

This is the poem Maine Poet Laureate Betsy Sholl poem may have read at the January 5, 2011 inauguration of Governor Paul LePage, had she been invited to the ceremony. "I actually started it before the Obama election, the year before," says Sholl, "then pulled it out to work on during the Obama campaign."

ELECTION DAY

Betsy Sholl

Falling on the steps of city hall, the light
this late afternoon infuses the whole sky
and bathes these poor little trees of heaven
stuck in concrete. From all sides, flooding down,

light slants across ruddy brick storefronts,
streaks along cables, glitters up from the bay,
and now, as I turn west toward the hospital,
here's the moon, the Cheshire moon, grinning

bright as a politician's promise, only better,
not favoring a few, but shining for anyone
who stops to gaze at this sky, which not even
the coldest facts can make less marvelous

just now, before the tabulations begin.
And here's the hospital, grinding on, full
of wires and tubes, trays of food, socks that
puff up and down so my friend's legs don't clot—

isn't it wonderful? Her loopy rainbow grin,
her dozing off mid-sentence, waking surprised,
to say, "Oh, hello," as if I just arrived.
And now when I say good-bye and step out,

the sky's so deep, I want to stuff the ballot box,
voting for earth all over again, happy to shiver
in the glow, as the first stars poke through
this impossible to name, not-yet-midnight blue,

letting it pour over me—glorious night,
the brightening moon, below which we turn
in endless space, all of us afloat, held
by invisible strings, though we feel so solid,

so full of our own weight. Lord, let me stand here
feeling nothing but this moment, spinning
and not dizzy, not yet facing the election results.
Let the bass from this passing car pulse through me

as the tattered man leaning on the streetlight
stops another, just to ask the name of his dog,
nothing more, just to say that name, *Herbie*,
and knuckle his ears. Amazing: Two men,

one in a fine suit, one in frayed tweed, stop
and chat, shake hands, each grinning as they part—
here, under this glowing sky, the polls still open,
and the moon above, new, all over again.