

CL&L

Winter Term – 01/09 – 2/27 '24

Barry Wallenstein

*Man that is born of woman  
Is of few days and full of trouble.  
He cometh like a flower And is  
cut down.  
He fleeth also as a shadow  
And continuith not. -- The Book of Job, 14 1-2*

*My dearest dream is for an internationality of poems and poets binding the lands of  
the earth closer than all treaties and diplomacy. Walt Whitman*

*Let everything happen to you  
Beauty and Terror  
Just keep going  
No feeling is final – Rainer Maria Rilke*

*All gladness, dear Nelly, all light!" Paul Celan to Nelly Sachs*

*Senegalese proverb – I am because/ we are*

*It is vanity to think that one can influence the course of history by writing poetry. It  
is not the barometer that changes the weather. -- Zbigniew Herbert*

*The best way to forget oneself is to look at the world with attention and love." —  
Red Auerbach*



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## Psalm 139

1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. 4 For *there* is not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6 *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it.

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit?

Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. 9 *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike to *thee*.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. 15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!

18 *If* I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:  
when I awake, I am still with thee. 19 Surely thou wilt slay  
the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

20 For they speak against thee wickedly, *and* thine enemies  
take *thy name* in vain.

21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?  
And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

22 I hate them with perfect hatred:  
I count them mine enemies.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart:  
try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if *there be any* wicked way in  
me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Native American Prayer by Sioux Chief \*Yellow Hawk\*

Oh Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds, and whose breath gives life to all the world – hear me – I come before you, one of your children. I am small and weak. I need your strength and wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things you have made, my ears sharp to hear your voice. Make me wise, so that I may know the things you have taught my People, the lesson you have hidden in every leaf and rock. I seek strength not to be superior to my brothers, but to be able to fight my greatest enemy, myself. Make me ever ready to come to you, with clean hands and straight eyes, so when life fades as a fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.

*From Under Milk Wood* by Dylan Thomas 1914 - 1953

Every morning when I wake,  
Dear Lord, a little prayer I make,  
O please do keep Thy lovely eye  
On all poor creatures born to die

And every evening at sun-down  
I ask a blessing on the town, For  
whether we last the night or no  
I'm sure is always touch-and-go.

We are not wholly bad or good  
Who live our lives under Milk Wood,  
And Thou, I know, wilt be the first To  
see our best side, not our worst.

O let us see another day!  
Bless us all this night, I pray,  
And to the sun we all will bow  
And say, good-bye – but just for now!



Sonnet 97 by William Shakespeare 1564 - 1616

How like a winter hath my absence been From  
thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!  
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen! What  
old December's bareness everywhere!  
And yet this time remov'd was summer's time,  
The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,  
Bearing the wanton burthen of the prime, Like  
widow'd wombs after their lords' decease:  
Yet this abundant issue seem'd to me  
But hope of orphans and unfather'd fruit;  
For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,  
And thou away, the very birds are mute;  
Or if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer That  
leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

## Sonnet 64

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defac'd  
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age; When  
sometime lofty towers I see down-ras'd  
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;  
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain  
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore, And  
the firm soil win of the wat'ry main,  
Increasing store with loss and loss with store;  
When I have seen such interchange of state,  
Or state itself confounded to decay; Ruin hath  
taught me thus to ruminare, That Time will come  
and take my love away. This thought is as a  
death, which cannot choose But weep to have  
that which it fears to lose.

Sonnet by John Keats 1795 - 1821

Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art—  
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night And  
watching, with eternal lids apart,  
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite

The moving waters at their priestlike task  
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores, Or  
gazing on the new soft-fallen mask  
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—

No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable, Pillow'd  
upon my fair love's ripening breast,  
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

Love's Secret by William Blake 1757 - 1827

Never seek to tell thy love,  
Love that never told can be; For  
the gentle wind does move  
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,  
I told her all my heart;  
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears, Ah!  
she did depart!

Soon as she was gone from me,  
A traveler came by,  
Silently, invisibly  
He took her with a sigh.

Home-Thoughts, from Abroad by Robert Browning 1812 - 1889

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf, While  
the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough In  
England—now!

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!  
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture The  
first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!

The Snow-Storm by Ralph Waldo Emerson 1803 - 1882

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,  
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,  
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air Hides  
hills and woods, the river, and the heaven, And  
veils the farm-house at the garden's end.  
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's  
feet Delayed, all friends shut out, the  
housemates sit Around the radiant fireplace,  
enclosed In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.  
Out of an unseen quarry evermore  
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer Curves  
his white bastions with projected roof Round  
every windward stake, or tree, or door.  
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work  
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he  
For number or proportion. Mockingly,  
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;  
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;  
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,  
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and, at the gate, A  
tapering turret overtops the work.  
And when his hours are numbered, and the world  
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,  
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art  
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,  
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,  
The frolic architecture of the snow.

Spellbound by Emily Brontë 1818 - 1848

The night is darkening round me,  
The wild winds coldly blow;  
But a tyrant spell has bound me And  
I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending Their bare  
boughs weighed with snow. And the  
storm is fast descending, And yet I  
cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,  
Wastes beyond wastes below;  
But nothing drear can move me; I  
will not, cannot go.

The Darkling Thrush by Thomas Hardy 1840 - 1928

I leant upon a coppice gate  
    When Frost was spectre-grey,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
    The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
    Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
    Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
    The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
    The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
    Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
    Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
    The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
    Of joy illimited;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
    In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
    Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
    Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
    Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
    His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
    And I was unaware.

## Musee des Beaux Arts by W. H. Auden 1907 - 1973

About suffering they were never wrong,  
The old Masters: how well they understood  
Its human position: how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;  
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
They never forgot  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away  
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water, and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.



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Landscape with the Fall of Icarus by William Carlos Williams 1883-1963

According to Brueghel  
when Icarus fell it was  
spring

a farmer was ploughing  
his field the whole  
pageantry

of the year was  
awake tingling near

the edge of the sea  
concerned with  
itself

sweating in the sun  
that melted the  
wings' wax

unsignificantly  
off the coast there  
was

a splash quite unnoticed  
this was Icarus  
drowning

From *Collected Poems: 1939-1962, Volume II* by William Carlos Williams

## After Someone's Death by Tomas Tranströmer 1931-2015

Once there was a shock that left behind a long, pale,  
shimmering comet's tail. It shelters us. It makes the  
TV images fuzzy.  
It settles in cold droplets on the power lines.

You can still shuffle along on skis in the winter sun  
through groves where last year's leaves hang on.  
Like pages torn from old telephone books— all of  
the names swallowed up by the cold.

It's still pleasant to feel the heart beating.  
But the shadow often seems more real than the body.  
The samurai looks insignificant beside his armor of  
black dragon scales.

*Translated from the Swedish by Patty Crane*

Walls Trembling Like Horses, by Dmitry Blizniuk

The sounds grow; they are the teeth of a vehemently rotating circular saw. And the bomber folds the sky like a book, cuts the sky in two, and you, seized with terror, shrivel up into “I,” into “We,” like into a lifeboat sent by God, but you are too big to squeeze in. Quickly and rudely, you cover your mom with your body. Your stunned guardian angel blindly thumps its wings against the linoleum, like an albatross on the deck. Where are you? Are you still here? Still alive? My dear people. The sky bursts with explosions. The sky gets filled with pink manganese solution. The oblong eyes of the beast of the horizon. It’s the trepanation of the despairing city with pneumatic picks. The walls of your house tremble like horses that caught the smell of a wolf.

*translated from Russian by Sergey Gerasimov*

—from [Poets Respond](#) May  
10, 2022

**Dmitry Blizniuk:** “I am in Kharkov, which has been [bombed and shelled by Russian troops](#) for 67 days in a row. Here I try to survive and write poetry.” ([web](#))

## The Song of the Drunkard by Rainer Maria Rilke [1875-1926]

It wasn't in me. it went in and out.  
I wanted to hold it. it held, with the wine.  
(I no longer know what it was.) then  
wine held this and that for me till I could  
never leave him completely.  
I am a fool.

now I play in his game and he shakes me out,  
looking at me disdainfully and perhaps today  
he will lose me to death – that brute! if he  
wins me, the dirtiest card in the pack, he'll  
use me to scratch his scabs and throw me  
away into the muck. #



### Childhood

It would be good to give much thought, before  
you try to find words for something so lost, for  
those long childhood afternoons you knew that  
vanished so completely —and why?

We're still reminded—: sometimes by a rain, but  
we can no longer say what it means; life was  
never again so filled with meeting, with reunion  
and with passing on

as back then, when nothing happened to us  
except what happens to things and creatures: we  
lived their world as something human, and  
became filled to the brim with figures.

And became as lonely as a sheperd and as  
overburdened by vast distances, and summoned  
and stirred as from far away, and slowly, like a  
long new thread, introduced into that picture-  
sequence where now having to go on bewilders  
us.

Cool Tombs by Carl Sandburg 1878 - 1967

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he forgot the copperheads and the assassin ... in the dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral turned ashes ... in the dust, in the cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember? ... in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin horns ... tell me if the lovers are losers ... tell me if any get more than the lovers ... in the dust ... in the cool tombs.

Good Night by Carl Sandburg

Many ways to spell good night.

Fireworks at a pier on the Fourth of July  
spell it with red wheels and yellow spokes.  
They fizz in the air, touch the water and quit.  
Rockets make a trajectory of gold-and-blue  
and then go out.

Railroad trains at night spell with a smokestack  
mushrooming a white pillar.

Steamboats turn a curve in the Mississippi crying  
in a baritone that crosses lowland cottonfields  
to a razorback hill.

It is easy to spell good night.

Many ways to spell good night.

The Farmer's Bride by Charlotte Mew 1869 – 1928

Three summers since I chose a maid,  
Too young maybe—but more's to do At  
harvest-time than bide and woo.

When us was wed she turned afraid  
Of love and me and all things human;  
Like the shut of a winter's day  
Her smile went out, and 'twadn't a woman—  
More like a little frightened fay.

One night, in the Fall, she runned away.

“Out 'mong the sheep, her be,” they said,  
'Should properly have been abed;  
But sure enough she wadn't there  
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.  
So over seven-acre field and up-along across the down  
We chased her, flying like a hare  
Before our lanterns. To Church-Town  
All in a shiver and a scare  
We caught her, fetched her home at last  
And turned the key upon her, fast.

She does the work about the house  
As well as most, but like a mouse:  
Happy enough to chat and play  
With birds and rabbits and such as they,  
So long as men-folk keep away.

“Not near, not near!” her eyes beseech  
When one of us comes within reach.  
The women say that beasts in stall  
Look round like children at her call.  
I've hardly heard her speak at all.

Shy as a leveret, swift as he,

Straight and slight as a young larch tree,  
Sweet as the first wild violets, she, To  
her wild self. But what to me?

The short days shorten and the oaks are brown,  
The blue smoke rises to the low grey sky,  
One leaf in the still air falls slowly down,  
A magpie's spotted feathers lie  
On the black earth spread white with rime,  
The berries redden up to Christmas-time.

What's Christmas-time without there be  
Some other in the house than we!

She sleeps up in the attic there  
Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair  
Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down, The  
soft young down of her, the brown, The brown  
of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!



The Soul has Bandaged moments (360) by Emily Dickinson 1830 –1886

The Soul has Bandaged moments –  
When too appalled to stir –  
She feels some ghastly Fright come up  
And stop to look at her –

Salute her, with long fingers –  
Caress her freezing hair – Sip,  
Goblin, from the very lips  
The Lover – hovered – o'er – Unworthy,  
that a thought so mean Accost a Theme  
– so – fair –

The soul has moments of escape –  
When bursting all the doors – She  
dances like a Bomb, abroad, And  
swings upon the Hours,

As do the Bee – delirious borne – Long  
Dungeoned from his Rose – Touch  
Liberty – then know no more, But  
Noon, and Paradise –

The Soul's retaken moments – When,  
Felon led along,  
With shackles on the plumed feet, And  
staples, in the song,

The Horror welcomes her, again,  
These, are not brayed of Tongue –  
#

To Make a Prairie by Emily Dickinson

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee, One  
clover, and a bee.

And reverie.

The reverie alone will do, If  
bees are few.

Fairy-Land by E. A. Poe 1809-1849

Dim vales—and shadowy floods— And  
cloudy-looking woods,  
Whose forms we can't discover For  
the tears that drip all over:  
Huge moons there wax and wane—  
Again—again—again—  
Every moment of the night—  
Forever changing places— And they  
put out the star-light With the breath  
from their pale faces.  
About twelve by the moon-dial,  
One more filmy than the rest  
(A kind which, upon trial,  
They have found to be the best)  
Comes down—still down—and down  
With its centre on the crown  
Of a mountain's eminence,  
While its wide circumference  
In easy drapery falls  
Over hamlets, over halls, Wherever  
they may be— O'er the strange  
woods—o'er the sea— Over spirits on  
the wing— Over every drowsy thing—  
And buries them up quite  
In a labyrinth of light—  
And then, how, deep! —O, deep, Is  
the passion of their sleep.  
In the morning they arise,  
And their moony covering  
Is soaring in the skies,  
With the tempests as they toss,  
Like—almost any thing—  
Or a yellow Albatross.  
They use that moon no more

For the same end as before,  
Videlicet, a tent—  
Which I think extravagant:  
Its atomies, however,  
Into a shower dissever,  
Of which those butterflies  
Of Earth, who seek the skies,  
And so come down again  
(Never-contented things!)  
Have brought a specimen  
Upon their quivering wings.

The Pylons by Stephen Spender 1909-1995

The secret of these hills was stone, and cottages  
Of that stone made,  
And crumbling roads  
That turned on sudden hidden villages

Now over these small hills, they have built the concrete  
That trails black wire  
Pylons, those pillars  
Bare like nude giant girls that have no secret.

The valley with its gilt and evening look  
And the green chestnut  
Of customary root,  
Are mocked dry like the parched bed of a brook.

But far above and far as sight endures  
Like whips of anger  
With lightning's danger  
There runs the quick perspective of the future.

This dwarfs our emerald country by its trek  
So tall with prophecy  
Dreaming of cities  
Where often clouds shall lean their swan-white neck.

## Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night by Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day; Rage,  
rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they Do  
not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright Their  
frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, Rage,  
rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way, Do  
not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay, Rage,  
rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height, Curse,  
bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

## And Death Shall Have No Dominion by Dylan Thomas

And death shall have no dominion.  
Dead man naked they shall be one  
With the man in the wind and the west moon;

When their bones are picked clean and the clean bones gone,  
They shall have stars at elbow and foot;  
Though they go mad they shall be sane,

Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;  
Though lovers be lost love shall not; And death shall  
have no dominion.

And death shall have no dominion.  
Under the windings of the sea

They lying long shall not die windily;  
Twisting on racks when sinews give way,  
Strapped to a wheel, yet they shall not break;  
Faith in their hands shall snap in two,  
And the unicorn evils run them through;  
Split all ends up they shan't crack;  
And death shall have no dominion.  
And death shall have no dominion.  
No more may gulls cry at their ears  
Or waves break loud on the seashores;  
Where blew a flower may a flower no more  
Lift its head to the blows of the rain;  
Though they be mad and dead as nails,  
Hammers of the characters hammer through daisies;  
Break in the sun till the sun breaks down, And  
death shall have no dominion.

The Snow Fairy by Claude McKay 1890 - 1948

I

Throughout the afternoon I watched them there,  
Snow-fairies falling, falling from the sky,  
Whirling fantastic in the misty air, Contending  
fierce for space supremacy.  
And they flew down a mightier force at night,  
As though in heaven there was revolt and riot,  
And they, frail things had taken panic flight Down  
to the calm earth seeking peace and quiet.  
I went to bed and rose at early dawn  
To see them huddled together in a heap, Each  
merged into the other upon the lawn, Worn  
out by the sharp struggle, fast asleep. The  
sun shone brightly on them half the day, By  
night they stealthily had stol'n away.

II

And suddenly my thoughts then turned to you  
Who came to me upon a winter's night, When  
snow-sprites round my attic window flew, Your  
hair disheveled, eyes aglow with light.  
My heart was like the weather when you came,  
The wanton winds were blowing loud and  
long; But you, with joy and passion all aflame,  
You danced and sang a lilting summer song.  
I made room for you in my little bed,  
Took covers from the closet fresh and warm, A  
downful pillow for your scented head, And lay  
down with you resting in my arm. You went  
with Dawn. You left me ere the day, The  
lonely actor of a dreamy play.

If We Must Die by Claude McKay

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs, Making  
their mock at our accursèd lot.  
If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy Shall  
be constrained to honor us though dead! O  
kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!  
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow! What  
though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, Pressed  
to the wall, dying, but fighting back!



Behind Stowe by Elizabeth Bishop 1911 –1979

I heard an elf go whistling by,  
A whistle sleek as moonlit grass,  
That drew me like a silver string  
To where the dusty, pale moths fly,  
And make a magic as they pass; And  
there I heard a cricket sing.

His singing echoed through and through The  
dark under a windy tree  
Where glinted little insects' wings. His  
singing split the sky in two.  
The halves fell either side of me,  
And I stood straight, bright with moon-rings.

Arrival at Santos by Elizabeth Bishop

Here is a coast; here is a harbor;  
here, after a meager diet of horizon, is some scenery; impractically  
shaped and—who knows?—self-pitying mountains,  
sad and harsh beneath their frivolous greenery,

with a little church on top of one. And warehouses,  
some of them painted a feeble pink, or blue, and  
some tall, uncertain palms. Oh, tourist,  
is this how this country is going to answer you

and your immodest demands for a different world,  
and a better life, and complete comprehension of  
both at last, and immediately, after eighteen days  
of suspension?

Finish your breakfast. The tender is coming, a strange and  
ancient craft, flying a strange and brilliant rag.  
So that's the flag. I never saw it before.  
I somehow never thought of there *being* a flag,

but of course there was, all along. And coins, I presume, and  
paper money; they remain to be seen.  
And gingerly now we climb down the ladder backward,  
myself and a fellow passenger named Miss Breen,

descending into the midst of twenty-six freighters  
waiting to be loaded with green coffee beans. Please,  
boy, do be more careful with that boat hook!  
Watch out! Oh! It has caught Miss Breen's

skirt! There! Miss Breen is about seventy, a retired  
police lieutenant, six feet tall, with beautiful bright  
blue eyes and a kind expression. Her home, when  
she is at home, is in Glens Fall

s, New York. There. We are settled.

The customs officials will speak English, we hope, and leave us our bourbon and cigarettes. Ports are necessities, like postage stamps, or soap,

but they seldom seem to care what impression they make, or, like this, only attempt, since it does not matter, the unassertive colors of soap, or postage stamps—wasting away like the former, slipping the way the latter

do when we mail the letters we wrote on the boat, either because the glue here is very inferior or because of the heat. We leave Santos at once; we are driving to the interior.

*January 1952*

## I Remember Galileo by Gerald Stern 1925-2022

I remember Galileo describing the mind as a piece of paper blown around by the wind, and I loved the sight of it sticking to a tree, or jumping into the backseat of a car, and for years I watched paper leap through my cities; but yesterday I saw the mind was a squirrel caught crossing Route 80 between the wheels of a giant truck, dancing back and forth like a thin leaf, or a frightened string, for only two seconds living on the white concrete before he got away, his life shortened by all that terror, his head jerking, his yellow teeth ground down to dust.

It was the speed of the squirrel and his lowness to the ground, his great purpose and the alertness of his dancing, that showed me the difference between him and paper. Paper will do in theory, when there is time to sit back in a metal chair and study shadows; but for this life I need a squirrel, his clawed feet spread, his whole soul quivering, the loud noise shaking him from head to tail. O philosophical mind, O mind of paper, I need a squirrel finishing his wild dash across the highway, rushing up his green ungoverned hillside.

Shibboleth by Paul Celan 1920 – 1970

along with my stones the  
big cry behind the bars  
they dragged me in the  
middle of the market there,  
where the flag rolls up, I  
swore no oath.

Flute,  
Double Flute of the Night:  
think of the dark twin  
blush in Vienna and  
Madrid.

Lower your flag to half-mast  
memory. At half mast for  
today and always.

Heart:

make yourself known here too  
here, in the middle of the market.  
Call out the shibboleth away  
from home: February. No  
pasaran.

Unicorn:

you know about the stones  
you know about the water  
come, i'm taking you  
away to the voices from  
Estremadura.

This Evening Also by Paul Celan

more fully, since snow fell even  
on this sun-drifted, sun-  
drenched sea, blossoms the ice  
in those baskets you carry into  
town.

sand you demand in return, for  
the last rose back at home this  
evening also wants to be fed out  
of the trickling hour.

O the Chimneys by Nelly Sachs 1891 - 1970

O the chimneys

On the carefully planned dwellings of death When  
Israel's body rose dissolved in smoke

Through the air –

To be welcomed by a chimney sweep star

Turned black Or was it a  
ray of the sun?

O the chimneys!

Paths of freedom for the dust of Jeremiah and Job –  
Who dreamed you up and built stone upon stone The  
path of smoke for their flight?

O dwellings of death

Set out so enticingly

For the host of the house, who used to be the guest – O  
you fingers

Laying the stone of the threshold

Like a knife between life and death –

O you chimneys O you fingers

And Israel's body dissolves in smoke through the air!

Job by Nelly Sachs

O you wind rose of torment!

Torn by primeval storms

In ever changing directions of the tempests;

Yet your south is loneliness, Where you  
stand is the navel of pain.

Your eyes are sunk deep into your skull

Like cave-dwelling doves in the night

Brought out blind by the huntsman,

Your voice is silenced

From asking too many whys,

To the worms and the fishes your voice has gone.

Job, you have wept through all the watches of the night  
But some day the star sign of your blood will Outshine  
all the rising suns.



Bell Bottom Trousers, by Diane Wakoski

*bell bottom trousers, coat of navy blue, she  
loves a sailor and he loves her too.  
—Guy Lombardo WWII song lyric*

Mine were brown velvet, lush as sable. '70s wide  
and swinging, swirling outward from my calves,  
vaquero rhythmed, and very expensive, the cost of  
a '40s war savings-bond. Driving across  
America, alone in Green Greed  
—or was it the Fox-brown Audi?—

I laid them flat across the backseat, like hero's flags,  
covered them with a Mexican serape, keeping them  
intact, uncrushed, ready for The Visit.

The Evening. The Expanse-of-Pacific-wrapped-around-me-Event, where  
I would wear them.

When the night collapsed into next day, and I fell—  
alone—into my motel room king-sized bed,  
like a duffle bag thrown into a locker,  
sleeping the salty sleep of a girl who dreams of oceans and the man  
coracled upon it, I flung the bell bottoms onto the foot  
of the bed, where the tossed heavy-textured spread covered them  
during my flailing night, thus causing their loss,  
I leaving them, not unlike my sailor-father  
leaving me. The bell bottoms next  
morning, forgotten, abandoned, in my  
haste to travel on.

That's what I am thinking about  
forty years later, I left  
them behind, and

just to fill you in on my concern, I who hate telephones, did call the next day, but they said no one had found them. That's what they said.

Unlike my bookkeeper mother, I don't keep a list of items left behind, yet these brown-as-my-father's-eyes trousers swirl into history. They seem memorable like a lost ring, topaz or sardonyx carved into a cameo.

They've conjured images of my father's sea duty to the Aleutians—bears hibernating— or Pearl Harbor— yellow hibiscus worn behind an ear. They floated, a topaz, fallen brown-faceted and envious out of its setting, my missing sailor pants, worn in the days when I used to dance— short breaths like the exhale of cigarette smoke, animating the free swing of bell bottoms. A small mishap in one of many journeys, just a memory, like the folded flag, I can't let go of.

—*from* **Rattle #33, Summer 2010**

Summer in the Ordinary by William Logan

*Eppur si muove*

The iris wavers as the fox trots by, mornings in paradise, or what pretends by any other name to smell of meat. What were we then that we did not become? The water touched the image of the beast; old factories of iron muted the plain. They were of no consequence, those sun-dark days before the word fell hard upon the ear. The Indian corn, I mean the poppy fields, carpets of color sown and yet not sown, ideas that rose to metal and to brick. That too was passion. Naked, in need of need, we had heard of passion. We knew ourselves that first first morning when we woke, and died.

Ancient Music by Ezra Pound 1885 - 1972

Winter is icummen in, Lhude  
sing Goddamm. Raineth drop  
and staineth slop, And how the  
wind doth ramm!

Sing: Goddamm.

Skiddeth bus and sloppeth us, An  
ague hath my ham.  
Freezeth river, turneth liver,       Damn you,  
sing: Goddamm. Goddamm, Goddamm, 'tis why  
I am, Goddamm,  
      So 'gainst the winter's balm.  
Sing goddamm, damm, sing Goddamm.  
Sing goddamm, sing goddamm, DAMM.

A parody of the Anglo—Saxon poem, Cuckoo Song **The  
Cuckoo Song**

Sing, cuccu, nu. Sing, cuccu.

Sing, cuccu. Sing, cuccu, nu.

Sumer is i-cumen in –  
Lhude sing, cuccu! Groweth  
sed and bloweth med    And  
springth the wude nu.  
Sing, cuccu!

Awe bleteth after lomb,  
      Lhouth after calve cu, Bulluc  
sterteth, bucke verteth –  
Murie sing, cuccu!  
      Cuccu, cuccu.  
      Wel singes thu, cuccu.  
      Ne swik thu naver nu!

Snow-Flakes by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow 1807 - 1882

Out of the bosom of the Air,  
Out of the cloud-folds of her garments shaken,  
Over the woodlands brown and bare,  
Over the harvest-fields forsaken  
Silent, and soft, and slow Descends  
the snow.

Even as our cloudy fancies take  
Suddenly shape in some divine expression,  
Even as the troubled heart doth make  
In the white countenance confession,  
The troubled sky reveals The grief it  
feels.

This is the poem of the air,  
Slowly in silent syllables recorded;  
This is the secret of despair,  
Long in its cloudy bosom hoarded,  
Now whispered and revealed To  
wood and field.

Buffalo Bill 's Defunct by ee cummings 1894 - 1962

Buffalo Bill 's defunct  
who used to  
ride a watersmooth-silver  
stallion  
and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat

Jesus

he was a handsome man  
and what i want to know is  
how do you like your blue-eyed boy  
Mister Death  
#

All in green went my love riding by e.e. cummings

All in green went my love riding  
on a great horse of gold into the  
silver dawn.

four lean hounds crouched low and smiling the  
merry deer ran before.

Fleeter be they than dappled dreams  
the swift sweet deer the red rare  
deer.

Four red roebuck at a white water the  
cruel bugle sang before.

Horn at hip went my love riding  
riding the echo down into the  
silver dawn.

four lean hounds crouched low and smiling the  
level meadows ran before.

Softer be they than slippered sleep  
the lean lithe deer the fleet flown  
deer.

Four fleet does at a gold valley the  
famished arrow sang before.

Bow at belt went my love riding  
riding the mountain down into  
the silver dawn.

four lean hounds crouched low and smiling the  
sheer peaks ran before.

Paler be they than daunting death  
the sleek slim deer the tall tense  
deer.

Four tall stags at a green mountain the  
lucky hunter sang before.

All in green went my love riding  
on a great horse of gold into the  
silver dawn.

four lean hounds crouched low and smiling my  
heart fell dead before.

Sonnet III: "Mindful of you the sodden earth in spring" by Edna St. Vincent Millay  
1892 – 1950

Mindful of you the sodden earth in spring,  
And all the flowers that in the springtime grow,  
And dusty roads, and thistles, and the slow  
Rising of the round moon, all throats that sing  
The summer through, and each departing wing,

And all the nests that the bared branches show,  
And all winds that in any weather blow, And all  
the storms that the four seasons bring.

You go no more on your exultant feet

Up paths that only mist and morning knew, Or  
watch the wind, or listen to the beat

Of a bird's wings too high in air to view,—  
But you were something more than young and sweet  
And fair,—and the long year remembers you.

From *Renascence, and other poems* (Harper, 1917) by Edna St. Vincent Millay.



Paul Robeson by Gwendolyn Brooks 1917 –2000

That time we all heard it, cool and  
clear, cutting across the hot grit of the  
day. The major Voice. The adult Voice  
forgoing Rolling River, forgoing  
tearful tale of bale and barge and other  
symptoms of an old despond. Warning,  
in music-words devout and large, that  
we are each other's harvest: we are  
each other's business: we are each  
other's magnitude and bond.

#

The Pool Players. Seven at the Golden Shovel

We real cool. We Left  
school. We

Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We Die  
soon.

## Exiles by Marilyn Hacker

Her brown falcon perches above the sink as  
steaming water forks over my hands.  
Below the wrists they shrivel and turn pink.  
I am in exile in my own land.

Her half-grown cats scuffle across the floor trailing  
a slime of blood from where they fed.  
I lock the door. They claw under the door.  
I am an exile in my own bed.

Her spotted mongrel, bristling with red mange,  
sleeps on the threshold of the Third Street bar  
where I drink brandy as the couples change.  
I am in exile where my neighbors are.

On the pavement, cans of ashes burn. Her  
green lizard scuttles from the light around torn  
cardboard charred to glowing fern.  
I am in exile in my own sight.

Her blond child sits on the stoop when I come  
back at night. Cold hands, blue lids; we both need  
sleep. She tells me she is going to die.  
I am in exile in my own youth.

Lady of distances, this fire, this water, this  
earth makes sanctuary where I stand.  
Call of your animals and your blond daughter, I  
am in exile in my own hands.

Ballade of a Great Weariness by Dorothy Parker 1893 - 1967

There's little to have but the things I had,  
There's little to bear but the things I bore.  
There's nothing to carry and naught to add,  
And glory to Heaven, I paid the score.  
There's little to do but I did before,  
    There's little to learn but the things I know;  
And this is the sum of a lasting lore:  
Scratch a lover, and find a foe.

And couldn't it be I was young and mad  
If ever my heart on my sleeve I wore?  
There's many to claw at a heart unclad,  
And little the wonder it ripped and tore.  
There's one that'll join in their push and roar,  
    With stories to jabber, and stones to throw; He'll  
fetch you a lesson that costs you sore— Scratch  
a lover, and find a foe.

So little I'll offer to you, my lad;  
It's little in loving I set my store.  
There's many a maid would be flushed and glad,  
And better you'll knock at a kindlier door. I'll  
dig at my lettuce, and sweep my floor—  
Forever, forever I'm done with woe—  
And happen I'll whistle about my chore,  
“Scratch a lover, and find a foe.”

L'ENVOI:

Oh, beggar or prince, no more, no more!  
    Be off and away with your strut and show. The  
sweeter the apple, the blacker the core—  
Scratch a lover, and find a foe!

From *Enough Rope* (Boni & Liveright, 1926) by Dorothy Parker. This poem is in the public domain.

## Common Cold by Ogden Nash 1902-1971

Go hang yourself, you old M.D.!  
You shall not sneer at me.  
Pick up your hat and stethoscope,  
Go wash your mouth with laundry soap;  
I contemplate a joy exquisite I'm not  
paying you for your visit. I did not call  
you to be told  
My malady is a common cold.

By pounding brow and swollen lip;  
By fever's hot and scaly grip;  
By those two red redundant eyes  
That weep like woeful April skies;  
By racking snuffle, snort, and sniff;  
By handkerchief after handkerchief;  
This cold you wave away as naught Is  
the damnedest cold man ever caught!

Give ear, you scientific fossil!  
Here is the genuine Cold Colossal;  
The Cold of which researchers dream, The  
Perfect Cold, the Cold Supreme.  
This honored system humbly holds  
The Super-cold to end all colds;  
The Cold Crusading for Democracy; The  
Führer of the Streptococcracy.

Bacilli swarm within my portals  
Such as were ne'er conceived by mortals,  
But bred by scientists wise and hoary  
In some Olympic laboratory;  
Bacteria as large as mice,

With feet of fire and heads of ice  
Who never interrupt for slumber  
Their stamping elephantine rumba.

A common cold, gadzooks, forsooth!  
Ah, yes. And Lincoln was jostled by Booth;  
Don Juan was a budding gallant,  
And Shakespeare's plays show signs of talent;  
The Arctic winter is fairly coolish, And your  
diagnosis is fairly foolish. Oh what a derision  
history holds  
For the man who belittled the Cold of Colds!

The Crocodile by Lewis Carroll 1832 – 1898

How doth the little crocodile  
    Improve his shining tail,  
And pour the waters of the Nile  
On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,  
    How neatly spreads his claws,  
And welcomes little fishes in,  
With gently smiling jaws! #

The Mock Turtle's Song

“Will you walk a little faster?” said  
a whiting to a snail. “There’s a  
porpoise close behind us, and he’s  
treading on my tail. See how  
eagerly the lobsters and the turtles  
all advance! They are waiting on  
the shingle— will you come and  
join the dance?”

Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, will  
you join the dance?

Will you, won’t you, will you, won’t you, won’t  
you join the dance?

THE BELLBIRD by Isabella Slattery-Shannon (age 11)

The full moon, glowing at dusk, and the audacious  
bellbird is calling out from his tree, so small yet so  
loud.

He calls, repeats, waits, and calls again.

It makes me wonder how loud our songs are heard,  
and how far they spread beyond our knowing.

—*from* 2023 Rattle Young Poets Anthology

*Why do you like to write poetry?*

**Isabella Slattery-Shannon:** “I enjoy poetry because it opens a whole new world for my brain.”

THAATHAA by Divya Venkat Sridhar (age 15)

My papa's papa used to run after the wooden cart of prasadam each dawn for food  
Young feet bleeding over the rough road. I like to imagine his eyes:  
bright like a brown beetle, fresh like monsoon soil, his chest  
burning like metal on metal as he gulps dusty air.  
He's wearing sandbag shorts, mottled with flecks of dirt.  
He's hurdling red rock and plastic bottles, blooming like a wild indigo,  
Stomach roaring in his lame body.  
His small hands are cupped and trembling, so empty they could hold  
a Ganges of riches, a Yamuna of flooding wealth— only a thin  
paper cup of rice lands in his fingers.

I like to imagine the summer when we go to Hyderabad now:  
he holds my hair, and I feel the lines in his palms like  
parted sediment along a freshwater river.  
He likes to laugh until his beetle eyes fly off into the clouds  
and his face goes wrinkly like pottery on an unmanned wheel.  
And when he cooks, he lays out food and food and colours  
rushing around the big table to fill our hearts with cardamom  
and cinnamon and cloves—his love language, grown from a  
tongue once parched in poverty.  
I like to imagine he's waited for this his whole life, and this pride  
takes root in me like the eternal warmth of a sunlit sky. His feet  
carry me over rough road, rock and rubble, until river, liquid  
gold breaks out from under his toes like a lullaby.

—*from* **2023 Rattle Young Poets Anthology**

*Why do you like to write poetry?*

**Divya Venkat Sridhar:** “Poetry helps me believe in myself. It is the best feeling in the world—to know that I can create something honest, using words in a way that nobody has done before, and speak my truth.”



Out, Out by Robert Frost 1874 –1963

The buzz-saw snarled and rattled in the yard And made  
dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood, Sweet-  
scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.

And from there those that lifted eyes could count  
Five mountain ranges one behind the other Under  
the sunset far into Vermont.

And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled, As  
it ran light, or had to bear a load.

And nothing happened: day was all but done.

Call it a day, I wish they might have said

To please the boy by giving him the half hour That  
a boy counts so much when saved from work.

His sister stood beside them in her apron

To tell them "Supper." At the word, the saw,

As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,

Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap— He  
must have given the hand. However it was, Neither  
refused the meeting. But the hand!

The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,

As he swung toward them holding up the hand

Half in appeal, but half as if to keep

The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—

Since he was old enough to know, big boy

Doing a man's work, though a child at heart— He

saw all spoiled. "Don't let him cut my hand off—

The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!"

So. But the hand was gone already.

The doctor put him in the dark of ether.

He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.

And then—the watcher at his pulse took fright.

No one believed. They listened at his heart.

Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it. No  
more to build on there. And they, since they  
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

A Line-storm Song by Robert Frost 1874 –1963

The line-storm clouds fly tattered and swift,

The road is forlorn all day, Where a  
myriad snowy quartz stones lift, And  
the hoof-prints vanish away. The  
roadside flowers, too wet for the bee,  
Expend their bloom in vain. Come over  
the hills and far with me, And be my  
love in the rain.

The birds have less to say for themselves

In the wood-world's torn despair  
Than now these numberless years the elves,  
Although they are no less there: All song  
of the woods is crushed like some Wild,  
easily shattered rose. Come, be my love in  
the wet woods; come, Where the boughs  
rain when it blows.

There is the gale to urge behind

And bruit our singing down, And the  
shallow waters aflutter with wind From  
which to gather your gown. What  
matter if we go clear to the west, And  
come not through dry-shod? For wilding  
brooch shall wet your breast The rain-  
fresh goldenrod.

Oh, never this whelming east wind swells

But it seems like the sea's return  
To the ancient lands where it left the shells  
Before the age of the fern; And it seems like  
the time when after doubt Our love came  
back amain. Oh, come forth into the storm  
and rout And be my love in the rain.

The Waking by Theodore Roethke 1908 - 1963

I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.  
I feel my fate in what I cannot fear.  
I learn by going where I have to go.

We think by feeling. What is there to know?  
I hear my being dance from ear to ear.  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Of those so close beside me, which are you? God  
bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there, And  
learn by going where I have to go.

Light takes the Tree; but who can tell us how?  
The lowly worm climbs up a winding stair; I  
wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.

Great Nature has another thing to do To  
you and me, so take the lively air, And,  
lovely, learn by going where to go.

This shaking keeps me steady. I should know.  
What falls away is always. And is near.  
I wake to sleep, and take my waking slow.  
I learn by going where I have to go.

The Snow Man by Wallace Stevens 1879 - 1955

One must have a mind of winter  
To regard the frost and the boughs  
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;  
And have been cold a long time  
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,  
The spruces rough in the distant glitter  
Of the January sun; and not to think  
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,  
In the sound of a few leaves,  
Which is the sound of the land  
Full of the same wind  
That is blowing in the same bare place  
For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

## I Sing What You Loved Gabriela Mistral 1889 –1957

*translated from the Spanish by Ursula K. Le Guin*

Life of my life, what you loved I sing.  
If you're near, if you're listening,  
remembering earth, in the evening, my  
life, my shadow, hear me sing.

Life of my life, I can't be still. What  
is a story we never tell?  
How can you find me unless I call?

Life of my life, I haven't changed, not  
turned aside and not estranged. Come to  
me as the shadows grow long, come, life  
of my life, if you know the song you used  
to know, if you know my name.  
I and the song are still the same.

Beyond time or place I keep the faith.  
Follow a path or follow no path, don't fear  
the night or the rainy wind. call me to come  
to you, now at the end, and come to me,  
soul of my soul, my friend.

In Every Direction by Silvina Ocampo 1903-1993

We go leaving ourselves in every direction,  
in beds, in rooms, in fields, in seas, in cities,  
and each one of those fragments that has  
ceased to be us, continues being as always  
us, making us jealous and hostile.

"What will it do that I would like to do?" we think.

"Who will it see that I would like to see?" We often  
receive chance news of that creature . . . We enter  
its dreams when it dreams of us, loving it  
like those whom we love most;

we knock at its doors with  
burning hands,

we think it will return in the illusion of belonging to us  
mistaken as before but it will keep being treacherous  
and unreachable. As with our rivals we would kill it. We  
will only be able to glimpse it in photographs. It must  
survive us.

## Epitaph for an Aroma by Silvina Ocampo

When the dew descended yesterday, amid future stamens and corollas, I perished in a garden that presented shadows in the shapes of trees, and water. Two ribbons bound me, here they are: longer than my petals they endured, pale, like the ribbons of the dead. The same implicit partnership of flowers, the similar hands, the care, the season and the blood of evening, will not be able to repeat exactly the dark tunnels of my aroma: infinite will be in memory the intricate paths of the perfume; infinite, too, the deceptive reappearance of every moment.

And though the days may want to bring them back, and though many circumstances join together- - repetition of phrases or of people, the same inclination of a head- - neither does that person anymore exist for whom I was in secret destined.

AN AUTOCORRECT POEM by Fae Merritt (age 9)

Cats are coming  
Dogs are not very friendly  
Monkeys created a new life  
Koalas have a lot of explaining to do  
Pandas need help from your parents  
Foxes have been doing the wrong thing  
And bats are in the same house as you  
BATS ARE IN THE SAME HOUSE AS YOU

—from 2023 Rattle Young Poets Anthology

Why do you like to write poetry?

Fae Merritt: “I like writing because it’s fun to make up stories and write about your ideas. It can be not real in the world but it becomes real when you write it.”



Perhaps the World Ends Here by Joy Harjo

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.

It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.

Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

From *The Woman Who Fell From the Sky* (W. W. Norton, 1994) by Joy Harjo.  
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Atlanta by Philip Fried

It all began, they say, with a lazy fly ball lofting out  
of the stadium into the deep Southern afternoon  
that had gone unbroken —and still goes—since  
that tousled raptor Sherman visited northern wrath  
on this drawling city.

My father, meeker, in a greater, foreign war,  
was waiting out the worldwide slaughter as a  
Damn Yankee Jew on Cherry Street —a  
whisper behind the stadium's ritual yells—  
where the ball nearly bombarded the barbecue.

Aside from the looping fly, the afternoons I was  
born into were ladled out of the gravy- boat of  
days and spiced with magnolia shadow and  
with many living things that had no names  
for northerners. But rebounding radio waves

were agitating for DiMaggio and crooning us into  
the cradle of postwar lives where the absent  
dying would return to its reason. I was absent  
living, a knobbly root upripped and laid in the  
cupped palms of the air.

What bowed to me then, down to the fontanelle,  
inhaling me with everything was nothing that I  
could ever locate with a name, not War fathering  
bastards, not mother, not father, not Earth, not  
sky, not universe. Better to lie:

“It all began, they say, with a lazy fly . . .”  
More Things, Horatio! by Philip Fried

—”There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio . . .”  
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Dream, philosophy, of the little  
Hudson Valley town of Cold Spring  
(there's an unexpected place)  
Where I spent a boyhood vacation running  
Wild and riding a horse around  
A ring, but I didn't know  
That the incarnation of Ralph Waldo  
Emerson was teaching in the high  
School all the while, in the form Of  
a bearded man who rhapsodized To  
his students about radio waves.  
River breezes whipped the pennons  
Along the top of the school and The  
river was a sentient being.  
After I left and the place left all  
But my deepest mind, the level where  
My blond hair still hasn't faded into  
Brown, there was a local baby boom  
Like an extrabig volley from West Point  
And the town built more and more schools  
(That now are empty) and a girl named Ruth  
Was shot into the mid-1950's  
As if from a circus cannon, hating  
Her name, but reconciled later,  
And she became a clarinetist  
In the high school band, knees furiously  
Pumping while atop her hat  
She wore a great white plume. Dream,  
Philosophy, of that! And she  
Knew how to blow bubbles and chewing Aggressively  
crack the wad of gum  
Against her molars. She didn't spit  
Or master refinements of spitting through  
The teeth because that was for boys. Oh The  
crispness of some things, beyond  
Philosophy's dreams!

Boundary Conditions by Sneha Madhavan-Reese  
*who but men blame the angels for the wild  
exceptionalism of men?*

—Sam Sax, “Anti-Zionist Abecedarian”

Along the border of any governed region, there exists a value which must satisfy its laws. This is a rule I learned for solving differential equations.

*Math seems like it doesn't exist*, my newly graduated kindergartner declares. *It's just rules that someone made up*. She's brilliant beyond her years.

On the surface of the ocean exist propagating dynamic disturbances; in other words, waves. In other words, the boundary between air and water,

between the requirements for life, between dark and light, wrong and right, between what can be held and what can only be imagined, between dreams

and the realities that shatter them, the things that keep us awake at night, at every boundary there are laws, and sometimes these laws make no sense.

Of course it's made up, but that doesn't mean it's not real. *There is math in the air we breathe*, I tell her. People die for made up reasons every day.

There is math in the shuddering earth. Find equations that govern its motion, whether by earthquake or explosion. Try and fail, try again and fail, to solve.

—from [Poets Respond](#)  
November 7, 2023

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**Sneha Madhavan-Reese:** “Nothing I can say [about current events](#) seems sufficient.”

## The Dim Tenements by D. Nurkse

What, I asked my father, is behind a wall? When  
you see a lit window through the rain down a  
dark street, who lives there?

When a car swishes past after midnight, sudden  
and decisive, where is it going?

The voices in the alley, laughing and sobbing, what  
are they talking about?

My father sighed and rolled his eyes  
while blinking furtively—it was an expression  
he had perfected during the fall of Narva—  
and cracked his knuckles, a hollow sound.

He explained: behind the wall is another wall.  
The rain doesn't know itself. The car is fleeing. The  
voices have no idea what they are saying.

When you come to the lit window at the end of life I  
will be waiting for you. But the room will be empty.

## Return From Flint by D. Nurkse

After my father died, the other children  
were kind and took great delight in  
giving me secret gifts—a jujube  
hermetically sealed in cellophane, a  
goose feather with a bent tip, a box of  
Ohio Blue Tip matches.

They allowed me to win at stoop soccer,  
whistleball, all their impenetrable games  
whose rules are like the Law,

decipherable only when broken.

The girls invited me to walk with them  
under tall sticky pines  
pulsing with the trance of crickets.  
Cindy kissed me. A girl with no name  
touched my earlobe experimentally.

Teacher let me pass the Pyramid Test  
though I answered at random, just a  
whirl of zeroes.

Even the blue dog followed me home.  
Our cat brought me a sparrow still  
flying gravely in its mouth.

I was confused: were they bribing me?  
If they loved me, it was strange as  
swallowing a moth.

My mother made my birthday meal,  
large meatballs mixed with small,  
Swedish and Italian, though even I  
understood she moved like a puppet  
on strings of supernatural fatigue.

That night I had my favorite  
dream: my father lifting me in  
strong arms out of Monday into  
Friday, out of August into  
November, out of childhood into  
old age.

## This Again by Bob Hicok

The recommendation from some website quoted on the news is to rape, cut the throats of, and throw female Jews off a cliff. But how far are the cliffs of Ithaca from Cornell, where the raping and throat slashing is supposed to occur? And if you don't have a car, are you supposed to borrow one or can you Uber a body to a cliff and ask the driver to wait while you chuck it off? And what if you're afraid of heights? It's time we address the shocking lack of detail in antisemitism. It's one thing to hate Jews but another to ask me to hate Jews without telling me how to hate Jews or why I should hate anyone when loving everyone is an option. A difficult one, I admit, impossible even, but in a process sense, it requires no knives or cars or evil and can be conveyed in a simple phrase: See someone, love someone. Or, Love thy neighbor as thou loves apple pie. Or, love thy stranger as thou loves starlight for touching us without knowing our names. Have you ever felt as brittle as kindling shattering to pieces just under the shower curtain of your skin?

It's a rhetorical question because I know you have and will, as I have and do right now.

So screw every cult of hate. Every bullet and knife and bomb and shitty thing said under the breath or with the full conviction of the lungs. If you see a Jew, be a Jew. If you see a Muslim, be a Muslim. If you see a human, be a human. The lend an ear or a hand kind.

The "how's it going" kind. The kind kind. No one chooses who or where or when to be. We just sort of collectively are. So hating you for being you makes no more sense than you hating me for being me. And I don't want to be raped or have my throat slashed or get thrown off a cliff, hard as that is to believe. I want to see the cliffs of Ithaca in moonlight. The Kaaba in Mecca circled by a crowd pulsing with faith. The Ice Hotel in a snow storm.

I want a really good pizza with an egg on it.

To kiss my wife on top of the Eiffel Tower. All the parts of her that are Jewish and all the parts that are human and all the parts that make her sigh and

moan. Being human means understanding that being human is the hardest thing you'll ever do. That we're all partisans in this struggle, fellow teamsters in not knowing what the hell is going on, brothers and sisters stuffing our befuddlement every morning into pants and dresses we hope don't make us look fat and stupid and lost. Everyone I know feels lost. The trick is to feel lost together. Maybe you have a map and I have a canteen. Certainly someone has a pogo stick or cyclotron. We need food and light and harmonicas and theremins and stories about monsters who decide not to eat the child or stomp the village or fly over the night with death on their wings. Lost together, our nowhere becomes our somewhere. Lost together, the dream of home never dies.

—*from* **Poets Respond**

**Bob Hicok:** “Don't know what to say about this, other than what the poem does.”



From Spoon River by Edgar Lee Masters 1868 - 1950

*Ollie McGee*

HAVE you seen walking through the village A  
man with downcast eyes and haggard face?  
That is my husband who, by secret cruelty  
never to be told, robbed me of my youth and my beauty;  
Till at last, wrinkled and with yellow teeth, And  
with broken pride and shameful humility, I  
sank into the grave.

But what think you gnaws at my husband's heart?  
The face of what I was, the face of what he made me!  
These are driving him to the place where I lie. In  
death, therefore, I am avenged.



*Fletcher McGee*

SHE took my strength by minutes,  
She took my life by hours, She  
drained me like a fevered moon That  
saps the spinning world. The days  
went by like shadows, The minutes  
wheeled like stars. She took pity from  
my heart, And made it into smiles. She  
was a hunk of sculptor's clay, My  
secret thoughts were fingers: They  
flew behind her pensive brow And  
lined it deep with pain.

They set the lips, and sagged the cheeks,  
And drooped the eyes with sorrow. My  
soul had entered in the clay, Fighting like  
seven devils.

It was not mine, it was not hers;  
She held it, but its struggles  
Modeled a face she hated,  
And a face I feared to see.

I beat the windows, shook the bolts. I  
hid me in a corner--  
And then she died and haunted me, And  
hunted me for life.

1994 by Lucille Clifton 1936 - 2010

i was leaving my fifty-eighth year  
when a thumb of ice  
stamped itself hard near my heart

you have your own story you  
know about the fears the tears  
the scar of disbelief

you know that the saddest lies are  
the ones we tell ourselves you  
know how dangerous it is

to be born with breasts you  
know how dangerous it is  
to wear dark skin

i was leaving my fifty-eighth year  
when i woke into the winter of a  
cold and mortal body

thin icicles hanging off the  
one mad nipple weeping

have we not been good children  
did we not inherit the earth

but you must know all about this from  
your own shivering life From

“Sleeping with Bashō” by David  
Trinidad

AT THE YAM FESTIVAL

What a delicious life!  
When I cut a sweet  
potato in half, I get  
the harvest moon.

STRIPPED BRANCHES

What’s left after the wind  
blows every blossom off  
the dog cherry— a tree  
of wagging tails.

SURRENDER TO THE BEAUTY OF FLOWERS

Be sure to wear your  
flowered robe when  
you come out to  
view the blossoms.

FAMILY HISTORY

The bamboo  
sprout cares  
nothing about the  
stalk that produced  
him.

WAGGING TONGUES

Every red leaf  
rustling with  
gossip.

LIGHTS OUT

Unhappily, the new  
moon has been sent  
upstairs before her  
bedtime.

SAYŌNARA

Like wild geese, we'll  
only be separated by  
clouds, my dear, dear  
friend.

HOUSE CALL

How come the rich merchant  
never sends a horse to fetch  
the village poet?

SEEING IS BELIEVING

I found god in plum  
blossoms, not the  
great blank sky  
beyond them.

Almost by Mark Jarman

Almost grasped what Grandmother Grace knew  
Last Sunday sitting in church, almost knew  
What Alexander Campbell grasped when, confronted  
With the desolate orphan, he told her, “You  
Are a child of God. Go claim your inheritance.”  
Almost got it. There it was in the sunlight,  
Squared in the clear glass windows, on the durable leaves Of  
the magnolia outside. Almost grasped the weather  
That turns clear and crystallized in Hans Küng’s brain.  
Almost held it in the ellipses and measure  
Of my almost understanding. I see the moment  
There in my notebook, then the next day’s anxiety  
Spilling like something wet across the ink. I  
almost put in my hand a vast acceptance  
And almost blessed myself, then it slipped away.  
All that colossal animal vivacity—smoke Of the  
distant horizon, most of it, haze.  
But to have known in any place or time What  
they knew is worth a record, a few notes.  
Almost knew what they knew. Almost got it.

—from **Rattle #25, Summer 2006**

**Mark Jarman:** “It took me years to figure out that one of the biggest influences on me as a writer had been the fact that I lived in a house with someone who had to write something every week, get up in front of bunch of people, and basically perform it. It was my fat     her writing sermons.” ([web](#))

In the Grove: The Poet at Ten by Jane Kenyon 1947 - 1995

She lay on her back in the timothy  
and gazed past the doddering auburn  
heads of sumac.

A cloud—huge, calm, and  
dignified—covered the sun but  
did not, could not, put it out.

The light surged back again.

Nothing could rouse her then from  
that joy so violent it was hard to  
distinguish from pain.

## Displaced by Mosab Abu Toha

*In memory of Edward Said*

I am neither in nor out.  
I am in between.  
I am not part of anything.  
I am a shadow of something.  
At best, I am a  
thing that does  
not really exist.  
I am weightless,  
a speck of time  
in Gaza. But I  
will remain  
where I am.

Pilgrims of the Mound by Conal Abatangelo

*after Genbakukuyōtō*

By the riverbank, where the herons no longer fed, for lack of food and lack of herons, they pulled bodies from the water until the days began to drop low in the horizon. If the sky cleared, the cloud remained, and near to the ground, the sun bloomed dimmer than all the summers before. There came a rain like night which swallowed all colors, painting in ash where ash had not been. Exhumed, exhausted, returned to the land. The workers, even as they buried, began too to drop dead. In the coming weeks, the months, the long years, a whole people became a vault, a chapel, then the mound. The line of ghosts unburying itself each time a bomb speaks, even if no one will listen for it.

**Comment from the series editor, Megan O'Reilly:** "I found the poet's use of language so unexpected as to be mesmerizing—I kept rereading phrases to savor them, and to marvel at how artfully and accurately they capture aspects of Arthur Lawrence's 'Shadowland.' The rich but muted hues of the image are reflected in the phrase 'a rain like night / which swallowed all the colors,' and I was moved by the description 'a line of ghosts unburying itself' in relation to the crowd of figures in 'Shadowland.' I think the phrase 'a bomb speaks' is the one which will haunt me most—the idea of a bomb having a voice and something to say is an unsettling truth. Truth is something neither poem nor image shy away from, and I think that's why they create such a resonant harmony."



## Because by Grace Schulman

Because, in a universe of charred bodies, the  
grass still glistens, the first daffodil  
shoots up near snow-melt, and a red-tailed hawk

perches rudely on a church spire; because children toss  
a fire-red ball in the yard where a schoolhouse facade  
was scarred by vandals,

and joggers still circle a dry reservoir; because a  
rainbow flaunts its painted ribbons and slips them  
underneath a blood-drenched earth;

because in a smoky bar the trombone blares louder  
than street sirens, because those  
who can no longer speak of pain are singing;

because on this wide meadow in the park a full  
moon still outshines the city lights, and when  
returning home, below the North Star,

I see a tower rise where the Towers fell, and fill  
a vacant sky with yellow glass;  
and I remember my love's calloused hand

soften in my hand while crab-apple blossoms  
showered our laps, and a yellow rose opened  
with its satellites of orange buds,

because I cannot lose the injured world without  
losing the world, I'll have to praise it.

## Scallop Shell by Grace Schulman

See them at low tide, scallop  
shells glittering on

a scallop-edged shore,

whittled by water into  
curvy rows the shape of  
waves that kiss the sand

only to erode it. Today I walked that  
shoreline, humming,

*Camino Santiago*, the road to  
St. James's tomb,  
where pilgrims traveled,

scallop badges on their capes,  
and chanted prayers for a  
miracle to cure

disease. And so I,  
stirred by their purpose,

hunted for scallop shells shaped  
like pleated fans, with mouths that  
open and close

to steer them from predators. I  
scooped up a fan and blew off sand  
grains, thinking,

for that one moment,  
of how Saint James' body

rose from sea decked with scallops,  
and of this empty beach in another  
austere time.

Let this unholy pilgrim,  
implore the scallop shell,

*silvery half-moon, save us.*

After Reading That Merriam-Webster's 2023 Word of the Year is  
Authenticity by Dante Di Stefano

I wonder about the future  
poems I will read, generated by  
AI, the imperceptibly pixelated  
tulips pushing through the rich soil in them,

the deepfake MFA bios attached to them  
like deflated orange balloons, the shining  
metaphors crowing from them  
as I open the App of my eyelids

and scroll lithely from stanza to stanza. I  
wonder if I'll be able to notice in their  
red wheelbarrows full of roses, how a  
chatbot has damasked every stem.

I found the poem I'm writing now, tucked  
in the galley of a tiny schooner  
circumnavigating the four chambers  
of my heart. It was wedged under a cask

of lime juice. It was written in the scrawl  
of a mad captain hellbent on shipwreck or  
treasure or unspecified glory. It was  
found, it was wedged, it was written

to explain a flower growing in me, a blue  
bonnet sprouting from my boot print,  
gently stretching skyward to touch the  
stars, but like all poems we humans fashion

from want and need and yes and must and what,  
it ended up saying something else beyond the  
arc of unseeing, something fevered and cut,  
rizzed up against the scurvy dark.

—*from Poets Respond*

**Dante Di Stefano:** “Often lately, I have been teaching and reading and thinking about generative AI. Despite all I’ve read about Sam Altman, ChatGPT, etc., it’s hard for me to imagine how this technology will transform our world. Reading the article about Meriam-Webster’s **word of the year** further confirmed how enmeshed we are in this transformation already. Authenticity is a fraught term in poetry anyway, so I think this poem wandered into some of the fraughtness and complexity that comes with the terrain of lyric saying. For me this is less a poem about AI than it is a poem about the ancient technology of poetic utterance in all its mystery. The word rizz that I use at the end of the poem is an internet neologism added to Meriam-Webster this year, meaning ‘romantic charm or appeal.’” (**web**)

Beauty (A Drop of Dopamine) by Alicia Ostriker

Just now while I was  
at the sink drying  
dishes they caught my  
eye those orange  
Peruvian lilies on the  
table with the old  
Iranian tablecloth at  
other times it is his  
aging sculpted face or  
his hands at rest on a  
book while he naps

TIME by Alicia Ostriker

Time goes by day trailing day it passes  
me by and somehow fades  
like a stealthy black cat like an old scar  
like a recently cleaned express subway  
car lit up boldly inside there it goes  
loudly clacking gradually  
passing the local subway car covered  
with graffiti in which I sit sighing  
watching golden-windowed Time slide by  
both trains move one moves faster wait  
up no

Circe's Power by Louise Glück 1943 - 2023

I never turned anyone into a pig. Some  
people are pigs; I make them Look  
like pigs.

I'm sick of your world  
That lets the outside disguise the inside. Your men weren't bad men;  
Undisciplined life  
Did that to them. As pigs,

Under the care of  
Me and my ladies, they Sweetened  
right up.

Then I reversed the spell, showing you my goodness  
As well as my power. I saw

We could be happy here,  
As men and women are  
When their needs are simple. In the same breath,

I foresaw your departure,  
Your men with my help braving  
The crying and pounding sea. You think

A few tears upset me? My friend,  
Every sorceress is  
A pragmatist at heart; nobody sees essence who can't  
Face limitation. If I wanted only to hold you

I could hold you prisoner.  
Celestial Music by Louise Glück

I have a friend who still believes in heaven.  
Not a stupid person, yet with all she knows, she literally talks to God.

She thinks someone listens in heaven.  
On earth she's unusually competent.  
Brave too, able to face unpleasantness.

We found a caterpillar dying in the dirt, greedy ants crawling over it.  
I'm always moved by disaster, always eager to oppose vitality But  
timid also, quick to shut my eyes.  
Whereas my friend was able to watch, to let events play out  
According to nature. For my sake she intervened Brushing  
a few ants off the torn thing, and set it down Across the  
road.

My friend says I shut my eyes to God, that nothing else explains  
My aversion to reality. She says I'm like the child who  
Buries her head in the pillow  
So as not to see, the child who tells herself  
That light causes sadness-  
My friend is like the mother. Patient, urging me  
To wake up an adult like herself, a courageous person-

In my dreams, my friend reproaches me. We're walking  
On the same road, except it's winter now;  
She's telling me that when you love the world you hear celestial music:  
Look up, she says. When I look up, nothing.  
Only clouds, snow, a white business in the trees  
Like brides leaping to a great height-  
Then I'm afraid for her; I see her  
Caught in a net deliberately cast over the earth-

In reality, we sit by the side of the road, watching the sun set;  
From time to time, the silence pierced by a birdcall. It's this  
moment we're trying to explain, the fact That we're at ease  
with death, with solitude.

My friend draws a circle in the dirt; inside, the caterpillar doesn't move. She's  
always trying to make something whole, something beautiful, an image  
Capable of life apart from her.

We're very quiet. It's peaceful sitting here, not speaking, The composition



Fixed, the road turning suddenly dark, the air  
Going cool, here and there the rocks shining and glittering- It's  
this stillness we both love.  
The love of form is a love of endings.

## The Peace of Wild Things By Wendell Berry 1934

When despair for the world grows in me and I wake in the night at the least sound in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be, I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds. I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief. I come into the presence of still water. And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light. For a time I rest in the grace of the world and am free.

Letter from Paul Celan by Grace Schulman  
*All gladness, dear Nelly, all light!*

Paris to Stockholm. My dear Nelly. After  
that which happened, the no-longer,  
your father's hand gripped through barbed wire

then let slip away, your lines still glow cool  
as white roses in rain. Fellow survivor,  
brother, remember the sudden flash

when we two first met, dazzling the lake?  
You, a disbeliever, looked for cause;  
I knew it was divine, and prayed

for that gold to come back, as a sign that  
we may breathe again in smokeless air.  
The fires you saw burn on in my mind;

not to have been there magnifies the flame. For  
you, though, all that remains of horror  
is language washed of horror. In your lines,

*white stones, frost, doves, icelight, snowlight,*  
*the lightbringers, star that listens to light* And  
your letter, whose lesson is indelible:

after great loss, language is survival -- the  
fizz of dark waves that crash white  
against dull rocks, the secret source of light,

the sun through fog, our not unjoyful days,