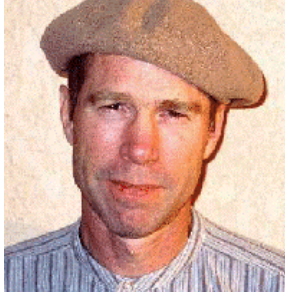


DONALD WARREN LEVERING (1949 -)



Don Levering grew up in Kansas City, Kansas, and for many years has lived in Santa Fe. His poetry braids together myth and the natural world, but unevenly. His poems are questions more than answers. As guest poet for the online Academy of American Poets forum, he described writing verse: "To straddle and ride the two-headed horse of poetry: one wants rhythm, the other compression." This suggests the tension in his writing—the ongoing rhythm is studded with medallions of lightning-quick stories. His collaged images seem familiar, but he arranges them into illogical sequences.

The poem "Spider" suggests the urban myth of a person, perhaps someone like yourself, waking up with a spider in your mouth. It also suggests the Southwestern Indigenous people's Spider Woman, who spins cosmic stories into realities. Just as this image of the "divine spider" becomes substantial, the poet turns you, or himself, into a marionette puppet tangled in strings pulled by an unseen puppeteer. The narrator is a helpless victim of a divorce, and then a victim of a larger web. The word "marrying" becomes another way of saying "entrapping." The last part of the poem is a paradox, an unexpected twist. The shadows and dust and spider's spinning all continue despite personal tragedy. The narrator focuses on the spider's legs, mouth, and ability to spin silk—and he himself becomes spider-like, the "joyful" singer of this poem.

SPIDER

**To make a joyful sound,
just let the divine spider
climb out of your mouth
and go about its business
tying knots around your life.
So you're a marionette,
you still can feel yourself dancing
no matter who's pulling the strings.
Even as your divorce decree
is signed, the spider
goes on marrying you
to corners of household dust.
Eight legs, a ravenous mouth,
and the yen to spin silk in shadows.
Who wouldn't sing?**

Education: Don Levering was born and raised in Kansas City, Kansas. He received a BA in English (Baker University, 1971); studied at the University of Kansas and Lewis and Clark College; and received an MFA in Creative Writing from Bowling Green University (1978).

Career: Levering's full-length books of poetry are *Outcroppings From Navajoland* (Navajo Community College Press 1985), *Horsetail* (Woodley Memorial Press 2003), and *Whose Body* (Sunstone Press 2007). He has published poems in five chapbooks and many anthologies and journals. Levering was a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Grant in poetry, a finalist for the John Ciardi Prize, and won first place in the Quest for Peace Writing Contest.