

PRAISE FOR *From Shade to Shine*

“In turns elegiac, documentary, and celebratory, Baumgaertner has allowed her fervent meditations to be overheard, and has thereby enlisted us in joining a prayerful dialogue with the God, and with one another. At every turn, she manifests an understanding that the poetic operation of language—those parabolic structures that allow our speaking more than we know to say—is one’s best path to apprehending within the Most a surpassing All.”

—**Scott Cairns**, author of *Slow Pilgrim: The Collected Poems*

“For one seeking to come out from the darkness and into the light, that journey could well begin and end with Baumgaertner’s new book. Her poems remind me that words on a page harbor and invite the divine Word; that the poem can be crucible and crucifix to fix and transfix the eternal; that the destination of all our journeys is to shuck the seeds of shade inside us and enter fully into the shine of His light.”

—**Valerie Wohlfeld**, chosen for the Yale Series of Younger Poets Prize

“Here is bread to feed the hungry soul with words that truly matter, words which will bring you closer to Christ, the Incarnate Word, the One who ‘rises, /he rises indeed,/light blazing.’ Oh, and the places she evokes with such heartbreaking accuracy—the Concentration Camps, Cuba, and for me especially those ancient runes of history in the way she captures the Orkneys. And so much more: marriage, that long-lost life of aunts and uncles and devout musicians and a dear bull terrier who live now in vibrant memory. Read her as you would the Psalms and those Metaphysical poets she so beautifully echoes. You too will be uplifted by her words, her music, her presence.”

—**Paul Mariani**, author of *The Mystery of It All: The Vocation of Poetry in the Twilight of Modernity*

“There is an exhilarating permanence about Baumgaertner’s remarkable poems. Hands cupped to receive the Eucharist are said, in one poem, to be ‘a small manger’—for Christians, a stunning and deeply true picture; there are plenty of others. The images and music of these poems bear steady witness to God’s abiding presence and love, even as the poems engagingly address widely various subjects. These are tough-minded poems of faith and hope, and they couldn’t have come at a better time.”

—**Charles Hughes**, author of *The Evening Sky* and *Cave Art*

“Baumgaertner has long been a voice crying in the wilderness, calling us to embrace poetry of beauty, goodness, and the mysterious truths of Christian faith. Here, she takes us on journeys back to her ancestral Cuba, to the horrors of Nazi-crushed Poland, to the earliest days of life beyond the garden with Eve and her family, to the ancient and rugged coast of Scotland’s Orkney Islands, and to current-day America. She converses with diverse poets—even out-smarting Christopher Smart with her dog Maddie usurping the place previously held by a cat named Jeffrey. Perhaps Baumgaertner’s richest gifts to us, though, are in her liturgical poems. How wise church leaders would be to draw these poems into the life of their communities.”

—**D.S. Martin**, author of *Angelicus*, and Poet-in-Residence at
McMaster Divinity College

“For all our effort, we may never get the meaning of past and present, the nature of beauty or savagery, or the relationship of God and the world right. To live thoughtfully and devoutly in time is, in a sense, to be in perpetual risk of heresy; the most we can hope is, from time to time, to get such things less wrong. Baumgaertner’s new poems are meditations of fine detail and great beauty that lead us into the mystery of the world and the mystery of the divine and, in their unfailing honesty, somehow leave us less wrong about these things than we were before.”

—**James Matthew Wilson**, author of *The Strangeness of the Good*

NEW POEMS

From
Shade
to Shine

JILL PELÁEZ BAUMGAERTNER



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The Quidditie

My God, a verse is not a crown,
No point of honour, or gay suit,
No hawk, or banquet, or renown,
Nor a good sword, nor yet a lute.

It cannot vault, or dance, or play;
It never was in France or Spain;
Nor can it entertain the day
With a great stable or domain.

It is no office, art, or news;
Nor the Exchange, or busy Hall:
But it is that which, while I use,
I am with Thee, and *Most take all*.

—GEORGE HERBERT

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PROLOGUE

Meditation on Psalm 8

*O LORD our Lord
how exalted is your name in all the world!*

A name like no other,
God, you are on our lips,
your name in our throats,
the syllables filling, substantial
like bread on our tongues.
We cannot get enough of you.
You kindle our glee
and tame our grief,
propel our metaphors,
invade our songs.
Even when it is not our intention
to put you there, you are there.
For you the moon and stars
are mere fidgets, and you
spin them like gyroscopes.
And here we sit in the turn
of creation, our minds agape,
stupefied by your love for us.

What are we in comparison
to all that you have made?
You have strewn us
with a profusion of blossoms,
an abundance of sunlight.
Only the angels and you,
the Lord of the Universe,
are closer to heaven.

You have given us
this earth and time on it.
All house painters and finger painters,
teachers and designers,

all coaches and men working in trees,
all gymnasts defying gravity,
cooks and midwives,
grandparents with their eyes
on the generations.
You have crafted us
like sculpture
and painted the world
with colors only
you can name,
you whose name
is so like no other
it hallows our throats
when its syllables
form on our lips.

— I —

Poem for November

Ephesians 5:8-20

Many trees are mere stencils now,
but some still dazzle, those with light
in their yellow leaves, this even
as November skies stretch mute
and somber.

It is easy this time of year
to dwell on losses and the world
so shattered, even watching this translucent
yellow tree, whose light one could read by,
this blaze against the dimming season.

And we are gathered, each one of us,
in this autumn dilemma,
both anchored and adrift.

Like Eve reaching for Adam's hand
as they stand, stunned,
outside the gates.

Or that child, Mary, who in the silence
after Gabriel's startling news,
wonders, "Should I say yes?"

Or Paul, the persecutor, eyes scaled,
his mouth a thin, straight
line, his heart in its first
ever motion of turning over.

Or two thousand years later
those rabbis at Auschwitz
who put God on trial,
convicted him,
then turned to evening prayer.

Or the aging professor
who said that when he cannot
forgive, he simply acts as if he had.

These images may seem splinters,
fragments scattered and aimless.
But we are not so twisted
that we cannot see the cross's
change from torture into bliss,
from blood and slivers
into the gleam of polished
planks for Christ, arms
raised in victory.

So here we gather
in all of our imperfections,
waiting for song to blaze into the dark
corners, as this year races
toward both finales and preludes.

Listen. Soon one clear voice will blend
with another. Anchored by the rush
of melody we will catch hold
of the whole breath and timbre
of the moment and together
in this world so prone to drift,
we will see by the cross,
the tree of light, pure music.

Advent

That breathless moment before the maestro
raises the baton, before the leaf falls,
before the page turns—

Just as the music begins to begin,
the leaf loosens its hold,
the words on the page give way
to more pages—

His coming is prelude, our waiting
for the fullness of time, a double waiting.