



YEAR FIVE OF  
**SATURDAY**  
**POEMS**



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6 August 2022

### Both Sides Now

Rows and flows of angel hair  
And ice cream castles in the air  
And feather canyons everywhere  
Looked at clouds that way

But now they only block the sun  
They rain and they snow on everyone  
So many things I would have done  
But clouds got in my way

I've looked at clouds from both sides now  
From up and down and still somehow  
It's cloud illusions I recall  
I really don't know clouds at all

Moons and Junes and Ferris wheels  
The dizzy dancing way that you feel  
As every fairy tale comes real  
I've looked at love that way

But now it's just another show  
And you leave 'em laughing when you go  
And if you care, don't let them know  
Don't give yourself away

I've looked at love from both sides now  
From give and take and still somehow  
It's love's illusions that I recall  
I really don't know love  
Really don't know love at all

Tears and fears and feeling proud  
To say, "I love you" right out loud  
Dreams and schemes and circus crowds  
I've looked at life that way

Oh, but now old friends they're acting strange  
And they shake their heads and they tell me that I've changed  
Well something's lost, but something's gained  
In living every day

I've looked at life from both sides now  
From win and lose and still somehow  
It's life's illusions I recall  
I really don't know life at all

It's life's illusions that I recall  
I really don't know life  
I really don't know life at all

— Joni Mitchell

13 August 2022



### Like a Tree That Can't Exist Without Fire

Infinity is pointless,  
like the wasteland out the window, where dust eternally roams  
and stray dogs sleep. Once  
our parents built houses  
too close to infinity.  
We inhaled it for too long, slept in its  
embrace, carried it in our pocket like a chestnut  
we'd been given by a girl who—if not life itself—  
would become our life.  
It falls from our throat when we sing,  
falls from our mouth, like wheezing, when we have to say its name,  
falls from our pockets, when they check us  
at the border. They know they can't let us in,  
because with this kind of baggage  
all our borders are internal, that is, impassable  
We would leave it behind, if only we knew how  
to tidy up after ourselves. Invisible as gas,  
it ignites from the slightest spark  
that catches between us and refuses to go out,  
and clings to us like a drowning man, like fire  
that can't exist without a tree,  
or like a tree, that can't exist without fire.

— Ostap Slyvynsky  
(Translated from the Ukrainian by Amelia Glaser and Yuliya Ilchuk)



20 August 2022

### Today

Today I'm flying low and I'm  
not saying a word.  
I'm letting all of the voodoo of ambition  
sleep.

The world goes on as it must,  
the bees in the garden rumbling a little,  
the fish leaping, the gnats getting eaten.  
And so forth.

But I'm taking the day off.  
Quiet as a feather.  
I hardly move though really I'm travelling  
a terrific distance.

Stillness. One of the doors  
into the temple.

— Mary Oliver (1935-2019)



27 August 2022

*Extract from*  
**Clarity**

I've still not admitted defeat,  
nor have I withdrawn:  
that high inspiration,  
that talent I was endowed with,  
has not been discarded.  
Its milk-camel's capacity to fill  
the dairy pail is undiminished —  
apart from my deliberate delay,  
there is no difference in me.  
So I have a few points to make  
to deal with the spreaders of doubt.

When men dedicate to the struggle  
and determine to fulfil their duty;  
when they ready themselves for the charge,  
amass the finest thoroughbreds;  
when the reins are on the racers,  
I never step aside.

— Maxamed Ibraahin Warsame 'Hadraawi'  
(translated by Sais Jama Hussein)



3 September 2022

### **Distant Yet Never So Close**

distant yet never so close  
we walk a sinking earth  
lying down on her or simply standing  
we feel the bucking of time

it's not about fearful flames  
nor ungovernable seas  
on this earth mind and body  
have the same ebb and flow  
in the air that lacks weight  
since nothing differs in memory  
from what we have seen or imagined

we dream as we live  
waiting without certainty or science  
the only thing we suspect beyond question  
the last chord in this vague music  
which envelops us

sometimes doubt  
explicit as a flower  
persuades us with petals and signs  
to swirl on our axis  
to thirst  
stained with ink to drink imagined lips  
from the oldest and most mortal wineskin

the sky would be a dark place  
a space of light  
in the eye that looks at itself  
in the hand that closes  
to clutch hold of itself  
out in the immense open

when all's said and done like the one who closes the coffin  
or a letter  
a ray of sunlight  
will rise up like a sword to blind us  
and gradually open the darkness  
like an unexpectedly wounded fruit  
like a door which hides nothing  
and guards nothing more

— Blanca Varela (1926-2009)  
*(translated by Gwen Keith)*



10 September 2022

### On Looking up by Chance at the Constellations

You'll wait a long, long time for anything much  
To happen in heaven beyond the floats of cloud  
And the Northern Lights that run like tingling nerves.  
The sun and moon get crossed, but they never touch,  
Nor strike out fire from each other nor crash out loud.  
The planets seem to interfere in their curves —  
But nothing ever happens, no harm is done.  
We may as well go patiently on with our life,  
And look elsewhere than to stars and moon and sun  
For the shocks and changes we need to keep us sane.  
It is true the longest drouth will end in rain,  
The longest peace in China will end in strife.  
Still it wouldn't reward the watcher to stay awake  
In hopes of seeing the calm of heaven break  
On his particular time and personal sight.  
That calm seems certainly safe to last to-night.

— Robert Frost (1874-1963)





17 September 2022

### **Be Nobody's Darling**

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.

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

— Alice Walker



24 September 2022

### Observation Deck

This poem which is a part of my life  
must live on as my life: Aragon's sun  
reaching down to me. Snow flurries melting  
as they fall on the slopes of Moncayo.  
An April day when everything seems alive.

The peal of bells soaks into the centuries-old shadows,  
and colorful butterflies tumble in the breeze,  
hover above me  
and settle on my book,  
which lies forgotten in my hands.

— Jóhann Hjálmarsson (1939-2020)





1 October 2022

### **You Are Tired (I Think)**

You are tired,  
(I think)  
Of the always puzzle of living and doing;  
And so am I.

Come with me, then,  
And we'll leave it far and far away—  
(Only you and I, understand!)

You have played,  
(I think)  
And broke the toys you were fondest of,  
And are a little tired now;  
Tired of things that break, and—  
Just tired.  
So am I.

But I come with a dream in my eyes tonight,  
And knock with a rose at the hopeless gate of your heart—  
Open to me!  
For I will show you the places Nobody knows,  
And, if you like,  
The perfect places of Sleep.

Ah, come with me!  
I'll blow you that wonderful bubble, the moon,  
That floats forever and a day;  
I'll sing you the jacinth song  
Of the probable stars;  
I will attempt the unstartled steppes of dream,  
Until I find the Only Flower,  
Which shall keep (I think) your little heart  
While the moon comes out of the sea.

— e. e. cummings (1894-1962)



8 October 2022

## Hope

It hovers in dark corners  
before the lights are turned on,  
it shakes sleep from its eyes  
and drops from mushroom gills,  
it explodes in the starry heads  
of dandelions turned sages,  
it sticks to the wings of green angels  
that sail from the tops of maples.

It sprouts in each occluded eye  
of the many-eyed potato,  
it lives in each earthworm segment  
surviving cruelty,  
it is the motion that runs  
from the eyes to the tail of a dog,  
it is the mouth that inflates the lungs  
of the child that has just been born.

It is the singular gift  
we cannot destroy in ourselves,  
the argument that refutes death,  
the genius that invents the future,  
all we know of God.

It is the serum which makes us swear  
not to betray one another;  
it is in this poem, trying to speak.

— Lisel Mueller (1924-2020)





15 October 2022

**For everyone who tried on the slipper before Cinderella**

*after Anis Mojgani and Audre Lorde*

For those making tea in the soft light of Saturday morning  
in the peaceful kitchen  
in the cool house  
For those with shrunken hearts still trying to love  
For those with large hearts trying to forget  
For those with terrors they cannot name  
upset stomachs and too tight pants  
For those who get cut off in traffic  
For those who spend all day making an elaborate meal  
that turns out mediocre  
For those who could not leave  
even when they knew they had to  
For those who never win the lottery  
or become famous  
For those getting groceries on Friday nights

There is something you know  
about living  
that you guard with your life  
your one fragile, wonderful life  
wonder, as in, awe,  
as in, *I had no idea I would be here now.*

For those who make plans and those who don't  
For those driving across the country to a highway that knows them  
For the routes we take in the dark, trusting  
For the roads for the woods for the dead humming in prayer  
For an old record and a strong sun  
For teeth bared to the wind  
a pulse in the chest  
a body making love to itself

There is every reason to hate it here  
There is a list of things making it bearable:  
your friend's shoulder Texas barbecue a new book  
a loud song a strong song a highway that knows you  
sweet tea an orange cat a helping hand  
an unforgettable dinner

a laugh that escapes you and deflates you  
like a pink balloon left soft with room  
for goodness to take hold

For those who have looked in the mirror and begged  
For those with weak knees and an attitude  
For those called "sensitive" or "too much"  
For those not called enough  
For the times you needed and went without  
For the photo of you as a child  
quietly icing cupcakes your hair a crackling thunderstorm

Love is coming.  
It's on its way.  
Look—

— Ariana Brown





22 October 2022



*Extract from*

**Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey**

For I have learned  
To look at nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore, am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye and ear, both what they half-create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

— William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

29 October 2022

### Transformation

I haven't written a single poem  
in months.  
I've lived humbly, reading the paper,  
pondering the riddle of power  
and the reasons for obedience.  
I've watched sunsets  
(crimson, anxious),  
I've heard the birds grow quiet  
and night's muteness.  
I've seen sunflowers dangling  
their heads at dusk, as if a careless hangman  
had gone strolling through the gardens.  
September's sweet dust gathered  
on the windowsill and lizards  
hid in the bends of walls.  
I've taken long walks,  
craving one thing only:  
lightning,  
transformation,  
you.

— Adam Zagajewski (1945-2021)  
*(translated by Clare Cavanagh)*



5 November 2022

### The Paradox

When I am inside writing,  
all I can think about is how I should be outside living.

When I am outside living,  
all I can do is notice all there is to write about.

When I read about love, I think I should be out loving.  
When I love, I think I need to read more.

I am stumbling in pursuit of grace,  
I hunt patience with a vengeance.

On the mornings when my brother's tired muscles  
held to the pillow, my father used to tell him,

*For every moment you aren't playing basketball,  
someone else is on the court practicing.*

I spend most of my time wondering  
if I should be somewhere else.

So I have learned to shape the words thank you  
with my first breath each morning, my last breath every night.

When the last breath comes, at least I will know I was thankful  
for all the places I was so sure I was not supposed to be.

All those places I made it to,  
all the loves I held, all the words I wrote.

And even if it is just for one moment,  
I will be exactly where I am supposed to be.

— Sarah Kay



12 November 2022

### In View of the River Han

The guest on the River Han has thoughts of going home.  
A poor old scholar decaying quietly in our universe.

Remote as the sky  
He takes the clouds, one at a time.

All night he's alone like the moon.

The sight of setting sun cheers him up,  
& the autumn winds  
Lighten his ills.

It is said that one should always keep an old horse;

Only don't let him take you on a long journey.

— Du Fu (712-770)  
*(translated by Wong May)*







19 November 2022

**We grow accustomed to the Dark**

We grow accustomed to the Dark —  
When Light is put away —  
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp  
To witness her Good bye —

A Moment — We Uncertain step  
For newness of the night —  
Then — fit our Vision to the Dark —  
And meet the Road — erect —

And so of larger — Darknesses —  
Those Evenings of the Brain —  
When not a Moon disclose a sign —  
Or Star — come out — within —

The Bravest — grope a little —  
And sometimes hit a Tree  
Directly in the Forehead —  
But as they learn to see —

Either the Darkness alters —  
Or something in the sight  
Adjusts itself to Midnight —  
And Life steps almost straight.

— Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)





26 November 2022

### **Thank You**

If you find yourself half naked  
and barefoot in the frosty grass, hearing,  
again, the earth's great, sonorous moan that says  
you are the air of the now and gone, that says  
all you love will turn to dust,  
and will meet you there, do not  
raise your fist. Do not raise  
your small voice against it. And do not  
take cover. Instead, curl your toes  
into the grass, watch the cloud  
ascending from your lips. Walk  
through the garden's dormant splendor.  
Say only, thank you.  
Thank you.

—Ross Gay

3 December 2022

### **The country of the trees**

There is no king in their country  
and there is no queen  
and there are no princes vying for power,  
    inventing corruption.  
Just as with us many children are born  
and some will live and some will die and the country  
    will continue.

The weather will always be important.

And there will always be room for the weak, the violets  
    and the bloodroot.  
When it is cold they will be given blankets of leaves.  
When it is hot they will be given shade.  
And not out of guilt, neither for a year-end deduction  
    but maybe for the cheer of their colors, their  
    small flower faces.

They are not like us.

Some will perish to become houses or barns,  
    fences and bridges.

Others will ensure past the counting of years.  
And none will ever speak a single word of complaint,  
    as though language, after all,  
did not work well enough, was only an early stage.  
Neither do they ever have any questions to the gods—  
    which one is the real one, and what is the plan.  
As though they have been told everything already,  
    and are content.

— Mary Oliver (1935-2019)



10 December 2022

### Near the Shrine of Saint Naum

I stood in the red church,  
its tiny domes like buds  
blossoming in stone,  
I stood near the saint's resting place  
while a tourist laid her cheek on the tombstone  
to hear his beating heart.  
But I was no tourist,  
and the saint left the room with me,  
and the church the builders wrote in his memory  
was nothing more  
than a passing dream in his eternal sleep.

The tourists come in vain,  
as do the believers.

— Najwan Darwish  
*(translated by Kareem James Abu-Zeid)*



17 December 2022

### **A Walk**

My eyes already touch the sunny hill.  
going far beyond the road I have begun,  
So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp;  
it has an inner light, even from a distance-

and changes us, even if we do not reach it,  
into something else, which, hardly sensing it,  
we already are; a gesture waves us on  
answering our own wave...  
but what we feel is the wind in our faces.

— Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926)







24 December 2022

### Brightness

Grey days, on which  
the sun carried itself  
like a pale nun, are gone.  
A blue day is blue above,  
a world has freely risen,  
in which sun and stars sparkle.

All of this transpired in silence,  
without racket, as a great will,  
and without much ceremony.  
The miracle opens up smiling.  
There is no need for rockets  
or matches, only a clear night.

— Robert Walser (1878-1956)  
*(translated by Daniele Pantano)*



31 December 2022

### To the New Year

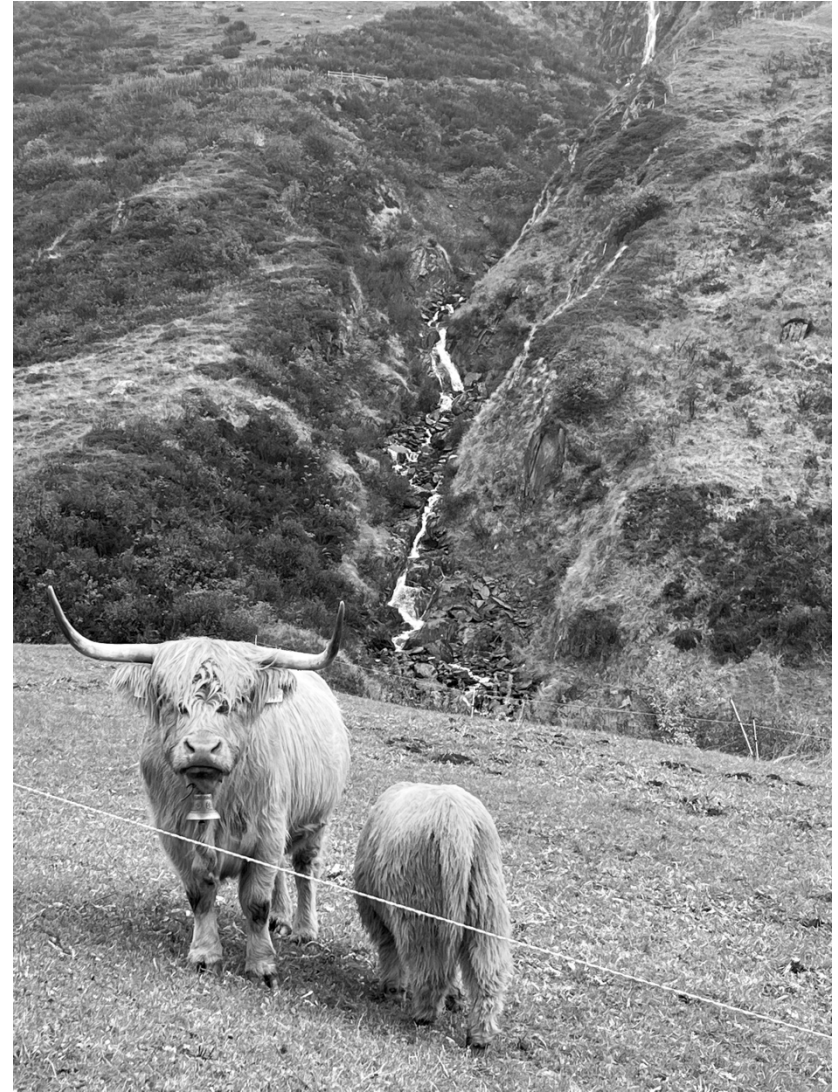
With what stillness at last  
you appear in the valley  
your first sunlight reaching down  
to touch the tips of a few  
high leaves that do not stir  
as though they had not noticed  
and did not know you at all  
then the voice of a dove calls  
from far away in itself  
to the hush of the morning

so this is the sound of you  
here and now whether or not  
anyone hears it this is  
where we have come with our age  
our knowledge such as it is  
and our hopes such as they are  
invisible before us  
untouched and still possible

— W. S. Merwin (1927-2019)



2023





7 January 2023

### Faith

The word Faith means when someone sees  
A dew-drop or a floating leaf, and knows  
That they are, because they have to be.  
And even if you dreamed, or closed your eyes  
And wished, the world would still be what it was,  
And the leaf would still be carried down the river.

It means that when someone's foot is hurt  
By a sharp rock, he also knows that rocks  
Are here so they can hurt our feet.  
Look, see the long shadow cast by the trees;  
And flowers and people throw shadows on the earth:  
What has no shadow has no strength to live.

— Czesław Miłosz (1911-2004)

14 January 2023

## Hands

### I

When I fall asleep  
my hands leave me.

They pick up pens  
and draw creatures  
with five feathers  
on each wing.

The creatures multiply.  
They say: "We are large  
like your father's  
hands."

They say: "We have  
your mother's  
knuckles."

I speak to them:  
"If you are hands,  
why don't you  
touch?"

And the wings beat  
the air, clapping.  
They fly

high above elbows  
and wrists.  
They open windows  
and leave

rooms.  
They perch in treetops  
and hide under bushes  
biting

their nails. "Hands,"  
I call them.  
But it is fall

and all creatures  
with wings  
prepare to fly  
South.

### II

When I sleep  
the shadows of my hands  
come to me.

They are softer than feathers  
and warm as creatures  
who have been close  
to the sun.

They say: "We are the giver,"  
and tell of oranges  
growing on trees.

They say: "We are the vessel,"  
and tell of journeys  
through water.

They say: "We are the cup."

And I stir in my sleep.  
Hands pull triggers  
and cut  
trees. But

the shadows of my hands  
tuck their heads  
under wings  
waiting  
for morning,

when I will wake  
braiding

three strands of hair  
into one.

— Siv Cedering (1939-2007)



21 January 2023

**[The faint shadow of the morning moon?]**

The faint shadow of the morning moon?  
Nay, the snow falling on the earth.  
The mist of blossoming flowers?  
Nay, poetry smiling up the sky.

— Yone Noguchi (1875-1947)



28 January 2023

*Extract from*

**Palimpsests**

The path submerges in the dark of sleep.  
The waters of bitter oblivion reach ever  
higher. And ever closer is the edge.  
I gaze into the emptiness of days and years —  
and wonder: where is that borderland  
that brings the severed soul back  
to the primordial. To the vale of pleasures  
heralded by the years of youth.  
Quo vadis? The disobedient step  
became itself in this unceasing walk,  
and you are only following its trace.  
The frail ribbon of the years grows thinner,  
just like your shadow coming forth to meet you  
and hypnotizing you... Your road has ultimately  
ended. The darkness. The abyss. The edge.  
So step beyond the verge. We cannot live  
with this uncertainty. Between. By just half a step.  
As if the foot was raised and paused,  
and then it froze. A half-desire  
cut off by semi-hesitation. Extensive borderlands  
conceal themselves behind the hills of anguish —  
the daring aims of space can't see them.  
Oh, what if that edge could know  
that we are fractured! What does it take  
for a mountain to become a mountain? What if we  
could move these borderlands of time,  
these borderlands of lingering  
when the withered figures of desire,  
these storms of passion, now reduced to ashes,  
have fallen suddenly on us.

— Vasyl Stus (1938-1985)





4 February 2023

## February

February. Get out the ink and weep!  
Sob in February, sob and sing  
While the wet snow rumbles in the street  
And burns with the black spring.

Take a cab. For a coin  
Be carried through church bells, the chirp of tyres  
To a place where the torrential rain  
Is louder still than ink or tears

Where, like charred pears  
A thousand rooks break from the bough  
Fall to puddles, cast their parched cares  
Into eyes of melted snow.

There gaps open black in the snow's expanse  
And the crow-pocked wind throbs  
And the surest poems come by chance  
Wrought from sobs.

— Boris Pasternak (1890-1960)  
*(translated by Sasha Dugdale)*





11 February 2023

**Island [1]**

Wave of sorrow,  
Do not drown me now:

I see the island  
Still ahead somehow

I see the island  
And its sands are fair:

Wave of sorrow,  
Take me there.

— Langston Hughes (1901-1967)



18 February 2023

### Who Can Govern Themselves Out of Governance?

if I could be somewhere  
I wasn't I would be there

or I would have already  
paid that place some

cold and charitable visit.  
if you knew how wealthy

I wasn't you would run.  
I cannot remember

what I was before I tried  
to become what I thought

I could in light of the  
dark that swallowed me.

the story of how I thought  
I had not been pure and

had not been enough. how  
I was not there though I

had been but was gone  
after what I did not

know I did not need  
came. how do you fix

that which the house  
has no tools to fix?

where is the resolve as  
bright as the wet face

of a child, the sight of the  
rigid origin of the break?

— A. H. Jerriod Avant



25 February 2023

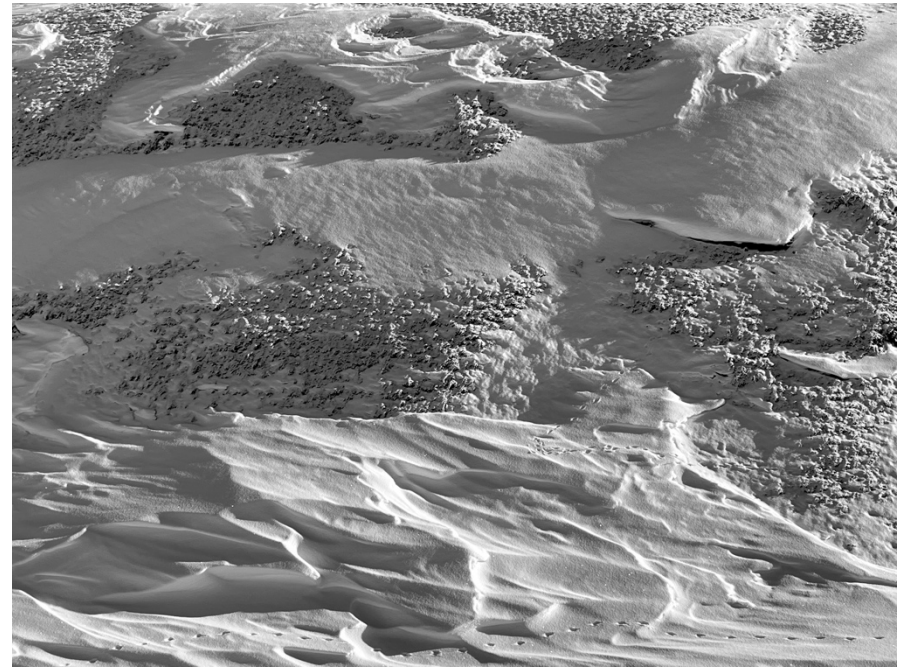
A brief history of snow,  
as told by eyewitnesses  
mimicked by a chorus  
collected from passers-by:  
give me a chronology of the snowfall,  
let me hold the thread that leads  
to the borders of winter,  
to a blizzard's blue outskirts.  
A brief description of what fills  
the space between eastern dunes  
and western lowlands,  
a brief stop in winter's long expedition.  
All those who defended this city  
will come out to its walls  
and call after the bad weather  
that fell on the shoulders of their dead:  
You go first, snow, go,  
once you've stepped forward, we'll follow,  
as you go out to the field  
our singing will follow you.  
After all, we're the ones singing on a quiet night  
when it's silent downtown,  
we plant the seeds of a sigh  
in the black soil of breath.  
Snow, fall on our childhood—  
the safe haven of loyalty and noise,  
here we were friendly  
with the dark side of language,  
with the deepening tenderness,

here we learned to collect voices  
like coins,  
you go first, snow, go first,  
fill up the deep sadness of the well  
that opened for you,  
like a metaphor.

Past the last gasps of childhood behind the station wall  
and the amateur blueprint of a Sunday school,  
past the houses on a hill, where boys'  
fragile voices break at the stem,  
go ahead of us, snow, mark us present  
in the book of comings and goings,  
in the nighttime registry of love,  
you go first, don't be afraid of getting lost in the field  
because we know you won't get beyond the boundaries of sound,  
beyond the boundaries of our names,  
the world is like a dictionary, it preserves its own depths,  
shares it with school teachers  
and their students.  
Your night is like prison bread, hidden in a pocket,  
like the oblique silhouette of someone walking, the wax that's shaped into  
the moon,  
your path is a reinvented chronicle of cities,  
the slope leading to the square,  
the deep tracks left by hunters,  
where fear meets courage.

— Serhiy Zhadan  
*(translated from the Ukrainian by Amelia Glaser and Yuliya Ilchuk)*





4 March 2023

## The Great Wagon

When I see your face, the stones start spinning!  
You appear; all studying wanders.  
I lose my place.

Water turns pearly.  
Fire dies down and doesn't destroy.

In your presence I don't want what I thought  
I wanted, those three little hanging lamps.

Inside your face the ancient manuscripts  
Seem like rusty mirrors.

You breathe; new shapes appear,  
and the music of a desire as widespread  
as Spring begins to move  
like a great wagon.  
Drive slowly.  
Some of us walking alongside  
are lame!

\*

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty  
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study  
and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.  
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

\*

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing,  
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,  
the world is too full to talk about.  
Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*  
doesn't make any sense.

\*

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.  
Don't go back to sleep.  
You must ask for what you really want.  
Don't go back to sleep.  
People are going back and forth across the doorsill  
where the two worlds touch.  
The door is round and open.  
Don't go back to sleep.

I would love to kiss you.  
*The price of kissing is your life.*

Now my loving is running toward my life shouting,  
*What a bargain, let's buy it.*

\*

Daylight, full of small dancing particles  
and the one great turning, our souls  
are dancing with you, without feet, they dance.  
Can you see them when I whisper in your ear?

\*

They try to say what you are, spiritual or sexual?  
They wonder about Solomon and all his wives.

In the body of the world, they say, there is a soul  
and you are that.

But we have ways within each other  
that will never be said by anyone.

\*

Come to the orchard in Spring.  
There is light and wine, and sweethearts  
in the pomegranate flowers.

If you do not come, these do not matter.  
If you do come, these do not matter.

— Rumi (1207-1273)  
*(translated by Coleman Barks)*



11 March 2023

### **Bonfire Opera**

In those days, there was a woman in our circle  
who was known, not only for her beauty,  
but also for taking off all her clothes and singing opera.  
And sure enough, as the night wore on and the stars  
emerged to stare at their reflections on the sea,  
and everyone had drunk a little wine,  
she began to disrobe, loose her great bosom  
and the tender belly, pale in the moonlight,  
the Viking hips, and to let her torn raiment  
fall to the sand as we looked up from the flames.  
And then, a voice lifted into the dark, high and clear  
as a flock of blackbirds. And everything was very still,  
the way the congregation quiets when the priest  
prays over the incense, and the smoke wafts  
up into the rafters. I wanted to be that free  
inside the body, the doors of pleasure  
opening, one after the next, an arpeggio  
climbing the ladder of sky. And all the while  
she was singing and wading into the water  
until it rose up to her waist and then lapped  
at the underside of her breasts, and the aria  
drifted over us, her soprano spare and sharp  
in the night air. And even though I was young,  
somehow, in that moment, I heard it,  
the song inside the song, and I knew then  
that this was not the hymn of promise  
but the body's bright wailing against its limits.  
A bird caught in a cathedral—the way it tries  
to escape by throwing itself, again and again,  
against the stained glass.

— Danusha Laméris.

18 March 2023

### **Meditation in Sunlight**

In space in time I sit  
Thousands of feet above  
The sea and meditate  
On solitude on love

Near all is brown and poor  
Houses are made of earth  
Sun opens every door

The city is a hearth

Far all is blue and strange  
The sky looks down on snow  
And meets the mountain-range  
Where time is light not shadow

Time in the heart held still  
Space as the household god  
And joy instead of will  
Knows love as solitude

Knows solitude as love  
Knows time as light not shadow  
Thousands of feet above  
The sea where I am now

— May Sarton (1912-1995)



25 March 2023

## Prisms

What is beheld through glass seems glass.

The quality of what I am  
Encases what I am not,  
Smooths the strange world.  
I perceive it slowly  
In my time,  
In my material,  
As my pride,  
As my possession:  
The vision is love.

When life crashes like a cracked pane,  
Still shall I love  
Even the slight grass and the patient dust.  
Death also sees, though darkly,  
And I must trust then as now  
Only another kind of prism  
Through which I may not put my hands to touch.

— Laura Riding Jackson (1901-1991)





1 April 2023

### The March of the Earth

Earth, you're nestled in twilight and  
from your slumber flows of lava erupted awake in fury  
to the drumbeat of a stately march  
oozing over the slothful time of budding shoots  
and bones saturated in humus-rich soil

follow the rhythm of your vapors and dance with me, Earth  
let us lose ourselves  
let us lose ourselves  
in a delirium

I saved some of your jasmine fragrance, Earth  
smear it onto my breasts  
and make love to me  
till you've pulled my hair straight into your heart

I feed your spawn  
I, time of eternity  
give birth to the new world

— Ervina Halili  
(translated from *Albanian* by *Suzana Vuljevic*)





8 April 2023

## Youth and Age

In my youth the heart of dawn was in my heart, and the songs of April were in my ears.

But my soul was sad unto death, and I knew not why. Even unto this day I know not why I was sad.

But now, though I am with eventide, my heart is still veiling dawn,

And though I am with autumn, my ears still echo the songs of spring.

But my sadness has turned into awe, and I stand in the presence of life and life's daily miracles.

The difference between my youth which was my spring, and these forty years, and they are my autumn, is the very difference that exists between flower and fruit.

A flower is forever swayed with the wind and knows not why and wherefore.

But the fruit overladen with them honey of summer, knows that it is one of life's home-comings, as a poet when his song is sung knows sweet content,  
Though life has been bitter upon his lips.

In my youth I longed for the unknown, and for the unknown I am still longing.  
But in the days of my youth longing embraced necessity that knows naught of patience.

Today I long not less, but my longing is friendly with patience, and even waiting.

And I know that all this desire that moves within me is one of those laws that turns universes around one another in quiet ecstasy, in swift passion which your eyes deem stillness, and your mind a mystery.

And in my youth I loved beauty and abhorred ugliness, for beauty was to me a world separated from all other worlds.

But now that the gracious years have lifted the veil of picking-and-choosing from over my eyes, I know that all I have deemed ugly in what I see and hear, is but a blinder upon my eyes, and wool in my ears;

And that our senses, like our neighbors, hate what they do not understand.

And in my youth I loved the fragrance of flowers and their color.

Now I know that their thorns are their innocent protection, and if it were not for that innocence they would disappear forevermore.

And in my youth, of all seasons I hated winter, for I said in my aloneness, "Winter is a thief who robs the earth of her sun-woven garment, and suffers her to stand naked in the wind."

But now I know that in winter there is re-birth and renewal, and that the wind tears the old raiment to cloak her with a new raiment woven by the spring.

And in my youth I would gaze upon the sun of the day and the stars of the night, saying in my secret, “How small am I, and how small a circle my dream makes.”

But today when I stand before the sun or the stars I cry, “The sun is close to me, and the stars are upon me;” for all the distances of my youth have turned into the nearness of age;

And the great aloneness which knows not what is far and what is near, nor what is small nor great, has turned into a vision that weighs not nor does it measure.

In my youth I was but the slave of the high tide and the ebb tide of the sea, and the prisoner of half moons and full moons.

Today I stand at this shore and I rise not nor do I go down.

Even my roots once every twenty-eight days would seek the heart of the earth.

And on the twenty-ninth day they would rise toward the throne of the sky.

And on that very day the rivers in my veins would stop for a moment, and then would run again to the sea.

Yes, in my youth I was a thing, sad and yielding, and all the seasons played with me and laughed in their hearts.

And life took a fancy to me and kissed my young lips, and slapped my cheeks.

Today I play with the seasons. And I steal a kiss from life’s lips ere she kisses my lips.

And I even hold her hands playfully that she may not strike my cheek.

In my youth I was sad indeed, and all things seemed dark and distant.

Today, all is radiant and near, and for this I would live my youth and the pain of my youth, again and yet again.

— Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931)



15 April 2023

### **I Grant You Ample Leave**

I grant you ample leave  
To use the hoary formula 'I am'  
Naming the emptiness where thought is not;  
But fill the void with definition, 'I'  
Will be no more a datum than the words  
You link false inference with, the 'Since' & 'so'  
That, true or not, make up the atom-whirl.  
Resolve your 'Ego,' it is all one web  
With vibrant ether clotted into worlds:  
Your subject, self, or self-assertive 'I'  
Turns nought but object, melts to molecules,  
Is stripped from naked Being with the rest  
Of those rag-garments named the Universe.  
Or if, in strife to keep your 'Ego' strong  
You make it weaver of the etherial light,  
Space, motion, solids & the dream of Time—  
Why, still 'tis Being looking from the dark,  
The core, the centre of your consciousness,  
That notes your bubble-world: sense, pleasure, pain,  
What are they but a shifting otherness,  
Phantasmal flux of moments?—

— George Eliot (1819-1880)



22 April 2023

**Place**

On the last day of the world  
I would want to plant a tree

what for  
not for the fruit

the tree that bears the fruit  
is not the one that was planted

I want the tree that stands  
in the earth for the first time

with the sun already  
going down

and the water  
touching its roots

in the earth full of the dead  
and the clouds passing

one by one  
over its leaves

— W.S. Merwin (1927-2019)

29 April 2023

### **A Brief For The Defense**

Sorrow everywhere. Slaughter everywhere. If babies  
are not starving someplace, they are starving  
somewhere else. With flies in their nostrils.  
But we enjoy our lives because that's what God wants.  
Otherwise the mornings before summer dawn would not  
be made so fine. The Bengal tiger would not  
be fashioned so miraculously well. The poor women  
at the fountain are laughing together between  
the suffering they have known and the awfulness  
in their future, smiling and laughing while somebody  
in the village is very sick. There is laughter  
every day in the terrible streets of Calcutta,  
and the women laugh in the cages of Bombay.  
If we deny our happiness, resist our satisfaction,  
we lessen the importance of their deprivation.  
We must risk delight. We can do without pleasure,  
but not delight. Not enjoyment. We must have  
the stubbornness to accept our gladness in the ruthless  
furnace of this world. To make injustice the only  
measure of our attention is to praise the Devil.  
If the locomotive of the Lord runs us down,  
we should give thanks that the end had magnitude.

We must admit there will be music despite everything.  
We stand at the prow again of a small ship  
anchored late at night in the tiny port  
looking over to the sleeping island: the waterfront  
is three shuttered cafés and one naked light burning.  
To hear the faint sound of oars in the silence as a rowboat  
comes slowly out and then goes back is truly worth  
all the years of sorrow that are to come.

— Jack Gilbert (1925-2012)



6 May 2023

**You And I Are Disappearing--Bjorn Hakansson**

The cry I bring down from the hills  
belongs to a girl still burning  
inside my head. At daybreak

she burns like a piece of paper. She burns like foxfire

in a thigh-shaped valley.  
A skirt of flames  
dances around her  
at dusk.

We stand with our hands

hanging at our sides,  
while she burns

like a sack of dry ice.

She burns like oil on water.  
She burns like a cattail torch  
dipped in gasoline.  
She glows like the fat tip  
of a banker's cigar,

silent as quicksilver.

A tiger under a rainbow  
at nightfall.

She burns like a shot glass of vodka.  
She burns like a field of poppies  
at the edge of a rain forest.  
She rises like dragonsmoke  
to my nostrils.  
She burns like a burning bush  
driven by a godawful wind.

— Yusef Komunyakaa





13 May 2023

### Self-Portrait

Between the computer, a pencil, and a typewriter  
half my day passes. One day it will be half a century.  
I live in strange cities and sometimes talk  
with strangers about matters strange to me.  
I listen to music a lot: Bach, Mahler, Chopin, Shostakovich.  
I see three elements in music: weakness, power, and pain.  
The fourth has no name.  
I read poets, living and dead, who teach me  
tenacity, faith, and pride. I try to understand  
the great philosophers—but usually catch just  
scraps of their precious thoughts.  
I like to take long walks on Paris streets  
and watch my fellow creatures, quickened by envy,  
anger, desire; to trace a silver coin  
passing from hand to hand as it slowly  
loses its round shape (the emperor's profile is erased).  
Beside me trees expressing nothing  
but a green, indifferent perfection.  
Black birds pace the fields,  
waiting patiently like Spanish widows.  
I'm no longer young, but someone else is always older.  
I like deep sleep, when I cease to exist,  
and fast bike rides on country roads when poplars and houses  
dissolve like cumuli on sunny days.  
Sometimes in museums the paintings speak to me  
and irony suddenly vanishes.  
I love gazing at my wife's face.

Every Sunday I call my father.  
Every other week I meet with friends,  
thus proving my fidelity.  
My country freed itself from one evil. I wish  
another liberation would follow.  
Could I help in this? I don't know.  
I'm truly not a child of the ocean,  
as Antonio Machado wrote about himself,  
but a child of air, mint, and cello  
and not all the ways of the high world  
cross paths with the life that—so far—  
belongs to me.

— Adam Zagajewski (1945-2021)  
*(Translated by Clare Cavanagh)*



20 May 2023

## The Age of the Possible

There,  
at the bottom of being,  
where the water that makes  
this planet a world  
is the color of spacetime

the octopus —

with her body-shaped mind  
and her eight-arm embrace  
of alien realities,  
with her colorblind vision  
sightful of polarized light  
and her perpetually awestruck  
lidless eye —

can see

shades of blue we cannot conceive.

Call it god  
if you must  
lean on the homely  
to fathom the holiness  
of the fathomless whole.

And meanwhile,  
up here,  
we swim amid particles  
we cannot perceive  
folded into dimensions  
we cannot imagine

to tell stories about  
what is real and  
what is possible,  
and what it means to be.

A blink of time ago  
we thought the octopus  
impossible,  
we thought this blue world  
lifeless  
below three hundred fathoms  
until in 1898 —  
an epoch after Bach  
scribbled in the margin  
of a composition  
“Everything that is possible is real” —  
we plunged our prosthetic eye  
deep into the blue  
and found a universe of life.

There,  
the octopus,  
godless and possible,  
lives.

Are any of her three hearts breaking  
for us  
and our impossible blues?

— Maria Popova



27 May 2023

### **The Lifeline**

*for Dave Lavery*

Here is what I know: when  
that bell tolls again, I  
need to go and make something,  
anything: a poem, a pie, a terrible  
scarf with my terrible knitting, I  
need to write a letter, remind myself  
of any little lifeline around me.

When death sounds, I forget most  
of what I learnt before. I go below.  
I compare my echoes with other people's  
happiness. I carve that hole in my own  
chest again, pull out all my organs once  
again, wonder if they'll ever work again  
stuff them back again. Begin. Again.

— Pádraig Ó Tuama

3 June 2023

**Nothing in the world ...**

Nothing  
in the world  
is usual today.  
This is  
the first morning.

\*

Come quickly—as soon as  
these blossoms open,  
they fall.  
This world exists  
as a sheen of dew on flowers.

\*

Even though  
these pine trees  
keep their original color,  
everything green  
is different in spring.

\*

Seeing you is the thread  
that ties me to this life—  
If that knot  
were cut this moment,  
I'd have no regret.

\*

Sleeplessly  
I watch over  
the spring night—  
but no amount of guarding  
is enough to make it stay.

— Izumi Shikibu (974–1034)

*(Extract from **The Ink Dark Moon** –  
translated by Jane Hirshfield and Mariko Aratani)*



10 June 2023

**If Life Is As Short As Our Ancestors Insist It Is,  
Why Isn't Everything I Want Already At My Feet**

if I make it to heaven, I will ask for all of the small pleasures  
I could have had on earth. And I'm sure this will upset

the divine order. I am a simple man. I want, mostly,  
a year that will not kill me when it is over.

A hot stove and a wooden porch, bent under  
the weight of my people. I was born, and it only got worse

from there. In the dead chill of a doctor's office,  
I am told what to cut back on and what to add more of.

None of this sounds like living. I sit in a running  
car under a bath of orange light and eat the fried chicken

that I promised my love I would stray from  
for the sake of my heart and its blood

labor. Still, there is something about the way a grease  
stain begins small and then tiptoes its way along

the fabric of my pants. Here, finally, a country  
worth living in. One that falls thick from whatever

it is we love so much that we can't stop letting it kill  
us. If we must die, let it be inside here. If we must.

— Hanif Abdurraqib



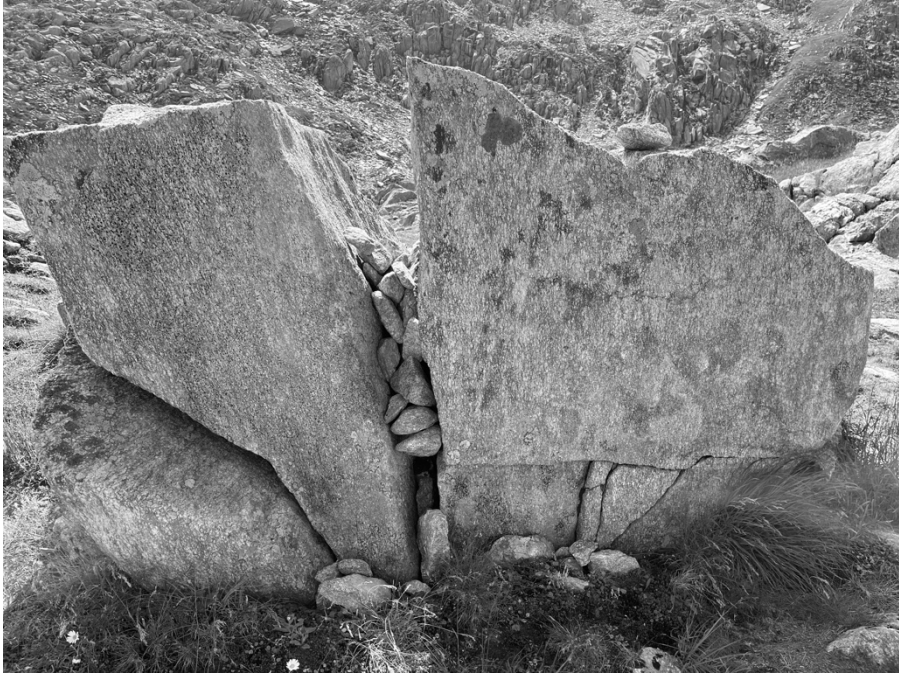
17 June 2023

### **The Way It Is**

There's a thread you follow. It goes among  
things that change. But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt  
or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.

— William Stafford (1914-1993)





1 July 2023

## For Those Who Have Far to Travel

### *A Blessing for Epiphany*

If you could see  
the journey whole  
you might never  
undertake it;  
might never dare  
the first step  
that propels you  
from the place  
you have known  
toward the place  
you know not.

Call it  
one of the mercies  
of the road:  
that we see it  
only by stages  
as it opens  
before us,  
as it comes into  
our keeping  
step by  
single step.

There is nothing  
for it  
but to go  
and by our going  
take the vows  
the pilgrim takes:

to be faithful to  
the next step;  
to rely on more  
than the map;  
to heed the signposts  
of intuition and dream;  
to follow the star  
that only you  
will recognize;

to keep an open eye  
for the wonders that  
attend the path;  
to press on  
beyond distractions  
beyond fatigue  
beyond what would  
tempt you  
from the way.

There are vows  
that only you  
will know;  
the secret promises  
for your particular path  
and the new ones  
you will need to make  
when the road  
is revealed  
by turns  
you could not  
have foreseen.

Keep them, break them,  
make them again:  
each promise becomes  
part of the path;  
each choice creates  
the road  
that will take you  
to the place  
where at last  
you will kneel

to offer the gift  
most needed—  
the gift that only you  
can give—  
before turning to go  
home by  
another way

— Jan Richardson





8 July 2023

### The Work of Happiness

I thought of happiness, how it is woven  
Out of the silence in the empty house each day  
And how it is not sudden and it is not given  
But is creation itself like the growth of a tree.  
No one has seen it happen, but inside the bark  
Another circle is growing in the expanding ring.  
No one has heard the root go deeper in the dark,  
But the tree is lifted by this inward work  
And its plumes shine, and its leaves are glittering.

So happiness is woven out of the peace of hours  
And strikes its roots deep in the house alone:  
The old chest in the corner, cool waxed floors,  
White curtains softly and continually blown  
As the free air moves quietly about the room;  
A shelf of books, a table, and the white-washed wall —  
These are the dear familiar gods of home,  
And here the work of faith can best be done,  
The growing tree is green and musical.

For what is happiness but growth in peace,  
The timeless sense of time when furniture  
Has stood a life's span in a single place,  
And as the air moves, so the old dreams stir  
The shining leaves of present happiness?  
No one has heard thought or listened to a mind,  
But where people have lived in inwardness  
The air is charged with blessing and does bless;  
Windows look out on mountains and the walls are kind.

— May Sarton (1912–1995)

15 July 2023

### **In Praise of Mystery: A Poem for Europa**

Arching under the night sky inky  
with black expansiveness, we point  
to the planets we know, we

pin quick wishes on stars. From earth,  
we read the sky as if it is an unerring book  
of the universe, expert and evident.

Still, there are mysteries below our sky:  
the whale song, the songbird singing  
its call in the bough of a wind-shaken tree.

We are creatures of constant awe,  
curious at beauty, at leaf and blossom,  
at grief and pleasure, sun and shadow.

And it is not darkness that unites us,  
not the cold distance of space, but  
the offering of water, each drop of rain,

each rivulet, each pulse, each vein.  
O second moon, we, too, are made  
of water, of vast and beckoning seas.

We, too, are made of wonders, of great  
and ordinary loves, of small invisible worlds,  
of a need to call out through the dark.

— Ada Limón

22 July 2023



### A Dream of Trees

There is a thing in me that dreamed of trees,  
A quiet house, some green and modest acres  
A little way from every troubling town,  
A little way from factories, schools, laments.  
I would have time, I thought, and time to spare,  
With only streams and birds for company,  
To build out of my life a few wild stanzas.  
And then it came to me, that so was death,  
A little way away from everywhere.

There is a thing in me still dreams of trees.  
But let it go. Homesick for moderation,  
Half the world's artists shrink or fall away.  
If any find solution, let him tell it.  
Meanwhile I bend my heart toward lamentation  
Where, as the times implore our true involvement,  
The blades of every crisis point the way.

I would it were not so, but so it is.  
Who ever made music of a mild day?

— Mary Oliver (1935 – 2019)





29 July 2023

**A woman created the sun**

A woman created the sun  
Inside her  
And her hands were beautiful  
The earth plunged beneath her feet  
Assailing her with the fertile breath  
Of volcanoes  
Her nostrils quivered her eyelids drooped  
Weighed down by the heavy silt of the pillow  
It is night  
And the calm wound where the breathless void dies  
Strikes, struggles, opens and quietly closes  
on the swaying rod of Noah the explorer.

— Joyce Mansour (1928 – 1986)  
*(translated by Emily Moorhouse)*

\*

**Une femme créait le soleil**

Une femme créait le soleil  
En elle  
Et ses mains étaient belles  
La terre plongeait sous ses pieds  
L'assaillant de l'haleine fertile  
Des volcans  
Ses narines palpitaient ses paupières se baissaient  
Empesées par le lourd limon de l'oreiller  
C'est la nuit  
Et l'égratignure tranquille où meurt le vide haletant  
Se bat se débat s'ouvre et doucement se ferme  
Sur la verge dodelinante de Noé l'explorateur

— Joyce Mansour (1928 – 1986)

\*



Stay safe! -  
Stay amazed!