Chicago, November 4, 2008

There were crowds before
In Pittsburgh, Boston, New York,
Out on the West Coast
All across the country,
Even Berlin,
Crowds of people
Black, white, tan,
And every color in between,
Every nationality, every age,
But never a crowd like tonight
Here in Chicago, our Chicago,
Outside in Grant Park,
Stars overhead,
All of us, arm-in-arm,
Close together, cheering
For our new Black President.

Hint of Fall in the air,
Faint smell of smoke,
Reminder of Summer's
Past bitterness,
Voices hoarse in disagreement,
All of us glad
The campaign's over,
Glad for this good
Strong feeling
Of being together,
Arm-in-arm, touching,
A people united,
Cheering for our
New Black President,
Home again for tonight
Here in Chicago.
AFTER THE CHICAGO MARATHON

The street is silent,
Hard to believe
In the last three hours
A hundred and forty thousand feet
Raced by.

Cheering spectators
Have drifted away,
Cars still held off
By barricades,
Cleaning crews
Swept in,
now gone.

We few walk quietly
On the deserted street,
Try to fathom
The change, the speed,
The wonder of it.
Pigeon Lady

She scatters
Bits of bread
In the park
And the pigeons
Flock around her,
Joyously, noisily
Jostle each other,
Sit on her shoulders,
Her back, her head,
As she bends to the food sack
On the ground.

She's laughing, talking—
These are her friends,
This is her show,
She is the star.
CANNING

We came across "Mason jars" in
Todd Boss' poem Inventory, and
Started to talk about canning –

Everybody's mother used to can,
Fill up hundreds of Mason jars
With vegetables and fruits in season.
We talked about how children helped:

Pitting cherries, shelling peas, snipping
Green beans, things we could do out of
The steamy kitchen, away from boiling
Hot water baths and pressure cookers.

We talked about packing pickles,
Big ones on the bottom, medium in
The middle, and tiny ones on top.
That was always our job, because
Our hands fit easily into Mason jars.
YOU HAVE TO SEASON A POEM

After you get the words arranged in a poem
You have to put it away to season for a spell
Maybe seal it up in a pickle jar with a cover
Let it sit until the words combine, ferment a bit.

They’ve never been in this arrangement before;
Some of them may resent the current situation,
Preferring instead a more important position,
May want to veer off to another place.

You have to let them know you’re in charge,
Whatever you dictate will be their ultimate fate,
You’ll give the nouns an adjective if you decide,
You’ll determine the tense of the verbs as well.

Yet no matter how long you preserve them,
To convince them you’re right and they’re wrong,
Or perhaps to make a few changes of your own,
Some words and some poems continue to disobey.