

INTRODUCING THE SRPR ILLINOIS POET:
ANN HUDSON



Raised in Urbana, Illinois and Charlottesville, Virginia, Ann Hudson currently lives in Evanston, Illinois, where she teaches at Chiaravalle Montessori School. She earned her BA at the University of Virginia, and her MFA at the University of Utah. Her first book, *The Armillary Sphere*, was selected by Mary Kinzie as the winner of the Hollis Summers Poetry Prize and was published by Ohio University Press. Her work has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *North American Review*, *Orion*, *Prairie Schooner*, *RHINO*, and elsewhere. Her poem "Elegy With a Train In It" was recently made into a Motionpoem for the Big Bridges Film Festival.

Parkinson's Ghazal

Twice a year we come visiting, flying out of the blue
into the green of Virginia, where you are dying out of the blue.

Some days you know us; some days you don't. *Good morning!*
I begin the day. *I miss my mom*, you say, sighing, out of the blue.

I miss my dad, I answer, grinning, then prattle about the weather,
last night's Cubs game, local traffic, my chatter multiplying out of the blue.

You've fallen more times than I can count: against the counter,
out of the chair, against the radiator, crying out of the blue.

Evening is harder. You're stiff in your chair, one arm pistoning,
jaws working in the air, your tremors amplifying out of the blue.

Your grip on your spoon is strong, though your arm shakes.
You hardly blink anymore, eyeing out of the blue.

My mother asks if she should ask for a prognosis,
by which she means time left. *No*, I say, lying out of the blue.

You've been clutching the newspaper all morning, scanning
the headlines. Words are mystifying out of the blue.

Your fingertips stroke my cheek; *Ann*, you say,
perhaps by accident, but trying out of the blue.

March

Robins return to the city, awkward
on the winter walk, scattering to the fenceline
in a dusky-orange ellipse. They are not,
dear children, a sign of anything.
Nor are we. Remember: we are *of* the world,
not a mark of something beyond it.
Next door the dogs high-step over the ice,
then nip at each other before tearing
across the tiny yard, unleashing
so much energy that the robins
hop up into the biting air, streak off
like contrails. Or no, that's snow.

Winter Morning

It's too early to rise, but there
is our boy again, at the doorway,
calling hello. There in the dark
he stands in his dinosaur pajamas
and mismatched socks, and waits
for us to call him to our bed.
I don't know how this ritual began,
but we repeat it every morning,
well before dawn. He climbs into the trough
between our bodies and snuggles in,
sucking contentedly at his thumb.
I know the whole room is humid
and sour with our nightbreath. I know
our voices rasp, and our faces
are doughy with sleep. I wish
I could bound from the bed,
springy and energized, my skin taut
and sparkling, my breath fresh as a melon.
I can't yet open my gritty eyes
but I know he's staring happily
at the ceiling, thinking whatever thoughts
a three-year-old thinks, just waiting
for us to finally wake up into
our better selves, the ones our boy loves.