

Join MIT's Literature faculty & friends for reading and discussion of memorable poems in January for IAP 2019

MON

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Stephen Tapscott

John Berryman,
Dream Song 14,
from *The Dream Songs*

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Elizabeth Doran

Alice Notley, "the descent of ALETTE"

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Zachary Bos

Toby Martinez de las Rivas, "Titan/All is Still"

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Alvin Kibel

four lamentations

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David Thorburn

Thom Gunn,
selected poems

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Bronwen Heuer

Molly McCully Brown,
selected poems from
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Sessions take place in 14N-417 @ 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

pleasures of poetry
pleasures of poetry

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Dream Song 14

John Berryman

Life, friends, is boring. We must not say so.
After all, the sky flashes, the great sea yearns,
we ourselves flash and yearn,
and moreover my mother told me as a boy
(repeatedly) 'Ever to confess you're bored
means you have no

Inner Resources.' I conclude now I have no
inner resources, because I am heavy bored.
Peoples bore me,
literature bores me, especially great literature,
Henry bores me, with his plights & gripes
as bad as Achilles,

who loves people and valiant art, which bores me.
And the tranquil hills, & gin, look like a drag
and somehow a dog
has taken itself & its tail considerably away
into mountains or sea or sky, leaving
behind: me, wag.

poem by Alice Notley

the descent of ALETTE

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"In a Station" "I saw" a woman crying" "She stood against"
"the wall" "looking dirty" "& exhausted," "crying quietly"

"I asked her who she was" "& why" "she was crying" "She
said: "I" "am a painter" "I have been trying" "to find"

"a form the tyrant" "doesn't own"---" "something" "he doesn't
Know about" "hasn't invented, hasn't" "mastered" "hasn't
made his own" "in his mind" "Not rectangular," "not a
sculpture" "Not a thing at all---" "he owns all things,"

"doesn't he?" "He's invented" "all the shapes" "I'm afraid he's"
"invented mine," "my very own" "body" ("she was hysterical")
"Did he invent me?" "I want" "to do something like
paint air" "Perhaps" "I even want to" "invent air" "I've

painted" "thin transparent" "pieces" "of plastic" "They---"
"the pictures on them---" "always turn" "rectangular," "circular"
"I once painted" "on bats wings" "I caught a bat" "painted
colors on" "let it loose &" "watched the air change..."

"He owns form," doesn't he?" "The tyrant" owns form"

the descent of ALETTE

page 37

“On a train, I” “fell asleep” “& dreamed I turned away” “from light:”

“I was reading” “I was reading” “an old book brown leather” “I
walked” “as I read” “I was reading” “& walking” “On a grassy”
“path that led” “to a small house” “up to its door” “I opened

the door---” “The house was filled with” “filled with white light”
“The tyrant stood there” “white haired, round-blue eyed” “black suited,”
“& slim,” “light” all about him” “I turned and ran.” “I awoke then”
“& thought,” “He owns enlightenment” “all enlightenment” “that we

know about” He owns” “the light” “I must resist it” “ “I slept again”
“My head” “fell against” “someone’s shoulder, I” “jerked awake,”
“peered at a car of” “quiet men,” “sleeper’s mask each” “the smooth
eyelids,” “the subtle modeling” “near each line of mouth” “I slept”

“& dreamed again:” “The tyrant floated” “in a blue sky” “He had
Frayed edges” “all about himself,” “became tatter-like” “His hair &
Face,” “his suit and hands” “were like rags blown” “on a clothesline”
“his eyes” “were bulging,” “his mouth open” “His tatter-arms

stretched out” “his white thin hair blowing” “He became” “pieces of
cloth; sky” “appeared” “between the pieces” “which scattered” “He
blew away” “Where he had been was” “a chaos” “cavelike,” “cave-
shaped a” “blue-black” “cell of winds” “The cave stretched backwards”

“into the blue sky a” “black” “snakelike tunnel”

Toby Martinez de las Rivas
from “Titan / All Is Still”

A black sun rises in the West of me
& will never set. God of my fathers, sleep
like the one sleeping next to me;
inert & tenderly coiled. I am so grateful
to yóu, that breathes as the dead
breathe in their shallow land — barely,
below the range of my hearing.
That draws in the thin streams of black air
& shifts & puts a white arm around me.
I want to know, Né, what it is like
in the kingdom of the dead where you are.
Is the one I fear there with her train
of silver hair? Have you seen John, the temples
of his glasses duct-taped to the hinge?
I know it is not still there; I know everything
is in furious motion beneath
the black sun & the sky white as chalk —
the torrent of silver hair whipped
about her face that woke in the moonlight
on the last morning, lucid & fluent,
& turned toward my father & said, “I love you,”
walking backward on the white road
into the white sky toward the white city,
black sun clearing the horizon &
a wind lifting in the torn leaves like the wind
in the wood above Lady’s Walk
where I trespassed in spring, singing,
Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more, the bluebells
hissing like cats & the canopy
a violent array, violently outside me
in flickering Islamic greens / Spanish grays,
the topside / bellyside of milled
leaves, the harebells biting their bitter tongues,
& raising its head in panic, a juvenile
fallow deer stippled with thick white spots.
Then someone shouted, “Oy, stay there, you fúck,”
Oyé, Whale, & my launces in his side,

& I went down the hill with the sweetgrass
pulling at me & the spit in my mouth.
Né, I cannot sleep. Ever since I lost my little children.
I look for their shapes on the ceiling,
in the dark, & they are not there.
Né, never, no, no, never, never, never, never.
There is nothing, Né. Neither the night
nor the white city like Conholt in its great estate.
Not the hart, nor the furious wood.

- O, John, John. I came downstairs still drunk
to find you asleep with your head
on the hoover, & the hoover still running;
half-shaved, the tape on your glasses,
your mouth open & the tattered Crombie.
Then years later when Oli called & you were,
O John. *Y am alpha and oo, the firste
and the laste, bigynnyng and ende.*
- O, John, John. No white city *as a wijf ourned to hir hosebonde,*
no voice in the wind, in the (clouds) crying
Lo! Y make alle thingis newe. I make all things new.
Como una novia adornada para su esposo.
Como tu cuerpo en la noche, Né; like this body
that pregnancies have raged over
& I have loved with my mouth *moost feithful and trewe.*
- i* And let him that is athirst come.
ii And let him that heareth say, Come.
iii And let the dawn thunder up in the street
while you are sleeping with the first cars sauntering
by & the dustmen & women whistling.
Lord, I will stand before yóu when yóu wish
in death's little house & yóu will eat my pronoun.

•

In that other life that will be ours
where there is neither marriage nor children,
I may kneel beside you, Mouse, & not
know you — our eyes like a golem's, empty
of their own will, but full of his,
the dead Lord at the center of his dead city.
In the days when my glory is stripped
from me, & yours from you, & all are made

equal — no aesthetic splendor, no charm,
no subversive, faithless glances to-
ward those I have loved & have loved me;
no property, no desire, no variation,
no sparrowhawk thrusting through birches
in the snow toward the wood, for
hé never stepped in a wood, nor saw a harebell
easing its frail metaled head, its light
pinks & papery blues, through the first tranche
of snow in November, nor the gray cere
of the plunderer beneath her blue helmet,
her single attention, wings volute in air,
head w/ beak narrowly ajar in concentration
& hunger breaking the line of the fence
at the old house in Broadway;
in the snow; in the snow that has flattened
everything, the bells ringing out,
the clouds heaped above the Blackdowns
dragging themselves from the earth,
headlights on the ridge in the wind groping
toward them, the hills featureless,
snuffed, white, black, dull, shining w/ no light.
No drinking in the afternoon, no dope,
no flaring temper. No bed to sleep
it off, Mouse, while you draw catkins & piggies
& pussybears with gorgeous happy frowns
in the cold. No sleep, no flesh to rest
in, for there is only day in the white irradiate
city where the lamb lights his terrible
mercy *in to worldis of worldis*, forever & ever
& his government will never fail, for no glory
is allowed but his glory, no bone
gouvernance but his bone gouvernance,
no prison camp but his prison camp,
his plantations, his will & techne, his punishment
beatings, his censorship, his textual criticism,
his forgiveness, his rehabilitation, O
ferdful men, & vnbileueful & cursid & manquelleris.
Mouse, on that day, will you turn toward me
& will I see in the insubstantial glass
of your eyes the memory of these days;
myself, father, authority, half chocolate & half

steel, still carrying you at six up the hill
& down the hill, still playing the Ticklepuss
& Crocopotamus, the horn of plenty,
salver, lessener of cries, bringer of swallows
& dragonflies, the Emperor & Downy Emerald
hovering over still waters *in the valei of teeris*,
wolves in the mist in the hills
above Antequera where the rocks bared
themselves like teeth & you were
asleep on my chest with fine alabaster
eyelids & eyelashes plashed with droplets of dew?
Where I said, “Shhhhhh, close your eyes
& imagine that you’re a water reed, Mouse,”
& I blew on you & that was the wind
& then my hand was a snail wandering over
your eyelids & the nape of your neck
& last of all it rained & that was my fingers
going pitter-pat upon the pinnacles of your head.
The days fade through our slow parting;
your mother grows ambivalent. Little accident,
in the stillness of the earth there is no life;
the harebell reaches its root into death
& the waters flow down until the rock is dry.
I wanted more than I was given,
& found in betrayal a churning courage.
Torchlight in the garden where we make our choice.
The will that flickers. My loss. Our bliss.
Mouse, on the last day, remember this.

•

Lying with you, Né, in the sun, in the (*clouds*)
half-listening to the Senegalese preacher
two mornings after the riots
when they ran Mame Mbaye down to the gutter
& wishing you would go buy your mutes
& play again, here, in silence, —
for them & for me & yourself & the *polis* —
Bach’s *Suiten für Violoncello* No. 1.
To watch in dumb show the formal motions
that reify language & music — the flesh;
your shoulder & forearm & wrist

& lightly-draped fingers one continuous
dependent assemblage flowing south to the river
at Arganzuela & the chuckling magpies.
There is an authority in you, when you play,
that is different from the authority
of the *whap* | *whap* of rotor blades overhead;
control that is liberation, a concentration
that is neither at one point nor diffuse,
like the globes of light hovering over the lampposts
in your myopia last night; wandering
across the river, the *madrileños*
also *entonados* swaying like palm fronds
in the wind; then the dark, & our one body
with its artifacts of pregnancy & loss.
An authority that is different from the authority
of the Lord in his dead city, his kingdom
that has no contiguity with ours, no *conformitá*,
the streets empty of opposition
& neither wind nor rain; nor thunder, nor tears.
Now a thin sun is dwelling in the wind.
I wd like to reach out to you in its cold light
& pull the shape of your body into mine;
put my tongue against your eyes
so I can taste what it is you see through them;
the restaurant opening, the crisp cloths.
Even the *polis* with their holsters & war clubs
looking on carefully & asexually
like angels come to lie with the daughters of men.
A kestrel on a lamppost strips the bascinet
from a cricket with slow, considerate
motions: lovely rare flame.
Have they buried Mame Mbaye? They are erasing
a name from the wall & the quarter is pacified.
Clouds rise above Guadarrama,
Somosierra, above the *meseta* like kites.
The *picoletos* shift from foot to foot in long
black boots. Bells bleat — lambs;
Alsations on leashes. The bougainvillea —
glad to bring us at last the first trace
of its colors — flaunts a breathless restraint.

•

FOUR LAMENTATIONS

SWEET EVERLASTING *Ellen Voigt*
Swarming over the damp ground with pocket lenses
that discover and distort like an insect's
compound eye, the second grade
slows, stops at the barrier on the path.
They straddle the horizontal trunk, down for months,
rub the rough track of the saw, then focus
on the new shoots at the other end--
residual, suggestive.
I follow the children into the open land
above the orchard, its small clouds tethered
to the grass, where we gather
samples of the plentiful white bud
that stipples the high pasture, and name it
by the book: wooly stem, pale lanceolate leaves:
the one called Everlasting. The punishment for doubt
is doubt--my father's death has taught me that.
Last week, he surfaced in a dream as promised,
as, at night, the logic of earth subsides
and stars appear to substantiate
what we could not see. But when I woke,
I remembered nothing that could tell me
which among those distant pulsing inconclusive signs
were active, which extinguished--
remembered, that is,
nothing that could save him.

SPRING AND FALL *Gerard Manley Hopkins*
Margaret, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What héart héard of, ghóst guéssed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

ON THE MANNER OF ADDRESSING CLOUDS
 Wallace Stevens
Gloomy grammarians in golden gowns,
Meekly you keep the mortal rendezvous,
Eliciting the still sustaining pomps
Of speech which are like music so profound
They seem an exaltation without sound.

Funest philosophers and ponderers,
Their evocations are the speech of clouds.
So speech of your processions returns
In the casual evocations of your tread
Across the stale, mysterious seasons. These
Are the music of meet resignation; these
The responsive, still sustaining pomps for you
To magnify, if in that drifting waste
You are to be accompanied by more
Than mute bare splendors of the sun and moon.

JOHN KINSELLA'S LAMENT FOR
MRS MARY MOORE *W.B. Yeats*

A bloody and a sudden end,
 Gunshot or a noose,
For Death who takes what man would keep,
 Leaves what man would lose.
He might have had my sister,
 My cousins by the score,
But nothing satisfied the fool
 But my dear Mary Moore,
None other knows what pleasures man
 At table or in bed.
*What shall I do for pretty girls
 Now my old bawd is dead?*

Though stiff to strike a bargain,
 Like an old Jew man,
Her bargain struck we laughed and talked
 And emptied many a can;
And O! But she had stories,
 Though not for the priest's ear,
To keep the soul of man alive,
 To banish age and care,
And being old she put a skin
 On everything she said.
*What shall I do for pretty girls
 Now my old bawd is dead?*

The priests have got a book that says
 But for Adam's sin
Eden's Garden would be there
 And I there within.
No expectation fails there,
 No pleasing habit ends,
No man grows old, no girl grows cold,
 But friends walk by friends.
Who quarrels over halfpennies
 That plucks the trees for bread?
*What shall I do for pretty girls
 Now my old bawd is dead?*

Thom Gunn (1929-2004)

TAMER AND HAWK

I thought I was so tough,
But gentled at your hands,
Cannot be quick enough
To fly for you and show
That when I go I go
At your commands.

Even in flight above
I am no longer free:
You seeled me with your love,
I am blind to other birds—
The habit of your words
Has hooded me.

As formerly, I wheel
I hover and I twist,
But only want the feel,
In my possessive thought,
Of catcher and of caught
Upon your wrist.

You but half civilize,
Taming me in this way.
Through having only eyes
For you I fear to lose,
I lose to keep, and choose
Tamer as prey.

TO YVOR WINTERS, 1955

I leave you in your garden.

In the yard

Behind it, run the Airedales you have reared
With boxer's vigilance and poet's rigour:
Dog-generations you have trained the vigour
That few can breed to train and fewer still
Control with the deliberate human will.
And in the house there rest, piled shelf on shelf,
The accumulations that compose the self—
Poem and history: for if we use
Words to maintain the actions that we choose,
Our words, with slow defining influence,
Stay to mark out our chosen lineaments.

Continual temptation waits on each
To renounce his empire over thought and speech,
Till he submit his passive faculties
To evening, come where no resistance is;
The unmotivated sadness of the air
Filling the human with his own despair.
Where now lies power to hold the evening back?
Implicit in the grey is total black:
Denial of the discriminating brain
Brings the neurotic vision, and the vein
Of necromancy. All as relative
For mind as for the sense, we have to live
In a half-world, not ours nor history's,
And learn the false from half-true premisses.

But sitting in the dusk—though shapes combine,
Vague mass replacing edge and flickering line,
You keep both Rule and Energy in view,
Much power in each, most in the balanced two:
Ferocity existing in the fence
Built by an exercised intelligence.
Though night is always close, complete negation
Ready to drop on wisdom and emotion,
Night from the air or the carnivorous breath,
Still it is right to know the force of death,
And, as you do, persistent, tough in will,
Raise from the excellent the better still.

“All Do Not Do All Things Well”

Implies that some therefore
Do well, for its own sake,
One thing they undertake,
Because it has enthralled them.

I used to like the two
Auto freaks as I called them
Who laboured in their driveway,
Its concrete black with oil,
In the next block that year.

One, hurt in jungle war,
Had a false leg, the other
Raised a huge beard above
A huge Hell's Angel belly.

They seem to live on beer
And corn chips from the deli.

Always with friends, they sprawled
Beneath a ruined car
In that inert but live way
Of scrutinizing innards.
And one week they extracted
An engine to examine,
Transplant shining like tar
Fished out into the sun.

‘It's all that I enjoy,’
Said the stiff-legged boy.
That was when the officious
Realtor had threatened them
For brashly operating
A business on the street
- An outsider, that woman
Who wanted them evicted,
Wanted the neighbourhood neat
To sell it. That was when
The boy from Vietnam told me
That he'd firebomb her car.
He didn't of course, she won.

I am sorry that they went.
Quick with a friendly greeting,
They were gentle joky men
- Certainly not ambitious,
Perhaps not intelligent
Unless about a car,
Their work one thing they knew
They could for certain do
With a disinterest
And passionate expertise
To which they gave their best
Desires and energies.
Such oily-handed zest
By-passed the self like love.
I thought they were good
For any neighbourhood.

THE MAN WITH NIGHT SWEATS

I wake up cold, I who
Prospered through dreams of heat
Wake to their residue,
Sweat, and a clinging sheet.

My flesh was its own shield:
Where it was gashed, it healed.

I grew as I explored
The body I could trust
Even while I adored
The risk that made robust,

A world of wonders in
Each challenge to the skin.

I cannot but be sorry
The given shield was cracked,
My mind reduced to hurry,
My flesh reduced and wrecked.

I have to change the bed,
But catch myself instead

Stopped upright where I am
Hugging my body to me
As if to shield it from
The pains that will go through me,

As if hands were enough
To hold an avalanche off.

poems by Molly McCully Brown

THE BLIND ROOM: A CONSECRATION

this is the beginning of the world

or this is the world before God made it

empty space darkness over the deep no sense where the edges are

eventually it is the best place you've ever been

in the blindroom the world unmakes itself
in an instant the door shuts the sun vanishes and with it
all the things the light makes fissures in the dust the dust at all
the shape of the chair your own shadow

sparrow possum sheepmoth brother
all unraveled all undone

at first you will tell yourself stories remember
you could ford a river hold a log level
hit a long high note you closed your eyes to silence

after awhile blessedly you are the only creature
everything is without history
there was never anyone but you in this cold lightless place
there was never any throat but yours never any voice
but the one you're humming with now and that high accompanying call
that must thank God be Gabriel

swallowing the final stars

the earth is a living thing

Lucille Clifton, 1936 - 2010

is a black shambling bear
ruffling its wild back and tossing
mountains into the sea

is a black hawk circling
the burying ground circling the bones
picked clean and discarded

is a fish black blind in the belly of water
is a diamond blind in the black belly of coal

is a black and living thing
is a favorite child
of the universe
feel her rolling her hand
in its kinky hair
feel her brushing it clean

Dream Variations

Langston Hughes, 1902 - 1967

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
 Dark like me—
That is my dream!

To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening . . .
A tall, slim tree . . .
Night coming tenderly
 Black like me.

poems by Gabrielle Calvocoressi

Hammond B3 Organ Cistern

The days I don't want to kill myself
are extraordinary. Deep bass. All the people
in the streets waiting for their high fives
and leaping, I mean *leaping*,
when they see me. I am the sun-filled
god of love. Or at least an optimistic
under-secretary. There should be a word for it.
The days you wake up and do not want
to slit your throat. Money in the bank.
Enough for an iced green tea every weekday
and Saturday and Sunday! It's like being
in the armpit of a Hammond B3 organ.
Just reeks of gratitude and funk.
The funk of ages. *I am not going to ruin
my love's life today.* It's like the time I said yes
to gray sneakers but then the salesman said
Wait. And there, out of the back room,
like the bakery's first biscuits: bright-blue kicks.
Iridescent. Like a scarab! Oh, who am I kidding,
it was nothing like a scarab! It was like
bright. blue. fucking. sneakers! I did not
want to die that day. Oh, my God.
Why don't we talk about it? How good it feels.
And if you don't know then you're lucky
but also you poor thing. Bring the band out on the stoop.
Let the whole neighborhood hear. Come on, Everybody.
Say it with me nice and slow
no pills no cliff no brains onthe floor
Bring the bass back. *no rope no hose*
not today, Satan.
Every day I wake up with my good fortune
and news of my demise. Don't keep it from me.
Why don't we have a name for it?
Bring the bass back. Bring the band out on the stoop.
Hallelujah!

Some Thoughts on Building the Atom Bomb

I would not have been great at it.
Firstly, I was terrible at science.
I got as far as slicing the frog's abdomen
open. Then I made an excuse
and walked the halls 'til the bell rang.

I know what you're thinking.
That's Biology. When I looked inside
the cavity I knew I didn't have what
it took. For a life in science. God,
I have intestines like that frog. They pulse
and shine like his. Cut me open,

you'll see my supper too. No.
When I looked inside the cavity
I thought, *I can't go on.* Volition.
That's a thing I don't have. I'd
leave the patient on the table
rather than get the job done.
I'd walk right into the desert

and roll around like a chinchilla
while everyone else back at the office
is considering implosion. *I'm dusty
as a chinchilla!* I'd say, entering the lab.
I'm the outside of your Mama's fallout shelter!
Those poor scientists. Every last one
wondering what I'm doing there.

I mean. I'd love to see the sky bloom
but I can do that already. Look!
the sky's blooming right now
outside the window. And plenty
of people are dying in various ways.
And won't the infrastructure fall
all on its own? Without me building

a bomb in the desert? These are the
kinds of questions that make me know
I'm not fit to decimate the planet.
Which is sort of sad to think
about. All that potential I'm just
giving up on.

T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets: No. 1, "BURNT NORTON"*

I

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.
There they were, dignified, invisible,
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,

And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

II

Garlic and sapphires in the mud
Clot the bedded axle-tree.
The trilling wire in the blood
Sings below inveterate scars
Appeasing long forgotten wars.
The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph
Are figured in the drift of stars
Ascend to summer in the tree
We move above the moving tree
In light upon the figured leaf
And hear upon the sodden floor
Below, the boarhound and the boar
Pursue their pattern as before
But reconciled among the stars.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.
The inner freedom from the practical desire,
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner
And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded
By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving,
Erhebung without motion, concentration
Without elimination, both a new world
And the old made explicit, understood
In the completion of its partial ecstasy,
The resolution of its partial horror.
Yet the enchainment of past and future

Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
Which flesh cannot endure.

Time past and time future

Allow but a little consciousness.
To be conscious is not to be in time
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered.

III

Here is a place of disaffection
Time before and time after
In a dim light: neither daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
Turning shadow into transient beauty
With slow rotation suggesting permanence
Nor darkness to purify the soul
Emptying the sensual with deprivation
Cleansing affection from the temporal.
Neither plentitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
Tumid apathy with no concentration
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after.
Eructation of unhealthy souls
Into the faded air, the torpid
Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,
Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.

Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude,
World not world, but that which is not world,
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Dessication of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,

Inoperancy of the world of spirit;
This is the one way, and the other
Is the same, not in movement
But abstention from movement; while the world moves
In appetency, on its metalled ways
Of time past and time future.

IV

Time and the bell have buried the day,
the black cloud carries the sun away.
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray
Clutch and cling?
Chill
Fingers of yew be curled
Down on us? After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
At the still point of the turning world.

V

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.
Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
Not that only, but the co-existence,
Or say that the end precedes the beginning,
And the end and the beginning were always there
Before the beginning and after the end.
And all is always now. Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
Always assail them. The Word in the desert
Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

The detail of the pattern is movement,
As in the figure of the ten stairs.

Desire itself is movement
Not in itself desirable;
Love is itself unmoving,
Only the cause and end of movement,
Timeless, and undesiring
Except in the aspect of time
Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being.
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
Even while the dust moves
There rises the hidden laughter
Of children in the foliage
Quick now, here, now, always
Ridiculous the waste sad time
Stretching before and after.

poems by Elinor Wylie (1885-1928)

LET NO CHARITABLE HOPE

Literary Digest, July 1922
Current Opinion, August 1923

Now let no charitable hope
Confuse my mind with images
Of eagle and of antelope:
I am in nature none of these.

I was, being human, born alone;
I am, being woman, hard beset;
I live by squeezing from a stone
The little nourishment I get.

In masks outrageous and austere
The years go by in single file;
But none has merited my fear,
And none has quite escaped my smile.

WILD PEACHES

1

When the world turns completely upside down
You say we'll emigrate to the Eastern Shore
Aboard a river-boat from Baltimore;
We'll live among wild peach trees, miles from town,
You'll wear a coonskin cap, and I a gown
Homespun, dyed butternut's dark gold colour.
Lost, like your lotus-eating ancestor,
We'll swim in milk and honey till we drown.

The winter will be short, the summer long,
The autumn amber-hued, sunny and hot,
Tasting of cider and of scuppernong;
All seasons sweet, but autumn best of all.
The squirrels in their silver fur will fall
Like falling leaves, like fruit, before your shot.

2

The autumn frosts will lie upon the grass
Like bloom on grapes of purple-brown and gold.
The misted early mornings will be cold;
The little puddles will be roofed with glass.
The sun, which burns from copper into brass,
Melts these at noon, and makes the boys unfold
Their knitted mufflers; full as they can hold,
Fat pockets dribble chestnuts as they pass.

Peaches grow wild, and pigs can live in clover;
A barrel of salted herrings lasts a year;
The spring begins before the winter's over.
By February you may find the skins
Of garter snakes and water moccasins
Dwindled and harsh, dead-white and cloudy-clear.

3

When April pours the colours of a shell
Upon the hills, when every little creek

Is shot with silver from the Chesapeake
In shoals new-minted by the ocean swell,
When strawberries go begging, and the sleek
Blue plums lie open to the blackbird's beak,
We shall live well—we shall live very well.

The months between the cherries and the peaches
Are brimming cornucopias which spill
Fruits red and purple, sombre-bloomed and black;
Then, down rich fields and frosty river beaches
We'll trample bright persimmons, while you kill
Bronze partridge, speckled quail, and canvasback.

4

Down to the Puritan marrow of my bones
There's something in this richness that I hate.
I love the look, austere, immaculate,
Of landscapes drawn in pearly monotones.
There's something in my very blood that owns
Bare hills, cold silver on a sky of slate,
A thread of water, churned to milky spate
Streaming through slanted pastures fenced with stones.

I love those skies, thin blue or snowy gray,
Those fields sparse-planted, rendering meagre sheaves;
That spring, briefer than apple-blossom's breath,
Summer, so much too beautiful to stay,
Swift autumn, like a bonfire of leaves,
And sleepy winter, like the sleep of death.

poems by Richard Blanco

Looking for The Gulf Motel
Marco Island, Florida

There should be nothing here I don't remember . . .

The Gulf Motel with mermaid lampposts
and ship's wheel in the lobby should still be
rising out of the sand like a cake decoration.
My brother and I should still be pretending
we don't know our parents, embarrassing us
as they roll the luggage cart past the front desk
loaded with our scruffy suitcases, two-dozen
loaves of Cuban bread, brown bags bulging
with enough mangos to last the entire week,
our espresso pot, the pressure cooker—and
a pork roast reeking garlic through the lobby.
All because we can't afford to eat out, not even
on vacation, only two hours from our home
in Miami, but far enough away to be thrilled
by *whiter* sands on the *west* coast of Florida,
where I should still be for the first time watching
the sun set instead of rise over the ocean.

There should be nothing here I don't remember . . .

My mother should still be in the kitchenette
of The Gulf Motel, her daisy sandals from Kmart
squeaking across the linoleum, still gorgeous
in her teal swimsuit and amber earrings
stirring a pot of *arroz-con-pollo*, adding sprinkles
of onion powder and dollops of tomato sauce.
My father should still be in a terrycloth jacket
smoking, clinking a glass of amber whiskey
in the sunset at The Gulf Motel, watching us
dive into the pool, two boys he'll never see
grow into men who will be proud of him.

There should be nothing here I don't remember . . .

My brother and I should still be playing *Parcheesi*,
my father should still be alive, slow dancing
with my mother on the sliding-glass balcony
of The Gulf Motel. No music, only the waves
keeping time, a song only their minds hear
ten-thousand nights back to their life in Cuba.
My mother's face should still be resting against
his bare chest like the moon resting on the sea,
the stars should still be turning around them.

There should be nothing here I don't remember . . .

My brother should still be thirteen, sneaking
rum in the bathroom, sculpting naked women
from sand. I should still be eight years old
dazzled by seashells and how many seconds
I hold my breath underwater—but I'm not.
I am thirty-eight, driving up Collier Boulevard,
looking for The Gulf Motel, for everything
that should still be, but isn't. I want to blame
the condos, the shadows for ruining the beach
and my past. I want to chase the snowbirds away
with their tacky mansions and yachts. I want
to turn the golf course back into mangroves,
I want to find The Gulf Motel exactly as it was
and pretend for a moment, nothing lost is lost.

Burning in the Rain

Someday compassion would demand
I set myself free of my desire to recreate
my father, indulge in my mother's losses,
strangle lovers with words, forcing them
to confess for me and take the blame.
Today was that day: I tossed them, sheet
by sheet on the patio and gathered them
into a pyre. I wanted to let them go
in a blaze, tiny white dwarfs imploding
beside the azaleas and ficus bushes,
let them crackle, burst like winged seeds,
let them smolder into gossamer embers—
a thousand gray butterflies in the wind.
Today was that day, but it rained, kept
raining. Instead of fire, water—drops
knocking on doors, wetting windows
into mirrors reflecting me in the oaks.
The garden walls and stones swelling
into ghostlier shades of themselves,
the wind chimes giggling in the storm,
a coffee cup left overflowing with rain.
Instead of burning, my pages turned
into water lilies floating over puddles,
then tiny white cliffs as the sun set,
finally drying all night under the moon
into papier-mâché souvenirs. Today
the rain would not let their lives burn.

Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)

“my dreams, my works, must wait till after hell”

I hold my honey and I store my bread
In little jars and cabinets of my will.
I label clearly, and each latch and lid
I bid, Be firm till I return from hell.
I am very hungry. I am incomplete.
And none can tell when I may dine again.
No man can give me any word but Wait,
The puny light. I keep eyes pointed in;
Hoping that, when the devil days of my hurt
Drag out to their last dregs and I resume
On such legs as are left me, in such heart
As I can manage, remember to go home,
My taste will not have turned insensitive
To honey and bread old purity could love.

poems by Gary Snyder

ANASAZI

Anasazi,
Anasazi,

tucked up in clefts in the cliffs
growing strict fields of corn and beans
sinking deeper and deeper in earth
up to your hips in Gods
 your head all turned to eagle-down
 & lightning for knees and elbows
your eyes full of pollen

 the smell of bats.
 the flavor of sandstone
 grit on the tongue.

 women
 birthing
at the foot of ladders in the dark.

trickling streams in hidden canyons
under the cold rolling desert

corn-basket wide-eyed
 red baby
 rock lip home,

Anasazi

THE GREAT MOTHER

Not all those who pass

In front of the Great Mother's chair

Get passt with only a stare.

Some she looks at their hands

To see what sort of savages they were.

THE JEMEZ PUEBLO RING

Lost in the cracks of the walls or floors in Kyoto
Fell through and missed and sifted out
 when the house was razed,
Foundations poured and apartments raised above it—

In forty years the apartments useless and torn down,
scrap wood burned for cooking and
bath fires—

Another sixty passes, the land is good;
With an ox they snake off concrete shards—

On the tines of the fork
 in the black soil
 the crusted ring,
 wiped with the thumb
 turquoise stone still blue.

The expert looked at it and said,
 this is a ring from the century past.
 when there was travel and trade.
 from across the sea, east,

Silver, and blue of the desert sky.
 the style is old.
 though we never see them now,

Those corn-growing black-haired villagers
 are still there, making such rings,
 I'm told—

TOMORROW'S SONG

The USA slowly lost its mandate
in the middle and later twentieth century
it never gave the mountains and rivers,
 trees and animals,
 a vote.
all the people turned away from it
 myths die; even continents are impermanent

Turtle Island returned.
my friend broke open a dried coyote-scat
removed a ground squirrel tooth
pierced it, hung it
from the gold ring
in his ear.

We look to the future with pleasure
we need no fossil fuel
get power within
grow strong on less.

Grasp the tools and move in rhythm side by side
 flash gleams of wit and silent knowledge
 eye to eye
sit still like cats or snakes or stones
 as whole and holding as
 the blue black sky.
gentle and innocent as wolves
 as tricky as a prince.

At work and in our place:

*in the service
of the wilderness
of life
of death
of the Mother's breasts!*

WHAT HAPPENED HERE BEFORE

–300,000,000–

First a sea: soft sands, muds, and marls
–loading, compressing, heating, crumpling,
crushing, recrystallizing, infiltrating,
several times lifted and submerged.
intruding molten granite magma
deep-cooled and speckling,
gold quartz fills the cracks–

–80,000,000–

sea-bed strata raised and folded,
granite far below.
warm quiet centuries of rains
(make dark red tropic soils)
wear down two miles of surface,
lay bare the veins and tumble heavy gold
in steambeds
slate and schist rock-riffles catch it–
volcanic ash floats down and dams the streams,
piles up the gold and gravel–

–3,000,000–

flowing north, two rivers joined,
to make a wide long lake.
and then it tilted and the rivers fell apart
all running west
to cut the gorges of the Feather,
Bear, and Yuba.

Ponderosa pine, manzanita, black oak, mountain yew.
deer, coyote, bluejay, gray squirrel,
ground squirrel, fox, blacktail hare,
ringtail, bobcat, bear,
all came to live here.

–40,000–

And human people came with basket hats and nets
winter-houses underground
yew bows painted green,
feasts and dances for the boys and girls
songs and stories in the smoky dark.

–125–

Then came the white man: tossed up trees and
boulders with big hoses,
going after that old gravel and the gold.
horses, apple-orchards, card-games,
pistol-shooting, churches, county jail.



We asked, who the land belonged to.
and where one pays tax.
(two gents who never used it twenty years,
and before them the widow
of the son of the man
who got him a patented deed
on a worked-out mining claim,)
laid hasty on land that was deer and acorn
grounds of the Nisenan?
branch of the Maidu?

ARTICULATIONS

Wish — I wish — why should we Weep. Why should I weep.
Why should I wish to stay, why should we stay. Why should we
sigh why should ye sigh?

Why should we fear why should I fear ye. How should I fear.
I should find I should say: I should die, if I should die, if I should
dwell, if I should tell, — if I should pray, and if I should be slain,
and if I should complain, and if I should shun, if I should hear
some day if I should want help.

If I shall fall. I found a shell, I shall die or I shall die.

Or I shall drop I shall be and I shall be and shall be. He shall
be we shall die, when he shall die, here we shall die.

When we shall hear when he will he shall have nay. And has
him shining where she will.

She whipped him, she lashed him, she whipped him, she
slashed him, we shall meet, but we shall miss him; she loves me
when she punishes.

When she blushes. See how she blushes!

Hush — I shall know I shall faint — I shall die — and I shall
sing, I shall say — I shall take.

I shall it take I shall take it kindly, like a stately Ship I patient
lie: the patient Night the patient head O patient hand. O patient
life. Oh, patience. Patience!

Patience, patience. He said, Nay, patience. Patience, little boy.
A shape of the shapeless night, the spacious round of the creation
shake; the sea-shore, the station of the Grecian ships.

In the ship the men she stationed, between the shade and the
shine; between the sunlight and the shade between the sunset and
the night; between the sunset and the sea between the sunset and

the rain; a taint in the sweet air when the setting sun the setting sun?

The setting day a snake said: it's a cane, it's a kill. Is like a stain. Like a stream. Like a dream.

And like a dream sits like a dream: sits like a queen, shine like a queen.

When like a flash like a shell, fled like a shadow; like a shadow still.

Lies like a shadow still, aye, like a flash o light, shall I like a fool, quoth he, You shine like a lily like a mute shall I still languish, — and still, I like Alaska.

Lies like a lily white is, like a lily, white. Like a flail, like a whale, like a wheel. Like a clock. Like a pea, like a flea, like a mill, like a pill, like a pill. Like a pall, hangs like a pall.

Hands like a bowl, bounds like a swallow!

Falls like a locust-swarm on boughs whose love was like a cloak for me. Whose form is like a wedge. But I was saved like a king; was lifted like a cup, or leave a kiss but in the cup the cup she fills again up she comes again.

Till she comes back again.

Till he comes back again. Till I come back again. Like mechanical toys. Like a pale antagonist. Like a beacon, like a star, not unlike a story compiled I too reckoned, like a boy, I take the cup you kindly reach, who smoke and sip the kindly cup, and give to each its purpose, like a king to work in — things had become difficult.

Taking up with her contempt, worthing is much taken; A King. They said. What King. Figuring, checking-up, testing all day,

MODERATORS

Sandy Alexandre is Associate Professor of Literature at MIT; she teaches American literature courses in all genres; her research focuses primarily on the fruitful intersection of American history and black-American literature.

Arthur Bahr is Associate Professor of Literature at MIT. He likes to read the medieval manuscripts as if they were poems: that is, for how the interaction of their many disparate parts (texts in a book, like lines or stanzas in a poem) together create something more interesting, beautiful, or just *stranger* than if they were read in isolation.

Rosemary Booth writes book reviews and essays. She is a Contributing Writer for *The Gay & Lesbian Review* and has been participating in Pleasures of Poetry sessions since 2009.

Zachary Bos edits *New England Review of Books*; directs *Pen & Anvil Press*; and coordinates the *BU BookLab* at Boston University.

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 currently the book buyer and events Coordinator at the historic Grolier Poetry Book Shop.

Anne Fleche is a Lecturer at MIT who teaches Drama and Film.

Bronwen Heuer has retired from her role in IS&T at MIT. Despite all her years in Information Technology, she still followed her passion for poetry and Spanish and wrote a thesis on Golden Age Spanish Poet Francisco de Quevedo. She hopes to dedicate retirement time to reading and studying the Mexican poet, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz.

Anne Hudson has participated in Pleasures of Poetry since 2002, when she attended a session in the wake of 9/11 on 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*.

Alvin Kibel joined the Literature Faculty at MIT in 1967 and has served for several years as its Chair. His work has appeared in numerous journals, including *The American Scholar*, *Partisan Review*, *Daedalus*, and *The New Republic*, among others. His teaching combines his interest in film narrative and in the history of ideas with the study of literary texts.

Martin Marks is a Senior Lecturer in the Music and Theater Arts Section. His academic and research interests include music, film, theater, literature and history (not necessarily in that order).

Nick Montfort computer-generated books of poetry include *#!*, the collaboration *2x6*, *Autopia*, *The Truelist* (first in the *Using Electricity* series from Counterpath), and *Hard West Turn*; his digital poetry and art projects include the collaborations *The Deletionist*, "Sea and Spar Between," and *Renderings*. He has six books out from the MIT Press, most recently *The Future*. He is professor of digital media at MIT, also teaches at the School for Poetic Computation, and lives in New York and Boston.

Jim Paradis teaches in CMS/W and has a special interest in poetry inspired by humans contemplating and engaging with and advancing on the natural world.

Stephen Tapscott is a professor of literature at the Institute. Next Spring he will be teaching an introduction to poetry subject, and a seminar on how Walt Whitman has influenced poets all over the world. May 31, 2019, by the way, will be Whitman's 200th birthday.

David Thorburn has taught Literature at MIT since 1976. He is the founder of Pleasures of Poetry.

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