

**TRISH REEVES (1947- )**



Trish Reeves is committed to poetry. One of my favorite stories about her took place the evening of September 11, 2001. She continued, that evening, with a previously scheduled poetry reading. After her presentation, a woman thanked her for commitment to the calling of poetry. In times of crisis, especially, poets speak for community. They express shared sorrows; they celebrate our human experience.

The intense, short lyric is this poet's forte, with attention to heart as well as underlying story. I turn to Reeves' verse for emotional and spiritual sustenance.

Reeves' work draws upon the European arts tradition, translated into Midwestern lifeways. This creates a tension, as Old World icons find places in American farmlands. In the poem "Chronology" the poet refers to Van Gogh's suicide and his oil painting technique of layering paint thickly on a canvas—*impasto*. His thick paint strokes are vivid and unsubtle—heightened with emotion. The poem resonates with the issue of farmers' suicides, too common in the heartland as family farms lose economic viability.

The seasonal cycle of summer sowing and autumn harvesting in "Chronology" is replaced not by a calendar timeline, but by an emotional calendar. Reeves creates a new timekeeping paradigm here, suggested by Van Gogh and by farming, but instead more personal: anniversaries of family deaths. When I read this poem, I remember my ancient grandmother mourning her father's death anniversary. I memorialize my own family deaths.

***CHRONOLOGY***

*"Goes out into the field  
and shoots himself."  
Well wouldn't you know  
this is the guy we adore.  
The wheat wild with him,  
the crows crazed and we  
so undecided  
about life ourselves  
that the least mention  
of Arles and  
self-portraits put on impasto  
has us thumbing through  
our pasts for the date  
he entered them with his sorrow  
as vividly as a death in the family  
that links us to our  
fate like the calendar  
on which numbers are unnecessary.*

**Education:** Trish Reeves was born and raised in St. Joseph and recently has lived in Prairie Village, Kansas, as well as Kansas City, Missouri. She received her BA from the University of Missouri School of Journalism. She received an MFA in Creative Writing, Warren Wilson College.

**Career:** In 1991 Reeves became an English professor at Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence. Her students have published and read widely. Her first book, *Returning the Question*, won the Cleveland State University Poetry Center Prize (1988). BookMark Press of UMKC published *In the Knees of the Gods: Poems* (2001). Her work is recognized by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Kansas Arts Commission, and Yaddo; she was a Keck Fellow at Sarah Lawrence College. She has edited *New Letters Review of Books*. She leads book discussion groups for the Kansas Humanities Council and Johnson County.