

Cecily Markham

Education: Bachelor of Science in Nursing the University of Virginia 1979

PUBLISHED POETRY WORKS, HONORS, AND AWARDS (select pieces)

The Wishing Stone – awarded second place in national writing competition with, **Hospital Drive - The Literature and Humanities Journal of the University Of Virginia School Of Medicine**. Published May 2016.

Imagery Happens – Prose reflective piece on imagery in poetry. **Imagery International** organization's on-line newsletter. Published August 2016.

Sisters in Rain – won first place in the national, **Seventh Annual Women's Words Chapbook Poetry Competition** of 1996. Published in 1997 by **Still Waters Poetry Press**.

The Poetry of Five – poem won first place in the **Shoreline, WA Arts Festival Literary Contest** - June 2000.

Passenger – poem won first place in a national poetry competition. Published by the **American Poetry Association** - 1988.

Best New Poet of the Year Award and Writing Grant – **The American Poetry Association** - 1987.

Silver Woman – poem honored with a **Washington Poets Association Literary Conference, Bart Baxter Performance Poetry Award** - 1998.

Too Much Sky – poem honored with a **Shoreline Arts Council, Arts Festival Award**. Invited as guest poet for live reading. **Poem exhibited at the Shoreline, WA Arts Center** - June 1998.

Lipstick, Old Keys, and the Hand Held Mirror – poem selected for exhibit during **National Poetry Month, Goodwin House, Arts and Poetry Hall, Alexandria, Virginia** - April 1997.

LITERARY & INTEGRATED ARTS PRESENTATIONS - TEACHING EXPERIENCE (select events)

Facilitator & Presenter – for summer sessions **Jung Society of Olympia group meetings**. Facilitated the study and discussion of various literary readings - including poetry, prose, non-fiction, and ancient stories. Provided poetry reading at group meetings. Olympia, WA - June through August & October – 2016.

Program Presenter-Exercising Your Brain Through The Arts. Created and presented program for the Young Womens' Christian Association (YWCA), for the group, **Girls Without Limits**. Designed a day program which included teaching creative ways to promote brain health through experiencing the fine arts, and in the second half of the day's program, coordinated the opportunity for young girls to visit an art exhibit encompassing 23 regional artists, at the Kenneth J. Minnaert Center for the Arts, of Sound Puget Sound Community College. YWCA, Olympia, WA – August 6, 2015.

Program Presenter-proposal accepted to present **Poetry of Days** program with **St. Placid Priory Programs, Lacey, WA** - September 2015.

Art as Health-Created and presented **Art As Health** program which provided in-depth, world-wide studies and interactive discussions on the health promotion and wellness benefits of exposure to and experiencing the fine arts - including literary, visual arts, and music. Program included a creative writing and art making time for participants. St. Placid Priory, The Spirituality Center. Lacey, WA – May 2, 2015.

Art as Health – Keynote speaker for the **Spring into Health** general membership meeting, the **Washington State Interagency Committee of State Employed Women**. Created and presented **Art as Health** program which explored

in-depth the health and wellness benefits of exposure to and experiencing the fine arts, sponsored by the **Health and Wellness Subcommittee**, Olympia, WA - March 2013.

Guest Poet – Presented live poetry performance for **Women's Art Festival. The University of Washington Ethnic Cultural Theater**, Seattle, WA - May 2011.

Guest Writer/Speaker –Arts Pathway Opportunity Day. Invited to speak to junior and senior high school students interested in careers in the literary arts and poetry. **Capital High School Career Event Day**, Olympia, WA 1999 & 2000.

Arts Bridging Curriculum Program, Endorsed Instructor – program was in partnership with the **Olympia School District and The City of Olympia Arts Commission.** Created, developed, and taught poetry and integrated arts classes, based on the **Washington State Essential Learning Standards**, at Olympia District Schools. Program overseen by **Olympia Arts Commissions' Cultural Services Division**, Olympia, WA 1999-2003.

Artist-in-Residency – Poetry and Integrated Arts Teacher. Boston Harbor Elementary. Taught multi-grade classes which encompassed introduction to poetry, beginning skill development in poetic concepts, individual and group exercises in learning the creative process. Integrated arts approaches included music, rhythms, movement, drawings, and design. Olympia, WA - September 1996 - May 1997.

Artist-in-Residency – Poetry and Integrated Arts Teacher. John Rodgers Elementary. Taught beginning poetry writing skills, the creative writing process, poetry performance, and integrated arts. Winter and spring semesters. Olympia, WA - 2000.

Guest Poet/Writer – taught third grade students studying legend writing and the characteristics of the creative writing process. **Lincoln Elementary**, Olympia, WA - February 1999.

Featured Poet – poetry presentation at community fall arts festival. Invited by board member of **Washington Poets Association** and arts representative with **Lower Columbia College**, Longview, WA - 1998.

Featured Poet-invited to give poetry presentation and book signing by the **Olympia Poetry Network.** Performed at **Traditions Café & World Folk Art**, Olympia, WA - February 1998.

Guest Artist/Poet – performed televised poetry presentation for fund raiser event for low income community members sponsored by **The Olympia Light and Chorale** singing group. Benefit Concert held at the **Washington Center for the Performing Arts**, Olympia, WA - December 1991.

SELECT: POETRY & INTEGRATED ART EXHIBITS & INSTALLATIONS

Olympia Arts Walk. The Heritage Room. Olympia, WA - April 26, 2014.

Olympia Arts Walk. The Urban Onion Restaurant. Olympia, WA - April 22-23, 2011.

Olympia Arts Walk. The Historic Olympian Hotel, Events Room. Olympia, WA - April 22-23, 2011.

Olympia Spring Arts Walk. Atelier Gallery. Olympia, WA - April 22-23, 2011.

Olympia Spring Arts Walk. Atelier Gallery. Olympia, WA - April 2010.

Fall Olympia Arts Walk. Atelier Gallery. Olympia, WA - October 2010.

One stone's tear, poetry on stone - installation on exhibit. **The Washington State Department of Health.** Tumwater, WA - July 2009.

Abandoned Woman. Art Installation. **The Evergreen State College.** Olympia, WA - May 2007.

The way of a stone. Solo gallery exhibit. Paintings, oil on canvas. Poetry exhibited on stone, glass, silk, and rice paper. Integrated arts. **Ideation Gallery.** Olympia, WA. September 2004 - January 2005.

Cecily Markham

Olympia Poet Laureate

Program Proposal

There is a moment in my childhood when poetry, *wanting* poetry in my life, desiring poetry, was immediate – a tout de suite. It was as if a clear running stream had found me. I am eight years old sitting at our family's modest kitchen table with my mother and her friend Marilyn. They have just returned from their masters in poetry class together, and they are talking about poetry. It is an unutterable moment for me. I can't move. But I am listening.

The following week I'm sitting once again at our kitchen table watching my mother, Ruth, and her friend talk about poetry. I'm excited to tell Marilyn about the poem I've chosen to recite to my third grade class, "Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening", by Robert Frost. I remember Marilyn with her coal black hair and ivory complexion saying to me, "Say it with feeling."

Since that first moment when poetry became alive for me, I have worked to bring to a broad audience the richness of the poetic life I was fortunate to have been given as a young girl.

Poet Laureate Focus: My focus as Poet Laureate of Olympia would be primarily to inspire both individuals and our community collectively to embrace the importance and value of having poetry in our lives, to experience the profound contributions poetry offers, and to deepen the enjoyment of this art form in coming to know how the power of poetry can transform our daily lives and culture.

One of my primary mentors in poetry, Czeslaw Milosz, in his book, **The Witness of Poetry** wrote, "I have titled this book *The Witness of Poetry* not because we witness it, but because it witnesses us."(pg. 4) Poetry is everywhere, everywhere watching and open to us. My focus would be to offer a variety of creative strategies, venues, and pathways connecting community to poetry.

Poet Laureate Primary Audience: My primary audience as Olympia Poet Laureate would be to work with: women in life transitions of all ages and high school teens, both girls and boys.

Community Engagement Strategy:

- **Women in Life Transitions:** Initiate contact, create, establish connections, and develop partnerships with, for example: community women's organizations; libraries; literary/book groups; The Olympia Poetry Network; bookstores; dream work groups; colleges; health care organization support groups; faith community centers; social service agencies; hospitals; non-profit organizations; government agencies as well as - performance venues, theaters, public businesses, and cultural arts centers. Introduce self, offer to coordinate poetry presentations, readings, poetry and integrated arts literary events, and consultation. (*Women in challenging life transitions may include: women experiencing illness, loss of relationship, changes in career, and socio-economic/psychological challenges*).
- **High School Teens-Girls and Boys:** Initiate contact, create, establish connections, and develop partnerships with, for example: Public and private school principals and leaders; public and private high school teachers teaching English/poetry/literature classes, and/or directing arts programs; community youth organizations; the YWCA & YMCA;

hospital leaders & pediatric department directors and offer e.g. poetry events and poetry writing groups providing outreach to teens experiencing illness/chronic disease/cancer; establish contact with community organizations providing services to teens with socio-economic/psychological challenges and offer e.g. poetry writing groups and poetry performance events & exhibits of their work in a variety of community venues.

- **Creative Strategies Implementation:** Work creatively to release the barriers some individuals have towards approaching poetry. Coordinate/present poetry events in innovative ways, integrating the experience of poetry with other fine arts such as music, visual arts, or dance in collaboration with Olympia's arts community - increasing accessibility to poetry as an art form to those who have perhaps had minimal or no exposure to poetry.
- **Promoting Poetry as a Community Voice that Contributes to a Sense of Place:** Explore & seek funding for local, special event and/or regular, Radio/TV coverage of poetry readings and events televised from **-The Harbor House at Percival Landing.**
- **Connect Poetry to Community and Place:** Make video presentations, which would have secured funding and sponsorship, of televised poetry readings, talks, & interviews with other writers – on-site at interesting landmarks in Olympia, such as on the beach of Priest Point Park, Percival Landing, Capital Campus, parks, and college campuses. – *connecting poetry to community and place.*
- **Establish an Olympia Poet Laureate website:** Website will include information about the Poet Laureate's role & background, what services, events, consultation will be offered, contact information, and include a link for a live video of regular poetry reading & talks.
- **Establish an Olympia Poet Laureate Blog**
- **Participant in the Olympia Arts Walk Festivals**
- **Olympia Poetry Celebration Event-**Create/coordinate a large scale poetry event yearly at **The Washington Center for the Performing Arts.** Partner, collaborate with, and involve art partners, poets, artists, musicians, local businesses, and community members.

Instructional Workshops supporting theme of Poet Laureate Appointment:

Lipstick, Old Keys, and The Hand Held Mirror: *Journey into the images of a poem.*

This workshop would be offered to women in life transitions. Journey into the images of a poem provides guidance towards relationship to oneself, life transitions, grief, memory, the healing power of nature, and the ordinary moments of life. This workshop will offer participants the opportunity to experience the power of imagery in poetry – as these images mirror and give witness to ones' own life, illuminate our personal uniqueness, and bridge our profound connection to the human family in our community and world.

Making Poetry: *Making Change.*

This workshop would be offered to junior and senior high school students facing change in their lives. *Are you trying to decide what you want to do after high school in the years ahead? Does it seem like you have too many choices or not enough?* In this workshop we will talk about these challenges & how to write about facing change through the art form of poetry. There will be a creative writing time & students will have the opportunity to present their poetry to the group & have their poetry on exhibit.

Cecily Markham

Olympia Poet Laureate

Application

Written Work Samples:

Passenger

The Wishing Stone

The Moment of Rain

leaving your hands

Lipstick, Old Keys, and The Hand Held Mirror

(↳ The Night Dream)

Recorded Work Sample-DVD

Poetry performance of: Passenger

Cecily Markham

Passenger

I am in the body of an immense silver bird streaming
through wind and sky.

It is the night's time.
All the other passengers
are asleep, but I am awake somewhere over the Atlantic
looking through a window into darkness.

It seems poets are always looking through windows
trying to bring a poem to light.

In these speeding moments
I think of how I am often a passenger
wondering about that place I am going – remembering
the sun in my sister's smile and the fading blue images
of the friends I leave behind.

How I love them. How I carry with me the memories of their dreams –
Even now we are all moving and streaming through the
starlit darkness.

Once an immense silver horse came running to me
out of a fog over a hill
across a pasture.

* * *

Now the sun comes rising
over the wings of birds and Ireland
and I have crossed the ocean again.

Cecily Markham

I walk into the room to check on her, to see if the pain medication helped. I am a young nurse. My patient is lying in the bed by the window. The room is honey-like from the sun pouring in. My patient's husband is lying in her bed bedside her. He is talking to her, bringing memories into the small, intimate space they share - celebrating their life together. In this moment my life changes and illuminates a truth about pain and love - in our most vulnerable hour.

The Wishing Stone

He wanted to make the day timeless. To create it that way. He dreamed of rain with her. Dreamed of so much rain. He wanted her words; he wanted her to stay; he wanted her words. The way she didn't speak, the way she spoke with words that would fall upon him, and move through him like a riderless horse on sun-washed plains, a beautiful ocean storm he wanted to be a part of, an indecisive wind that would howl and howl and pull back and took with it some part of himself. He didn't want to know where he was with her now or where she was, only memory, love, this holding her pale slender arms - timeless. If he could only make the shivers go away, he thought, to make her warm again.

He reminded her of mountains they had hiked and little creeks they'd found and waterfalls with June sunbows and the long blue-green hills they had climbed on the way to the sun. He thought of the day they'd made love in the river before Sarah was born, and afterwards, found a midnight blue, marbled stone along the bank, that was smooth as still pond water. He remembered how they rubbed it together and made a wish that the stone would remain there holding the pulses of their fingertips inside, and that the river would always know where they were. The river would always know how to find them.

He spoke of all their children, spoke their names out loud - Sarah, Jason, and Patrick, so that the thinning air, so that time if there was any time, would not forget. He carried her with his own words through their gardens of - foxgloves, azaleas, and English roses, and how the poplar trees along the drive to their house sway and sing with unfettered music, remembrance, and waiting. Because he wanted to enter her wholly, past her human edge, all her river to sea, all her sky to sky to her invisible self, and he kept holding her, lying next to her in the narrowing afternoon light that was losing its day - penetrating through him, beyond courage, beyond his strength and trembling, what is marrow and sacred - past all that is hardly human.

She died that day lying next to him, slipping away on violet evening shadows, and some beginning stars, who whispered back to him, echoed to him soft as her silk blouses, soft as her rains. . . .

My song, my time was with you.

Cecily Markham

The Moment of Rain

is something like hearing the first note of Bach's *Air*
in G Minor played on a Stradivarius violin.

How that sound wraps its arms around your breath -

The music, a soft sea rushing in.

Your thoughts listing just above the dark-green ocean.

The wind partners with the moment and informs us to:

Watch. Listen.

Being friends of the rain, the leaves of the aspen trees respond with song
and turn to their whiter sides.

You feel the wetness of change
and accept the inevitable drops splashing
on the window pane.

The birds find their places too.

*There is a hum, a sigh, and droplets of rain-stars glistening in the grass
in preparation for the time that is coming —*

Fresh and daring, new again.

Smell it!

Cecily Markham

*You pleaded with me,
"Don't stay the same." Across
my yearbook you wrote, "Keep changing" in
blue bold magical letters.
Poet of yesterday, words of eternal
flame, whose echoes
I hold close . . .
- In memory of C.H.*

leaving your hands

There is a hill where we were once,
a hill where we are all wanting to go,

but I'm still running down the hill
where I last saw you.

Only my breath turned back to see.

* * *

A ribbon loosed from my hair
is still falling.

The ocean breaking against my iridescent thighs
is still cool.

The road that is burning is a Star.

My legs are waterfalls pounding out the rhythms
My eyes hold deep the sunbows
in the surprises of April
I was born between three slippery rocks –
There's my heart loose in the rapids
Screaming a cold breath leaping
Down the river.

Icy are the tears.

Where is the sea my father sang of endlessly?
When I was a girl
I looked up at him
and thought he was the sea.

* * *

There is a hill where we were once,
a hill where we are all wanting to go.

* * *

Earth, in her evening hips,
her harvest fields, her lost gold winds
whirling down and down.
The echoes of summer's words eternal,
the promises, the distances,
the blue-green mountains beyond...
We are driving the narrowing road.

The scarlet leaves are leaving me now
Making red wind, rising from
The echoes of word carved alleys
Voices without a face,
Who wrote something darkly,
The starless corners

The broken sidewalks around my house,
The broken afternoon sun sheer as my own angels
The scarlet leaves whirling away
Autumn leaves becoming birds.

In the flame,
My soul leaning onto her highways.

There are roads of hills and curves.

Here's the sharp narrowing turn
I downshift I upshift
Through the windshield
Blind me sun forever, hold me in your shining.

Leaving your hands, leaving your hands,
Running the hills,
My hips...are rivers.

Cecily Markham

**Lipstick, Old Keys,
and The Hand Held Mirror**
(& The Night Dream)

Scene I

It begins downstairs
in a hospital in Falls Church, Virginia.
You have to go down a long way. Many stairs. Deep down.
Below the ground level.
It's in the cafeteria – where people not only
eat between emergencies, healings, and deaths,
but keep hoping – when they're told after the accident by the exhausted surgeon
that there is no hope for her.
This is a room where people talk politics, movies, spirituality,
dreams, drink coffee through the night and sometimes fall in love.

*He is up there – three stories above me,
but I don't know this yet.
The light is mixed.
Halfway up this large, expansive room,
In the middle of the air a brightness rises.*

I have been here before,
as a young nursing student wearing
a pink pinafore with a
short sleeved cotton blouse underneath –
still with braces on my teeth
to change my bite, the way I look.

I wrote such somber poetry then.
But at least I did write. Desiring poetry. Desiring poetry.

I took the elevator to the floor where I worked as a nurse
Bing...bing, 7th floor east, 7:00 am.
The shift begins with the pursuit of healing to relieve the suffering,
the bleeding, the constant rushing from room to room to help my
patients, the call lights lighting the halls, room A-1..buzz buzz,
room A-13...buzz buzz, people in need, unanswered pain. Morphine pumps, Demerol
injections - Valium, to ease his pain even for an hour
or maybe a little more.

Bandages - bright white bandages carefully being brought out of their safe pure wombs
perfect and untainted as was once a *Paradise*.
Bandages that have not yet touched the pain of a body.

A Paradise now incarnate and flush with human skin –
The tear of an eye, an infected gut, bacteria, dust –
Snow white bandages and questions.
One universal question:

The suffering earth spinning round and round with her
bandages flinging in air and fresh arterial blood running through,
lacerated cities and continents torn apart – unanswered pain
burned weeping fields.

The outrage of hunger struck children fallen on roads
and streets like dying autumn leaves, their mothers desperately in search of
milk and fathers who cannot give them what their
little pulses need.

She is calling out – crying
Why...why this suffering,
my patient asks me who has just been told has just been told.
I answer her by saying, “I don’t know.”
A woman on the edge of her life, I with her
sitting on the edge of her bed – where her body now is,
and the two of us exchanging silences and the crying out
which is the pursuit of healing –
and me, adjusting the drops of normal saline –
water which will enter her body,
neither one of us sure of the water’s return or hers.

Scene 2

I know this room, the hospital cafeteria.
A large adjustable room –
the kind you put folding walls up and take them back down.
Then look again. See yourself
in its large space – as if it had never been interrupted, never disturbed.

*Now I feel a sensation to move –
to move through the crowd
of myriad faces I cannot distinguish in this immense
room – where a mystic night has fallen and no
one reaches to turn on the lights.
I keep moving. I keep moving. I am aware I don’t know anyone,
but I keep moving.
I am drawn in a fluid motion towards the stairway.
I begin to climb. Darkness hovers around me
like the face of a woman in a Rembrandt painting –
where the only light that falls falls on her face
and in every other breath of space darkness prevails.*

*The railing and the steps of the stairs are lighted too, and I climb them.
Here, in this dream light, I begin to see him up there
just two floors above me. It is something like heaven
or a holiday party where he is – everyone is eating and talking and happy.
The evening light is cheerful and soft.*

*I see him descending the stairs and halfway up
We meet on the ivory white stairwell.
He leans forward to embrace me.
Really embrace me.
As he is doing this, I see his arm
moving towards me, and in his hand
he is holding a small cloth purse
embroidered in a dark rose pattern.*

*I see that it is my purse – my small purse that fits
inside my larger purse.
You know there is a self within the self and more – a hard
textural seed inside the vulnerable skin of the peach.
He feels glad to give back what belongs
to me as he holds me. I feel this man's great joy.
I hold him in my arms, and he holds me in his, and
I turn my head and rest it on his kind shoulder.*

It's like lying down in a wide pasture on your day off.
The weatherman is wrong because the sun throws itself all
over you and the grass, and you're with your best friend. The wind
lifts up through you a sacred way, and you can hardly believe
that it's you and how good it is to be alive.

Scene 3

Inside my small purse I shuffle through a handful of things I've not
looked at for years but was never willing to throw away:

Lipstick – in dark plum red
a fiery color to paint on.
Lipstick belonging on these lips no longer
backed by braces to control the bite
but strengthened teeth -
courageous enough to smile just in the hope of it.

Old keys,
to a door I closed once and turned my face from,
but now grasping the keys
I penetrate the keyholes and make all the turns at once –
Free the doors and push them open to a rain washed day - and the

Hand held mirror, the kind divided in half
with one side larger than this life –
to show the deep pores and
eyes to stare down the dream like prey
and breathe heavy light on it in long rhythmical strokes.

Catch it in my mouth and make words with it –
words that don't fail to feel but get out and move in it –
A savvy nose to smell like a wolf and rosy dreams of the skin
where I look at myself in the mirror and glimpse the healing
of my body at last.

O To get inside someone else's wound – or your own.
To feel yourself in it – and speak the poem that belongs to it.
To grip it in your hands like an old key you pull up from underground –
A long way down,

many stairs.

To bring to somebody a cool glass of water
for the sake of human thirst.

And like the Genesis story, to
nurse with words, your hands, and words again –
back to the beginning, back to belonging and being
held, in the silences and the crying out we cry -
Which is the pursuit of healing,
while snow is falling on our faces.

O How Paradise longs to lie down with her wounded,
Her beloved, and give back through her hands and his
what belongs to us –

The continents of our dreams embroidered in dark plum roses
And sumptuous fruits and fields of sun, children of gladness and peace,
A resting head on a kind shoulder.

Everywhere, today, in this hour of crossing –
Desiring poetry.
Desiring poetry.

Poesia desante.

Cecily Markham

Olympia Poet Laureate

Application

References:

Darcie Richardson, MA

Depth Psychology, Pacifica Graduate Institute

Board Member / Conference Chair

Imagery International

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Through a shared involvement and work in an established Olympia community group, Darcie Richardson, board member and conference chair, with the organization, Imagery International, invited me to make a proposal to be a presenter for the organization's October 2016 conference in Menlo Park, California. I have worked with Darcie in the proposal, planning, development, and coordination phases of my presentation - on the power of imagery in poetry. My proposal was accepted in early March 2016.

Janice Ariza, Center Coordinator

The Priory Spirituality Center

360.438.2595 / office

253-226-2348 / cell

prioryprograms@stplacid.org

spiritualityctr@stplacid.org

I have proposed and given several day program presentations at St. Placid Priory with The Priory Spirituality Center. Janice Ariza is the Center Coordinator. I have worked with Janice in the proposal, planning, coordination, and implementation of my presentations and review of presentation evaluations.