



Days of Blue and Flame

SARAH YERKES

PRAISE FOR *DAYS OF BLUE AND FLAME*

“Sarah Yerkes’ *Days of Blue and Flame* is a message to future generations whose world we have mottled with lasting trauma and ecological scars; but hers is a calm and generous voice of deep intelligence and compassion. As she imagines Dickinson alive today, writing her poems in chapbooks rather than sewn fascicles, Yerkes herself sews a pre-nuclear America to the computer age, and she leaves space enough for our pages, and our children’s pages, all the stories yet to come.”

DAVID KEPLINGER, *Another City*

“In her wide-ranging poetry, which looks outward but also inward, Sarah has found a space, beyond the possibilities of three-dimensional art, to investigate and express feelings close to her heart, at times with restraint, always questioning, and always striving to gaze with absolute clarity.”

BONNIE NARADZAY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Book of Poems by 101-Year-Old Author

Passager Books announces the publication of *Days of Blue and Flame* by 101-year-old Sarah Yerkes. She investigates subjects closest to her heart—childhood, family, travel, aging, art—with, as poetry teacher Bonnie Naradzay says, “absolute clarity.”

Yerkes has lived in Washington, DC since the 1940s. She has a master’s degree in architecture from Harvard and studied sculpture at the Corcoran School of Art.

After a career as a sculptor and a landscape architect, Yerkes began writing poetry at age 97. “I never fully understood how satisfying it could be to shape, build and form a piece with words rather than with wood, aluminum, stone and iron pipe,” she said.

Passager editor Kendra Kopelke says one of the things that attracted the editors to Yerkes’ work was the sense of a person redefining herself, not at 35, not at 65, but at age 100. “Sarah is a remarkable artist, hard-working, striving to write sometimes difficult poems with courage. A model for us all.”

Poet David Keplinger, winner of the 2019 UNT Rilke Award, said, “Yerkes sews a pre-nuclear America to the computer age, and she leaves space enough for our own pages, and our children’s pages, all the stories yet to come.”

Days of Blue and Flame is available from www.passagerbooks.com.

Passager Books is a not-for-profit press dedicated to publishing the work of older writers, encouraging the imagination throughout life, and creating beautiful and welcoming publications. Its literary journal, *Passager*, founded in 1990, has featured work by nearly 1000 poets, fiction writers and memoirists, many in their 80s and 90s. With *Days of Blue and Flame*, Passager continues its tradition of bringing the compelling writing and insight of older writers to the public.

FROM THE AUTHOR

Over the years, I have celebrated holidays, birthdays and other occasions by writing poems. The earliest poem in this collection, “Autumn,” came to me when I was in my mid-fifties and newly married. When I was in my mid-nineties, Henry Morgenthau, a friend at my retirement community, Ingleside at Rock Creek, became interested in writing poetry. Together, we took a poetry workshop led by poet Bonnie Naradzay at Ingleside and I found a new way of making art.

I have always liked to make things. Doll clothes, ash trays from clay found on the shores of Lake Erie, puppets, marionettes. I was intrigued by my mother’s needlepoint. Later I learned how to do it myself and created my own designs for projects – a hanging for our chapel and pillows for my entire family, including all thirteen great-grandchildren.

After moving to Washington, D.C. in the 1940s with my growing family, and after winning a blue ribbon at a flower show, a friend and I formed a small landscape architecture firm. We called it Edmunds and Hitchcock, our maiden names, to avoid confusion with our architect husbands. After twenty years, we decided to retire and I felt quite lost without a project. So I returned to the Corcoran School of Art to study sculpture. A revelation!

From the first fine careless rapture
three dimensions, still, but pure,
without clients, no contractors
to interrupt creation’s lure.

Eventually, after another twenty years, partly due to old age

and decrepitude, I was no longer infatuated with creating large sculptures and turned to creating smaller works. By that time we had moved to Ingleside, where the facilities for making art were limited. I never fully understood how satisfying it could be to shape, build and form a piece with words rather than with wood, aluminum, stone and iron pipe.

How fortunate I was, at 97, to have a challenging path, one that would enable me to peel back more layers and find unexplored insights into my long and varied life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photograph by Christine Drawl

Sarah Hitchcock Yerkes was born in 1918 in Portland, Oregon, where her father had been sent to remove giant spruce trees from the Northwest forests to make WWI airplane propellers. Once the war ended, the family returned to their home in Cleveland, where Sarah grew up. Sarah studied at the Boston Museum School, the Cambridge School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, and Harvard's Graduate School of Design, and was one of the first women to complete a degree in architecture from Harvard. Since 1945, Sarah has lived in Washington DC. In addition to her professional life as a landscape architect and sculptor, she was a student, a trustee for over fifteen years, and interim dean at the Corcoran Galleries and Museum. In her mid-nineties, Sarah turned seriously to poetry when she joined a poetry workshop at her retirement community, Ingleside at Rock Creek. She is mother to three, grandmother to nine, and great grandmother to thirteen children.

ORDERING INFORMATION

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