

CESTA

*„Věděl jsem, že její láska není skutečná, byl jsem však skutečně šťasten,“ řekl Antonio.
„Kdoví, co je tu vlastně skutečné,“ opáčil Filibert, jenž v jeho hlase postřehl hořkost.
(Ztroskotanec na břehu atlantském)*

Uprostřed ostrova bylo jezero a na tom jezeře se zelenal ostrůvek zarostlý křovím. Tady! ozvalo se z rákosí a spáč spatřil prám, na kterém čekal muž s bidlem. Odkdy mají převozníci na zádech meč a na hlavě přilbici s chocholem? podivil se spáč.

Pospěš si, není čas, řekl muž.

Spáč chvíli váhal, než vstoupil do vody a prodral se rákosím k prámu.

Když dorazili k ostrvků, podivný převozník odhodil bidlo, pokynul spáči, ať jej následuje, a zamířil k úzké cestě, která mizela mezi křovisky.

V místě, kam dopadlo bidlo, se coci velkého pohnulo. V hnědozelené vodě ležel krokodýl. Zpátky už asi nepopluji, pomyslel si spáč a vydal se za převozníkem.

Dospěli k čiré tůni, v níž po pás ponořen seděl bělovousý stařec. Nad ním se úslužně skláněl strom.

Nemehlo! odstrčil stařec větve, která naň šplouchala vodu. Podej mi osušku! A meč mi podej!

Obnažil meč a obrátil se k spáči: Buď vítán. Nezdála se ti divná tvá cesta?

A aniž by počkal na odpověď, pokračoval: Baže, byla divná a dlouhá. Jsi zmaten.

Vždyť ani nevíš, kudy jsi chodil, spáči. Nyní tě probudím. Zbávím tě tvého zmatku.

Ivan Wernisch, December 30, 2022

THESE

are the desolate, dark weeks
when nature in its barrenness
equals the stupidity of man.

The year plunges into night
and the heart plunges
lower than night

to an empty, windswept place
without sun, stars or moon
but a peculiar light as of thought

that spins a dark fire -
whirling upon itself until,
in the cold, it kindles

to make a man aware of nothing
that he knows, not loneliness
itself - Not a ghost but

would be embraced - emptiness
despair - (They
whine and whistle) among

the flashes and booms of war;
houses of whose rooms
the cold is greater than can be thought,

the people gone that we loved,
the beds lying empty, the couches
damp, the chairs unused -

Hide it away somewhere
out of mind, let it get to roots
and grow, unrelated to jealous

ears and eyes - for itself.
In this mine they come to dig - all.
Is this the counterfoil to sweetest

music? The source of poetry that
seeing the clock stopped, says,
The clock has stopped

that ticked yesterday so well?
and hears the sound of lakewater
splashing - that is now stone.

William Carlos Williams, December 26, 2022

SPRINGVATTNET (DAMASKUS, GAMLA STADEN)

Bakom murarna. I skymningen en trädgård
med en brunn, på vattenytan tusen strödda rosenblad
som ekorrbärens blommor sent en junikväll i skogen.

Doften här av varma stenar, kamelia och jasmin,
doften där av mossa, barr och nyutsprungna björklöv.
I mitten vattnet som är överallt och rinner bortåt, hitåt och tillbaka.

Druckna nakna galar sjunger natten.
Mannens steg runt gården, låga röster:
om allt som flutit före oss.

Ylva Gislén, December 23, 2022

ON AN ANTHOLOGY OF CHINESE POEMS

Beautiful the hanging cliff and the wind-thrown cedars, but they have no weight.
Beautiful the fantastically
Small farmhouse and ribbon of rice-fields a mile below; and billows of mist
Blow through the gorge. These men were better
Artists than any of ours, and far better observers. They loved landscape
And put man in his place. But why
Do their rocks have no weight? They loved rice-wine and peace and
friendship,
Above all they loved landscape and solitude.
Like Wordsworth. But Wordsworth's mountains have weight and mass,
dull though the song be.
It is a moral difference perhaps?

Robinson Jeffers, December 19, 2022

THE SORROW OF LOVE

The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,
And all that famous harmony of leaves,
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,
And all that lamentation of the leaves,
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

William Butler Yeats, December 16, 2022

NEXT, PLEASE

Always too eager for the future, we
Pick up bad habits of expectancy.
Something is always approaching; every day
Till then we say,

Watching from a bluff the tiny, clear
Sparkling armada of promises draw near.

How slow they are! And how much time they waste,
Refusing to make haste!

Yet still they leave us holding wretched stalks
Of disappointment, for, though nothing balks
Each big approach, leaning with brasswork prinked,
Each rope distinct,

Flagged, and the figurehead wit golden tits
Arching our way, it never anchors; it's
No sooner present than it turns to past.
Right to the last

We think each one will heave to and unload
All good into our lives, all we are owed
For waiting so devoutly and so long.
But we are wrong:

Only one ship is seeking us, a black-
Sailed unfamiliar, towing at her back
A huge and birdless silence. In her wake
No waters breed or break.

Philip Larkin, December 12, 2022

IN MEMORY OF W.B. YEATS

I

He disappeared in the dead of winter:
The brooks were frozen, the airports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.
What instruments we have agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Far from his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays;
By mourning tongues
The death of the poet was kept from his poems.

But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,
An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
The provinces of his body revolted,
The squares of his mind were empty,
Silence invaded the suburbs,
The current of his feeling failed; he became his admirers.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections,
To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.
The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living.

But in the importance and noise of to-morrow
When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor of the bourse,
And the poor have the sufferings to which they are fairly accustomed
And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom
A few thousand will think of this day
As one thinks of a day when one did something slightly unusual.

What instruments we have agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

II

You were silly like us; your gift survived it all:
The parish of rich women, physical decay,
Yourself. Mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

III

Earth, receive an honoured guest:
William Yeats is laid to rest.
Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,

With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

Wystan Hugh Auden, December 9, 2022

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What care the Dead, for Chanticleer
What care the Dead for Day?
'Tis late your Sunrise vex their face
And Purple Ribaldry of Morning

Pour as blank on them
As on the Tier of Wall
The Mason builded, yesterday,
And equally as cool

What care the Dead for Summer?
The Solstice had no Sun
Could waste the Snow before their Gate
And knew One Bird a Tune

Could thrill their Mortised Ear
Of all the Birds that be
This One beloved of Mankind
Henceforward cherished be

What care the Dead for Winter?
Themselves as easy freeze
June Noon as January Night
As soon the South her Breeze

Of Sycamore or Cinnamon
Deposit in a Stone
And put a Stone to keep it Warm
Give Spices unto Men

Emily Dickinson, December 5, 2022

RED MAPLE STREET

Houses are emptying of the old rich
and filling with the new, and furniture removers
feel no different, sweating and sighing equally
to and from the lorry. What's in the heads of the ants
as they lug their thoughts through the vacant rooms,
curves of the women, pains of the proletariat,
or stuff unfenced by anything: a tug
of curiosity, the autumn's splendour? That thing
carried in the pocket, and seen in the mirror only,
like a bend in own nose, or this shame
the nature fills the trees with, and
the trees the street,
which will be the same tomorrow
for a stroller and for a tenant -
both the home, and a distant land...

Igor Kličević (translated from the Bosnian by the Author), December 2, 2022

ALLENBY ROAD

At sunset, when the paralyzed street gives up
hope of hearing an ambulance, finally settling for
strolling Chinamen, while the elms imitate a map
of a khaki-clad country that lulls its foe,
life is gradually getting myopic, spliced,
aquiline, geometrical, free of gloss
or detail – be it cornices, doorknobs, Christ –
stressing silhouettes: chimneys, rooftops, a cross.
And your closing the shutters unleashes the domino
theory; for no matter what size a lump
melts in your throat, the future snowballs each “no”
to coin a profile by the burning lamp.
Neither because there is a lot of guilt
nor because local prices are somewhat steep,
nobody picks this brick pocket filled
with change that barely buys some sleep.

Joseph Brodsky, November 28, 2022

A COAT

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies

From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world's eyes
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked.

William Butler Yeats, November 25, 2022

TO JSOU ŘEČI

Byl jednou jeden, byl a dost, proč o něm mluvit, on sám toho o sobě napovídal až až. A to ještě koktal. Jeho samotného z toho brněla hlava, z toho koktání a ze všeho, co o sobě napovídal, a taky se styděl, takové to byly hlouposti, stejně hloupé jako on sám. Mluvme raději o někom jiném, dejme tomu o druhém. Ale to taky k ničemu nevede, to jsme zase tam, kde jsme byli, i kdyby ten druhý nekoktal, nic to nemění na tom, že byl a dost. Mluvme tedy o někom, kdo nebyl, abychom se dostali někam, kde jsme ještě nebyli. Nuže – jednou jeden nebyl. To už je přece jen trochu veselejší. Je to však jisté? Jak si můžeme o někom být jisti, že nebyl. Podle čeho poznáme, že nebyl. Podle toho, že nám o sobě nic nenapovídal? Neřekl vůbec nic. To by mohl být důkaz, a teď mě napadá, že by to mohla být také hlavní příčina toho, že nebyl. Pak tedy ale pozor. Byl, nebo nebyl – není to totéž? Představte si: až jednou o mně, o vás někdo řekne byl, neřekne na to někdo jiný: To jsou řeči?

Ivan Wernisch, November 21, 2022

TO HELENE

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicæan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!

Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

Edgar Allan Poe, November 18, 2022

- - -

Chtěl jsem kašlat potichu,
než jsem si uvědomil,
že nemusím.
Že už nemusím kašlat potichu.
Svítlí se,
protože se zapomnělo zhasnout.
Smrt,
řekla jsi tak zběžně,
že to musela být pravda.

Petr Hruška, November 14, 2022

LIFTBOY

“Malignant tumor,” he said.

I left the doctor’s office. In the waiting room, a few potted plants sat among the despondent patients. Nowhere do plants thrive so well as in the hospital waiting rooms and hallways.

I take the elevator to the ground floor.

The door opens. In front of the door stands an old woman. She looks like the slightest draft could knock her off the ground like the last standing dry leaf off a tree. I hold the door for her to enter, but she just stands there and looks at me.

“Sir, may I ask you to take me to the fifth floor?”

“Of course, ma’am!”

We go back to the elevator and I push five.

“I hope you don’t mind my taking your time.”

“I am in no hurry, ma’am.”

“You know, I’m afraid to be alone in the elevator.”

“It can be uncomfortable.”

“I am scared.”

“Me, too.”

Adin Ljuca (translated by Esma Hadžiselimović), November 11, 2022

TUOTTAR

Hyperborea does not exist! My twenty-year-long silence about that I feel today like savings accumulated with great difficulty and spent on games of chance. In wakeful nights I turned over the stones of doubt and put away, like before the arrival of guests, evidence of its imprudence so that now, like for Tzar Trojan's* barber, the only thing left for me is to dig a hole in the ground and cry into it: *Hyperborea, too, is a vassal of the Empire!*

Once, when I didn't know the language, I thought I was being received as a friend. Today, when I understand, the windows on the slumped taverns by the Lulij River look tiny and round to me like the eyes on bunkers. The retired crusaders in them are grafting the heavy vines of paranoia on the still feeble saplings.

Where do we go now, sister, when *Hyperborea* is no more? Like poisoned fish downriver toward the towns by the shallow sea, toward a slow death in Venice or, as always, against the wind, toward the Tuottar Plateau? Into the waves of bare hills that do not eat human wrecks courteously, by the teaspoon, but devour in one swallow, with their entire body like an ocean.

* From the fairy tale "Emperor Trojan Has Goat's Ears."

Milorad Pejić (translated by Omer Hadžiselimović), November 7, 2022

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I many times thought Peace had come
When Peace was far away –
As Wrecked Men – deem they sight the Land –
At Centre of the Sea –

And struggle slacker –but to prove
As hopelessly as I –
How many the fictitious Shores –
Before the Harbor be –

Emily Dickinson, November 4, 2022

KHAMSIN

Du vet. Jag tog mig från ett krig till ett annat
från en belägring jag inte kunde tala om till

en som lät sig sägas och betraktas,
inte så enkelt men ändå.
Alla frågorna på vägen ut från flygplatsen.

Papper. Pass. Adresser.
Stavade vi rätt?
Och så dadelpalmer. Värme,

sabbatssirener, inte flyglarm, inte än så länge,
for now, these hot days, is the mad blood stirring
tänker jag långt senare på en annan gata,

full av unga män i bilar väntande och ropande
när vindarna från öknen blåst i flera dagar.
Hetta damm och aningar om flyktingläger, flyktingskaror,

oljetorn som brinner. Rök slår upp på andra sidan dalen:
en gräsbrand ser vi senare, ravinens sidor svedda.
Hemma brinner skogen, gnistor flyr,

en löpeld över trakten. Ser filmerna där män i uniformer
rör sig genom rök och eld till tonerna av segersånger
och långa tal av män vars ansikten är dolda.

Soporna som glöder, ryker: Golgata.
Eldarna som våldsamt rasar över världen.
Olja! Gas! Acceleration!

Explosioner, rök och död i varje tänkbar form.
Vem vet att vakta, vårda eldarna?
Missilerna så nära här men nuet stilla,

kaffet svart som natten på kaféerna
där fåglarna i burar sjunger om efraterna,
de galna, skrupelfria och bevingade.

Varelser av eld och damm och långa tider.
Femtio dagar glöder vinden
och de vet att vänta.

Ylva Gislén, October 31, 2022

JOVO

No one, they say, throws
a surprise like death, and,
the family that we were,
I immediately think
of a cheat of sort, our
grand-uncle Jovo, whose
first wife got repossessed
in the war along with the flat
by a local Nazi. Afterwards,
he chewed the soft and
the hard of life always lugging
the same look of an infinite
surprise, easy to mistake
for ebullience or lunacy,
and once, when I was ill,
by a way of encouragement
told me that death is merely
a theft, a brazen operation,
that, fortunately, occurs only
once in a lifetime, though -
a wink - not necessarily
at the end...

Igor Klikovac (translated from the Bosnian by the Author), October 28, 2022

FRÅN MARS '79

Trött på alla som kommer med ord, ord men inget språk
for jag till den snötäckta ön.
Det vilda har inga ord.
De oskrivna sidorna breder ut sig åt alla håll!
Jag stöter på spåren av rådjursklövar i snön.
Språk men inga ord.

Tomas Tranströmer, October 24, 2022

HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1910

1910 marks the end of the first decade.
As such, it can definitely be okayed.
For there is clearly a democratic
trend. Though at times things take an erratic
turn. Like when Egypt's Prime Minister, through no fault
of his, gets murdered. But the revolt

in Albania is the work of masses
(although how they tell their oppressed from their ruling class is
anyone's guess). Plus Portugal bravely rids
itself of its king, and as he's hugged by the Brits,
becomes a republic. As for the Brits themselves,
one more generation of them learns God saves
no king, and mourning the sad demise
of Edward the Seventh, they fix their eyes
on George the Fifth. Mark Twain and Tolstoy die too.
But Karl May has just published his Winnetou
in German. In Paris, they've seen and heard
Stravinsky-cum-Diaghilev's "Firebird".
That causes some riot, albeit a tiny one.
Whereas the twangs of the Argentinean
Tango do to the world what the feared and hailed
Halley's comet, thank heavens, failed
to do. And our watchful Congress
finds it illegal if not incongruous
to take ladies across state lines
for purposes it declines
to spell out, while Japan moves nearer
to Korea: a face that invades a mirror.

The man of the year is an architect.
His name is Frank Lloyd Wright.
Things that he's built still stand erect,
nay! hug what they stand on tight.

(Frank Lloyd Wright)

"Nature and space have no walls or doors,
and roaming at will is what man adores.
So, a builder of houses, I decide
to bring the outside inside.
You don't build them tall: you build them flat.
That's what Nature is so good at.
You go easy on bricks and big on glass
so that space may sashay your parquets like grass."

Joseph Brodsky, October 21, 2022

A WALK AFTER DARK

A cloudless night like this
Can set the spirit soaring:
After a tiring day
The clockwork spectacle is
Impressive in a slightly boring

Eighteenth-century way.

It soothed adolescence a lot
To meet so shameless a stare;
The things I did could not
Be so shocking as they said
If that would still be there
After the shocked were dead

Now, unready to die
But already at the stage
When one starts to resent the young,
I am glad those points in the sky
May also be counted among
The creatures of middle-age.

It's cosier thinking of night
As more an Old People's Home
Than a shed for a faultless machine,
That the red pre-Cambrian light
Is gone like Imperial Rome
Or myself at seventeen.

Yet however much we may like
The stoic manner in which
The classical authors wrote,
Only the young and rich
Have the nerve or the figure to strike
The lacrimae rerum note.

For the present stalks abroad
Like the past and its wronged again
Whimper and are ignored,
And the truth cannot be hid;
Somebody chose their pain,
What needn't have happened did.

Occurring this very night
By no established rule,
Some event may already have hurled
Its first little No at the right
Of the laws we accept to school
Our post-diluvian world:

But the stars burn on overhead,
Unconscious of final ends,
As I walk home to bed,
Asking what judgment waits
My person, all my friends,
And these United States.

Wystan Hugh Auden, October 17, 2022

OTÁZALI SE WANGA

Pavlovi Turnovskému

Otázali se Wanga
Na smysl rčení
Na 7. ulici ti krejčí přešije kabát,
Na 9. ti ustřihne knoflík

Usmál se:
Ptáte se, kde je Cesta,
A chodíte ulicemi,
V nichž zanechali Staří
Zřetelná znamení

Ivan Wernisch, October 14, 2022

BURIAL WISHES

I have told you in another poem, whether you've read it or not,
About a beautiful place the hard-wounded
Deer go to die in; their bones lie mixed in their little graveyard
Under leaves by a flashing cliff-brook, and if
They have ghosts they like it, the bones and mixed antlers are well content.
Now comes for me the time to engage
My burial place: put me in a beautiful place far off from men,
No cemetery, no necropolis,
And for God's sake no columbarium, nor yet no funeral.
But if the human animal were precious
As the quick deer or that hunter in the night the lonely puma
I should be pleased to lie in one grave with 'em.

Robinson Jeffers, October 10, 2022

PIED BEAUTY

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;

And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, October 7, 2022

A STUDY OF READING HABITS

When getting my nose in a book
Cured most things short of school,
It was worth ruining my eyes
To know I could still keep cool,
And deal out the old right hook
To dirty dogs twice my size.

Later, with inch-thick specs,
Evil was just my lark:
Me and my coat and fangs
Had ripping times in the dark.
The women I clubbed with sex!
I broke them up like meringues.

Don't read much now: the dude
Who lets the girl down before
The hero arrives, the chap
Who's yellow and keeps the store
Seem far too familiar. Get stewed:
Books are a load of crap.

Philip Larkin, October 3, 2022

ARS POETICA

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown –

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds.

*

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon releases
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind –

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs.

*

A poem should be equal to:
Not true.

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea –

A poem should not mean
But be.

Archibald Macleish, September 30, 2022

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I could not prove the Years had feet –
Yet confident they run
Am I, from symptoms that are past
And Series that are done –

I find my feet have further Goals –
I smile upon the Aims
That felt so ample – Yesterday –
Today's – have vaster claims –

I do not doubt the self I was
Was competent to me –
But something awkward in the fit –

Proves that – outgrown – I see –

Emily Dickinson, September 26, 2022

THE BLACK SWAN

When the swans turned my sister into a swan
I would go to the lake, at night, from milking:
The sun would look out through the reeds like a swan,
A swan's red beak; and the beak would open
And inside there was darkness, the stars and the moon.

Out on the lake, a girl would laugh.
"Sister, here is your porridge, sister,"
I would call; and the reeds would whisper,
"Go to sleep, go to sleep, little swan."
My legs were all hard and webbed, and the silky

Hairs of my wings sank away like stars
In the ripples that ran in and out of the reeds:
I heard through the lap and hiss of water
Someone's "Sister... sister," far away on the shore,
And then as I opened my beak to answer

I heard my harsh laugh go out to the shore
And saw - saw at last, swimming up from the green
Low mounds of the lake, the white stone swans:
The white, named swans... "It is all a dream,"
I whispered, and reached from the down of the pallet

To the lap and hiss of the floor.
And "Sleep, little sister," the swan all sang
From the moon and stars and frogs of the floor.
But the swan my sister called, "Sleep at last, little sister,"
And stroked all night, with a black wing, my wings.

Randahl Jarrell, September 23, 2022

WALNUT

I visited my brother recently. He is a city person who bought a house in the country a few years ago. Next to the house was a large walnut tree. But when I arrived this time, there was no walnut tree. Felled.

"What's gotten into you, man?" I asked him.

“It was a beautiful tree,” he said, “when its crown was full of leaves or the nuts were dropping down. But once the leaves fall off, what’s left were those bare black limbs, and that’s when I would start picking the right one to sling a rope over...”

Adin Ljuca (translated by Esma Hadžiselimović), September 19, 2022

THE NOVELIST

Encased in talent like a uniform,
The rank of every poet is well known;
They can amaze us like a thunderstorm,
Or die so young, or live for years alone.

They can dash forward like hussars: but he
Must struggle out of his boyish gift and learn
How to be plain and awkward, how to be
One after whom none think it worth to turn.

For, to achieve his lightest wish, he must
Become the whole of boredom, subject to
Vulgar complaints like love, among the Just

Be just, among the Filthy filthy too,
And in his own weak person, if he can,
Must suffer dully all the wrongs of Man.

Wystan Hugh Auden, September 16, 2022

RAIN

As the rain falls
so does
 your love

bathe every
 open
object of the world –

In houses
the priceless dry
 rooms

of illicit love
where we live
hear the wash of the
 rain –

There
 paintings
and fine
 metalware
woven stuffs –
all the whorishness
of our
 delight
sees
from its window

the spring wash
of your love
 the falling
rain –

The trees
are become
beasts fresh-risen
from the sea –
water

trickles
from the crevices of
their hides –

So my life is spent
 to keep out love
with which
she rains upon

 the world

of spring

 drips

so spreads

 the words

far apart to let in

 her love

And running in between

the drops

the rain
is a kind physician

the rain
of her thoughts over
the ocean
every

where

walking with
invisible swift feet
over

the helpless
waves –

Unworldly love
that has no hope
of the world

and that
cannot change the world
to its delight –

The rain
falls upon the earth
and grass and flowers

come
perfectly

into form from its
liquid

clearness

But love is
unworldly

and nothing
comes of it but love

following
and falling endlessly
from
her thoughts

William Carlos Williams, September 12, 2022

MIND

Mind in its purest play is like some bat
That beats about it caverns all alone,
Contriving by a kind of senseless wit
Not to conclude against a wall of stone.

It has no need to falter or explore;
Darkly it knows what obstacles are there,
And so may weave and flutter, dip and soar
In perfect courses through the blackest air.

And has this simile a like perfection?
That mind is like a bat. Precisely. Save
That in the very happiest intellection
A graceful error may correct the cave.

Richard Wilbur, September 9, 2022

THE OLD STONEMASON

Stones that rolled in the sea for a thousand years
Have climbed the cliff and stand stiff-ranked in the house-walls;
Hurricane may spit his lungs out they'll not be moved.
They have become conservative; they remember the end-less
Treacheries of ever-sliding water and slimy ambushes
Along the shore; they'll never again give themselves
To the tides and the dreams, the popular drift,
The whirlpool progress, but stand steady on their hill
At bay? – Yes; but unbroken.
I have much in common with these old rockheads.
Old comrades, I too have escaped and stand.
I have shared in my time the human illusions, the muddy foolishness
And craving passions, but something thirty years ago pulled me
Out of the tide-wash; I must not even pretend
To be one of the people. I must stand here
Alone with open eyes in the clear air growing old,
Watching with interest and only a little nausea
The cheating shepherds, this time of the demagogues
and the docile people, the shifts of power,
And pitiless general wars that prepare the fall;
But also the enormous unhuman beauty of things; rock,
sea and stars, fool-proof and permanent,
The birds like yachts in the air, or beating like hearts

Along the water; the flares of sunset, the peaks of Point Lobos;
And hear at night the huge waves, my drunken quarry men
Climbing the cliff, hewing out more stones for me
To make my house. The old granite stones, those are my people;
Hard heads and stiff wits but faithful, not fools, not chatterers;
And the place where they stand today they will stand also tomorrow.

Robinson Jeffers, September 5, 2022

OBRAZY

Jak blažilo mne, že jsem ozdoben pírkou z vašich klobouků, ó dámy v
Hirkánii! Krajinou se valil kamenný měsíc, a já se tísnil v řadě
křiklounů, svíraje ratiště své zbraně.

Jsem stará duše, bivert, čikatori, mám zkušenosti z mnoha jiných zrození,
avšak v tomto světě-nesvětě, na tomto místě-nemístě nevím co dělat, nevím
co přijde, netuším co se stane.

Vše, nač jsem se tu zahleděl, se vzápětí změnilo v něco jiného. Obrovská
hora zmizela a na jejím místě se začala utvářet propast. Stěny se sesuly,
rozletěla se křídla vrat, v nich zavlál červený plášť, nad příkrým
schodištěm stál muž a rozpřahoval ruce. Viděl jsem jezdce na zjančelém
koni, dřevěnou štoudev s dešťovou vodou.

Mé oči zasáhl ostrý odlesk hořícího města. Zamžoural jsem, a spatřil vodu
rozlitou po lukách, led a sníh, červeně kvetoucí step, led a sníh, červeně
kvetoucí step.

Bylo to sdělení?

Bylo to sdělení určené mně?

V pobřežním písku leží loď a vlny se přes ni těžce přelévají.

Ty mjíející obrazy snad představovaly a představují nějaký děj. Nevím.
Cítím jen, že jsou krásné – tak postradatelně, tak zapomenutelně krásné,
jak může být pouze to, co se mne netýká.

Ivan Wernisch, September 2, 2022

WHEN I AM DEAD, MY DEAREST

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,

Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain;
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

Christina Rossetti, August 29, 2022

SUICIDE NOTE

*You speak to me of narcissism but I reply that it is
a matter of my life' – Artaud*

*'At this time let me somehow bequeath all the leftovers to my daughters and their daughters' –
Anonymous*

Better,
despite the worms talking to
the mare's hoof in the field;
better,
despite the season of young girls
dropping their blood;
better somehow
to drop myself quickly into an old room.
Better (someone said)
not to be born and far better
not to be born twice
at thirteen where the boardinghouse,
each year a bedroom,
caught fire.

Dear friend,
I will have to sink with hundreds of others
on a dumbwaiter into hell.
I will be a light thing.
I will enter death like someone's lost optical lens.
Life is half enlarged.
The fish and owls are fierce today.
Life tilts backward and forward.
Even the wasps cannot find my eyes.

Yes, eyes that were immediate once.
Eyes that have been truly awake,
eyes that told the whole story –
poor dumb animals.
Eyes that were pierced,
little nail heads, light blue gunshots.

And once with
a mouth like a cup,
clay colored or blood colored,
open like the breakwater
for the lost ocean
and open like the noose
for the first head.

Once upon a time
my hunger was for Jesus.
O my hunger! My hunger!
Before he grew old
he rode calmly into Jerusalem
in search of death.

This time
I certainly
do not ask for understanding
and yet I hope everyone else
will turn their heads when an unrehearsed fish jumps
on the surface of Echo Lake;
when moonlight,
its bass note turned up loud,
hurts some building in Boston,
when the truly beautiful lie together.
I think of this, surely,
and would think of it far longer
if I were not... if I were not
at that old fire.

I could admit
that I am only a coward
crying me me me
and not mention the little gnats, the moths,
forced by circumstance
to suck on the electric bulb.
But surely you know that everyone has a death,
his own death,
waiting for him.
So I will go now
without old age or disease,
wildly but accurately,

knowing my best route,
carried by that toy donkey I rode all these years,
never asking, "Where are we going?"
We were riding (if I'd only known)
to this.

Dear friend,
please do not think
that I visualize guitars playing
or my father arching his bone.
I do not even expect my mother's mouth.
I know that I have died before –
once in November, once in June.
How strange to choose June again,
so concrete with its green breasts and bellies.
Of course guitars will not play!
The snakes will certainly not notice.
New York City will not mind.
At night the bats will beat on the trees,
knowing it all,
seeing what they sensed all day.

Anne Sexton, August 26, 2022

FAITH HEALING

Slowly the women file to where he stands
Upright in rimless glasses, silver hair,
Dark suit, white collar. Stewards tirelessly
Persuade them onwards to his voice and hands,
Within whose warm spring rain of loving care
Each dwells some twenty seconds. *Now, dear child,*
What's wrong, the deep American voice demands,
And, scarcely pausing, goes into a prayer
Directing God about this eye, that knee.
Their heads are clasped abruptly; then, exiled.

Like losing thoughts, they go in silence; some
Sheepishly stray, not back into their lives
Just yet; but some stay stiff, twitching and loud
With deep hoarse tears, as if a kind of dumb
And idiot child within them still survives
To re-awake at kindness, thinking a voice
At last calls them alone, that hands have come
To lift and lighten; and such joy arrives
Their thick tongues blort, their eyes squeeze grief, a crowd
Of huge unheard answers jam and rejoice –

What's wrong! Moustached in flowered frocks they shake:
By now, all's wrong. In everyone there sleeps
A sense of life lived according to love.
To some it means the difference they could make
By loving others, but across most it sweeps
As all they might have done had they been loved.
That nothing cures. An immense slackening ache,
As when, thawing, the rigid landscape weeps,
Spreads slowly through them - that, and the voice above
Saying *Dear child*, and all time has disproved.

Philip Larkin, August 22, 2022

HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1909

1909 trots a fine straight line.
Three Lives are published by Gertrude Stein.
(On the strength of this book, if its author vies
for the man of the year, she sure qualifies.)
Other than that, there is something murky
about the political life in Turkey:
in those parts, every man has a younger brother,
and as Sultans they love to depose each other.
The same goes apparently in Iran:
Ahmed Shah tells Mohammed Ali: "I run
the show", though he's 12 years old.
In Paris, Sergei Diaghilev strikes gold
with his "Ballets Russes". While in Honduras,
screaming the usual "God, endure us!"
peasants slaughter each other: it's a civil war.
Sigmund Freud crosses the waters for
to tell our Wonderland's cats and Alices
a few things about psychoanalysis.
But David Griffith of Motion Pictures,
boggling one's dreams, casts Mary Pickford.
The Brits, aping the Royal Dutch
Shell Company, too, legalize their touch
on the Persian oil. The Rockefeller
Foundation is launched to stall a failure
and to boost a genus. Leaving all the blight,
glitter and stuff made of Bake light
(that heralds the Plastic Age) far below, the weary
bearded and valiant Captain Robert Peary
reaches the North Pole, and thus subscribes
virginal white to the Stars and Stripes.
Ah those days when one's thoughts were glued
to this version of the Absolute!

The man of the year is the unknown
nameless hairdresser in London Town.
Stirred either by its cumulous firmament
or by the British anthem, he invents the permanent.

(A London hairdresser)

"The Sun never sets over this Empire.
Still, all empires one day expire.
They go to pieces, they get undone.
The wind of history is no fun.
Let England be England and rule the waves!
And let those waves be real raves.
Let them be dark, red, chestnut, blonde
unruffled by great events beyond!"

Joseph Brodsky, August 19, 2022

EPIGRAM

Kapitalets byggnader, mördarbinas kupor,
honung för de få.
Där tjänade han. Men i en mörk tunnel
vecklade han ut sina vingar och flög när ingen såg.
Han måste leva om sitt liv.

Tomas Tranströmer, August 15, 2022

STRUČNÉ DĚJINY

Nacházím teď prázdné láhve
na temných místech.
Vznešené názvy vodek,
šlechtická jména fernetů.
Vím,
že ses dlouze díval
na nosné trámy domu.
Na pomalu ujíždějící kamennou desku nad vchodem.
Na poštovní schránce jsi škrtnul své jméno
a potom ho tam znovu napsal.
Slušel ti cylindr,
i když jsi to tušil.
Jako dítěti
ukazoval jsi mi trávy
a učil mě nevědět.
Otče.
Vodky se tak často jmenují podle vůdců.

Na temných místech
stručné dějiny posledního století.

Petr Hruška, August 12, 2022

A COAT

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world's eyes
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked.

William Butler Yeats, August 8, 2022

THESE ARE THE FACTS

These are the facts, observe them how you will:
forget for a moment the medals and the glory,
the clean shape of a bomb, designed to kill,
and the proud headlines of the papers' story.

Remember the walls of brick that forty
years had nursed to make a neat though shabby
home; the impertinence of death, ignoring tears
that smashed the house and left untouched the Dome.

Bodies in death are not magnificent or stately,
Bones are not elegant that blast has shattered;
This sorry, stained and crumpled rag was lately
a man whose life was made of little things that mattered;

Now he is just a nuisance, liable to stink,
a breeding ground for flies, a test-tube for disease:
Bury him quickly and never pause to think,
what is the future worth to men like these?

People are more than places, more than pride;
a million photographs record the works of Wren;
a city remains a city on credit from the tide
that flows among its rock, a sea of men.

Ruthven Todd, August 5, 2022

CUTTINGS

This urge, wrestle, resurrection of dry sticks,
Cut stems struggling to put down feet,
What saint strained so much,
Rose on such lopped limbs to a new life?
I can hear, underground, that sucking and sobbing,
In my veins, in my bones I feel it –
The small waters seeping upward,
The tight grains parting at last.
When sprouts break out,
Slippery as fish,
I quail, lean to beginnings, sheath-wet.

Teodore Roethke, August 1, 2022

SARAJEVO

Laid out badly around comings and goings, the city
tells you once again: *You owe nothing, I gave you nothing;
or rather – you wanted nothing.* Then you size each other up like snipers
from the opposite sides of the river, trigger-muscles for an instant numbed
by the spring's warmth. You can't escape that, but it doesn't upset any longer;
only when you see the life grown over the remains of yours, you give in and
ask the images to speak up, as if they could. Once, remember, you believed
that if you stared long enough, you'd see yourself in the hurrying crowd;
only now you know that's impossible. What comes before the forgetting
is insecure about itself too: it pulls the sleeve from the dark, like hooks
jutting from the crumbling houses, long since not really sure themselves
what they were for. The last to admit the defeat, it's true, are the smells: of the thick
window paint, smog in the linen tablecloths. Someone, that much is clear,
has to fire first. The gunshot echoes in the world already altered, and only
the broken thought about the beauty of the spring that leaves the dead body
lingers a moment or two in the old one...

Igor Klikovac (translated by Igor Klikovac and John McAuliffe), July 29, 2022

PORTRAIT D'UNE FEMME

Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea,
 London has swept about you this score years
And bright ships left you this or that in fee:
 Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things,
Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price.
 Great minds have sought you — lacking someone else.
You have been second always. Tragical?
 No. You preferred it to the usual thing:
One dull man, dulling and uxorious,
 One average mind — with one thought less, each year.
Oh, you are patient, I have seen you sit
 Hours, where something might have floated up.
And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay.
 You are a person of some interest, one comes to you
And takes strange gain away:
 Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion;
Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale for two,
 Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else
That might prove useful and yet never proves,
 That never fits a corner or shows use,
Or finds its hour upon the loom of days:
 The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work;
Idols and ambergris and rare inlays,
 These are your riches, your great store; and yet
For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things,
 Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff:
In the slow float of differing light and deep,
 No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,
Nothing that's quite your own.
 Yet this is you.

Ezra Pound, July 25, 2022

A FIRE TRUCK

Right down the shocked street with a siren-blast
That sends all else skittering to the curb,
Redness, brass, ladders and hats hurl past,
 Blurring to sheer verb,

Shift at the corner into uproarious gear
And make it around the turn in a squall of traction,
The headlong bell maintaining sure and clear,
 Thought is degraded action!

Beautiful, heavy, unweary, loud, obvious thing!

I stand here purged of nuance, my mind a blank.
All I was brooding upon has taken wing,
 And I have you to thank.

As you howl beyond hearing I carry you into my mind,
Ladders and brass and all, there to admire
Your phoenix-red simplicity, enshrined
 In that not extinguished fire.

Richard Wilbur, July 22, 2022

IN HONOUR OF LOVE

In your honour I have cleaned the windows
Of four months' sorrow-flung obscuration and dirt
And cut my hair and thrown away old rags
That make cupboard foetid, suffused with miserly pain.
I shall wipe the mould out of the corners
Rub down, prepare to paint; in your honour.

And in your honour
Am throwing out old nastiness with the floorboards,
Memories of hurt, lese-majesty
Along with the shards and glue, useless and hard now.

As if for new love turning a new leap over
I will pick of infestation up to the minute.
At this time of budding give a chance to cleanliness
Make beds freshly in garden, and in the house
Fresh covers; as if with hope square corners
in expectation, in honour of your coming.

For your comfort and in your honour
I have laid by stores and funds of robustness
Sweeping despondence out with the spiders' coatings
Disinfecting anxiety, self-pity
The damp that clads, sours and eats the woodwork.

I think it isn't true that ghosts return
Only to ruins and to broken things.
Shy visitants that start to come with me
Along the tracks I make you from the past
By thinking of you, you would never bear
Burdens you could not shoulder when alive.
You'll still want cheering, self-reliance, comfort
The big wheel pulling up the hill, hearth cleared,
Coal ordered, landlord dealt with; 'sociables',
And so to welcome you and keep a place

For your reviving influence to bide in
I move within the chrysalis of doubt
Wound round for winter comfort, for survival.
In honour of love, in hope of expectation
I leave that drab covering that kept me
Safe through the winter, safe and solitary.

The grub without its carapace is needed
Pale and soft and vulnerable, for birds
Shining and voracious. so,
I am persuaded, every time the fool.
Well, something must feed the remorselessness of spring.

The skin will burst, so you should see the light wings
No dirty brown slough. the bad times swept away,
Place ready for the prodigal,
and be damned the peril
The piercing light and the brief high flight will bring.

Ashes, when you have gone, burnt bits on the lamp
That lit you on your way, but in your honour
As you pass by the window, love - bright flame.

Jenny Joseph, July 18, 2022

REVENGE

Following a cruel winter with hard sudden frosts
The old man died. His sons who had neglected
Him so long found less than they'd expected-
Advice and an old chart the sum of his bequests.
This plan was neatly plotted to a careful scale,
And showed where, near half a world away,
Treasure was hidden on a summer's day
By one who sacked a city for its spoil.

The brothers met great trouble with their ship,
Encountered waterspouts and twisted fishes
That were to them the emblems of lost hope,
For, when they dug, they saw no hidden riches,
Nothing but lugworms in the shifting sand--
Which was exactly as the old man planned.

Ruthven Todd, July 15, 2022

LAST NIGHT IN CALCUTTA

Still night. The old clock Ticks,
half past two. A ringing of crickets
awake in the ceiling. The gate is locked
on the street outside sleepers, mustaches,
nakedness, but no desire. A few mosquitos
waken the itch, the fan turns slowly
a car thunders along the black asphalt,
a bull snorts, something is expected
Time sits solid in the four yellow walls.
No one is here, emptiness filled with train
whistles & dog barks, answered a block away.
Pushkin sits on the bookshelf, Shakespeare's
complete works as well as Blake's unread
O Spirit of Poetry, no use calling on you
babbling in this emptiness furnished with beds
under the bright oval mirror perfect
night for sleepers to dissolve in tranquil
blackness, and rest there eight hours
Waking to stained fingers, bitter mouth
and lung gripped by cigarette hunger,
what to do with this big toe, this arm
this eye in the starving skeleton-filled
sore horse tramcar-heated Calcutta in
Eternity sweating and teeth rotted away
Rilke at least could dream about lovers,
the old breast excitement and trembling belly,
is that it? And the vast starry space
If the brain changes matter breathes
fearfully back on man But now
the great crash of buildings and planets
breaks thru the walls of language and drowns
me under its Ganges heaviness forever.
No escape but thru Bangkok and New York death.
Skin is sufficient to be skin, that's all
it ever could be, tho screams of pain in the kidney
make it sick of itself, a wavy dream
dying to finish its all to famous misery
Leave immortality for another to suffer like a fool,
not get stuck in the corner of the universe
sticking morphine in the arm and eating meat.

Allen Ginsberg, July 11, 2022

THE FORGE

All I know is a door into the dark.
Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting;
Inside, the hammered anvil's short-pitched ring,
The unpredictable fantail of sparks

Or hiss when a new shoe toughens in water.
The anvil must be somewhere in the centre,
Horned as a unicorn, at one end square,
Set there immovable: an altar

Where he expends himself in shape and music.
Sometimes, leather-aproned, hairs in his nose,
He leans out on the jamb, recalls a clatter

Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows;
Then grunts and goes in, with a slam and a flick
To beat real iron out, to work the bellows.

Seamus Heaney, July 8, 2022

HOW TO KILL

Under the parabola of a ball,
a child turning into a man,
I looked into the air too long.
The ball fell in my hand, it sang
in the closed fist: Open Open
Behold a gift designed to kill.

Now in my dial of glass appears
the soldier who is going to die.
He smiles, and moves about in ways
his mother knows, habits of his.
The wires touch his face: I cry
NOW. Death, like a familiar, hears

And look, has made a man of dust
of a man of flesh. This sorcery
I do. Being damned, I am amused
to see the centre of love diffused
and the wave of love travel into vacancy.
How easy it is to make a ghost.

The weightless mosquito touches
her tiny shadow on the stone,
and with how like, how infinite

a lightness, man and shadow meet.
They fuse. A shadow is a man
when the mosquito death approaches.

Keith Douglas, July 4, 2022

SEA FEVER

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

John Masefield, July 1, 2022

PETITION

Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
But will his negative inversion, be prodigal:
Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch
Curing the intolerable neural itch,
The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy,
And the distortions of ingrown virginity.
Prohibit sharply the rehearsed response
And gradually correct the coward's stance;
Cover in time with beams those in retreat
That, spotted, they turn though the reverse were great;
Publish each healer that in city lives
Or country houses at the end of drives;
Harrow the house of the dead; look shining at
New styles of architecture, a change of heart.

Wystan Hugh Auden, June 27, 2022

POLITICS

In our time the destiny of man presents its meanings in political terms.
Thomas Mann

How can I, that girl standing there,
My attention fix
On Roman or on Russian
Or on Spanish politics,
Yet here's a travelled man that knows
What he talks about,
And there's a politician
That has both read and thought,
And maybe what they say is true
Of war and war's alarms,
But O that I were young again
And held her in my arms.

William Butler Yeats, June 24, 2022

CONTINUING TO LIVE

Continuing to live – that is, repeat
A habit formed to get necessities –
Is nearly always losing, or going without.
It varies.

This loss of interest, hair, and enterprise –
Ah, if the game were poker, yes,
You might discard them, draw a full house!
But it's chess.

And once you have walked the length of your mind, what
You command is clear as a lading-list.
Anything else must not, for you, be thought
To exist.

And what's the profit? Only that, in time,
We half-identify the blind impress
All our behavings bear, may trace it home.
But to confess,

On that green evening when our death begins,
Just what it was, is hardly satisfying,
Since it applied only to one man once,
And that one dying.

Philip Larkin, June 20, 2022

KIDRON

En skåra ristad genom dalen: stenarna
och jorden håller minnet av en bäck
etsad i planetens vävnad. Ett spår i skriften

och i myten. Verkliga: de tysta stora kråkorna i träden,
barn som ropar, leker i en dunge. Torra tistlar, skärvor,
glas och plast och brända ben. Här vräktes offren

för massakrer, spillror av förstörda tempel,
askan efter tygerna, askan efter kvinnorna
som vävde tygerna. Kompost av gudar och demoner.

Långt här under vattenfallets gömda röst.
Över dalen här ska tråden spännas: de levande
och döda balansera – de lyckliga får komma in i staden.

Här nere kommer blodet flyta, kroppar samlas,
som så många gånger förr sorteras ut.
På slutningen brer gravfält ut sig, solen bränner

över sten och smala gångar. Vilka gudar kräver
berg och höjder? Avgrundsdjup som
öppnar sig emellan. Vi vandrar genom

skuggorna. En stilla skymning faller
bland olivträd, getterna på stigen mellan
stammarna och allvarsamma bröder,

svarta yllekåpor, långa skägg. En trädgård
och en häst. Bäckens löper under staden
under asfalt, bilar, ödetomter. Stenarna i barnens händer.

Sopor, katter. Långt där borta korsar muren vattnet
som letar sig mot Döda havet genom öknen
skär genom stup och klippor, samlar avloppen från

bosättningar och byar. Stanken stark av förutsägelser
och missförstånd: offrandet till faderns kärlek –
när omsorgen om vattnets rörelser...

Vid Damaskusporten vattnar lugnt en pojke
plantorna han säljer: rosmarin basilika
och nerium. Varsamt. Först sedan dricker han det sista själv.

Ylva Gislén, June 17, 2022

THE DEER LAY DOWN THEIR BONES

I followed the narrow cliffside trail half way up the mountain
Above the deep river-canyon. There was a little cataract crossed the path, flinging
itself
Over tree roots and rocks, shaking the jewelled fern-fronds, bright bubbling water
Pure from the mountain, but a bad smell came up. Wondering at it I clambered
down the steep stream
Some forty feet, and found in the midst of bush-oak and laurel,
Hung like a bird's nest on the precipice brink a small hidden clearing,
Grass and a shallow pool. But all about there were bones lying in the grass, clean
bones and stinking bones,
Antlers and bones: I understood that the place was a refuge for wounded deer;
there are so many
Hurt ones escape the hunters and limp away to lie hidden; here they have water for
the awful thirst
And peace to die in; dense green laurel and grim cliff
Make sanctuary, and a sweet wind blows upward from the deep gorge. – I wish my
bones were with theirs.
But that's a foolish thing to confess, and a little cowardly. We know that life
Is on the whole quite equally good and bad, mostly gray neutral, and can be
endured
To the dim end, no matter what magic of grass, water and precipice, and pain of
wounds,
Makes death look dear. We have been given life and have used it – not a great gift
perhaps – but in honesty
Should use it all. Mine's empty since my love died – Empty? The flame-haired
grandchild with great blue eyes
That look like hers? – What can I do for the child? I gaze at her and wonder what
sort of man
In the fall of the world... I am growing old, that is the trouble. My children and little
grandchildren
Will find their way, and why should I wait ten years yet, having lived sixty-seven,
ten years more or less,
Before I crawl out on a ledge of rock and die snapping, like a wolf
Who has lost its mate? – I am bound by my own thirty-year-old decision: who
drinks the wine
Should take the dregs; even in the bitter lees and sediment
New discovery may lie. The deer in that beautiful place lay down their bones: I
must wear mine.

Robinson Jeffers, June 13, 2022

WHO'S THAT CRYING BEHIND THE WALL, 2

*Sarajevo, from both sides of the wall,
from both sides of the river, 2020*

Neighbor, did you hear that last night?
The kid wailing in the apartment next door?
All night long
I never slept a wink
Well, must be those migrants
Devil take them
Why choose our building to come to
Neighbor B. says they're from Iraq
They're hardly able to choose
Lucky for them they have somewhere to sleep

That's surely the crying of a sickly child

Spare me your sentiment
Whatever moved them to travel with a child?
Who sent them out into the wide world
and to us, of all places, in this hole in the wall
Please, spare me!

But, the kid's just a child
who can hardly be blamed for being born
Maybe they have nothing to eat
And the kid's sick
Maybe they have no medicine
I doubt the kid's crying for joy

You, my dear, are such a bleeding heart
Obviously you're a poet
This is all according to plan
They move into our buildings
Change our genes
Nothing random here

Spare me, like they've chosen Bosnia
To settle here – out of all the countries in the world
Were you a refugee during the war?

I was, yes, in Sweden
But I had no cell phone like they have
Thank God I'm white so I fit in
But these here are out to taint our seed
All this is a conspiracy
against European civilization!
It's just that you don't understand
You're such a gullible fool
Like all poets
And besides
If you love them so much
Be my guest
Take them home with you!

Postscript:

The Slovenian police found thirteen migrants from Iraq, two of them children (six and eleven) who had hidden in a freight truck and suffered from dehydration and a shortage of oxygen. Some of them required medical care after they were found on Tuesday during a routine check on the border with Croatia.

The migrants had traveled several hours from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) through Croatia, packed into compartments with scant oxygen, in a truck with BiH license plates. The police arrested the truck driver from BosniaHerzegovina and another person who was with him in the vehicle.

BUT:

Will freedom know how to sing
The way captives have sung of it?*

* Branko Miljković

Ferida Duraković (translated by Ellen Elias-Bursac), June 10, 2022

WHO'S THAT CRYING BEHIND THE WALL

*Sarajevo, from both sides of the wall,
from both sides of the river, 1993*

Who's that crying behind the wall?

If they're ours
Let's mourn them
If they're theirs
Let's dump them

Let them cry
Let them croak
Let them starve
Let them be lonesome

But
What if it's an old woman crying behind the wall?
What if it's a lonely child crying behind the wall?
A little girl, raped?
The helpless have no kin
or army or party
Or words of solace
So what about the helpless?

Forget them
Fuck them

They're not ours
And they're not theirs either
See how they dumped them on us
Let them cry
Let them croak
Let them starve
Let them be lonesome

But what if they aren't theirs or ours
Whose are they then?
I think they're ours
They should be ours
We're helpless they're helpless
They're ours

Ours they're not
Forget them
Fuck them
They aren't ours
They're no-one's
Who's to blame anyway
Just look at you –
They're yours
You should be over there behind the wall just like them!

Postscript:

The war I suffered through from 1992 to 1995 is still going on in my thoughts today. This poem is my way to speak – bypassing ideologies, politics and the newly formed “states” – about how there is no such thing as a just war, that civilians, in every war, have nothing but lines of verse with which to cover themselves if somebody humiliates them, beats them, tortures them, locks them up, wounds or murders them. Civilians. The collateral damage of every war and all conflicts of all armies and all ideologies in this part of the world, especially nationalistic ones.

My grandmother, who died in besieged Sarajevo in 1995, was born in 1911 and over the course of her lifetime she made her way through three wars: the First World War, the Second World War, and this one, one of many in the Balkans. I made it through only this one, one of the many in the Balkans.

If we follow this trajectory and its symbolism, my daughter, born in 1996, will not experience the fate of the women in her family. And she'll live a healthy, happy, long life... Just preserve her from the hearing of evil.

Ferida Duraković (translated by Ellen Elias-Bursac), June 6, 2022

SYLVIA'S DEATH

For Sylvia Plath

O Sylvia, Sylvia,
with a dead box of stones and spoons,
with two children, two meteors
wandering loose in a tiny playroom,
with your mouth into the sheet,
into the roofbeam, into the dumb prayer,
(Sylvia, Sylvia
where did you go
after you wrote me
from Devonshire
about raising potatoes
and keeping bees?)
what did you stand by,
just how did you lie down into?

Thief -
how did you crawl into,
crawl down alone
into the death I wanted so badly and for so long,
the death we said we both outgrew,
the one we wore on our skinny breasts,
the one we talked of so often each time
we downed three extra dry martinis in Boston,
the death that talked of analysts and cures,
the death that talked like brides with plots,
the death we drank to,
the motives and the quiet deed?
(In Boston
the dying
ride in cabs,
yes death again,
that ride home
with our boy.)

O Sylvia, I remember the sleepy drummer
who beat on our eyes with an old story,
how we wanted to let him come
like a sadist or a New York fairy
to do his job,
a necessity, a window in a wall or a crib,
and since that time he waited
under our heart, our cupboard,
and I see now that we store him up
year after year, old suicides
and I know at the news of your death

a terrible taste for it, like salt,
(And me,
me too.
And now, Sylvia,
you again
with death again,
that ride home with our boy.)
And I say only
with my arms stretched out into that stone place,
what is your death
but an old belonging,
a mole that fell out of one of your poems?
(O friend, while the moon's bad,
and the king's gone,
and the queen's at her wit's end the bar fly ought to sing!)
O tiny mother,
you too!
O funny duchess!
O blonde thing!

Anne Sexton, June 3, 2022

HORSETAIL

It grows anywhere.
This jointed stalk, with branches
Like green floating hair,

Thrives in ditches and
Trackside gravel, and even
In oil-spattered sand.

Careless of that,
Its foot-high grace enhances
Any habitat.

Like a proud exile,
It will not boast that elsewhere
It lived in high style;

And who, after all,
Would credit what its vague head
Must in dreams recall--

How it long looked down
On the backs of dinosaurs
Shadowed by its crown?

Richard Wilbur, May 30, 2022

PALUBA V NORMANDII

Došel jsem k mizernému zábradlí,
u kterého jsi už stála.
Kov příčky
sevřeli jsme oba v rukou
jak překvapivý studený dar.

Pod námi z lodě vyjížděla auta.
Dlouhé nákladní vozy
po vrch naložené
právě vyrobenými automobily.
Nezastavovaly v přístavu a pokračovaly dál,
směrem k vítězným obloukům
dálničních nájezdů.

Nad námi havarovalo večerní nebe.
Stáli jsme
a nespouštěli oči z těch aut vezoucích auta,
z nových, prázdných aut
nehybně svištících dálnicí.

Petr Hruška, May 27, 2022

HISTORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, 1908

1908 is a real bore
though it provides a new high in gore
by means of an earthquake in the Southern part
of Calabria, Italy. Still, the world of art
tries to replace those one hundred fifty
thousand victims with things as nifty
as Monet's depiction of the Ducal Palace
in Venice, or with Isadora's galas,
or with the birth of Ian Fleming: to fill the crater.
In the World Series Chicago's again a winner.
In the Balkans, Bosnia and Herzegovina
are taken by Austria (for what it took
it will pay somewhat later with its Archduke).
And the fountain pen is in vogue worldwide.
The gas of helium's liquefied
in Holland which means the rising of
that flat country a bit above
sea level, which means thoughts vertical.

The king and the crown prince are killed in Portugal,
for horizontality's sake no doubt.
Also, the first Model T is out
in Dearborn to roam our blissful quarters
trailed by the news that General Motors
is incorporated. The English Edward
and Russia's Nicholas make an effort
to know each other aboard a yacht.
The Germans watch it but don't react -
or do, but that cannot be photographed.
And the Republic calls on William Taft.

The man of the year is German scientist
Paul Ehrlich. He digs bacterias
and sires immunology. All the sapiens
owe a lot to his theories.

(Paul Ehrlich)

"The world is essentially a community
and to syphilis, nobody has immunity.
So what I've invented beefs up your arsenal
for living a life that's a bit more personal.
I've made Salvarsan. Oh my Salvarsan!
It may cure your wife, it may cure your son,
it may cure yourself and your mistress fast.
Think of Paul Ehrlich as you pull or thrust!"

Joseph Brodsky, May 23, 2022

A WANDERER'S SONG

A wind's in the heart of me, a fire's in my heels,
I am tired of brick and stone and rumbling wagon-wheels;
I hunger for the sea's edge, the limit of the land,
Where the wild old Atlantic is shouting on the sand.

Oh I'll be going, leaving the noises of the street,
To where a lifting foresail-foot is yanking at the sheet;
To a windy, tossing anchorage where yawls and ketches ride,
Oh I'll be going, going, until I meet the tide.

And first I'll hear the sea-wind, the mewing of the gulls,
The clucking, sucking of the sea about the rusty hulls,
The songs at the capstan at the hooker warping out,
And then the heart of me'll know I'm there or thereabout.

Oh I am sick of brick and stone, the heart of me is sick,

For windy green, unquiet sea, the realm of Moby Dick;
And I'll be going, going, from the roaring of the wheels,
For a wind's in the heart of me, a fire's in my heels.

John Masefield, May 20, 2022

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

William Butler Yeats, May 16, 2022

A RECORD OF HOPE

And this was writ
By the captive who does not rejoice

May he be the last captive
The last man who has lost hope

Mak Dizdar (Translated by Omer Hadžiselimović and Stephen P. Meyer), May 13, 2022

WHO'S WHO

A shilling life will give you all the facts:
How Father beat him, how he ran away,
What were the struggles of his youth, what acts
Made him the greatest figure of his day:
Of how he fought, fished, hunted, worked all night,
Though giddy, climbed new mountains; named a sea –
Some of the last researchers even write

Love made him weep his pints like you and me.

With all his honours on, he sighed for one
Who, say astonished critics, lived at home;
Did little jobs about the house with skill
And nothing else; could whistle; would sit still
Or potter round the garden; answered some
Of his long marvellous letters but kept none.

Wystan Hugh Auden, May 9, 2022

HER IMMORTALITY

Upon a noon I pilgrimed through
A pasture, mile by mile,
Unto the place where I last saw
My dead Love's living smile.

And sorrowing I lay me down
Upon the heated sod:
It seemed as if my body pressed
The very ground she trod.

I lay, and thought; and in a trance
She came and stood me by –
The same, even to the marvellous ray
That used to light her eye.

"You draw me, and I come to you,
My faithful one," she said,
In voice that had the moving tone
It bore in maidenhead.

She said: "'Tis seven years since I died:
Few now remember me;
My husband clasps another bride;
My children mothers she.

My brethren, sisters, and my friends
Care not to meet my sprite:
Who prized me most I did not know
Till I passed down from sight."

I said: "My days are lonely here;
I need thy smile alway:
I'll use this night my ball or blade,
And join thee ere the day."

A tremor stirred her tender lips,
Which parted to dissuade:
"That cannot be, O friend," she cried;
"Think, I am but a Shade!

"A Shade but in its mindful ones
Has immortality;
By living, me you keep alive,
By dying you slay me.

"In you resides my single power
Of sweet continuance here;
On your fidelity I count
Through many a coming year."

--I started through me at her plight,
So suddenly confessed:
Dismissing late distaste for life,
I craved its bleak unrest.

"I will not die, my One of all! –
To lengthen out thy days
I'll guard me from minutest harms
That may invest my ways!"

She smiled and went. Since then she comes
Oft when her birth-moon climbs,
Or at the seasons' ingresses
Or anniversary times;

But grows my grief. When I surcease,
Through whom alone lives she,
Ceases my Love, her words, her ways,
Never again to be!

Thomas Hardy, May 6, 2022

THE SWARM

Somebody is shooting at something in our town -
A dull pom, pom in the Sunday street.
Jealousy can open the blood,
It can make black roses.
Who are the shooting at?
It is you the knives are out for
At Waterloo, Waterloo, Napoleon,
The hump of Elba on your short back,
And the snow, marshaling its brilliant cutlery

Mass after mass, saying Shh!
Shh! These are chess people you play with,
Still figures of ivory.
The mud squirms with throats,
Stepping stones for French bootsoles.
The gilt and pink domes of Russia melt and float off
In the furnace of greed. Clouds, clouds.
So the swarm balls and deserts
Seventy feet up, in a black pine tree.
It must be shot down. Pom! Pom!
So dumb it thinks bullets are thunder.
It thinks they are the voice of God
Condoning the beak, the claw, the grin of the dog
Yellow-haunched, a pack-dog,
Grinning over its bone of ivory
Like the pack, the pack, like everybody.
The bees have got so far. Seventy feet high!
Russia, Poland and Germany!
The mild hills, the same old magenta
Fields shrunk to a penny
Spun into a river, the river crossed.
The bees argue, in their black ball,
A flying hedgehog, all prickles.
The man with gray hands stands under the honeycomb
Of their dream, the hived station
Where trains, faithful to their steel arcs,
Leave and arrive, and there is no end to the country.
Pom! Pom! They fall
Dismembered, to a tod of ivy.
So much for the charioteers, the outriders, the Grand Army!
A red tatter, Napoleon!
The last badge of victory.
The swarm is knocked into a cocked straw hat.
Elba, Elba, bleb on the sea!
The white busts of marshals, admirals, generals
Worming themselves into niches.
How instructive this is!
The dumb, banded bodies
Walking the plank draped with Mother France's upholstery
Into a new mausoleum,
An ivory palace, a crotch pine.
The man with gray hands smiles -
The smile of a man of business, intensely practical.
They are not hands at all
But asbestos receptacles.
Pom! Pom! 'They would have killed me.'
Stings big as drawing pins!
It seems bees have a notion of honor,
A black intractable mind.

Napoleon is pleased, he is pleased with everything.
O Europe! O ton of honey!

Sylvia Plath, May 2, 2022

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I had not minded – Walls –
Were Universe – one Rock –
And far I heard his silver Call
The other side the Block –

I'd tunnel – till my Groove
Pushed sudden thro' to his –
Then my face take her Recompense –
The looking in his Eyes –

But 'tis a single Hair –
A filament – a law –
A Cobweb – wove in Adamant –
A Battlement – of Straw –

A limit like the Veil
Unto the Lady's face –
But every Mesh – a Citadel –
And Dragons – in the Crease –

Emily Dickinson, April 29, 2022

ATT THE FISHHOUSES

Although it is a cold evening,
down by one of the fishhouses
an old man sits netting,
his net, in the gloaming almost invisible,
a dark purple-brown,
and his shuttle worn and polished.
The air smells so strong of codfish
it makes one's nose run and one's eyes water.
The five fishhouses have steeply peaked roofs
and narrow, cleated gangplanks slant up
to storerooms in the gables
for the wheelbarrows to be pushed up and down on.
All is silver: the heavy surface of the sea,
swelling slowly as if considering spilling over,
is opaque, but the silver of the benches,

the lobster pots, and masts, scattered
among the wild jagged rocks,
is of an apparent translucence
like the small old buildings with an emerald moss
growing on their shoreward walls.
The big fish tubs are completely lined
with layers of beautiful herring scales
and the wheelbarrows are similarly plastered
with creamy iridescent coats of mail,
with small iridescent flies crawling on them.
Up on the little slope behind the houses,
set in the sparse bright sprinkle of grass,
is an ancient wooden capstan,
cracked, with two long bleached handles
and some melancholy stains, like dried blood,
where the ironwork has rusted.
The old man accepts a Lucky Strike.
He was a friend of my grandfather.
We talk of the decline in the population
and of codfish and herring
while he waits for a herring boat to come in.
There are sequins on his vest and on his thumb.
He has scraped the scales, the principal beauty,
from unnumbered fish with that black old knife,
the blade of which is almost worn away.

Down at the water's edge, at the place
where they haul up the boats, up the long ramp
descending into the water, thin silver
tree trunks are laid horizontally
across the gray stones, down and down
at intervals of four or five feet.

Cold dark deep and absolutely clear,
element bearable to no mortal,
to fish and to seals... One seal particularly
I have seen here evening after evening.
He was curious about me. He was interested in music;
like me a believer in total immersion,
so I used to sing him Baptist hymns.
I also sang "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."
He stood up in the water and regarded me
steadily, moving his head a little.
Then he would disappear, then suddenly emerge
almost in the same spot, with a sort of shrug
as if it were against his better judgment.
Cold dark deep and absolutely clear,
the clear gray icy water... Back, behind us,
the dignified tall firs begin.
Bluish, associating with their shadows,

a million Christmas trees stand
waiting for Christmas. The water seems suspended
above the rounded gray and blue-gray stones.
I have seen it over and over, the same sea, the same,
slightly, indifferently swinging above the stones,
icily free above the stones,
above the stones and then the world.
If you should dip your hand in,
your wrist would ache immediately,
your bones would begin to ache and your hand would burn
as if the water were a transmutation of fire
that feeds on stones and burns with a dark gray flame.
If you tasted it, it would first taste bitter,
then briny, then surely burn your tongue.
It is like what we imagine knowledge to be:
dark, salt, clear, moving, utterly free,
drawn from the cold hard mouth
of the world, derived from the rocky breasts
forever, flowing and drawn, and since
our knowledge is historical, flowing, and flown.

Elizabeth Bishop, April 25, 2022

FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE ROYAL STATION HOTEL

Light spreads darkly downwards from the high
Clusters of lights over empty chairs
That face each other, coloured differently.
Through open doors, the dining-room declares
A larger loneliness of knives and glass
And silence laid like carpet. A porter reads
An unsold evening paper. Hours pass,
And all the salesmen have gone back to Leeds,
Leaving full ashtrays in the Conference Room.

In shoeless corridors, the lights burn. How
Isolated, like a fort, it is –
The headed paper, made for writing home
(If home existed) letters of exile: *Now
Night comes on. Waves fold behind villages.*

Philip Larkin, April 22, 2022

THE OPERATION

By Saturday I said you would be better on Sunday.

The insistence was a part of a reconciliation.

Your eyes bulged, the grey
light hung on you, you were hideous.

My involvement is just an old
habitual relationship.

Cruel, cruel to describe
what there is no reason to describe.

Robert Creeley, April 18, 2022

THE SELF AND THE MULBERRY

I wanted to see the self, so I looked at the mulberry.
It had no trouble accepting its limits,
yet defining and redefining a small area
so that any shape was possible, any movement.
It stayed put, but was part of all the air.
I wanted to learn to be there and not there
like the continually changing, slightly moving
mulberry, wild cherry and particularly the willow.
Like the willow, I tried to weep without tears.
Like the cherry tree, I tried to be sturdy and productive.
Like the mulberry, I tried to keep moving.
I couldn't cry right, couldn't stay or go.
I kept losing parts of myself like a soft maple
I fell ill like the elm. That was the end
of looking in nature to find a natural self.
Let nature think itself not manly enough!
Let nature wonder at the mystery of laughter.
Let nature hypothesize man's indifference to it.
Let nature take a turn at saying what love is!

Mervin Bell, April 15, 2022

DEN HALVFÄRDIGA HMLEN

Modlösheten avbryter sitt lopp.
Ångesten avbryter sitt lopp.
Gamen avbryter sin flykt.

Det ivriga ljuset rinner fram,
även spökena tar sig en klunk.

Och våra målningar kommer i dagen,
våra istidsateljéers röda djur.

Allting börjar se sig omkring.
Vi går i solen hundratals.

Var människa en halvöppen dörr
som leder till ett rum för alla.

Den oändliga marken under oss.

Vattnet lyser mellan träden.

Insjön är ett fönster mot jorden.

Tomas Tranströmer, April 11, 2022

THE TRUTH THE DEAD KNOW

*For my mother, born March 1902, died March 1959
and my father, born February 1900, died June 1959*

Gone, I say and walk from church,
refusing the stiff procession to the grave,
letting the dead ride alone in the hearse.
It is June. I am tired of being brave.

We drive to the Cape. I cultivate
myself where the sun gutters from the sky,
where the sea swings in like an iron gate
and we touch. In another country people die.

My darling, the wind falls in like stones
from the whitehearted water and when we touch
we enter touch entirely. No one's alone.
Men kill for this, or for as much.

And what of the dead? They lie without shoes
in their stone boats. They are more like stone
than the sea would be if it stopped. They refuse
to be blessed, throat, eye and knucklebone.

Anne Sexton, April 8, 2022

TEWKESBURY ROAD

It is good to be out on the road, and going one knows not where,
Going through meadow and village, one knows not whither or why;
Through the grey light drift of the dust, in the keen cool rush of the air,
Under the flying white clouds, and the broad blue lift of the sky.

And to halt at the chattering brook, in a tall green fern at the brink
Where the harebell grows, and the gorse, and the foxgloves purple and white;
Where the shifty-eyed delicate deer troop down to the brook to drink
When the stars are mellow and large at the coming on of the night.

O, to feel the beat of the rain, and the homely smell of the earth,
Is a tune for the blood to jig to, and joy past power of words;
And the blessed green comely meadows are all a-ripple with mirth
At the noise of the lambs at play and the dear wild cry of the birds.

John Masefield, April 4, 2022

LEDA AND THE SWAN

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead. Being so caught up,

So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

William Butler Yeats, April 1, 2022

TORNFALLET

There is a meadow in Sweden
where I lie smitten,
eyes stained with clouds'

white ins and outs.

And about that meadow
roams my widow
plaiting a clover
wreath for her lover.

I took her in marriage
in a granite parish.
The snow lent her whiteness,
a pine was a witness.

She'd swim in the oval
lake whose opal
mirror, framed by bracken,
felt happy, broken.

And at night the stubborn
sun of her auburn
hair shone from my pillow
at post and pillar.

Now in the distance
I hear her descant.
She sings "Blue Swallow,"
but I can't follow.

The evening shadow
robs the meadow
of width and color.
It's getting colder.

As I lie dying
here, I'm eyeing
stars. Here's Venus;
no one between us.

Joseph Brodsky, March 28, 2022

IN THE MOONLIGHT

"O lonely workman, standing there
In a dream, why do you stare and stare
At her grave, as no other grave there were?"

"If your great gaunt eyes so importune
Her soul by the shine of this corpse-cold moon,
Maybe you'll raise her phantom soon!"

“Why, fool, it is what I would rather see
Than all the living folk there be;
But alas, there is no such joy for me!”

“Ah she was one you loved, no doubt,
Through good and evil, through rain and drought,
And when she passed, all your sun went out?”

“Nay: she was the woman I did not love,
Whom all the others were ranked above,
Whom during her life I thought nothing of.”

Thomas Hardy, March 25, 2022

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How still the Bells in Steeples stand
Till swollen with the Sky
They leap upon their silver Feet
In frantic Melody!

Emily Dickinson, March 21, 2022

HOVNO

At' jste se starého Mistra dotázali na cokoliv, odpovídal jedním jediným slovem.
Jeho učení již bylo tak uspořádáno a veškeré jeho myšlenky byly tak sjednoceny,
že dokázal vše postihnout jedním jediným slovem.

Ivan Wernisch, March 18, 2022

BY THE LAKE

Across the flat and the pastel snow
Two people go.... 'And do you remember
When last we wandered this shore?'... 'Ah no!
For it is cold-hearted December.'
'Dead, the leaves that like asses's ears hung on the trees
When last we wandered and squandered joy here;
Now Midas your husband will listen for these
Whispers-these tears for joy's bier.'
And as they walk, they seem tall pagodas;
And all the ropes let down from the cloud

Ring the hard cold bell-buds upon the trees-codas
Of overtones, ecstasies, grown for love's shroud.

Dame Edith Sitwell, March 14, 2022

CARMEL POINT

The extraordinary patience of things!
This beautiful place defaced with a crop of suburban houses –
How beautiful when we first beheld it,
Unbroken field of poppy and lupin walled with clean cliffs;
No intrusion but two or three horses pasturing,
Or a few milch cows rubbing their flanks on the outcrop rock-heads –
Now the spoiler has come: does it care?
Not faintly. It has all time. It knows the people are a tide
That swells and in time will ebb, and all
Their works dissolve. Meanwhile the image of the pristine beauty
Lives in the very grain of the granite,
Safe as the endless ocean that climbs our cliff. – As for us:
We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident
As the rock and ocean that we were made from.

Robinson Jeffers, March 11, 2022

THE WANDERER

Doom is dark and deeper than any sea-dingle.
Upon what man it fall
In spring, day-wishing flowers appearing,
Avalanche sliding, white snow from rock-face,
That he should leave his house,
No cloud-soft hand can hold him, restraint by women;
But ever that man goes
Through place-keepers, through forest trees,
A stranger to strangers over undried sea,
Houses for fishes, suffocating water,
Or lonely on fell as chat,
By pot-holed becks
A bird stone-haunting, an unquiet bird.
There head falls forward, fatigued at evening,
And dreams of home,
Waving from window, spread of welcome,
Kissing of wife under single sheet;
But waking sees
Bird-flocks nameless to him, through doorway voices

Of new men making another love.

Save him from hostile capture,
From sudden tiger's leap at corner;
Protect his house,
His anxious house where days are counted
From thunderbolt protect,
From gradual ruin spreading like a stain;
Converting number from vague to certain,
Bring joy, bring day of his returning,
Lucky with day approaching, with leaning dawn.

Wystan Hugh Auden, March 7, 2022

A BETTER RESURRECION

I have no wit, I have no words, no tears;
My heart within me like a stone
Is numbed too much for hopes or fears;
Look right, look left, I dwell alone;
A lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief
No everlasting hills I see;
My life is like the falling leaf;
O Jesus, quicken me.

Sylvia Plath, March 4, 2022

THE SEEKERS

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blessed abode,
But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the road.

Not for us are content, and quiet, and peace of mind,
For we go seeking a city that we shall never find.

There is no solace on earth for us for such as we,
Who search for a hidden city that we shall never see.

Only the road and the dawn, the sun, the wind, and the rain,
And the watch fire under stars, and sleep, and the road again.

We seek the City of God, and the haunt where beauty dwells,
And we find the noisy mart and the sound of burial bells.

Never the golden city, where radiant people meet,
But the dolorous town where mourners are going about the street.

We travel the dusty road till the light of the day is dim,
And sunset shows us spires away on the world's rim.

We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day is past and by,
Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of the sky.

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth nor blest abode,
But the hope of the City of God at the other end of the road.

John Masefield, February 28, 2022

THE TYGER

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

William Blake, February 25, 2022

FINISH

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife:
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art:
I warm'd both hands before the fire of Life;
It sinks; and I am ready to depart.

Walter Savage Landor, February 21, 2022

BAROQUE SONATA

Two Bosnian war veterans and a handful of tourists met with Georg Friedrich Händel one evening at 10 o'clock in the Church of Saint Nicholas in Old Town Square.

How can eardrums accustomed to listening to the silence between a firing blast and an explosion get used to such transitions: Adagio – Allegro – Adagio – Bourrée – Minuet.

Unlike the tourists', their hearing is more refined, they recognize, by sound only and without fail, the exact kind of weapon used, where it was fired, and how to let those sound waves pass them by.

From the baroque times to today the musical scale has been immensely enhanced. The treble clef has been replaced by a distress signal. With a monotone, but agitating sound, the concert begins. The children and women leave their apartments, descend to the basement.

The concert is exhausting, for both the musicians and the audience. It lasts six months, one or two years, and even longer for some – till the end of their life.

And as I listen, with Dženan, to the cycle of baroque sonatas, I try, in my mind, to reach that point where two parallel lines meet.

All in vain.

There are things we don't have to understand.

E.g.:

how to connect the past and the present that meet right here,
within these sixty or so kilograms of flesh and bones,
comingled in four or five liters of blood.

We don't turn to God, although the place is appropriate for that. Surrendering to the music, we sail comfortably from F major to B minor.

I listen, captivated: harpsichord, oboe, flute, cello. The atmosphere is rising: *affettuoso*, *affettuoso*, *vivace*, *vivace* – the air thickens like after a detonation. My feet perspire. I am overcome with tremors, chills. It's cold everywhere: at both the South and North Pole. Although as a child, I imagined this South Pole to be warm.

Adin Ljuca (translated by Esma Hadžiselimović), February 18, 2022

HE WAS

a brown old man with a green thumb:
I can remember the scream on stones of his hoe,
The chug, choke, and high madrigal wheeze
Of the spray-cart bumping below
The sputtery leaves of the apple trees,
But he was all but dumb

Who filled some quarter of the day with sound
All of my childhood long. For all I heard
Of all his labors, I can now recall
Never a single word
Until he went in the dead of fall
To the drowsy underground,

Having planted an orchard with so great care
In that last year that none was lost, and May
Aroused them all, the leaves saying the land's
Praise for the livening clay,
And the found voice of his buried hands
Rose in the sparrowy air

Richard Wilbur, February 14, 2022

WIRES

The widest prairies have electric fences,
For though old cattle know they must not stray
Young steers are always scenting purer water
Not here but anywhere. Beyond the wires

Leads them to blunder up against the wires
Whose muscle-shredding violence gives no quarter.
Young steers become old cattle from that day,
Electric limits to their widest senses.

Philip Larkin, February 11, 2022

BLACK ART

A woman who writes feels too much,

those trances and portents!
As if cycles and children and islands
weren't enough; as if mourners and gossips
and vegetables were never enough.
She thinks she can warn the stars.
A writer is essentially a spy.
Dear love, I am that girl.

A man who writes knows too much,
such spells and fetiches!
As if erections and congresses and products
weren't enough; as if machines and galleons
and wars were never enough.
With used furniture he makes a tree.
A writer is essentially a crook.
Dear love, you are that man.

Never loving ourselves,
hating even our shoes and our hats,
we love each other, precious, precious.
Our hands are light blue and gentle.
Our eyes are full of terrible confessions.
But when we marry,
the children leave in disgust.
There is too much food and no one left over
to eat up all the weird abundance.

Anne Sexton, February 7, 2022

A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
But Gregory's Wood and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack and roof-levelling wind,
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour,
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And under the arches of the bridge, and scream
In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come
Dancing to a frenzied drum
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty, and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass; for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness, and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen, being chosen, found life flat and dull,
And later had much trouble from a fool;
While that great Queen that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless, could have her way,
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
Hearts are not had as a gift, but hearts are earned
By those that are not entirely beautiful.
Yet many, that have played the fool
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise;
And many a poor man that has roved,
Loved and thought himself beloved,
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree,
That all her thoughts may like the linnets be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound;
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
Oh, may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,
The sort of beauty that I have approved,
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,
Yet knows that to be choked with hate
May well be of all evil chances chief.
If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnets from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,

Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is heaven's will,
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.
How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

William Butler Yeats, February 4, 2022

RECUERDO

We were very tired, we were very merry –
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable –
But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,
We lay on a hill-top underneath the moon;
And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came soon.

We were very tired, we were very merry –
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry;
And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,
From a dozen of each we had bought somewhere;
And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold,
And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold.

We were very tired, we were very merry,
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
We hailed, "Good morrow, mother!" to a shawl-covered head,
And bought a morning paper, which neither of us read;
And she wept, "God bless you!" for the apples and pears,
And we gave her all our money but our subway fares.

Edna St. Vincent Millay, January 31, 2022

THE DEATH OF THE BALL TURRET GUNNER

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

Randahl Jarrell, January 28, 2022

A GRAVEYARD

Man, looking into the sea –
taking the view frEdna St. Vincent Millaye as much right to it as you have it to
yourself –
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:
the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The firs stand in a procession – each with an emerald turkey-foot at the top –
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;
repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;
the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.
There are others besides you who have worn that look –
whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them
for their bones have not lasted;
men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,
and row quickly away – the blades of the oars
moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as
death.
The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx – beautiful under networks of
foam,
and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seaweed;
the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as heretofore –
the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them
and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and noise of bell-buoys,
advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are
bound to sink –
in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.

Marianne Moore, January 24, 2022

CLIFF KLINGENHAGEN

Cliff Klingenhagen had me in to dine
With him one day; and after soup and meat,
And all the other things there were to eat,
Cliff took two glasses and filled one with wine
And one with wormwood. Then, without a sign
For me to choose at all, he took the draught
Of bitterness himself, and lightly quaffed
It off, and said the other one was mine.

And when I asked him what the deuce he meant
By doing that, he only looked at me
And smiled, and said it was a way of his.
And though I know the fellow, I have spent
Long time a-wondering when I shall be
As happy as Cliff Klingenhagen is.

Edwin Arlington Robinson, January 21, 2022

THE BLUE BOOBY

The blue booby lives
on the bare rocks
of Galapagos
and fears nothing.
It is a simple life:
they live on fish,
and there are few predators.
Also, the males do not
make fools of themselves
chasing after the young
ladies. Rather,
they gather the blue
objects of the world
and construct from them
a nest –an occasional
Gaulois package,
a string of beads,
a piece of cloth from
a sailor's suit. This
replaces the need for
dazzling plumage;
in fact, in the past
fifty million years
the male has grown
considerably duller,
nor can he sing well.

The female, though,
asks little of him –
the blue satisfies her
completely, has
a magical effect
on her. When she returns
from her day of
gossip and shopping,
she sees he has found her
a new shred of blue foil:
for this she rewards him
with her dark body,
the stars turn slowly
in the blue foil beside them
like the eyes of a mild savior.

James Tate, January 17, 2022

ROMANSKA BÅGAR

Inne i den väldiga romanska kyrkan
trängdes turisterna i halvmörkret.
Valv gapande bakom valv och ingen överblick.
Några ljuslågor fladdrade.
En ängel utan ansikte omfamnade mig
och viskade genom hela kroppen:
"Skäms inte för att du är människa, var stolt!
Inne i dig öppnar sig valv bakom valv oändligt.
Du blir aldrig färdig, och det är som det skall."
Jag var blind av tårar
och föstes ut på den solsjudande piazzan
tillsammans med Mr och Mrs Jones,
Herr Tanaka och Signora Sabatini
och inne i dem alla öppnade sig
valv bakom valv oändligt.

Tomas Tranströmer, January 14, 2022

ČERVENÝ KABÁT

*Strhni dům, postav loď.
(sumerská hliněná tabulka)*

Všechno se to odehrává na lodi.
Těžká mužská hlava
na cizím ženském rameni.

Pijící chlap
opřený o okap.
Řeči
o bezpečí.
Komíhající se hák.
Sedm nebohých věřících,
zpívajících v závětrí,
s košilemi zastrčenými do kalhot.
Přísahání a sliby,
pod ohnutým plechem se zákazem.
Nový strach.
Tvůj červený kabát tam,
kde se můj život zdál
tak soběstačný.
Všechno se děje na lodi.

Petr Hruška, January 10, 2022

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I was the slightest in the House –
I took the smallest Room –
At night, my little Lamp, and Book –
And one Geranium –

So stationed I could catch the Mint
That never ceased to fall –
And just my Basket –
Let me think –I'm sure –
That this was all –

I never spoke – unless addressed –
And then, 'twas brief and low –
I could not bear to live – aloud –
The Racket shamed me so –

And if it had not been so far –
And any one I knew
Were going – I had often thought
How noteless – I could die –

Emily Dickinson, January 7, 2022

MUSÉE DE BEAUX ARTS

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

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

Wystan Hugh Auden, January 3, 2022