

Poetry Series

**Tim Gavin**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**  
2005

**Publisher:**  
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## Tim Gavin(March 18,1963)

Tim Gavin has had his poems published in Anglican Theological Review, Black Bear Review, Black Moon, Black Water Review, Chiron Review, Endless Mountain Review, Mad Poets Review, Negative Capability, One Trick Pony, Poet Lore, South Dakota Review, Wind, Yarrow and other journals. His essays and book reviews have been published in a number of literary and educational journals. He is the editor of Nova House Press, which published a chapbook series. He is in search of a publisher for his novel, entitled, Street Legal.

# All The Light You Can

Strike a match and light your sky  
And stars will swirl like sparklers  
Cart wheeling towards a black hole

Like neglected relics  
Under-wrought  
Outdated  
Nothing inside catches□

Your eye eclipses both Mercury and Venus□  
Overshadowing the meteor belt  
Of a heart haunted by past partners□  
Who wallowed unprotected  
And nasty

Throw a match□  
Burned out and exhausted  
Into a galaxy  
Where grit gathers grit  
And true strength fades like fashion

The left side of your face holds special effect of neon blush  
The right  
Fabricated beauty of  
Dishonor and vanity but at least for yourself

Frame all the light you can

Tim Gavin

# Am I Fooling Myself

Venus's been hovering west of the moon,  
following Earth's satellite like a dog  
looking for a bone. Each night, I walk  
through Bryn Mawr, climbing each steep hill  
to face the next steep hill. I follow my  
celestial neighbor. I wonder at  
all the activity she hosts - so far  
away that the distance is beyond  
comprehension. Is she lonely in her  
fury? Is her light a result of pain  
or passion?

Venus brightens the sky and  
guides my walk past the post office, beneath  
the train trestle. Our world is full of travel,  
transporting people and ideas to where  
they need to go. So it seems. I walk up  
a short incline toward the long driveway  
of a private girl's school which boast not of  
academics but of its string of cherry  
blossoms lining each side of its driveway.  
A gift from China I think. Passing through  
the dark, I wonder why the ancients so  
ordained Venus the goddess of love. Is  
she after me as I approach middle  
age and each day recognize the gray in  
my hair and crows feet beside my eyes?  
Ten years ago where was she? I would have  
approached her with zealous intentions. Would  
she have had me? Would she have taken me  
and shared her moist love? Would she let  
me kiss her breasts and stroke her thigh? Would she  
envelope me like a clam shell closing?  
Or would I have been too arrogant or  
too self-absorbed to have even given  
her a thought? □  
□was younger then, logging  
mile after mile of hills in a single  
run. Putting distance between who I was  
and who I wanted to become. I never

gave Venus notice; just as I never  
gave walking a thought. I turn up Old Gulph  
Road and lean into another steep hill.  
My right leg propels my left leg; they work  
in rhythm one provides passion for the  
other. Reaching the top of the hill, I  
pass by the Christ Baptist Church of Bryn Mawr  
with the grave yard just beyond it as if  
to remind the parishioners something  
greater than they will eventually  
take them at will.

Venus lights my way home.

Over my shoulder, I feel her tender  
push as my legs grow heavy, cumbersome.  
Again, what is happening on her surface  
to produce all of that light? Her energy  
overwhelms me. I never noticed her;  
she has that beauty that is beyond touch,  
reminding me there is something greater  
than I am; something in control. Earlier  
it seemed as if she were chasing the moon,  
but perhaps the moon is that far behind  
like a runner being lapped in a race  
so far behind that it seems ahead. Was  
she a lover so ready to love that  
I was beyond honor? Or is she just  
one more thing I took for granted? Or am  
I fooling myself in believing that  
I could ever have been so close to touch?

Tim Gavin

## At This Point

Everything is burning - scorched with flames  
sunsets rupture rafters of elevated trains.  
At my age fire forges -  
a small blue jay's fury due  
to a squirrel's imposition, a child  
dancing in front of a video  
monitor at Target, a man  
tearing up a ticket stub  
of another lost lottery.  
Now more than ever,  
everything is burning with my desire  
to establish a legacy -  
be it justice or honor dashed  
with mercy and forbearance; be it  
fame and piety or pity and remorse  
stacked up against the saints.  
I could forgive all cheaters  
and dope dealers and athletes  
who corrupt honest dreams by marketing  
scandals.  
Who killed my sweetheart?  
She who let me in and kept me a part of her  
on those cold winters when we fought off wind and rain  
on the corner of Hancock and Ontario  
amid the druggies and whores.  
I could measure out my life in a video  
montage begun and ended with fades of black.  
I think now of all those lyrics  
wasted in my marble notebook  
and my remorse in not sharing them with her  
or not offering them to the gods.  
After all, everything is burning - the power  
of elms, the force of drifts, the spirals of spring,  
the seduction of sweat. I can't have life  
the way I planned and dreamed, but must  
make of it what I can - a broken egg,  
a charred piece of beef, a curved wing,  
a last chance, a lost resort.

□

Tim Gavin

# Clarity

Is the vision one has in the morning  
After the first cup of coffee

The squeaky-clean sight line of pine trees and hills immediately  
After washing one's windows

The stars after clouds peel away  
Revealing a luminous moon

Fragile petals open one by one

Tim Gavin

# Do Not Hide

from your past  
like a lost sock  
beneath your bed  
& don't duck behind clouds  
like a full moon  
don't avoid people who knew you when  
you were young & lovesick

learn all you can after falling  
stand up  
nurse your skinned knees  
& wipe away the blood

do not hide  
from your future  
tomorrow will eventually arrive  
even if you ignore it  
and pain will recede  
like waves of nausea  
rolling away after swigs of ginger ale  
don't speed through yellow caution lights  
slow down  
move moment to moment  
finding each unique  
like a lip print  
on a wine glass

yesterday's pain will diminish  
& tomorrow's will become  
ephemeral like a full moon  
slowly peaking through  
night clouds  
light dissolving  
in black waves of the sea  
enjoying its sphere  
its one & only

Tim Gavin

## He & She, Circa 1929

Here he was the summer of '29,  
driving a coal truck from upstate down route  
611 towards Philly. He bought  
cosmos at a road side stand  
with a few pennies and shifted through  
six gears. Drifting in and out of sleep, the lines  
of imagination swerved  
as he thought of her waiting on the front  
porch, snapping beans. Waiting for him. Just  
him. He would go directly to her after  
dumping the final load of coal. He would  
walk up, in his dusty work clothes,  
a green thermos under his left arm, his  
right hand behind his back:  
the calloused hand, the delicate cosmos,  
a still life of their own. She'd place  
the strainer of beans on her lap & lean left  
to peek behind him, but he'd shift his weight  
from one foot to another extending  
the thrill of his prize. Music would play  
and their shadows would fox trot,  
lope or pace. The music  
would be carried, not by air,  
but touch. He would stand there  
a life time, admiring her hands folded,  
the knuckles red from scrubbing floors;  
she'd reach out and touch his left hand.  
No words; words were for the unfamiliar.  
Gestures, turns, a bit of eye contact  
spoke proof. He'd bring his hand  
from behind his back and deliver the flowers  
that suffered the same exhausting trip  
in the dump truck arriving  
where they finally belonged.

Tim Gavin

# Idea Of God

The notion is beyond  
intellect -  
it's hard to grasp edge of infinity;  
we want one more step  
and one last over-the-shoulder  
glance,  
but have we created something so uncomprehensible  
that even  
we  
fail to conceptualize it?  
Does paradox proves existence?

The prime mover who is unmovable & formless initiates  
motion  
& form - makes them palpable -  
like a kind of street poet spray-painting lyrics on walls  
and highway overpasses  
for all  
to read and  
for all  
to ponder how those words appeared.

The idea of God is a mega black hole & likewise a beta fish  
in which light & space respectively trap & manifest  
speed and transmission  
of stars that radiate  
now  
in the sky but  
became  
extinguished over a million years ago  
before  
time even started.

Tim Gavin

# Idiot Spring

I

daffodils tinged brown arched over  
hunch backed broken

everything  
is so ahead of itself

sparrows freeze  
as they shatter through

mid march expels them

II

april snow surprises us  
and clamps us

to a week  
end with no fire wood or wine

we will attempt to save what  
we thought we had but

we will see our marriage  
tinged brown our kids estranged

III

we could cut stems plant bulbs  
wait through thaw of idiot spring

opening  
our yellow heads

dropping  
our green hearts

Tim Gavin

# Infinity

I graph the points I've touched along railroad tracks;  
among stones and broken ties I count my losses.

My gains, reflected in muddy puddles,  
criss-cross the ruts laid by work trucks.

The days of steam and iron intrigue me;  
I'm in the wrong age;  
    I pick a wildflower,

a blue phlox, I think, and hold it  
to align myself with the untamed.

Tantalized by infinity, I could walk forever, but a whistle,  
a metal clack rolls toward me and passes on

as the train curves out of reach.

Tim Gavin

# Long Pond Bridge

As kids we would sneak out to Long Pond Bridge  
When the sun settled beyond  
the white birch sky-line. We would look  
at the manmade lake, our reflections  
staring back at us in the dark cedar water  
and wait for the brave one  
To step up on the rail  
And swan dive down  
To the surface, breaking the muddy reflection  
Of us staring into the unknown.  
The wait seemed like a thaw of winter  
As he approached the surface  
From below, rising with fistfuls  
Of brown leaves, stones,  
and ground fish bones,  
Re-entering the plain  
That bridged us to the underworld.

Tim Gavin

# Lunch Break Outside The Joseph Oat's Machine Shop

On a pier right above the Delaware & adjacent to a factory,  
a man takes a lunch break,  
legs kicking absent-mindedly as he ponders  
the number of holes he needs to drill through  
thick steel plates. His green t-shirt with the pocket  
left of center contrasts the white stucco wall,  
streaked with rust run-off from the corrugated roof,  
which shields him now from the work  
on the inside. The work that will provide some  
unknown man a million dollars this month. The work  
that won America its cold war. The work  
that made Wall Street bullish. The work  
that tells him he needs an industrial revolution  
to pay his mortgage and bowling dues.  
A brackish river, which coils through Camden  
and Philadelphia, transports barges  
loaded with cooling towers  
and heat exchangers for nuclear  
power plants to places  
far beyond the man's imagination.  
Not caring much about destination  
he eats his tuna fish sandwich  
and drinks his cherry coke – his legs kicking,  
his jaws chewing, his green t-shirt absorbing  
the sound of heat, the twist of steel  
that coils & uncoils onto an oily floor.

Tim Gavin

# Lyric

Forget the wild weeds along the river  
and the dirt paths dividing the mountains.  
Let me embrace the city,  
its rotten canals and its tankers. I will ride  
the trolley wobbling along Erie Avenue  
like some wild hog, sniffing the ground  
for its hole. I will remove  
the bloody aprons from the men  
at the slaughter house - the smell  
of burning fat settling on their rubber boots.  
I will condemn the asbestos factory  
where laborers wittle down to nothing:  
transparent skin with a cage  
of veins locking in the souls.  
I will collect in the light and the dark  
as a new lyric envelopes  
the city I once betrayed.

Tim Gavin

# Morning Run

The ball blazes red on the horizon  
& dissipates like napalm over the river  
it could bring down the skyline  
of Philly if it weren't for the birds  
on the wires  
singing like sirens  
seducing the rays  
with warbling and sarcastic tones  
redirecting fire  
into the balls of my feet  
so combustible  
& predictable  
this sunrise I run into over  
and over again

Tim Gavin

# Raising The Ax

It is the sound of the log splitting  
and its echo  
which marks my passage  
into manhood. My father stands  
by the porch as the ax swings up  
and falls.  
He studies the way I go  
with the grain and let the ax do the work.  
He studies the rolling of my shoulders  
with each whack into the dense  
wood. He remembers his own  
father teaching him to swing a pick  
in the dark tunnels  
of the Pennsylvania coal mines.  
With a carbide lamp  
splitting the darkness,  
he brought to the surface  
buckets of coal. As he straitened  
the stiffness out of his back and legs,  
he'd squint into the harshness of light -  
fearing the darkness behind him.  
Now, after four, five, six logs  
and after ten, eleven, twelve logs  
split and stacked, he squints into the sun  
breaking through the clouds  
and sees the spots  
of early manhood rising.

Tim Gavin

# Temptation

“Jesus was led up by the spirit  
into the wilderness to be tempted.”

Matthew 4: 1

after 40 abstained days  
I am famished but lucid

I am approached and offered

stone -  
a loaf of perishable bread

resurrection -  
self-betrayal

kingdom come -  
nothing but numbered years

after 40 fasted days  
I ascend incorruptible - yeast not -

ready toward the pin-hole of splendor

Tim Gavin

# The Coldest May Since God Knows When

And I sit here, hearing a muse snicker,  
Informing me that I'll never compose  
A poem worth the time wasted on it.  
I pace the floorboards and listen  
To Bob Dylan; he can inspire  
The most drab of us. I think of him  
As flea bane growing wild in my garden,  
Having that special something. I think  
Of Hart Crane and his reckless love  
Affairs; I think of John Berryman  
And his madness; I think of Emily  
Dickinson and her cognitive  
Cloister; I think of Ovid, eating olives  
And bread, exiled - for writing about love  
And sex - so far from Sulmo, his home.  
I've been at it for over twenty years  
And still feel uncomfortable calling myself  
A poet. I remember my father say the word  
With disdain. He would have been  
More proud if I'd had been a ditch  
Digger. At least that would have been  
Manly. Upon my first published poem,  
He asked, "Are you going to be rich?  
No? Then what good is it?" He wanted  
Me to be an engineer. Earn a true wage.  
I sit here looking at the white blank  
Upon my screen and can't even  
Record the brittle feeling of this morning  
As the temperature drops toward freezing  
And we're only a few days from June. I  
Can't describe the shock of the morning glories  
As they reach out of the dirt with their fang like  
Leaves. I am stuck on words and images like  
A paper jammed copy machine. I can't  
Hear what to say, for my muse has gone away  
Into her own madness and delusions, leaving  
Me here with an opportunity I'm bound to miss.

Tim Gavin

# Transfiguration

outside the liquor store a bum  
begs for loose change.  
car fare, he said, but the glint in his eye  
of disillusionment and fury

reveals the ruins of Nineveh:  
rocks broken, residents hiding among mountains,  
fire consuming pathways to the capitol. elders  
inspect the locust ravaged fields

of wheat and barley. all lost. the bum  
bums dimes, quarters, nickels  
shifting from one foot to the other  
hoping to avoid the cold concrete

beneath him that is drawing him  
in to its heat: oh paradox  
of transfiguration  
change me from the victim

to the victor and let me hear  
clapping hands rejoice  
at the ruins I leave behind.  
the bum reaches deep in my pocket

amid lint and grime pulling up  
a few coins that cradle the sun light,  
counts them out and drops them  
into my outstretched palm.

Tim Gavin

## Yes, An Ascension

Yes, the rain deferring to the sun, shining  
Through clouds, revealing dust hovering  
In a shaft of light. Yes to the ice caps  
On mountains melting, forming rivers  
Running through rocks and ravines  
Of thighs. Yes to the pomegranate seeds,  
Turning finger tips red. Juice on my chin.  
Yes to you and your open mouth and claim  
To my life. Yes to the day and its star  
Swirling in the galaxy of unknowing.  
Yes to you and your breath on my neck  
And your hand on the nape of my back,  
Pulling me into your fire, knowing all I need  
Is here. The stars could be aligned for a history  
Defined. So I say yes to you  
And yes to ground swell, rising beneath my feet  
Lifting me to the clouds of heaven.  
So orgasmic – ah yes.

Tim Gavin