without getting a hand cut off for grabbing at the biggest drumstick in the chicken bucket. At least now I’m aware of when I’m being selfish.

I’m sorry, this poem has been all about me. Tell me about yourself, but I’ll have to ask you to speak up because of all this wax in my ears.
The car wash has grown a lot since I last saw it and now they have a Five Guys Burgers across the parking lot, but the old Indian Buffet closed down after the owners retired and skipped town. Every billboard that’s changed coughs to grab my attention, and the ones that have remained the same since before I learned to read give me a wink: Warrior’s Pizza, Love at First Slice.

The new baristas treat me like I’m not a regular, and the one that remembers me does not ask, but states, “No room for cream in that, right.” The man outside the coffee shop who I thought was senile remembers my name and asks if I ever finished Infinite Jest. A new generation of punks have elaborated the old graffiti that my friends left behind by spray painting dicks all over it. I mourn for the painted over walls where I wrote Hermann Hesse quotes and the names of local bands whose songs I forget. As I buy plums at Walmart, my 9th grade history teacher asks how life’s going and he actually seems curious. I see an old classmate across the parking lot and am relieved that she didn’t say hi and force us to pretend that we’ve thought about each other once since our last encounter. I feel like swinging by the library, but there are overdue fines waiting for me. Now that I’m old enough, I could pick up cigars from City News or have a drink at Martini’s; It wouldn’t be the same though. Vice has lost its charm, and I never had the guts to sneak in anyways. There’s no romance in a man returning to a bar he never went to.
On Abstract Expressionism

Jackson Pollock was the painter we’d be imitating that day in our second grade art class when Miss Rose told us that people used to fight over what his paintings meant and whether or not they were really art. She passed around laminates of the controversial canvases. All we saw were colorful swirls—how trivial they must have been, killing each other over paintings. Fighting to the death to destroy or protect acrylic swirls. We had cups of paint with holes punctured at the bottom for the paint to drip out, and we Pollocked about over old bed sheets. I looked down at our creation. Who would fight over this one? Who would call it disgraceful and turn our mess of colors into a bigger mess of shredded cloth and wet paint? Who would attest to its brilliance and abandon their family to protect this artifact of witless expression? Not me, or anyone else in the classroom who helped make it.

Though we were pleased to see it displayed above the drinking fountain later that week.
Cleanliness is Next to Godliness

As I shook off the last drop of piss, I thought of the panhandler I passed by on my way to the bar, whose sign read, “Why Lie, I Could Use A Beer.” I thought of the offertory that passed empty through my hands and how thankful I was when my friend forgot to collect my share of the gas money after our trip to Nashville. I thought of Jesus saying *Sell What You Poses And Give To The Needy*, and I felt dirty. I zip up and go to the sink. I balance out the hot and cold water, and I fill my hands with soap which I rub into every crevice and onto my wrists and up my arms until two waves of frothed soap collide in the middle of my chest and flow down my torso. I am submerged in an ocean and now, with handfuls of water, I rinse the soap away, anointing myself. I think this is baptism.