

t.s. poetry press

CASUAL



a little book of jeans poems & photos

T. S. Poetry Press
Ossining, New York
Tspoeetry.com

© 2015 T. S. Poetry Press

You may share portions of this work (up to three full poems) without asking permission (in your book, on your blog, in your classroom, in a business presentation). We love when our work is shared! Just tell people where you got it. Link to us at tspoeetry.com. But don't reproduce the whole thing and try to resell it. In our book, that would be naughty indeed.

All poems and photos used by permission of the authors and T. S. Poetry Press (Dave Malone poem from *O: Love Poems from the Ozarks*).

Edited by L.L. Barkat

Cover image by Susan Etole

*To our dear readers who enjoy poetry,
casually or otherwise*

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
SLIP IN. Photo, Michelle Ortega	8
Chambray. Terri Conlin	9
Liturgy. Jeniffer Smith	10
Perhaps I should have told you long ago— Elizabeth Marshall.....	11
Oh, blue,. Michelle Rummel.....	12
saturday. Michelle Ortega.....	13
New Life. Dave Malone.....	14
When he pulled through with a new Chevy in red. Taylor Burgin.....	15
WORN. Photo, Darlene	16
Ode to Jeans. Naomi Jeanpierre.....	17
A straight soft indigo is mid-rise,. Jessie Stewart	18

Poem on a Line by Anne Sexton, “We Are All Writing God’s Poem.” Barbara Crooker.....	19
Weather. Laurie Kolp.....	20
Some Things Don’t Mend. Susan Etole.....	21
Cooking Class, Illinois, Mid 70s. Tania Pryputniewicz.....	22
My baby boy’s jeans. Amy Billone.....	24
After all you’ve done for me in love. Elizabeth Marshall, Michael Garcia, Ceil, Donna Z. Falcone ..	25
holes. tears. dyed. Michael Garcia, Donna Z. Falcone, Ceil	26
In the fields. Lexanne Leonard.....	27
NOON. Photo, Darlene	28
Denim Enfolds Me. Lexanne Leonard.....	29
Blues. Irish Grace.....	30
jeans jeans. Darlene.....	31
LINES. Photo, Wendy Galgan.....	32
Trip. Sandra Heska King.....	33

Identity. Monica Sharman.....34

American Lines. Elizabeth Marshall35

FIT. Photo, Darlene.....36

Jean-ealogy. Maureen Doallas.....37

Fibonacci Jeans. Richard Maxson.....38

Set. Bethany Rohde.....40

Life on the London Underground. Glynn Young.....42

Will my beloved jeans feel slighted. Donna Z. Falcone.....43

Introduction

Reading and writing poetry is a profound way to express the heart, discover truth, and build a thinking and compassionate community. That's why we promote what we call the 5 Vital Approaches to Poetry for Life.

The 5 Vital Approaches

- teach it like it's alive
- bring it home
- transport it
- paint it in the public square
- take it to work

This little book begins in a rather personal place: the very clothes we wear at home, while we we learn, when we travel or make our way into the public squares of the communities we visit or live in, and maybe even at work. As such, this collection is its own contribution to Poetry for Life.

So come. Live! Take a stroll in our jeans (and perhaps in yours).

A close-up, vertical photograph of a zipper. The zipper pull is a large, metallic, gold-colored piece with a textured surface and a central hole. It is attached to a black zipper tape. The teeth of the zipper are also gold-colored and are visible along the left edge. The zipper is set against a blue, textured fabric background. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on the zipper teeth and pull, and deep shadows in the recesses. The background is blurred, showing more of the blue fabric and some out-of-focus light spots.

SLIP IN

Chambray

You can't know all these rivets hold—
my starry eyes and bagpipe notes
the doors we called, "Welcome home."

Our indigo pockets always gave
but never gave way;

still, we lost in the cull
on double-seamed highways
with room for me to love you.

—Terri Conlin

Liturgy

Outside, she's in jeans.
Filling pockets with rocks from the earth.

—Jeniffer Smith

Perhaps I should have told you long ago—

cornflower, cobalt, Caribbean, Carolina, cerulean
winking at me with that one brass eye;
secrets tucked in all four pockets.

—Elizabeth Marshall

Oh, blue,

there's an ease in your step
an art to your fray
comfort in your curve

my perfect fit—just right—in the afternoon light.

—Michelle Rummel

saturday

heat rises
on the city street
i slip one finger
through the belt loop
of his jeans.

—Michelle Ortega

New Life

One August, my grandmother wears blue jeans
and thumbs a ride from the Caney Mountain foothills
fifty miles north to the crest of Cedar Gap
and the snaking Frisco line.

On as much steam as her own,
the locomotive crawls into old Las Vegas,
where she baptizes her legs
in the El Rancho swimming pool
just long enough to be snatched up
by a flashy suit.

By sundown, she wears the new life
of a showgirl who never returns home.
Gambler's dotted die latches at temple and wrist.
The only black and white she's known before—
local newsprint yielding stories
of falling hog prices,
bumper crops of peaches.

—Dave Malone

When he pulled through with a new Chevy in red

we fell into the night
we fell into time

tugging at denim as he pushed towards the hood,
those jeans never looked so good.

— Taylor Burgin

A close-up photograph of a worn black leather boot with frayed blue denim jeans, set against a textured olive-green background. The boot is on the left side of the frame, showing the toe and laces. The denim is frayed at the top edge. The background is a mottled, textured surface in shades of olive green and brown. The word "WORN" is printed in a serif font in the upper right quadrant.

WORN

Ode to Jeans

Wrapped in a plastic bag
scent of artificial air seeping,
you were soft yet firm
in my hands

like a ripe mango
plucked on the
cusp of June.

— Naomi Jeanpierre

A straight soft indigo is mid-rise,
once well worn, but now
folded and forgotten.

Train tracks laid down the outseams
ran parallel to the legs and the relationship formed,
spurring the process of molding and remolding
a cast of denim.

A life imprinted in fabric, dusted—
just above the ankle.

—Jessie Stewart

**Poem on a Line by Anne Sexton,
“We Are All Writing God’s Poem.”**

Today, the sky’s the soft blue of a work shirt washed
a thousand times.

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.
On the interstate listening to NPR, I heard a Hubble scientist
say, “The universe is not only stranger than we think,
it’s stranger than we *can* think.”

I think I’ve driven into spring, as the woods revive
with a loud shout, redbud trees, their gaudy scarves
flung over bark’s bare limbs.

Barely doing sixty, I pass a tractor trailer called
Glory Bound, and aren’t we just?

Just yesterday, I read Li Po: “There is no end of things
in the heart,”

but it seems like things are always ending—vacation
or childhood, relationships, stores going out of business,
like the one that sold jeans that really fit—

And where do we fit in? How can we get up
in the morning, knowing what we do?

But we do, put one foot after the other, open the window,
make coffee, watch the steam curl up and disappear.

At night, the scent of phlox curls in the open window,
while the sky turns red violet, lavender, thistle,
a box of spilled crayons. The moon
spills its milk on the black tabletop for the thousandth time.

—Barbara Crooker

Weather

Inky clouds cling
to sky like jeans

I heave
past thighs.

Deep down I know
nothing

changes a thing—
he's leaving.

I fumble
with buttons

of the 501s,
cursing

Levi for such
shrinkage.

Beyond my window
a willow tree shivers

before the deluge.

—Laurie Kolp

Some Things Don't Mend

“Do you mind if we cut off your jeans,” they said.

“They’re my favorite scrub denims,” I said.

I haven’t walked since.

—Susan Etole

Cooking Class, Illinois, Mid 70s

Along her immaculate counter: silo
of red-handled sifter, bright order
of silver spoons, lemon bales of butter

softening in late winter light. In cupboards
her husband the carpenter built, bars
of Baker's Chocolate, dried figs, quartered

apricots and Mason Jars of brined harvest.
A good cook puts up her hair, wears
apron, stores flour in freezer to keep

Boll Weevils out, uses shells of her egg
as a tool to separate yolk from white.
She also wears dresses, I learned

when, for donning jeans, she informed me
she no longer wished me to babysit. She cited,
over the phone to my mother, the effect

it might have on her son, the kind of wife
he might choose, the man he'd become
as I chased him on my hands and knees round

the living room's glass table she refused to move
when he was born. He'd learn, she'd said, he'd learn
soon enough, where he stopped and she began.

— Tania Pryputniewicz

My baby boy's jeans

grow fast as the moon. Midnight!

Please don't run away.

—Amy Billone

After all you've done for me in love,
stitched to ensure a long life—
my jeans don't fit, longways on the bias.

—A cento from the words of Elizabeth Marshall,
Michael Garcia, Ceil, Donna Z. Falcone

holes. tears. dyed

akimbo on the floor;
i must be getting old.

— A cento from the words of Michael Garcia,
Donna Z. Falcone, Ceil

In the fields

where my grandfather
kept his bees
on Mr. Granjeans farm,
cornflowers
winked a welcome
and relinquished
their sweetness.

—Lexanne Leonard

A close-up, high-angle photograph of a person sitting on a wooden bench. The person is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue denim jeans. Their hands are resting on their lap. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The background shows a wooden bench and some green grass. The word "NOON" is printed in a bold, black, sans-serif font in the center of the image.

NOON

Denim Enfolds Me

Periwinkle petals
zaffer glazed eyes
Dodger blue home runs

an indigo sigh
shaped to my curves —
soft, well-worn.

—Lexanne Leonard

Blues

Lazy noon
by river's edge
I'm skipping letters

submerged in shades
of washed-up
indigo words:

my cotton defense.

—Irish Grace

jeans jeans

everywhere the
jeans – city, country
especially there – rural
folk wear 'em Friday and
don't call it *casual* – because
it's the same as every other day
where they work. ride. live. breathe.

—Darlene

LINES



Trip

We met for family time at an indoor waterpark.
After pizza in our hotel room—cheese, veggie, meat
supreme—
we cut shoe patterns out of old jeans
to give some soles some hope.

My grandgirl grimaced at the video
of skinny Ugandan children with jiggers.

Next day, she bought a pair of Nikes

82 dollars
and new jeans

in a skinny cut.

—Sandra Heska King

Identity

The most popular brand

is just a question mark at the bottom
of an inverted triangle.

Status attached

to a symbol sewn by one thin thread
onto back-pocket denim.

A single breath

of next week's gossip would break
a bond that weak.

Don't second-guess. Wear the jeans that fit.

Lie down at the top of the green hill
and let yourself roll. Go home laughing.

—Monica Sharman

American Lines

Driving south on Highway 17
I see them hanging
stiff-legged, board-straight
in the quarter-acre backyard,
rusted old fence line
hemming in half-naked children
and the flock of laying hens.

In three days
they'll still be cold-wet
unwearable
unable to clothe a working man.

I blink.

Neiman Marcus email
slips into my inbox:
on back order,
size 2 Lucky Jeans.

—Elizabeth Marshall



FIT

Jean-ealogy

is about the origin of blue
jeans, vintage cloth made
to wrinkle and shrink.

What the small French
village called Nimes knit,
Levi Strauss starched
and sold . . . made to fit!

From zippers to bell-bottoms
and rivets, like Texas cowboys,
the jeans finally fade. Same's
the history for hippies in Frisco
who grew up to make a billion
and are aging in the one pair,
still blue, they are wearing.

—Maureen Doallas

*A remix of words with some grammatical changes from
Chandrakant Shah's "Jeans 101 – An Historical Poem,"
translated by Naushil Mehta and Arundhatbi Subramaniam.
Poetry International, India section.*

Fibonacci Jeans

These are the ones

everyone wants

Bring a friend so the two
of you can take advantage

of the sale, only three days
left to get a pair of Fibonacci
Jeans at this amazing price—

only five dollars each, and if
you act now, the first eight
people to purchase any
quantity before the thirteenth
of April, will get a gift certificate

to Forever 21, our partner
for this offer. Come to our
store at the corner of Thirty-fourth
Street and Fifty-fifth Avenue.

Reviews for Fibonacci Jeans
have been off the charts. More
than eighty-nine reviews have
given the highest rating possible.

Yesterday one-hundred and forty-four
pair of Fibonacci Jeans were sold in one
store alone to only sixteen people.
That's nine pair of jeans for each
person. There are only two-hundred-
thirty-three pair remaining. So, Hurray!
We have all sizes for your waist and inseam.
We have the most popular colors,
light blue, black, grey and white.
Prices like these are as good as gold.
This sale may be extended if more
people continue to buy in quantities
like these, but I wouldn't count on it.

—Richard Maxson

Set

After raspberry pancakes
Mom declared
in our olive-green kitchen:
today, I'll teach you to swing.

She hoisted her own
thick hips
into the black smile
next to me

pumped sky
in her stone washed jeans.

*Just gotta lean
into it.*

Then below that bar of rust,
her seat suddenly

snapped.

She gripped the old chains— stuck the landing.
Remember our laugh?

Lung-crush of hilarity

while everyone else
held their
 breath.

—Bethany Rohde

Life on the London Underground

I wore my jeans
on the tube
and discovered
free advertising
at every stop
when the disembodied
voice proclaimed
Mind the Gap.

—Glynn Young

Will my beloved jeans feel slighted
when I'm too big for my britches
yet again?

—Donna Z. Falcone