



LIBRARIES

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Lottery ticket. 2013

Bryant, Heather Corbally

Madison, Wisconsin: Parallel Press, 2013

<https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/YYTUDJO3RDFRN8T>

Copyright 2013 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. All rights reserved.

For information on re-use see:

<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/Copyright>

The libraries provide public access to a wide range of material, including online exhibits, digitized collections, archival finding aids, our catalog, online articles, and a growing range of materials in many media.

When possible, we provide rights information in catalog records, finding aids, and other metadata that accompanies collections or items. However, it is always the user's obligation to evaluate copyright and rights issues in light of their own use.

A Parallel Press Chapbook

Lottery Ticket



BY

Heather Corbally Bryant

A Parallel Press Chapbook

Lottery Ticket

Poetry by
Heather Corbally Bryant

Parallel Press

University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries

Parallel Press
University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries
728 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706
<http://parallepress.library.wisc.edu>

Copyright © 2013 by the Board of Regents of the
University of Wisconsin System

All rights reserved

ISBN: 978-1-934795-50-7

Acknowledgements:

“Baptism” first appeared in *Cheap Grace*, Heather Bryant Jordan, Finishing Line Press, Georgetown: Kentucky, 2011.

It takes a village to make a book of poems. I would like to thank my children, Phoebe, Douglas, and Walker, for their patience with an occasionally distracted mother; my local friends, Beth, Denise, Dennis, Gael, Janie, Jessica, Kit, and Willa; my faraway friends and family, Ann, Anne, Brenda, Chip, Katy, Lou, Marguerite, Martha, Melissa, Michael, Lesley, Nancy, and Vivian; my department for their support; Dana Carlisle Kletchka, Curator of Education at the Palmer Art Museum for arranging readings, and my Irish Studies friends, especially Nathalie Anderson, who have been generous enough to invite me to give readings at The Pennsylvania State University, the University of Madison, and The University of Illinois at Chicago. Finally, I would like to thank James Silas Rogers, who discovered my second published poem and encouraged me to write a few more. I took him at his word.

In loving memory of my mother, Rene Leilani Kuhn Bryant
(March 2, 1923–January 30, 2013)

She lived as long as she possibly could to
see me through to the other side.

A Baptism

We loved the earth but could not stay
~Loren Eiseley

What do we do with the things of the dead—
Glasses, rings, shoes, pants—
They do not need them where they are going—

The smell of the lilies at a wake on a bright
April afternoon—an old man's body
Lies stiff below banks of roses and orchids—

In one week, a death and a birth—
At the baptism, sunlight pours through purple glass,
The priest passes around incense and pungent oils—

Dressed in a white christening gown, the black-haired
Baby sleeps deliciously through the ceremony—
Arms raised up high once in startled reflex

As if surprised by all the fuss.

Impatiens

These annuals we planted by my father's grave,
Plucky flowers, red, white, and pink,
Blowing in a June wind, ringing the
Stone. We dug earth, chunks of dirt
And clay and sand—and you, my eldest son,
Always inquisitive, my father's namesake—
Asked if we might come upon a bone or two,
If we could accidentally
Dig up your grandfather?

“No chance,” I said, so we dug and hewed
And scratched the ground, pushing down
Hard with our fingers until a garden had
Sprung to life, green leaves waving,
Blossoms about to pop into bloom.

It's my own private joke with the
Powers that be, to sow impatiens in
The springtime in honor of my father
Who hated so to wait for anything.

Curator of Clouds

Once when I was six, I sat on my mother's bed and
Made a secret wish that she would never die; I even
Sealed the deal by sending a balloon up to the sky.

Later, when I told my mom about this bargain, she
Reminded me no one should make a promise she
Could not keep, but she would stick around as

Long as she possibly could; her own formidable
Mother had lived to be almost ninety-nine;
Corbally women are strong of heart and mind.

My mother explained we would never really be apart,
No matter what; when we first started hearing
The words: hospice, mass, metastasis, my mom

Begged me to be with her when she died; she
Did not want to die alone was what she said. I
Began to worry about making a promise I could

Not keep; I said, if I possibly could, I would be
With her at the end. I used to calculate how fast
I could get there, if it were snowing, or clear.

When I got the call, I made the trip, door to door,
Just under five hours on a sunny morning late
In January; when I walked into her room, she

Reached out for my hand, and then closed her
Eyes for the last time. I lay beside her for five
Nights, holding her hand, promising she would

Not be alone, she would live on in me and in her
Grandchildren; I told her she had seen me through
Everything; I was back on my feet again. She

Gave me strength, sarcasm, words, and books,
Always more books, and tiny packages of tissues;
She gave me humility, honor, and grace; she

Gave me life, she gave me everything. Eventually,
She showed me how to die: she paused for twenty
Seconds—I know because I counted—and then she

Took her last breath, one last puff of air,
Like the clouds above she so loved. She
Always told people that in her next life she

Wanted to be the Curator of Clouds so she
Could invent their shape and form; she was
Definitely not a believer in anything beyond

Her own imaginings. After her breath quieted,
Her body stilled, and I held her wrist until I
Knew she was gone for sure; she held on so

Long for me, for life, and then when she knew
She could do no more, all I could do was usher
Her body out the door where I knew my

Children, Phoebe Elizabeth, Douglas William,
and Walker Bryant, were waiting to catch
Me as I stepped back into our lives.

Camden Harbor

An almost full moon
Has come up in this wintry
Sky—shining over ice floes—

Over this small harbor,
Safe from storm—the air
Is crisp, thin, new—

And the ice makes
Geometric patterns as it
Begins to break up—

Guinness tastes good
Stored in the packed
Snow where it keeps

The perfect temperature.

Morning in Virginia

I want to remember this:
Rolling blue-green mountains
Against the gray morning,
A pair of grapefruit moons,
Traces of stars cut like bits of
Mirror across a darkened sky,

The way the light fell when
I awoke, sleeping deeply next
To all your things, tasting stale
Cognac still in my mouth,

The view out your window,
To the clapboard shack,
To the edge of the farm,
To the end of your land,
One cloudy morning in Virginia.

Indian Head Farm, Berlin

On a scorching June Sunday we drive
To a place called Indian Head Farm—
Strawberry plants, green vines climbing—

Where we find: a frog in a lily pond,
One pink blossom, two pair of oxen,
Four altogether; we pick out summer
Treasures: blueberry jam, spearmint,
Strawberries, purple petunias,
And terracotta pots flowing with lavender.

The farmer says she knows of a Phoebe bird
Who's made a nest—we go on a search
Until we find a pair of soft brown
Creatures, ecru spots on their foreheads,
Sitting on twin hitching posts, man and woman,
Husband and wife, making a life for their
Four chicks inside a stick and mottle nest,
In the eaves of a New England barn,
Nestled against the wind, waiting to take flight.

Blueberry Island

On a hot and sultry July afternoon—
Air still and close, coming nearer—
We tip off from shore, green canoe
Bobbling along, riding blue ripples
To the middle of Bare Hill Pond.

We dock on the sandy beach of
Blueberry island, tying up our
Vessels before tiptoeing across
To pick and taste the sweet
Ripening berries on the other side.

A Fairfield Porter Retrospective

White tablecloth, clean yellow sun,
A blue China teapot with small corn silk
Flowers, crumbs but no dirt.
These objects, these mornings
You paint with a kindly eye,
Tell of dawns in Maine,
Of mist and pine and silent isle,
Of close families and cheery hours,
Of the way a family gathers
To take their tea and milk.
For children, too, you
Bring out your canvas:
Wide eyes, flat forehead, these days
You paint for us in generosity,
Preservation.

You are not at your best, perhaps,
When you step away and
Paint your real love, the
View out, out of the window frame.

Here, you give us quiet birches,
Sharp green highlights, soft
Brown earth, moving away
Towards the dense forest.

Fireworks over Bare Hill Pond

Over the glistening water
Bright bursts of color explode:
Red, blue, orange, and yellow.

As the night falls,
Kids with glow sticks gather
And run through darkness.

Before us, our three children lie,
Bellies pressed to the grass,
Chins cupped in hands, gazing

Towards the brightening sky.

Burial Ground

We followed a patch of new grass, pine trees
Curving behind, making green-tinged shade
Long with black shadows. Earlier, you
Pointed out a mound of broken shells
Where Indians used to prepare their catch,
Just up from the shore where you brushed
Your head against a branch, and the blood
Flowed until we thought it would not stop,
All through a white handkerchief you pressed
Against it, tight, like a tourniquet. “There, now,”
You said, and led the way out of the thicket
To a small hollow, still under noon sunlight.
You lay down here, next to a small marker,
“This is the view I shall have, not bad.”

At the Planetarium

In darkness, bright red lights shine on
A slim Venus, yellow Saturn rising, Antares,
Aquila, Altar, and Deneb—a voice points out
Constellations of darkling summer sky—

The Big Dipper, Polaris, Ursa Major, or the
Big Bear, and across the orb, Cygnus and
Cassiopeia—how, if you look the right way
All the stars line up, on a hot July night—
Just after the longest day of the year.

If you are in a propitious spot, you
Might be lucky enough to see a meteor
Shower, each speck as a grain of
Dust smaller than the human eye.

Cicadas

Please give me simple things:
A bright summer evening sky,
Cicadas coming out to sing—

Our youngest son was once suspicious
Of these creatures, loud and chirping,
Menacing, unfamiliar too—

But now, he begins to accept them
As being part of his world and I bless
Him for letting me see clearly again—

A universe, beautiful and new,
Filled with cacophony of life, one
Brittle shell left on the pavement.

Fish Ticket

*If you catch one of them crabs
With orange on its claw, you'll get
A fish ticket, says the six-year-old
Boy filled with wisdom standing
On the edge of the Frisco pier—*

Down the way, a big man catches
One Sheep Head after another, piling
The Black and White zebra stripes,
One by one—our rods baited with
Smaller pieces of worm—we cast
Yellow lines out—
Looking for a Spot, a Gray Trout,
Maybe a Bluefish, if we're lucky.

Fish by fish, the string begins to
Tighten—and we reel them in,
Unhook them careful for the blood,
And toss them out into the sunset
Waters—

Just before dark, we catch one last
Baby Spot—*Can I have it for bait?*
And sweetly, you hand it over to the
Little boy who seems to have come
Here alone—a grin of thanks is
Enough for the customs of this place.

Great Blue Heron

A morning alone at the pond—
Sun rising slowly, warming chilly
Water—

My arms stretch quietly into the ruffling
Surface, I pull through my glide and kick
As hard as I can—

When I finish I inch myself out of the
Water and look up to the sky and see—

The Great Blue Heron swooping down.

Harbor Seals, Kejimkejik

We round the corner to see
Black shapes, soft and mysterious
Through the salty mist—

Perched on gray rocks set
As still lives in Atlantic Ocean's
Distance, closer and closer to us—

“I can't see, I can't see them,”
Our daughter cries—but with her eyes
Focused with my glasses, she shouts out,

“Seals, Mommy, seals.”

Hummingbirds

Like a hummingbird whirring, diving, I fly to nectar,
Spying it from afar, my body jiggles, wiggles, bumps
Along the way through darkness and disarray—

Until I am turning in circles upon myself, forcing
My wings through brambles, nettles, burrs that threaten
To pull me to the ground, disrupting my flight with

All their might. When I land beside the sweet bowl
Of liquid, sugar water, put out by some kind soul,
I sip until the loveliness fills my beak and I wonder

Up at the blue sky until there can be no possible retreat,
Until I can soar high as can be, evening out my speed
Balancing my wings on knowing the truth.

Kayaking by Kinnakeet

Bright sun, small ripples of wind, paddles
Take our kayaks gliding across the sound—
Past four orange-footed ducks, three
Snowy white egrets, around a tiny island
Until we land on a green brined sandy beach.

We pull our plastic vessels up on shore to
Explore a grove of old shade trees, gnarled
And gray, hunched over from years upon
Years of westward blowing storms.

Following a path through stubby mounds
Of dried seaweed leads us to six white
Marble gravestones, the carvings
Weathered by water and time.

Barely, we make out lines of remembrance,
A man from the family of Williams, who
Died just over a century ago, here, by this
Land south of Avon or Kinnakeet,
As this place first was named.

Little Hatteras Island

Breached not in two, but three parts,
Ocean's force came pushing and shoving,
Breaking up asphalt, leaving only chunks
Of tar, and stretches of painted yellow
Line sticking rakishly out of the water—

Where we were, now separated from the
Rest of the island, ocean meeting Pamlico
Sound as it keeps up its unceasing
Hegira towards meeting the mainland.

The End of the Land

Here, at the end of the island—
At the edge of the land—
Where sound meets ocean,
Flat waters rippling into salty tide—
Our little boat heads out in search
Of fish—Spanish Mackerel, Flounder,
Gray Trout—*Something's making*
Them critters run, the captain says—
The birds are going crazy chasing
Those jumping Menhaden, the ones
Which turn up a wave in a silver
Flash of late light—
The craft bumps through surf—
Some bounders as high as three feet—
The kids giggle at the turbulence,
Blues turn calm, where the sky and water
Come together, meeting at the horizon.

Suddenly, a fleck of gray, a turn of a white
Mammal—*Porpoises*, we cry out—a whole
School of them—suddenly we are surrounded
By pods and pods of these playful creatures
Who decide to put on a show—
Alongside the boat they follow—
Frolicking, showing their flukes,
Blowing up, turning over, at
Least fifty of them surprise us with
Their antics—the last balances a
Red jellyfish atop his snout like a ball.

Stone Walls

If you keep a wall around your heart,
It will stay cold and closed, the
Secrets won't let the feelings in,
The stones will keep the love away.

Our New England soil is filled
With ledge and unyielding—
No wonder the first
Farmers couldn't grow anything—

No more whispers, I say, unbuild
The walls, take the stones away,
Hear what we have to say.

After the First Lie

I don't know when it was that he began to lie, how could I—because
He was so good at it—I suspect, like most occurrences in a marriage,
It came to pass slowly, a series of accretions over the months and the

Years until it came as second nature to him, until it became so familiar
That perhaps even he did not know when he was lying and when he was
Telling the truth—despite the total chaos he unleashed upon our lives,

A sweet relief comes knowing I no longer have to listen for his
falsehoods.

Milkweed

A green pod, thick and bursting,
Strong seam slit open, fingers
Slid under to pry out riches
Inside, white stretched
Filaments of seed stems
Matted together, as if
Folded like a parachute,
With black ends making ready
To be scattered across green
Grasses, to be planted in the
Autumn, to fall where they might,
Safely past harvest blight.

First Leaf

And the first things will be the last;
On a morning walk I pick up one
Fallen maple leaf, red and orange
Around the edges, best to announce
The season of death, brown leavings
Will be all that remains.

I walk alone, having sent my youngest
Off to his first day of school, heart in
My mouth, seeing a small boy trudge
Onto a big yellow school bus, without
Looking back at me. Of my body born,
These children of mine, I know they have
To go, just as fall follows summer, they
Must find their way; cherishing the quiet,
I long for their return to our house.

Daffodil Bulbs

I hold four brown globes
In my hands, wrappers
Crinkling, edges wrinkling
Like paper lunch sacks.
Catalogue pictures have
Promised a bevy of blooms—
White Narcissus, hosts of
Yellow Jonquils, a hillside
Of apricot-centered blossoms
Blowing in early spring breeze.

Jauntily, I imagine, these
Flowers will grace garden
Edges, creeping up underneath
Our stone walls, to be just like
The ones my father admired,
Amidst snow's remains,
When he proclaimed the first shoots
Of April to be glorious, remarkable.

All Hallows Eve

Fairies, sprites, knights, witches,
Goblins, and ghosts galore—
On this evening of trick or treat,
They repeat their plea—hands held
Open for candy, beside pumpkins
Lit with candle flames, transformed
This night, just for once, taken
Out of the ordinary, kids experiment
With being someone other
Than who they are.

When it is Dark: A Sestina

When it is dark
And I am not with you,
I will begin, and go
To a place we have not been.
There, it will be warm
And we can find light.

You will bring the light,
Always, with you, it is not dark.
When you arrive, warm,
I will see Morocco with you.
Even where we have never been,
Now, together, we will go.

To Morocco, where, long ago,
Others, before, sought the light.
Yet, other lands where I have been
Have seemed strange and dark.
Here, now, with you,
Finally the sun feels warm.

But if you leave, the warmth
Vanishes. And, when I go
There will not be an us, a me and you.
Always, the African morning light,
Striking oranges and women dark,
And strange, in these places we have been.

Always, now, when we have been
To these lands, I remember moments, warm
And instants where there is a quick, dark
Click of a camera, where I go
To record this deepening light,
Along with you.

Together, now, me and you,
In this distant terrain of never been
And still to be. The noon light
Slices through, and our bodies warm,
While on the go,
We never reach the end till dark.

Always, the light or the warmth,
Fades quickly, you and I go
Where we have never been: into the falling dark.

Winter Berries

Wintering over, it's called, these brown
Sticks waving valiantly in the brisk
Wind, their last red berries
Lingering, luxuriating in their
Newly found light; I collect as
Many as I might, knowing
Their last blast of fire will keep
Me warm, hold some brightness
When heavy snows come.

Mirror

As if still in a dream, I woke thinking of you—
Sometimes I don't believe you are real, here,
My daughter, always—you have a way about

You, something I can't explain, something
Magical, ethereal, as if you came from somewhere
Far away from this earth—I remember you inside

Me, somersaulting, always moving, from the
Beginning you were a mystery; we could not see
Your beautiful face, you always moved behind

Your twin brother; I will never forget the way
You came to me one snowy day in January, blue
Eyes already open, squinting at the world, if

I had only one wish for you, it is that you learn
To look inside yourself for strength, love, passion,
Joy, peace, and tranquility—it is all already there,

As if waiting for you to turn your gaze
Inward to receive just what you need—
By staring long enough at who you are,

You will know who you want to become.

White Iris

For the first time, we can see green
Ground since snow's melting—

I wake early, to the March sun—
Filling my room, churning yellow,
Close to the earth—

I place one dozen irises
In a vase, stems tall and verdant—
White blossoms, spilling open—

Thrusting jauntily upwards,
Jubilantly upturned—
Their veins etching thin petals

With care—a mustard yellow
Stripe running through their centers
With spunk—they stand still, looking

As though they could last forever;
I light one small candle of hope.

Lottery Ticket

We habitually underestimate the effects of randomness.

—Leonard Mlodinow

Late afternoon November gloom,
An old woman alone comes into a
Shop, opens her black purse,
And pours out her dull dollars
In exchange for a piece of paper
With the numbers covered over—

One by one, she scratches each
Digit with the rounded edges of
A shiny nickel, eyebrows knitted
And knotted, she turns up a loser
Five times over; who was to think
That she would be so lucky?



Heather Corbally Bryant (formerly Heather Bryant Jordan) currently teaches in the English department at the Pennsylvania State University. Previously, she taught at the University of Michigan, Harvard College, and at Wellesley College. She received her A.B. with honors in History and Literature from Harvard where she received the Boston Ruskin Prize for her thesis, “Sight and Sensibility: A Study of Praeterita.” She received her Ph.D in Modern British and Irish Literature from the University of Michigan where she was a Regents Fellow. She has won outstanding teaching awards from Michigan, Harvard, and most recently, from Penn State.

Her academic publications include, *How Will the Heart Endure: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of War*, (University of Michigan Press, 1992). This study of the relationship between war and literature was awarded the Donald R. Murphy Prize for best first book. In addition, she has assisted in the research for the Cornell Yeats Series as well as publishing articles on Bowen, Yeats, O’Faolain, and T.S. Eliot. She has given papers at international conferences and was a plenary speaker at the centennial celebration of Elizabeth Bowen held at University College, Cork, in 1999.

Beyond her academic publications, Heather Bryant has published a novel, *Through Your Hands* (2011) which received an Editor’s Choice and Rising Star designation. Her first poetry chapbook, *Cheap Grace*, was published by the Finishing Line Press in 2011. In addition, she has published poems in *The Christian Science Monitor* and the 2007 anthology of poetry, *In Other Words*. She has given readings at Penn State, The University of Wisconsin–Madison, The University of Illinois at Chicago, and the Palmer Art Museum. She lives in State College Pennsylvania with her three children.

PARALLEL PRESS POETS

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| L. Ward Abel | Richard Fein | Michael Salcman |
| Mary Alexandra Agner | Jean Feraca | Kay Sanders |
| Marilyn Annucci | Jim Ferris | Carmine Sarracino |
| Mark Belair | Doug Flaherty | Lynn Shoemaker |
| F.J. Bergmann | Allison Funk | Shoshauna Shy |
| Richard Broderick | Max Garland | Austin Smith |
| Lisa Marie Brodsky | Ted Genoways | Thomas R. Smith |
| Harriet Brown | John Graber | Judith Sornberger |
| Heather Corbally Bryant | Barbara L. Greenberg | Alex Stolis |
| Charles Cantrell | Richard Hedderman | Alison Stone |
| Robin Chapman | Rick Hilles | Judith Strasser |
| Kelly Cherry | Karla Huston | Heather Swan |
| Jan Chronister | Catherine Jagoe | Katrin Talbot |
| Cathryn Cofell | Bryant Jordan | Marilyn L. Taylor |
| Temple Cone | Diane Kerr | Paul Terranova |
| Francine Conley | John Lehman | Don Thompson |
| Paola Corso | Carl Lindner | Jeanie Tomasko |
| James Crews | Sharon F. McDermott | Alison Townsend |
| Dallas Crow | Mary Mercier | Dennis Trudell |
| Alice D'Alessio | Corey Mesler | Tisha Turk |
| Paul Dickey | Stephen Murabito | Ron Wallace |
| CX Dillhunt | John D. Niles | Timothy Walsh |
| Heather Dubrow | Elizabeth Oness | Matt Welter |
| Gwen Ebert | Roger Pfingston | Jacqueline West |
| Barbara Edelman | John Pidgeon | Katharine Whitcomb |
| Susan Elbe | Andrea Potos | J.D. Whitney |
| Karl Elder | Eve Robillard | Mason Williams |
| R. Virgil Ellis | James Silas Rogers | George Young |
| Thomas J. Erickson | Marjorie Saiser | Timothy Young |
| Fabu | Allegra Jostad Silberstein | Tracy S. Youngblom |



Parallel Press
University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries

parallepress.library.wisc.edu
ISBN 978-1-934795-50-7