

PLEASURES OF POETRY

Join MIT's Literature faculty & friends for readings and discussions of poetry January IAP 2022

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Wyn Kelley

Emily Dickinson
"Bloom - is Result
- to meet a Flower"
& "As if some little
Arctic flower";
Herman Melville
"Field Asters" &
"Inscription"

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Diana Henderson

William Shakespeare
"Song: Fear no more
the heat o' the sun";
Ben Jonson "On My
First Son" & "On My
First Daughter";
John Donne "A
Nocturnal upon St.
Lucy's Day"

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Pamela Sutton

Wilfred Owen
"Spring Offensive";
Edwin Muir
"The Horses"

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Zachary Bos

Bertolt Brecht
"Fragen eines
lesenden
Arbeiters" & "A
Worker Reads
History"/"Question
s From a Worker
Who Reads"

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"Pastoral" (pg 28-
29); & "Pastoral"
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"The Vanishing
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Sessions take place in 14E-304 @ 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

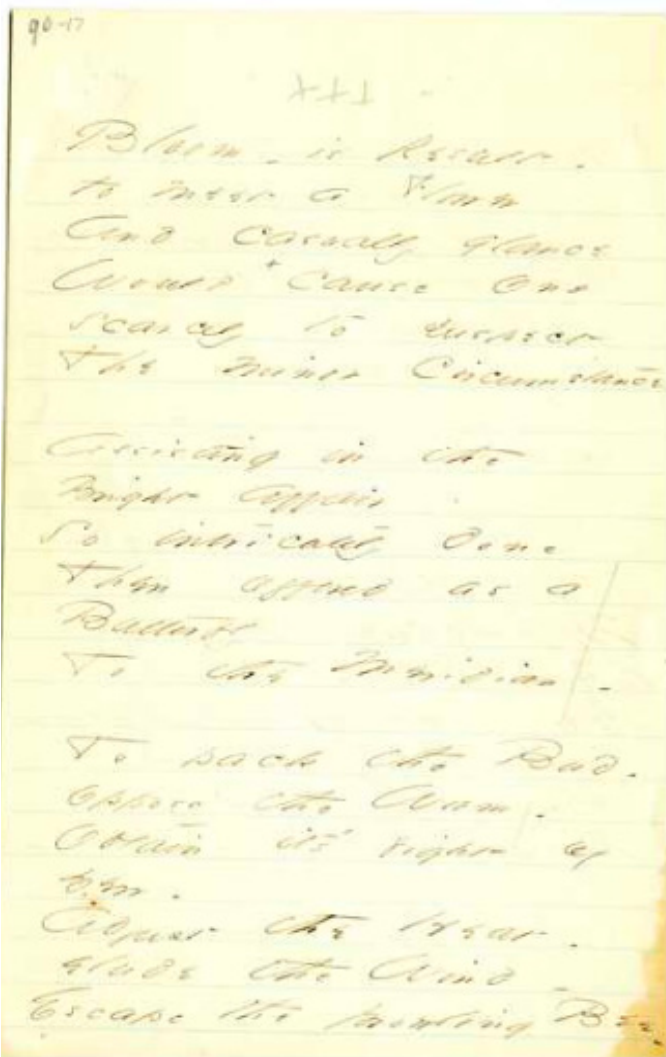
*Masks + COVID Pass/Tim Tickets required.

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https://www.edickinson.org/editions/1/image_sets/12176543

F1038A - Bloom is result - to meet a flower

Emily Dickinson

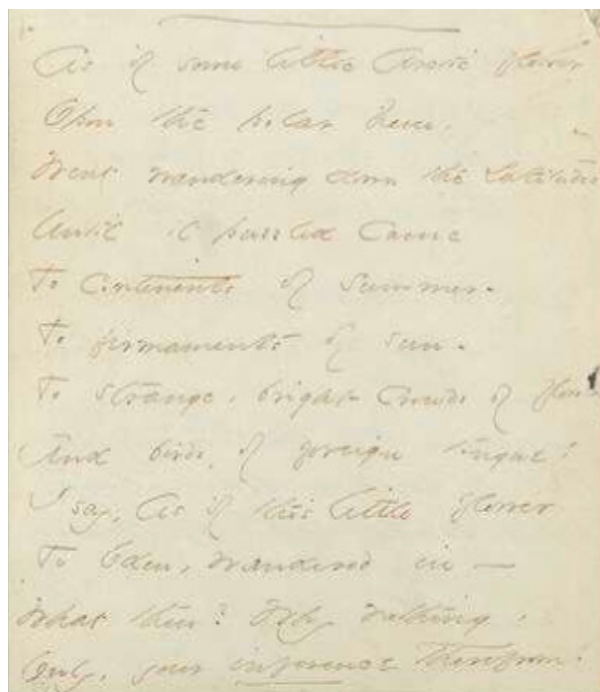
Bloom - is Result -
to meet a Flower
And casually glance
Would cause one
scarcely to suspect
The minor Circumstance

Assisting in the
Bright Affair
So intricately done
Then offered as a
Butterfly
To the Meridian -

To pack the Bud -
oppose the Worm -
Obtain it's right of
Dew -
Adjust the Heat -
elude the Wind -
Escape the prowling Bee -

Great Nature not
to disappoint
Awaiting Her that Day -

To be a Flower, is
profound
Responsibility -



https://www.edickinson.org/editions/1/image_sets/12173902

F177A - As if some little Arctic flower

Emily Dickson

As if some little Arctic flower
Upon the polar hem -
Went wandering down the Latitudes
Until it puzzled came
To continents of summer -
To firmaments of sun -
To strange, bright crowds of flowers -
And birds, of foreign tongue!
I say, As if this little flower
To Eden, wandered in -
What then? Why nothing,
Only, your inference therefrom!

Field Asters

Herman Melville

Like the stars in commons blue
Peep their namesakes, Asters here,
Wild ones every autumn seen --
Seen of all, arresting few.

Seen indeed. But who their cheer
Interpret may, or what they mean
When so inscrutably their eyes
Us star-gazers scrutinize.

<https://www.poetryexplorer.net/poem.php?id=10106870>

Inscription

Herman Melville

Inscription

*For a Boulder near the spot
Where the last Hardback was laid low
By the new proprietor
of the Hill of Arrowhead*

A WEED grew here.—Exempt from use,
Weeds turn no wheel, nor run;
Radiance pure or redolence
Some have, but this had none.
And yet heaven gave it leave to live
And idle it in the sun.

Song: "Fear no more the heat o' the sun"

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(from Cymbeline)

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The scepter, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finished joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have;
And renownèd be thy grave!

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50428/song-fear-no-more-the-heat-o-the-sun->

On My First Son

Ben Jonson

Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy ;
My sin was too much hope of thee, lov'd boy.
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
Oh, could I lose all father now ! For why
Will man lament the state he should envy?
To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,
And if no other misery, yet age !
Rest in soft peace, and, asked, say, Here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.
For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such
As what he loves may never like too much.

Source: *Poetry of the English Renaissance 1509-1660*.
J. William Hebel and Hoyt H. Hudson, eds.
New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1941. 498.
<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/jonson/son.htm>

On My First Daughter

Ben Jonson

Here lies, to each her parents' ruth,
Mary, the daughter of their youth;
Yet all heaven's gifts being heaven's due,
It makes the father less to rue.
At six months' end, she parted hence
With safety of her innocence;
Whose soul heaven's queen, whose name she bears,
In comfort of her mother's tears,
Hath placed amongst her virgin-train:
Where, while that severed doth remain,
This grave partakes the fleshly birth;
Which cover lightly, gentle earth!

Source: Maclean, Hugh. *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets*.
New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1974.
<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/jonson/daughter.htm>

A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day, Being The Shortest Day

John Donne

'Tis the year's midnight, and it is the day's,
Lucy's, who scarce seven hours herself unmask;
 The sun is spent, and now his flasks
 Send forth light squibs, no constant rays;
 The world's whole sap is sunk;
The general balm th' hydroptic earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the bed's feet, life is shrunk,
Dead and interr'd; yet all these seem to laugh,
Compar'd with me, who am their epitaph.

Study me then, you who shall lovers be
At the next world, that is, at the next spring;
 For I am every dead thing,
 In whom Love wrought new alchemy.
 For his art did express
A quintessence even from nothingness,
From dull privations, and lean emptiness;
He ruin'd me, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darkness, death: things which are not.

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
Life, soul, form, spirit, whence they being have;
 I, by Love's limbec, am the grave
 Of all that's nothing. Oft a flood
 Have we two wept, and so
Drown'd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
To be two chaoses, when we did show
Care to aught else; and often absences
Withdrew our souls, and made us carcasses.

But I am by her death (which word wrongs her)
Of the first nothing the elixir grown;
 Were I a man, that I were one
 I needs must know; I should prefer,
 If I were any beast,
Some ends, some means; yea plants, yea stones detest,
And love; all, all some properties invest;
If I an ordinary nothing were,
As shadow, a light and body must be here.

But I am none; nor will my sun renew.
You lovers, for whose sake the lesser sun
 At this time to the Goat is run
 To fetch new lust, and give it you,
 Enjoy your summer all;
Since she enjoys her long night's festival,
Let me prepare towards her, and let me call
This hour her vigil, and her eve, since this
Both the year's, and the day's deep midnight is.

<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/nocturnal.php>

Halted against the shade of a last hill,
They fed, and, lying easy, were at ease
And, finding comfortable chests and knees
Carelessly slept.

But many there stood still
To face the stark, blank sky beyond the ridge,
Knowing their feet had come to the end of the world.

Marvelling they stood, and watched the long grass swirled
By the May breeze, murmurous with wasp and midge,
For though the summer oozed into their veins
Like the injected drug for their bones' pains,
Sharp on their souls hung the imminent line of grass,
Fearfully flashed the sky's mysterious glass.

Hour after hour they ponder the warm field—
And the far valley behind, where the buttercups
Had blessed with gold their slow boots coming up,
Where even the little brambles would not yield,
But clutched and clung to them like sorrowing hands;
They breathe like trees unstirred.

Till like a cold gust thrilled the little word
At which each body and its soul begird
And tighten them for battle. No alarms
Of bugles, no high flags, no clamorous haste—
Only a lift and flare of eyes that faced
The sun, like a friend with whom their love is done.
O larger shone that smile against the sun,—
Mightier than his whose bounty these have spurned.

So, soon they topped the hill, and raced together
Over an open stretch of herb and heather
Exposed. And instantly the whole sky burned
With fury against them; and soft sudden cups
Opened in thousands for their blood; and the green slopes
Chasmed and steepened sheer to infinite space.

Of them who running on that last high place
Leapt to swift unseen bullets, or went up
On the hot blast and fury of hell's upsurge,
Or plunged and fell away past this world's verge,
Some say God caught them even before they fell.

But what say such as from existence' brink
Ventured but drave too swift to sink.
The few who rushed in the body to enter hell,
And there out-fiending all its fiends and flames
With superhuman inhumanities,
Long-famous glories, immemorial shames—
And crawling slowly back, have by degrees
Regained cool peaceful air in wonder—
Why speak they not of comrades that went under?

Barely a twelvemonth after
The seven days war that put the world to sleep,
Late in the evening the strange horses came.
By then we had made our covenant with silence,
But in the first few days it was so still
We listened to our breathing and were afraid.
On the second day
The radios failed; we turned the knobs; no answer.
On the third day a warship passed us, heading north,
Dead bodies piled on the deck. On the sixth day
A plane plunged over us into the sea. Thereafter
Nothing. The radios dumb;
And still they stand in corners of our kitchens,
And stand, perhaps, turned on, in a million rooms
All over the world. But now if they should speak,
If on a sudden they should speak again,
If on the stroke of noon a voice should speak,
We would not listen, we would not let it bring
That old bad world that swallowed its children quick
At one great gulp. We would not have it again.
Sometimes we think of the nations lying asleep,
Curled blindly in impenetrable sorrow,
And then the thought confounds us with its strangeness.

The tractors lie about our fields; at evening
They look like dank sea-monsters couched and waiting.
We leave them where they are and let them rust:
'They'll molder away and be like other loam.'
We make our oxen drag our rusty plows,
Long laid aside. We have gone back
Far past our fathers' land.

And then, that evening
Late in the summer the strange horses came.
We heard a distant tapping on the road,
A deepening drumming; it stopped, went on again
And at the corner changed to hollow thunder.
We saw the heads
Like a wild wave charging and were afraid.
We had sold our horses in our fathers' time
To buy new tractors. Now they were strange to us
As fabulous steeds set on an ancient shield.
Or illustrations in a book of knights.
We did not dare go near them. Yet they waited,
Stubborn and shy, as if they had been sent
By an old command to find our whereabouts
And that long-lost archaic companionship.
In the first moment we had never a thought
That they were creatures to be owned and used.
Among them were some half a dozen colts
Dropped in some wilderness of the broken world,
Yet new as if they had come from their own Eden.
Since then they have pulled our plows and borne our loads
But that free servitude still can pierce our hearts.
Our life is changed; their coming our beginning.

Bertolt Brecht:

Fragen eines lesenden Arbeiters

Wer baute das siebentorige Theben?
In den Büchern stehen die Namen von Königen.
Haben die Könige die Felsbrocken herbeigeschleppt?
Und das mehrmals zerstörte Babylon,
Wer baute es so viele Male auf? In welchen Häusern
Des goldstrahlenden Lima wohnten die Bauleute?
Wohin gingen an dem Abend, wo die chinesische Mauer fertig war,
Die Maurer? Das große Rom
Ist voll von Triumphbögen. Über wen
Triumphierten die Cäsaren? Hatte das vielbesungene Byzanz
Nur Paläste für seine Bewohner? Selbst in dem sagenhaften Atlantis
Brüllten doch in der Nacht, wo das Meer es verschlang,
Die Ersaufenden nach ihren Sklaven.

Der junge Alexander eroberte Indien.
Er allein?
Cäsar schlug die Gallier.
Hatte er nicht wenigstens einen Koch bei sich?
Philipp von Spanien weinte, als seine Flotte
Untergegangen war. Weinte sonst niemand?
Friedrich der Zweite siegte im Siebenjährigen Krieg. Wer
Siegte außer ihm?

Jede Seite ein Sieg.
Wer kochte den Siegeschmaus?
Alle zehn Jahre ein großer Mann.
Wer bezahlte die Spesen?

So viele Berichte,
So viele Fragen.

1935; as appears in Svendborger Gedichte (1939).

A Worker Reads History

Who built the seven gates of Thebes?
The books are filled with names of kings.
Was it the kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone?
And Babylon, so many times destroyed.
Who built the city up each time? In which of Lima's houses,
That city glittering with gold, lived those who built it?
In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished
Where did the masons go? Imperial Rome
Is full of arcs of triumph. Who reared them up? Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph? Byzantium lives in song.
Were all her dwellings palaces? And even in Atlantis of the legend,
The night the seas rushed in,
The drowning men still bellowed for their slaves.

Young Alexander conquered India.
He alone?
Caesar beat the Gauls.
Was there not even a cook in his army?
Phillip of Spain wept as his fleet
was sunk and destroyed. Were there no other tears?
Frederick the Greek triumphed in the Seven Years War.
Who triumphed with him?

Each page a victory.
At whose expense the victory ball?
Every ten years a great man.
Who paid the piper?

So many particulars.
So many questions.

tr. H.R. Hays

Questions From a Worker Who Reads

Who built Thebes of the seven gates?
In the books you will find the name of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
And Babylon, many times demolished.
Who raised it up so many times? In what houses
Of gold-glittering Lima did the builders live?
Where, the evening that the Wall of China was finished
Did the masons go? Great Rome
Is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them? Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph? Had Byzantium, much praised in song,
Only palaces for its inhabitants? Even in fabled Atlantis
The night the ocean engulfed it
The drowning still bawled for their slaves.

The young Alexander conquered India.
Was he alone?
Caesar beat the Gauls.
Did he not have even a cook with him?
Philip of Spain wept when his armada
Went down. Was he the only one to weep?
Frederick the Second won the Seven Years' War. Who
Else won it?

Every page a victory.
Who cooked the feast for the victors?
Every ten years a great man.
Who paid the bill?

So many reports.
So many questions.

tr. Michael Hamburger

Aubade
Forrest Gander

Can you hear dawn edging close, hear • soft light with its vacuum
fingertips • gripping the bedroom wall, an understated • what?
exhilaration? Can you hear the voices, • if they can be called voices,
of towhees • scratching in the garden and then • the creaky low
husky • voice flecked with sleep beside you in bed • telling a dream
slowly as though in real time, • and now, interrupting that dream,
can you • make out the voice, if it can be • called a voice, of
absence speaking • intimately to you, directly, I know • you must
hear it feelingly, a low vibration in • your bones, for don't you find
yourself • absorbed in a next moment beyond you're given life?

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In the Mountains

Forrest Gander

*“No hay exterior del cuerpo. O mejor dicho,
el exterior ocurre dentro del cuerpo”*

—Juan Sebastián Cárdenas

January 7, 2022

Elizabeth Doran

If April dog days reach her before your note does

If at your back door, a mushroom speckled with roving mites
turns the color of rodent teeth

Then her thighs will tremble, her head go light as she tries to stand

If her rises flare, if your collied face stares back from her pupils dull
as a writ

Then you must acknowledge the presentiment that you've been
cored

If you take another sip of dust, trying to remember what to say

If the sludge she calls her sadness stops damming-up your veins

Could she glimpse what was there before you turned inside yourself?

If the regrets edge up behind you chattering

Then she will blindfold you saying: taste this

If it takes just one more crossed-out name to complete the bitterness

If ululations rising from the hills are answered in her face

Then whatever you gasp while she lies over you will sound like
nonsense from a play

If you reflexively choose the first response that precludes thinking

Then she will cry out *Oh no* as though surprised she can't stop it

If the Western Ghats swallow a carbonized sun

If she mistakes that tic at your eye's crease for a signal

If when she sets her basket on the counter, the ripest mango topples
from the peak

You must forget the other hands that have opened her robe

If local animals make themselves nocturnal to avoid you, if swarms
of laughing thrushes no longer descend from the summit

Then the barest gleam from her eyes in the night will reel you in

But if this orange lichen—gossiping across boulders—blackens,
curls, and goes silent?

The rain broke off an hour earlier, the turn
the turn-signal indicator ceased the last of its clucking, and

we arrived at the abandoned farm arrived
with others just now bailing themselves out

from their cars, our voices pitched in some ad-
mixture of ease and exhilaration, some

adventure in happiness if there were such a thing and it wasn't
pretend: laughing, slamming the doors, we were miscible, we believed

we were friends, remember that? and your floriferous
bridesmaids still wearing those purple plumeria headbands

like Goa hippies. The serpentine footpath to the river streamed—
it steamed in sunlight adding to the fullness without

adding weight. You, to whom this place was a given,
sacred even, and so not given to you, pointed out

peacock tracks in the mud. Through an old orchard on either side
of us, where swollen jackfruit hung on slender limbs,

swarms of midges bobbed up and down
like balled hairnets in the light breeze. Before it

become visible, we heard the river *river*
and behind it the gurgling of runoff

down bluffs of packed alluvium. Jacaranda perfume
mixed with pong from your neighbor's

breeder-houses. Who could look into that afternoon and see
it closing? Our whole queue halted when you went

to one knee, when you crouched at a puddle to coo
to a fat toad. Gone quiet, we were hypnotized

by the signature enthusiasm
in your face. As the sun cleared the clouds, you

glanced back to find my eyes eyes fixed on you, and what
I felt then gave me cause

to recall the pleasure breaking out
on the faces of musicians in that pause

between their last note between their last note and
the applause. What you said, what I said. What

we did we did unit there was no interval between us.

Pastoral

Forrest Gander

(pg 46-47)

Together,
you
standing
before me before
the picture
window, my arms
around you, our
eyes pitched
beyond our
reflections into—

("into," I'd
written, as
though *there*
swung at the end
of a tunnel,
a passage dotted
with endless
points of
arrival, as
though our gaze
started just outside
our faces and
corkscrewed its way
toward the horizon,
processual,
as if looking
took time to happen
and weren't
instantaneous,
offered whole in
one gesture
before we
ask, before our
will, as if the far
Sonoma mountains
weren't equally ready
to be beheld as
the dead
fly on the sill)—

the distance, a
broad hill of
bright mustard flowers
the morning light
coaxes open.

AMOR FATI
Sandra Lim

Inside every world there is another world trying to get out,
and there is something in you that would like to discount this
world.

The stars could rise in darkness over heartbreaking coasts,
and you would not know if you were ruining your life or
beginning a real one.

You could claim professional fondness for the world around you;
the pictures would dissolve under the paint coming alive,

and you would only feel a phantom skip of the heart, absorbed so
in the colors.

Your disbelief is a later novel emerging in the long, long shadow of
an earlier one—

is this the great world, which is whatever is the case?

The sustained helplessness you feel in the long emptiness of days is
matched

by the new suspiciousness and wrath you wake to each morning.
Isn't this a relationship with your death, too, to fall in love with
your inscrutable life?

Your teeth fill with cavities. There is always unearned happiness
for some,
and the criminal feeling of solitude. Always, everyone lies about
his life.

THE VANISHING WORLD

Sandra Lim

It's said that people tend to believe God believes what they believe.

When I was young I loved to get up before every dawn of the world, still sweetly baffled by the possibility of unbelief.

Perhaps grace is not so poor a thing that it can't also appear in this instance like a new definition of luck,

akin to tiny blossoms out of cactus thorns in spring, their loneliness crushing your lungs.

Isn't everything sloughed from the same star? What is believable and possible, what is acceptable and what is nothing?

Caught between the old and new year, why do you think that the old will be famous for its pain, the new from the liberation from pain?

Some kind of belief still runs off me in strings;

to enjoy the clarifying effect of participation without remainder may be the most mysterious thing.

When I come to the right place, I believe I'll paint a door on it and walk right through.

The Good Gray Wolf

Martha Collins

Wanted that red, wanted everything tucked inside
that red, that body, it seemed, turned inside out,
that walking flower, petals furled, leaved
by the trees by the forest path, the yellow basket
marking the center--

wanted to raise that rose
petal skin to my gray face, barely to brush
that warmth with my cold nose, but I knew she'd cry
for mercy, help, the mother who'd filled the basket
that morning, Wolf, she'd cry, Wolf, and she'd
be right, why should she try to see beyond
the fur, the teeth, the cartoon tongue wet
with anticipation?

And so I hid behind
a tree as she passed on the path, then ran, as you know,
to her grandmother's house, but not as they say, I knocked
and when she answered I asked politely for her
advice. And then, I swear, she offered me tea,
her bonnet, an extra gown, she gave me more
than advice, she tucked me into a readied bed,
she smoothed my rough fur, I felt light
as a flower, myself, stamened and stemmed in her
sweet sheets.

Not ate her, you see, but rather became
her, flannel chest for the red head, hood
that hid the pearl that when I touched it flushed
and shone. What big eyes! and she opened the cape,
tongue, mouth to her mouth, and opened everything,
I crooned, crawling inside, wolf to flower,
gray to rose, grandmother into child
again, howl to whisper, dagger to cloak,
my mother father animal arms, disarmed
by love, were all she ever dreamed of.

MARTHA COLLINS

THE STORY WE KNOW

The way to begin is always the same. Hello,
Hello. Your hand, your name. So glad, Just fine,
and Good-bye at the end. That's every story we know,

and why pretend? But lunch tomorrow? No?
Yes? An omelette, salad, chilled white wine?
The way to begin is simple, sane, Hello,

and then it's Sunday, coffee, the *Times*, a slow
day by the fire, dinner at eight or nine
and Good-bye. In the end, this is a story we know

so well we don't turn the page, or look below
the picture, or follow the words to the next line:
The way to begin is always the same Hello.

But one night, through the latticed window, snow
begins to whiten the air, and the tall white pine.
Good-bye is the end of every story we know

that night, and when we close the curtains, oh,
we hold each other against that cold white sign
of the way we all begin and end. *Hello*,
Good-bye is the only story. We know, we know.

Herman Hesse

Der Dichter

Nur mir dem Einsamen
Scheinen des Nachts die unendlichen Sterne,
Rauscht der steinerne Brunnen sein Zaubertied,
Mir allein, mir dem Einsamen
Ziehen die farbigen Schatten
Wandernder Wolken Träumen gleich übers Gefild.
Nicht Haus noch Acker ist,
Nicht Wald noch Jagd noch Gewerbe mir gegeben,
Mein ist nur, was keinem gehört,
Mein ist stürzender Bach hinterm Waldesschleier,
Mein das furchtbare Meer,
Mein der spielenden Kinder Vogelgeschwirre,
Träne und Lied einsam Verliebter am Abend.
Mein auch sind die Tempel der Götter, mein ist
Der Vergangenheit ehrwürdiger Hain.
Und nicht minder der Zukunft
Lichtes Himmelsgewölbe ist meine Heimat:
Oft in Flügen der Sehnsucht stürmt meine Seele empor,
Seliger Menschheit Zukunft zu schauen,
Liebe, Gesetz besiegend, Liebe von Volk zu Volk.
Alle sind ich sie wieder, edel verwandelt:
Landmann, König, Händler, emsiges Schiffervolk,
Hirt und Gärtner, sie alle
Feiern dankbar der Zukunft Weltfest.
Einzig der Dichter fehlt,
Er, der vereinsamt Schauende,
Er, der Menschensehnsucht Träger und bleiches Bild,
Dessen die Zukunft, dessen die Weltverfüllung
Nicht mehr bedarf. Es welken
Viele Kränze an seinem Grabe,
Aber verschollen ist sein Gedächtnis.

The Poet

Only on me, the lonely one,
The unending stars of the night shine,
The stone fountain whispers its magic song,
To me alone, to me the lonely one
The colorful shadows of the wandering clouds
Move like dreams over the open countryside.
Neither house nor farmland,
Neither forest nor hunting privilege is given to me,
What is mine belongs to no one,
The plunging brook behind the veil of the woods,
The frightening sea,
The bird whirl of children at play,
The weeping and singing, lonely in the evening, of a man
secretly in love.
The temples of the gods are mine also, and mine
The aristocratic groves of the past.
And no less, the luminous
Vault of heaven in the future is my home:
Often in full flight of longing my soul storms upward,
To gaze on the future of blessed men,
Love, overcoming the law, love from people to people.
I find them all again, nobly transformed:
Farmer, king, tradesman, busy sailors,
Shepherd and gardener, all of them
Gratefully celebrate the festival of the future world.
Only the poet is missing,
The lonely one who looks on,
The bearer of human longing, the pale image
Of whom the future, the fulfillment of the world
Has no further need. Many garlands
Wilt on his grave,
But no one remembers him.

[1911]

Herman Hesse

Ode an Hölderlin

Freund meiner Jugend, zu dir kehr ich voll Dankbarkeit
Manchen Abend zurück, wenn im Fliedergebüsch
Des entschlummerten Gartens
Nur der rauschende Brunnen noch tönt.

Keiner kennt dich, o Freund; weit hat die neuere Zeit
Sich von Griechenlands stillen Zaubern entfernt,
Ohne Gebet und entgöttert
Wandelt nüchtern das Volk im Staub.

Aber der heimlichen Schar innig Versunkener,
Denen der Gott die Seele mit Sehnsucht schlug,
Ihr erklingen die Lieder
Deiner göttlichen Harfe noch heut.

Sehnlich wenden wir uns, vom Tag Ermüdete,
Der ambrosischen Nacht deiner Gesänge zu,
Deren wehender Fittich
Uns beschattet mit goldenem Traum.

Ach, und glühender brennt, wenn dein Lied uns entzückt,
Schmerzlicher brennt nach der Vorzeit seligem Land,
Nach den Tempeln der Griechen
Unser ewiges Heimweh auf.

[1911]

Ode to Hölderlin

Friend of my young manhood, on many an evening
I return gratefully to you, when in the elder bushes
Of the garden fallen asleep
Only the rustling fountains still make a sound.

Nobody knows you, my friend; this new age has driven
Far away from the silent magic of Greece.
Without prayer, and cheated out of gods,
People stroll reasonably in the dust.

But to the secret gathering who sink in their inner lives,
Whose souls God has stricken with longing,
The heavenly strings of your songs
Are ringing, even today.

We turn passionately, exhausted by day,
To the ambrosia, the night of your music,
Whose fanning wing casts us into
A shadow of golden dream.

Yes, and luminously, when your song delights us,
Sorrowfully burning for the blessed land of the past,
For the temples of the Greeks,
Our homesickness lasts forever.

Herman Hesse

An einer Sammlung ägyptischer Bildwerke

Aus den Edelsteinaugen
Blicket ihr still und ewig
Über uns späte Brüder hinweg.
Nicht Liebe scheint noch Verlangen
Euren schimmernd glatten Zügen bekannt.
Königlich und den Gestirnen verschwistert
Seid ihr Unbegreiflichen einst
Zwischen Tempeln geschritten,
Heiligkeit weht wie ein ferner Götterduft
Heut noch um eure Stirnen,
Würde um eure Knie;
Eure Schönheit atmet gelassen,
Ihre Heimat ist Ewigkeit.

Aber wir, eure jüngeren Brüder,
Taumeln gottlos ein irres Leben entlang,
Allen Qualen der Leidenschaft,
Jeder brennenden Sehnsucht
Steht unsre zitternde Seele gierig geöffnet.
Unser Ziel ist der Tod,
Unser Glaube Vergänglichkeit,
Keiner Zeitenferne
Trotzt unser fliehendes Bildnis.
Dennoch tragen auch wir
Heimlicher Seelenverwandtschaft Merkmal
In die Seele gebrannt,
Ahnen Götter und fühlen vor euch,
Schweigende Bilder der Vorzeit,
Furchtlose Liebe. Denn sehet,
Uns ist kein Wesen verhasst, auch der Tod nicht,
Leiden und Sterben
Schreckt unsre Seele nicht,
Weil wir tiefer zu lieben gelernt!
Unser Herz ist des Vogels,
Ist des Meeres und Walds, und wir nennen
Sklaven und Elende Brüder,
Nennen mit Liebesnamen noch Tier und Stein.
So auch werden die Bildnisse
Unsres vergänglich Seins
Nicht im harten Steine uns überdauern;
Lächelnd werden sie schwinden
Und im flüchtigen Sonnenstaub
Jeder Stunde zu neuen Freuden und Qualen
Ungeduldig und ewig auferstehn.

In a Collection of Egyptian Sculptures

Out of jeweled eyes
Silent and eternal, you gaze away
Over us late brothers.
Neither love nor longing appears to be known among
Your smooth gleaming procession.
Once, inconceivable, you walked, majestic
Brothers and sisters of constellations,
Among the temples.
Even today, holiness like the distant fragrance of gods
Drifts round your brows,
Dignity round your knees:
Your beauty breathes calmly,
Your home is eternity.

But we, your younger brothers,
Stagger godless through a confusing life,
Our trembling souls stand eagerly, opened
To all the sufferings of passion,
To every burning desire.
Our goal is death,
Our belief a belief in what perishes,
No great distance of time defies
Our fleeting faces.
Nevertheless, we also
Bear, burned into our very souls,
The sign of a secret affinity to the spirit,
We have a foreboding of gods, a feeling for you,
Images of the silent past,
A fearless love. Look:
We hate nothing that exists, not even death,
Suffering and dying
Does not horrify our souls,
As long as we learn more deeply to love.
Our heart is the bird's heart,
And it belongs to the sea and the forest, and we name
Slaves and wretches our brothers,
We still name with loving names both animal and stone.
So also the images
Of our perishing lives will not survive us
In hard stone:
They will vanish smiling,
And in the flickering dust of sunlight
Every hour to new joys and unhappiness,
Impatient, eternal, they will rise.

If Home Is the Body

Linda Hogan

If, as they say, your home resembles your body,
please pardon my rumpled clothing,
this untidy appearance. But in this home
are pockets of memory,
stones I carried from places of holiness,
beside disordered papers, so plentiful and unfinished.

The windows need no curtains.
Only light peers in
as does the moon from the black
vessel of night rising over red mountains.
I think how the nautilus rises,
shining on the surface of every darkness.

The house is old with dusty corners
where memories have settled
along with my gifts from deep oceans.

Inside, a picture of two women
ride through a red valley on horses.
A Woodlands family smiles,
the child standing proud beside his father
and the kindness and love of the mother.
Rarely do you see us in photos this way, so happy.

In one corner hangs a strand of blue beads from Turkey
to protect, as do lucky coins,
tree frogs climbing the window
to sing before rain,
and the sounds of crickets.

Last is the dog with her wet paws.
She loves each morning, going out,
leaving the house,
returning to announce,
I am here.

The Fingers, Writing

Linda Hogan

Not all fingers hold a nail
waiting for the hammer.
Not all take up white thread
and transform it to lace.
Even fewer pick up the pen
and offer words to a lover's
body where it is so beautifully dark
as we lay in the sunlit field of grasses,
wildflowers, olive trees,
a gathering of life.

The hands have their reasons
unknown to the heart,
a needed touch,
the kindness of another skin.

The fingers have their own aims,
to make beauty, to touch softly
something to live by.

But then I remember that sometimes they lie
when from out of the dark corridors
of some mind
they sign a writ of death.

I remember the musician who had his fingers broken
for creating songs his country didn't want.
The same is true for other lands.

As for my people, a government of hands
entreat for their land, pen and ink like blood
wrote away each stand
of ancient forest, the waters
we drank gone with the grand larceny
of fingers holding nothing
but a pen and a bottle of ink,
our stolen indigo, dark as blood.

In the distance between hand and soul
lies the history of this continent.
So now I write this poem.
Some of us have to tell
what has been done,
what they will do
now, even tomorrow,
the truth of what happens.

A World in an Earring

Margaret Cavendish

An Earring round may well a Zodiac be,
Wherein a Sun goeth round, and we not see.
And Planets seven about that Sun may move,
And He stand still, as some wise men would prove.
And fixèd Stars, like twinkling Diamonds, placed
About this Earring, which a World is vast.
That same which doth the Earring hold, the hole,
Is that, which we do call the Pole.
There nipping Frosts may be, and Winter cold,
Yet never on the Lady's Ear take hold.
And Lightings, Thunder, and great Winds may blow
Within this Earring, yet the Ear not know.
There Seas may ebb, and flow, where Fishes swim,
And Islands be, where Spices grow therein.
There Crystal Rocks hang dangling at each Ear,
And Golden Mines as Jewels may they wear.
There Earthquakes be, which Mountains vast down fling,
And yet ne'er stir the Lady's Ear, nor Ring.
There Meadows be, and Pastures fresh, and green,
And Cattle feed, and yet be never seen:
And Gardens fresh, and Birds which sweetly sing,
Although we hear them not in an Earring.
There Night, and Day, and Heat, and Cold, and so
May Life, and Death, and Young, and Old, still grow.
Thus Youth may spring, and several Ages die,
Great Plagues may be, and no Infections nigh.
There Cities be, and stately Houses built,
Their inside gay, and finely may be gilt.
There Churches be, and Priests to teach therein,
And Steeple too, yet hear the Bells not ring.
From thence may pious Tears to Heaven run,
And yet the Ear not know which way they're gone.
There Markets be, and things both bought, and sold,
Know not the price, nor how the Markets hold.
There Governors do rule, and Kings do Reign,
And Battles fought, where many may be slain.
And all within the Compass of this Ring,
And yet not tidings to the Wearer bring.
Within the Ring wise Counselors may sit,
And yet the Ear not one wise word may get.
There may be dancing all Night at a Ball,
And yet the Ear be not disturbed at all.
There Rivals Duels fight, where some are slain;
There Lovers mourn, yet hear them not complain.
And Death may dig a Lover's Grave, thus were
A Lover dead, in a fair Lady's Ear.
But when the Ring is broke, the World is done,
Then Lovers they into Elysium run.

Source: Cavendish, *Poems and fancies* (London, 1653), sig. G3r-G4v, with spelling modernized.
<http://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/>

The Poetress's Hasty Resolution

Margaret Cavendish

Reading my Verses, I liked them so well,
Self-love did make my *Judgement* to rebel.
Thinking them so good, I thought more to write;
Considering not how others would them like.
I writ so fast, I thought, if I lived long,
A *Pyramid of Fame* to build thereon.
Reason observing which way I was bent,
Did stay my hand, and asked me what I meant;
Will you, said she, thus waste your time in vain,
On that which in the World small praise shall gain?
For shame leave off, said she, the *Printer* spare,
He'll lose by your ill *Poetry*, I fear
Besides the World hath already such a *weight*
Of useless Books, as it is over-fraught.
Then pity take, do the World a good turn,
And all you write cast in the fire, and burn.
Angry I was, and *Reason* strook away,
When I did hear, what she to me did say.
Then all in haste I to the *Press* it sent,
Fearing *Persuasion* might my *Book* prevent:
But now 'tis done, with grief repent do I,
Hang down my *head* with *shame*, *blush*, *sigh*, and *cry*.
Take pity, and my drooping *Spirits* raise,
Wipe off my *tears* with *Handkerchiefs of Praise*.

Source: *Margaret Cavendish*, Edited and Introduction by Michael Robbins (NYRB Books, 2019)
<http://library2.utm.utoronto.ca/poemsandfancies/>

Upon the Heights

Yone Noguchi

And victor of life and silence,
I stood upon the Heights; triumphant,
With upturned eyes, I stood,
And smiled unto the sun, and sang
A beautifully sad farewell unto the dying day.
And my thoughts and the eve gathered
Their serpentine mysteries around me,
My thoughts like alien breezes,
The eve like a fragrant legend.
My feeling was that I stood as one
Serenely poised for flight, as a muse
Of golden melody and lofty grace.
Yea, I stood as one scorning the swords
And wanton menace of the cities.
The sun had heavily sunk into the seas beyond,
And left me a tempting sweet and twilight.
The eve with trailing shadows westward
Swept on, and the lengthened shadows of trees
Disappeared: how silently the songs of silence
Steal into my soul! And still I stood
Among the crickets, in the beauteous profundity
Sung by stars; and I saw me
Softly melted into the eve. The moon
Slowly rose: my shadow on the ground
Dreamily began a dreamy roam,
And I upward smiled silent welcome.

<https://poets.org/poem/upon-heights>

At Night

Yone Noguchi

At night the Universe grows lean, sober-
faced, of intoxication,
The shadow of the half-sphere curtains
down closely against my world, like a
doorless cage, and the stillness chained by
wrinkled darkness strains throughout the Uni-
verse to be free.
Listen, frogs in the pond, (the world is a pond itself)
cry out for the light, for the truth!
The curtains rattle ghostlily along, bloodily biting
my soul, the winds knocking on my cabin door
with their shadowy hands.

<https://poets.org/poem/night-2>

Bird

Joy Harjo

The moon plays horn, leaning on the shoulder of the dark universe
to the infinite glitter of chance. Tonight I watched Bird kill himself,

larger than real life. I've always had a theory that some of us
are born with nerve endings longer than our bodies. Out to here,

farther than his convoluted scales could reach. Those nights he
played did he climb the stairway of forgetfulness, with his horn,

a woman who is always beautiful to strangers? All poets
understand the final uselessness of words. We are chords to

other chords to other chords, if we're lucky, to melody. The moon
is brighter than anything I can see when I come out of the theater,

than music, than memory of music, or any mere poem. At least
I can dance to "Ornithology" or sweet-talk beside "Charlie's Blues,"

but inside this poem I can't play a horn, hijack a plane to
somewhere where music is the place those nerve endings dangle.

Each rhapsody embodies counterpoint, and pain stuns the woman
in high heels, the man behind the horn, sings the heart.

To survive is sometimes a leap into madness. The fingers of
saints are still hot from miracles, but can they save themselves?

Where is the dimension a god lives who will take Bird home?
I want to see it, I said to the Catalinas, to the Rincons,

to anyone listening in the dark. I said, Let me hear you
by any means, by horn, by fever, by night, even by some poem

attempting flight home.

"Bird" from *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems, 1975-2001* by Joy Harjo.
W. W. Norton & Co.: 2002.

Ah, Ah

Joy Harjo

for Lurline McGregor

Ah, ah cries the crow arching toward the heavy sky over the marina.
Lands on the crown of the palm tree.

Ah, ah slaps the urgent cove of ocean swimming through the slips.
We carry canoes to the edge of the salt.

Ah, ah groans the crew with the weight, the winds cutting skin.
We claim our seats. Pelicans perch in the draft for fish.

Ah, ah beats our lungs and we are racing into the waves.
Though there are worlds below us and above us, we are straight ahead.

Ah, ah tattoos the engines of your plane against the sky—away from these waters.
Each paddle stroke follows the curve from reach to loss.

Ah, ah calls the sun from a fishing boat with a pale, yellow sail. We fly by
on our return, over the net of eternity thrown out for stars.

Ah, ah scrapes the hull of my soul. Ah, ah.

"Ah, Ah" from *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems: 1975-2001* by Joy Harjo. Copyright © 2002 by Joy Harjo. Used by permission of W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., www.wwnorton.com.

Womanhood, As Told By 20th Century Feminist Poets

Her Kind

Anne Sexton

I have gone out, a possessed witch,
haunting the black air, braver at night;
dreaming evil, I have done my hitch
over the plain houses, light by light:
lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.
A woman like that is not a woman, quite.
I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods,
filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,
closets, silks, innumerable goods;
fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:
whining, rearranging the disaligned.
A woman like that is misunderstood.
I have been her kind.

I have ridden in your cart, driver,
waved my nude arms at villages going by,
learning the last bright routes, survivor
where your flames still bite my thigh
and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.
A woman like that is not ashamed to die.
I have been her kind.

Siren Song

Margaret Atwood

This is the one song everyone
would like to learn: the song
that is irresistible:
the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see the beached skulls
the song nobody knows
because anyone who has heard it
is dead, and the others can't remember.
Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit?
I don't enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical
with these two feathery maniacs,
I don't enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.
I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.
Come closer. This song
is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can,
you are unique
at last. Alas
it is a boring song
but it works every time.

A Woman Speaks

Audre Lorde

Moon marked and touched by sun
my magic is unwritten
but when the sea turns back
it will leave my shape behind.

I seek no favor
untouched by blood
unrelenting as the curse of love
permanent as my errors
or my pride

I do not mix
love with pity
nor hate with scorn
and if you would know me
look into the entrails of Uranus
where the restless oceans pound.

I do not dwell
within my birth nor my divinities
who am ageless and half-grown
and still seeking
my sisters
witches in Dahomey
wear me inside their coiled cloths
as our mother did
mourning.

I have been woman
for a long time
beware my smile
I am treacherous with old magic
and the noon's new fury
with all your wide futures
promised

I am
woman
and not white.

Be Nobody's Darling

Alice Walker

Be nobody's darling;
Be an outcast.
Take the contradictions
Of your life
And wrap around
You like a shawl,
To parry stones
To keep you warm.
Watch the people succumb
To madness
With ample cheer;
Let them look askance at you
And you askance reply.
Be an outcast;
Be pleased to walk alone
(Uncool)
Or line the crowded
River beds
With other impetuous
Fools.

Make a merry gathering
On the bank
Where thousands perished
For brave hurt words
They said.

But be nobody's darling;
Be an outcast.
Qualified to live
Among your dead.

@Tubman's_Rock

Lillian Yvonne Bertram

after Nanni Balestrini

"I just wanted the world to see
what they did to my baby"
—Mamie Till

\$(0)

They tied up Till (steal away)
likely to kill just stay dead
Drove toward Money, Mississippi behind enemy lines
The dead trees will show you the way
See us free like Jesus we just won't stay dead
around your house To Moses, slowly
When the river ends steal away
I just wanted the world to see
the river bank makes for a good road
that Jesus is a friend with friends

\$(1)

Jesus is a friend with friends
The river bank makes for a good road
Moses never lost a passenger
The dead trees will show you the way
they tied up Till Steal away
& just stay dead
Drove toward Money, Mississippi Behind enemy lines
when the wind blows the first quail call
sees us free Just like Jesus we won't stay dead
around your house To Moses slowly

\$(2)

I just wanted the world to see
To holler down the lions in this air
Tracks laid from the south to the north
They tied up Till Steal away
around your house To Moses slowly
set us free and just like Jesus we won't stay dead
When the wind blows the first quail calls
Drove toward Money, Mississippi behind enemy lines
the river bank makes for a good road
trouble the water holler down the lions

\$(3)

Bundle of wood Parcel Load of potatoes
People also ask *what was Harriet Tubman's life like?*
I just wanted the world to see—
Till tied up, stolen away
Patterrollers spread throughout the colonies
toward promised land
— *what they did to my baby* Behind enemy lines
our Moses never lost a passenger
on tracks laid from the south to the north
A friend of a friend of a friend sent me she said
the river bank makes for a good road

\$(4)

People also ask *why is Harriet Tubman important to the world?*
I just wanted the world to see
flying bondsmen on French leave steal away
They say our Moses never lost a passenger
& just like Jesus we won't stay dead
The river bank makes for a good road
Emmett tied to a cotton-gin fan, shot in the head
From the south tracks laid to the north
She said a friend of a friend of a friend sent me
The wind blows the first quail call

\$(5)

People also ask *what is Harriet Tubman most famous for?*
Flying bondsmen on French leave steal away
They drove Emmett Till toward Money, Mississippi
Behind enemy lines
our Moses never lost a passenger
People also ask *why is Harriet Tubman important to the world?*
Tracks pressed south to north She often said *a friend*
of a friend of a friend sent me & when the wind blows
& the first quail calls
the river bank makes for a good road
I just wanted the world to see

\$(6)

“in no rush— the first quail calls
in each pound of dollar bills
slave patrol also called patterrollers
pattyrollers paddy rollers patrollers
three fourths a pound of cotton
Jesus is a friend with friends
—to put Tubman on the \$20 bill.”
Our Moses never lost a passenger
The dollar hasn’t changed: 3/4
People also ask *what was Harriet Tubman’s life like?*
People do not ask *who picks the*
I just wanted the world to see
See results about the murder of

\$(7)

The dollar hasn’t changed
People also ask *what was Harriet Tubman’s life like?*
In each pound of dollar bills
slave patrol also called patterrollers
pattyrollers paddy rollers patrollers
people also ask *why is Harriet Tubman important to the world?*
Treasure secretary won’t stay dead
of a pound of cotton
she said a friend of a friend of a friend sent me
Drove toward Money, Mississippi \$\$\$\$\$\$
in no rush the first quail calls

\$(8)

People also ask *what was Harriet Tubman’s life like?*
In each pound of dollar bills—
Jesus is a friend with friends
Treasured secretary: just like Jesus we won’t stay dead
Our Moses hollered down the lions
never lost a passenger
pound of cotton
slave patrol also called patterrollers
pattyrollers paddy rollers patrollers
in no rush the first quail calls
I just wanted the world to see
three fourths of a

\$(9)

Treasure secretary "in no rush
People also ask *why is Harriet Tubman important to the world?*
people also ask *what is Harriet Tubman
most most famous for?*
The dollar hasn't changed
Money, Mississippi \$\$\$\$\$\$
Among our talents: to holler down the lions
People also ask *what was Harriet Tubman's life like?*
Fying bondsmen on French leave steal away
I just wanted the world to see
to put Tubman on the \$20 bill"

\$(10)

They say Jesus is a friend with friends
and in each pound of dollar bills!
{slave patrol} also called {patterrollers
pattyrollers paddy rollers patrollers}
three fourths!
They say our Moses never lost a passenger
to put Tubman on the \$20 bill"
just like Jesus we won't stay dead
of a pound of cotton!
I just wanted the world to see
drove toward Money, Mississippi \$\$\$\$\$\$
what they did to my baby

#!/usr/bin/env python

import random, textwrap
import sys

*#code adapted for Python3
#code from github and translated from the Italian
#is a reconstruction of the method thought to have been used
#for Nanni Balestrini's electronic poem Tape Mark 1, 1962
#Wikipedia was consulted for information about
#Mamie and Emmett Till, Harriet Tubman,
#the rock that struck Harriet Tubman in the head,
#and slave patrols.
#To holler down the lions' comes from
#gay chaps at the bar' by Gwendolyn Brooks*

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180422070754/https://bostonreview.net/poetry/lillian-yvonne-bertram-tubmans-rock>

At Mt. Auburn Cemetery

Robert Pinsky

Walking among the graves for exercise
Where do you get your ideas how do I stop them
Looking for Mike Mazur's marker I looked
Down at the grass and saw Stanislaw Baranczak
Our Solidarity poetry reading in Poznan
Years later in Newton now he said I'm a U.S.
Liberal with a car like everybody else
When I held Bobo dying in my arms
His green eyes told me *I am not done yet*
Then he was gone when he was young he enjoyed
Leaping up onto the copy machine to press
A button and hear it hum to life and rustle
A blank page then another out onto its tray
Sometimes he batted the pages down to the floor
I used to call it his hobby here's a marble
Wicker bassinet marking a baby's grave
To sever the good fellowship of dust the vet's
Needle first a sedative then death now Willie
Paces the house mowling his elegy for Bobo
They never meow to one another just to people
Or to their nursing mother when they're small I
Marvel at this massive labelled American elm
Spreading above a cluster of newer names
Chang, Ohanessian, Kondakis joining Howells,
Emerson, Parkinson and here's a six-foot sphere
Of polished granite perfect and inscribed *Walker*
Should I have let him die his own cat way
Bruce Lee spends less on a stone than Schwarzenegger
The cemetery official confided what will mark
The markers when like mourners they bow and kneel
And topple down flat to kiss the very heaps
They have in trust under the splendid elm
Also marked with its tag a noble survivor
Civilization lifted my cat from the street gave him
A name and all his shots and determined his death
Now Willie howls the loss from room to room
When people say I'm ashamed of being German
Said Arendt I want to say I'm ashamed of being
Human sometimes when Bobo made the machine
Shoot copies of nothing I crumpled one he could chase
And combat practicing the game of being himself.

From *The New Yorker*, 29 March 2021.

Shirt

Robert Pinsky

The back, the yoke, the yardage. Lapped seams,
The nearly invisible stitches along the collar
Turned in a sweatshop by Koreans or Malaysians

Gossiping over tea and noodles on their break
Or talking money or politics while one fitted
This armpiece with its overseam to the band

Of cuff I button at my wrist. The presser, the cutter,
The wringer, the mangle. The needle, the union,
The treadle, the bobbin. The code. The infamous blaze

At the Triangle Factory in nineteen-eleven.
One hundred and forty-six died in the flames
On the ninth floor, no hydrants, no fire escapes--

The witness in a building across the street
Who watched how a young man helped a girl to step
Up to the windowsill, then held her out

Away from the masonry wall and let her drop.
And then another. As if he were helping them up
To enter a streetcar, and not eternity.

A third before he dropped her put her arms
Around his neck and kissed him. Then he held
Her into space, and dropped her. Almost at once

He stepped to the sill himself, his jacket flared
And fluttered up from his shirt as he came down,
Air filling up the legs of his gray trousers--

Like Hart Crane's Bedlamite, "shrill shirt ballooning."
Wonderful how the pattern matches perfectly
Across the placket and over the twin bar-tacked

Corners of both pockets, like a strict rhyme
Or a major chord. Prints, plaids, checks,
Houndstooth, Tattersall, Madras. The clan tartans

Invented by mill-owners inspired by the hoax of Ossian,
To control their savage Scottish workers, tamed
By a fabricated heraldry: MacGregor,

Bailey, MacMartin. The kilt, devised for workers
To wear among the dusty clattering looms.
Weavers, carders, spinners. The loader,

The docker, the navy. The planter, the picker, the sorter
Sweating at her machine in a litter of cotton
As slaves in calico headrags sweated in fields:

George Herbert, your descendant is a Black
Lady in South Carolina, her name is Irma
And she inspected my shirt. Its color and fit

And feel and its clean smell have satisfied
Both her and me. We have culled its cost and quality
Down to the buttons of simulated bone,

The buttonholes, the sizing, the facing, the characters
Printed in black on neckband and tail. The shape,
The label, the labor, the color, the shade. The shirt.

From *The Want Bone*, 1990.

moderators

Wyn Kelley, Senior Lecturer in Literature at MIT, is author of *Melville's City: Literary and Urban Form in Nineteenth-Century New York* (1996) and *Herman Melville: An Introduction* (2008) and most recently is co-editor with Christopher Ohge on Wiley's *A New Companion to Herman Melville* (2022). She is Associate Director of the *Melville Electronic Library*.

Diana Henderson is a Professor of Literature at MIT who primarily works with Shakespeare across media and as a dramaturg, but loves poems, novels and plays from a wide array of times and places.

Pamela Sutton taught Critical Writing at the University of Pennsylvania, holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Boston University, and MS in Journalism from Northwestern University. She is the author of two books of poetry: *Pocket Gospel*, (Sheep Meadow Press, 2012); *Burning My Birth Certificate*, which won the Snyder Memorial Prize from Ashland Poetry Press in 2016. She has finished her first novel, *Tamer of Horses*; a third book of poetry, *Wolfbone Reliquaries*, and is writing a second novel *The Last Water Castle*.

Zachary Bos coordinates the Boston University BookLab. He is editor of the daily literary homepage *New England Review of Books*. His work as a poet and translator has appeared recently in *Peach Velvet*, *Incessant Pipe*, *Asses of Parnassus*, *The Battersea Review*, and elsewhere.

Elizabeth Doran is a poet and painter. She resides in Boston's Back Bay. Her poems have been published in: *Ibbetson Street*, *Poiesis*, and *Spirited Magazine*. Two of her paintings were chosen by the Mass Poetry Festival for their Poetry on the T series. Her painting was featured on the cover of *Salamander* in 2016. She is the former manager of the historic Grolier Poetry Book Shop.

Mary Fuller joined the Literature Faculty at MIT in 1989. She teaches introductory and advanced subjects in poetry as a break from her research, which focuses on the records of maritime and colonial history 1450-1650.

Mark Hessler is a local alum with a 21S degree in literature and physics. He has worked in the US and overseas as a high school teacher, actor, and programmer, and has attended PoP for many years.

Avery Nguyen (they/them) is a senior double majoring in chemical engineering and literature. They think often about bodies, belief, and the environment.

Lianne Habinek is a lecturer in Literature at MIT and received her undergraduate degrees from MIT in Courses 9 and 21L; she then earned an MPhil in Renaissance Literature from King's College, Cambridge University, and an MPhil and PhD in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University.

AJ Odasso's first full-length poetry collection, *The Sting of It*, was shortlisted for the 2017 Sexton Prize (under its working title, *Things Being What They Are*) and was published in 2019 by Tolsun Books. It won Best LGBT Book at the 2019 New Mexico/Arizona Book Awards. Their first novel, *The Pursued and the Pursuing*, was published in September 2021 by DartFrog Blue. AJ teaches at University of New Mexico and Central New Mexico Community college, and serves as Senior Poetry Editor at *Strange Horizons* magazine.

Anne Hudson has participated in Pleasures of Poetry since 2002, when she attended a session in the wake of 9/11 on WH Auden's "September 1, 1939." Her own poetry has appeared in print and online, including in the MIT Faculty Newsletter. From 2000 to 2006 she published the online literary magazine, *Facets*, and she is currently working on a novel.

Brindha Rathinasabapathi is a second-year undergraduate in Course 7 (Biology) at MIT. She reads and writes poetry in her free time, and has found further appreciation for it through the MIT Literature department.

Nick Montfort, a professor in Comparative Media Studies/Writing, is a poet and artist who seeks to uncover how computing and language are entangled with each other and with culture. He directs a lab/studio, The Trope Tank, and has published eight computer-generated books of poetry, including *#!* and *Golem*.

David Thorburn is the founder of Pleasures of Poetry and has taught Literature at MIT since 1976. His first book of poems, *Knots*, was published in 2020.

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