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**pleasures of poetry**

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A Noiseless Patient Spider
by Walt Whitman

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark’d where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark’d how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch’d forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form’d, till the ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.
METAPHOR  Sylvia Plath
I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

SONNET 18  William Shakespeare
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

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

ON THE MANNER OF ADDRESSING CLOUDS  Wallace Stevens
Gloomy grammarians in golden gowns,
Meekly you keep the mortal rendezvous,
Eliciting the still sustaining pomp
Of speech which are like music so profound
They seem an exaltation without sound.
Funest philosophers and ponderers,
Their evocations are the speech of clouds.
So speech of your processions returns
In the casual evocations of your tread
Across the stale, mysterious seasons. These
Are the music of meet resignation; these
The responsive, still sustaining pomp for you
To magnify, if in that drifting waste
You are to be accompanied by more
Than mute bare splendors of the sun and moon.

Emily Dickinson
Because I could not stop for Death --
He kindly stopped for me --
The Carriage held but just Ourselves --
And Immortality.

We slowly drove -- He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility --

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess -- in the Ring --
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain --
We passed the Setting Sun --

Or rather -- He passed Us --
The Dews drew quivering and Chill --
For only Gossamer, my Gown --
My Tippet -- only Tulle --

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground --
The Roof was scarcely visible --
The Cornice -- in the Ground --

Since then -- 'tis Centuries -- and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity --

LEDA AND THE SWAN  William Butler Yeats
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?
poems by Tyehimba Jess

MY NAME IS SISSIERETTA JONES

Once word got out about the way I sing, the world wanted to bleed all the sass out my name. To scratch out the gift my mother gave me and shove a would-be white diva in my spotlight. They couldn’t imagine the colored in coloratura standing on its own onstage, so they claimed I was just part of Adelina Patti’s chorus. They stuck me beneath her name, a shadow sentenced to the borders of her light, called me Black Patti.

But the darkened sense inside my name won’t be silenced. With its sister and shush and gospel of ocean, I sing each night from the way I’d stand on the docks of Providence, a straggie-boned bundle of lungs and tremble lifting wave after wave into wave after wave of Atlantic. Its applause keeled over me, calling me with its bell of salt, its belly of sunken hulls, its blue green fathoms of tremolo. Every night, in the dark offstage, I hear my mother’s voice in my head, her backyard hum, the sea in her distance with the weather of storm. She’d look out and see the thrall of water heave its back to the sky. I’d look out to the darkness and hear my true name.

Thing is, you wrestle too long with someone else’s song, you gotta make sure you find as many ways as possible to make it your own. But you still gotta remember where the line is between you and that other song, or you gone get your voice all grunted up—confused. That’s what she was wrestlin with. Sissie—or Miss Jones to anyone who ain’t know her good—that’s what she’d tell me. I know she didn’t think I was listening most of the time, but even then, when I was just a small time sand dancer and contortionist, I would hear her talking about how she would make herself one with those arias and then snap back into spirituals like daytime turning into night and back into day. Like a two-headed doctor of song. She was oceanside born, you know. Right off the Atlantic. Seemed like her voice had a tide in it that tied all time together. She’d turn all your moments inside out. Seemed like sometimes she’d take a whole year’s worth of seasons and pour it into one moan, standin up there with her mouth swallowing up everyone’s sorrow one note at a time.
O patria mia

Aida, buried in the darkness
of her fate. Aida, singing
in the tomb of her lover.
Her lover a notion pale as
the aria circling from her mouth.
Aida, lowered into the pit
cloaked in breath's ocean,
a war inside her voice.
A battle of tongues sung doloroso,
the husk of shadow on air.
With the soar of her father's sermon for truth. With the burn
of nigger heaven. With the hum
of oceans wrapped in bone.
With the legacy of bones
wrapped in ocean. With a national
healing hooted to song.
Let me hum it to you sweet
with vivace; let me scrape it into
our history. Let my voice turn
its scarred back on you.
Let my skin disappear
to cover you whole.
Let my molten song be
your blessing of ash.

Let the ash cover all
our faces. Let ash be
the secret that masters
itself. Let the curtain rise
upon the hidden face.
Let the spotlight burn
to purify need. Nail down
the lockbox of spirituals
inside my throat. Bury
them in opera's echo
of grandeur. Resurrect the holy
grind of tremolo and tradition.
Let the key be infinite.
Let the coon song scatter.
Let each mouth be envy.
Let bloodlines be muddied.
I stand solo in this country
of concert. I am multitudes
of broken chains. I am Aida
with war on her lips.
I am Aida against drowning
in all that summons her alive.
I bear the crescendo
of ocean inside me.
I carry its bones inside
my attack. I am a wave
reaching beyond this shore.
Let this belting be our
unbinding. Let o bring
the sound of all our wanting.
Let patria speak the names
of all my fathers.
Let the curtain rise
to show the face that is
known. Let the country
be mine. Let the country
be mine. Let this country
be mine.
THREE BULGARIAN POEMS
Georgi Belev
translated by the author with Lisa Sapinkopf

Zoo

In their cage, the lion mounts the lioness.
Their muzzles face the crowd. Wives leap toward the lioness’ eyes,
squeeze through the flaming hoops of her irises, and, arch-backed, try
to out the male’s weight.

In their cage, the lion mounts the lioness.
The men, grasping sons by the hand, grow smaller, and the sons grow
up—they’re fathers now, they ask no more questions. And the fathers
are boys—how they see, hear and remember everything!

In their cage, the lion mounts the lioness.
He withdraws, she sprawls, her paws flash white. A hot stench rises
from her belly, reunites the families and sends them off. Their bars
clang shut behind them, and just a brief roar rattles them from within.

Fifth Floor

Existing is not always appropriate,
yet it’s already happening to me,
on a daily basis.
Should I tell my doubts, “Nothing doing!”?
But they’d miss me . . .
And I, them.

Damn these long poetic nights,
that stretch from here
all the way to there.
In summer they display them in full force,
they broadcast them through fountains over Eagle Bridge.
And (how shall I put this)
they make me howl—and not just once—
silently at the moon from my apartment
on the fifth, top, floor.
It’s a good thing
people are deaf to silence.
As well as to cries, by the way.
Some bricks nearby respond
and engage my fingernails in battle.

It’s on nights like these,
crumbling around me
with all their concrete weight,
that I discover, in some antiquarian volume,  
the traces of lost time.  
The poet went looking for me.  
But  
he didn’t wait around.  
Maybe it’s better that way.  
Life’s a contemporary performance.  
What dead genius would understand me?  

And despite everything  
I slip between the lines,  
almost painlessly  
like a knife-tip.  
And—  
a hundred bronze men sit down beside me, 
to come to life with me  
for at least one night!  
The floors merge into a warm house,  
a real river bursts forth beneath the bridge!  
Lost time is restored to me,  
I’m almost sure  
that’s the case . . .  

Dawn breaks all around.  
Finale. Curtain.  
We’ll survive tomorrow.  
(This crazy life . . . !)  
A casual night episode  
was hanged on a sunbeam.  
And the dog, always first up,  
is deftly watering the yellow pavement.  
What nice thing will happen to me  
on my way down  
from the fifth floor?  

Gates  

These people on the road—why they’ve gone out,  
where they’re heading in this fog, I don’t know,  
since in their tall house behind the iron gates  
they’ve left the dead man alone.  

He lies bareheaded and unseen within,  
his puzzled eyes are wandering.  
My God, he says, everyone here is dead,  
what use are these gates to them?  

Source: *Clay and Star: Contemporary Bulgarian Poets*, edited by Lisa Sapinkopf and Georgi Belev, 
End of Winter
by Louise Glück

Over the still world, a bird calls
waking solitary among black boughs.

You wanted to be born; I let you be born.
When has my grief ever gotten
in the way of your pleasure?

Plunging ahead
into the dark and light at the same time
eager for sensation

as though you were some new thing, wanting
to express yourselves

all brilliance, all vivacity

never thinking
this would cost you anything,
ever imagining the sound of my voice
as anything but part of you—

you won't hear it in the other world,
not clearly again,
not in birdcall or human cry,

not the clear sound, only
persistent echoing
in all sound that means good-bye, good-bye—

the one continuous line
that binds us to each other.
Vita Nova
by Louise Glück

You saved me, you should remember me.

The spring of the year; young men buying tickets for the ferryboats. Laughter, because the air is full of apple blossoms.

When I woke up, I realized I was capable of the same feeling.

I remember sounds like that from my childhood, laughter for no cause, simply because the world is beautiful, something like that.

Lugano. Tables under the apple trees. Deckhands raising and lowering the colored flags. And by the lake’s edge, a young man throws his hat into the water; perhaps his sweetheart has accepted him.

Crucial sounds or gestures like a track laid down before the larger themes and then unused, buried.

Islands in the distance. My mother holding out a plate of little cakes—

as far as I remember, changed in no detail, the moment vivid, intact, having never been exposed to light, so that I woke elated, at my age hungry for life, utterly confident—

By the tables, patches of new grass, the pale green pieced into the dark existing ground.

Surely spring has been returned to me, this time not as a lover but a messenger of death, yet it is still spring, it is still meant tenderly.
A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning
by John Donne

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
   And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
   "The breath goes now," and some say, "No,"

So let us melt, and make no noise,
   No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
   To tell the laity our love.

Moving of the earth brings harms and fears,
   Men reckon what it did and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
   Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers’ love
   (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
   Those things which elemented it.

But we, by a love so much refined
   That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
   Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
   Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion.
   Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
   As stiff twin compasses are two:
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
   To move, but doth, if the other do;

And though it in the center sit,
   Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
   And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
   Like the other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
   And makes me end where I begun.
Marianne Moore (1887-1972)

The Paper Nautilus

For authorities whose hopes are shaped by mercenaries?
Writers entrapped by teatime fame and by commuters’ comforts? Not for these the paper nautilus constructs her thin glass shell.

Giving her perishable souvenir of hope, a dull white outside and smooth-edged inner surface glossy as the sea, the watchful maker of it guards it day and night; she scarcely eats until the eggs are hatched.
Buried eight-fold in her eight arms, for she is in a sense a devil-fish, her glass ramshorn-cradled freight is hid but is not crushed.
As Hercules, bitten by a crab loyal to the hydra, was hindered to succeed, the intensively watched eggs coming from the shell free it when they are freed,—leaving its wasp-nest flaws of white-on white, and close-
laid Ionic chiton-folds like the lines in the mane of a Parthenon horse, round which the arms had wound themselves as if they knew love is the only fortress strong enough to trust to.
Roses Only

You do not seem to realise that beauty is a liability rather than an asset—-that in view of the fact that spirit creates form we are justified in supposing that you must have brains. For you, a symbol of the unit, stiff and sharp, conscious of surpassing by dint of native superiority and liking for everything self-dependent, anything an ambitious civilization might produce: for you, unaided to attempt through sheer reserve, to confute presumptions resulting from observation, is idle. You cannot make us think you a delightful happen-so. But rose, if you are brilliant, it is not because your petals are the without-which-nothing of pre-eminence. You would, minus thorns, look like a what-is-this, a mere peculiarity. They are not proof against a worm, the elements, or mildew but what about the predatory hand? What is brilliance without co-ordination? Guarding the infinitesimal pieces of your mind, compelling audience to the remark that it is better to be forgotten than to be remembered too violently, your thorns are the best part of you.

The Mortal Lease
by Edith Wharton

I

Because the currents of our love are poured
Through the slow welter of the primal flood
From some blind source of monster-haunted mud,
And flung together by random forces stored
Ere the vast void with rushing worlds was scored—
Because we know ourselves but the dim scud
Tossed from their heedless keels, the sea-blown bud
That wastes and scatters ere the wave has roared—

Because we have this knowledge in our veins,
Shall we deny the journey’s gathered lore—
The great refusals and the long disdains,
The stubborn questing for a phantom shore,
The sleepless hopes and memorable pains,
And all mortality’s immortal gains?

II

Because our kiss is as the moon to draw
The mounting waters of that red-lit sea
That circles brain with sense, and bids us be
The playthings of an elemental law,
Shall we forego the deeper touch of awe
On love’s extremest pinnacle, where we,
Winging the vistas of infinity,
Gigantic on the mist our shadows saw?

Shall kinship with the dim first-moving clod
Not draw the folded pinion from the soul,
And shall we not, by spirals vision-trod,
Reach upward to some still-retreating goal,
As earth, escaping from the night’s control,
Drinks at the founts of morning like a god?

III

All, all is sweet in that commingled draught
Mysterious, that life pours for lovers’ thirst,
And I would meet your passion as the first
Wild woodland woman met her captor’s craft,
Or as the Greek whose fearless beauty laughed
And doffed her raiment by the Attic flood;
But in the streams of my belated blood
Flow all the warring potions love has quaffed.
How can I be to you the nymph who danced
Smooth by Ilissus as the plane-tree's bole,
Or how the Nereid whose drenched lashes glanced
Like sea-flowers through the summer sea's long roll—
I that have also been the nun entranced
Who night-long held her Bridegroom in her soul?

IV

“Sad Immortality is dead,” you say,
“And all her grey brood banished from the soul;
Life, like the earth, is now a rounded whole,
The orb of man's dominion. Live to-day.”
And every sense in me leapt to obey,
Seeing the routed phantoms backward roll;
But from their waning throng a whisper stole,
And touched the morning splendour with decay.

“Sad Immortality is dead; and we
The funeral train that bear her to her grave.
Yet hath she left a two-faced progeny
In hearts of men, and some will always see
The skull beneath the wreath, yet always crave
In every kiss the folded kiss to be.”

V

Yet for one rounded moment I will be
No more to you than what my lips may give,
And in the circle of your kisses live
As in some island of a storm-blown sea,
Where the cold surges of infinity
Upon the outward reefs unheeded grieve,
And the loud murmur of our blood shall weave
Primeval silences round you and me.

If in that moment we are all we are
We live enough. Let this for all requite.
Do I not know, some winged things from far
Are borne along illimitable night
To dance their lives out in a single flight
Between the moonrise and the setting star?
VI

The Moment came, with sacramental cup
Lifted—and all the vault of life grew bright
With tides of incommensurable light—
But tremulously I turned and covered up
My face before the wonder. Down the slope
I heard her feet in irretrievable flight,
And when I looked again, my stricken sight
Saw night and rain in a dead world agrope.

Now walks her ghost beside me, whispering
With lips derisive: “Thou that wouldst forego—
What god assured thee that the cup I bring
Globes not in every drop the cosmic show,
All that the insatiate heart of man can wring
From life’s long vintage?—Now thou shalt not know.”

VII

Shall I not know? I, that could always catch
The sunrise in one beam along the wall,
The nests of June in April’s mating call,
And ruinous autumn in the wind’s first snatch
At summer’s green impenetrable thatch—
That always knew far off the secret fall
Of a god’s feet across the city’s brawl,
The touch of silent fingers on my latch?

Not thou, vain Moment! Something more than thou
Shall write the score of what mine eyes have wept,
The touch of kisses that have missed my brow,
The murmur of wings that brushed me while I slept,
And some mute angel in the breast even now
Measures my loss by all that I have kept.

VIII

Strive we no more. Some hearts are like the bright
Tree-chequered spaces, flecked with sun and shade,
Where gathered in old days the youth and maid
To woo, and weave their dances: with the night
They cease their flutings, and the next day’s light
Finds the smooth green unconscious of their tread,
And ready its velvet pliancies to spread
Under fresh feet, till these in turn take flight.

But other hearts a long long road doth span,
From some far region of old works and wars,
And the weary armies of the thoughts of man
Have trampled it, and furrowed it with scars,
And sometimes, hush, a sacred caravan
Moves over it alone, beneath the stars.
Dear John, Dear Coltrane
by Michael S. Harper

a love supreme, a love supreme
a love supreme, a love supreme
Sex fingers toes
in the marketplace
near your father’s church
in Hamlet, North Carolina—
witness to this love
in this calm fallow
of these minds,
there is no substitute for pain:
genitals gone or going,
seed burned out,
you tuck the roots in the earth,
turn back, and move
by river through the swamps,
singing: a love supreme, a love supreme;
what does it all mean?
Loss, so great each black
woman expects your failure
in mute change, the seed gone.
You plod up into the electric city—
your song now crystal and
the blues. You pick up the horn
with some will and blow
into the freezing night:
a love supreme, a love supreme—

Dawn comes and you cook
up the thick sin ‘tween
impotence and death, fuel
the tenor sax cannibal
heart, genitals, and sweat
that makes you clean—
a love supreme, a love supreme—

Why you so black?
cause I am
why you so funky?
cause I am
why you so black?
cause I am
why you so sweet?
cause I am
why you so black?
cause I am
a love supreme, a love supreme:

So sick
you couldn’t play Naima,
so flat we ached
for song you’d concealed
with your own blood,
your diseased liver gave
out its purity,
the inflated heart
pumps out, the tenor kiss,
tenor love:
a love supreme, a love supreme—
a love supreme, a love supreme—
Mz N Growth of a Poet's Mind

Like all children Mz N lived
in archaic
mythic zones
and all the neighbors and kin played their parts to a T
although they never were able to tell her
the whole story.

§

The child Mz N sat on her bed
and wondered: that tree
outside her window
shifted
when her eye
shifted. What to make
of that?

§

Mz N and her siblings
had a dog for some time.
They went on vacation &
when they came back
no dog.
They asked the parents:
the dog?
who replied:
what dog?
And some people wonder
why others distrust the obvious.

§

One year Mz N began her great project
of investigative
touch. Like everything
it came about
through reading
and happenstance. Mz N had a friend
who said I do it and then
I worry
what if my roommate
hears?
What if?
Mz N wondered
went home
and discovered a new octave.

§

Mz N sometimes thinks
what N stands for: Nothing.
One day she said
nihilism
in school & the teacher
paused, chalk between her fingers
like her longed-for cigarette.
What’s nihilism
Another student said I thought
it was neshilism.
This was another example
of Mz N bringing up topics
that went Nowhere.
the blackest black
is not so black
it cannot take
a blacker black
so Mz N thinks
the void would speak
if void could speak
or of color think

§

Mz N is writing what she hopes will be
a masterpiece: Mispronunciation:
the definitive
autobiography. She only includes
the bloopers she remembers.
She is very strict that way.
What's va-gi-na
—hard g—
she called to her parents
age five
when they'd plopped her on the sofa
with a picture book
to help her learn
where babies. Some years later she told a story
at dinner
about being very angry
with a persecuting
teacher. I spoke
she sd
with great ve-hé-mence.
Her father laughed
a somewhat unkind laugh
and asked her to repeat it.
She did & once again
he laughed.

Mz N vehemently
objects to the making fun of children
who struggle every day
to get their words
and bodies aligned

§

one day after sex
in a century of bad sex
the other one asked Mz N
did I leave you
on the edge
never having had an orgasm
as far as she knew
she sd
quite definitively
no
how would she know
such an edge
are you sure
the other persisted
Mz N thought again
she could say
quite definitively
o yes here I am on the edge
where you left me
the edge
of a certain
abyss
but this
she knew was the answer
to a question
no one was asking

§
Mz N embarks one day upon a sonnet
attracted by the knowledge that it’s dead
extinct like dinosaur dodo or bonnet
long replaced by baseball caps on heads

that centuries ago were piled with curls
birds powder wires and such machinery
’twould blow the minds of tattooed boys and girls
who cruise the streets of this new century

Mz N concedes she’s antiquarian
old hat old news—“hoarder of ancient dirt”
to quote the mouldy Scot John Pinkerton
but from her dead-end path she won’t divert

the airplane made the train a living fossil
relic herself she listens for its whistle

§

Wordsworth never took a plane
but Mz N takes a plane with Wordsworth
on her mind
and other matters: love,
fear, a wish
to die.

Wordsworth had a very sturdy mind
and legs that took him far
into the mountains,
Scottish glens, German
towns and yee across
the Alps. Mz N has never seen
the Alps nor Snowdon
nor a mountain
anywhere beyond the ancient
Adirondacks Wordsworth too she thinks
would like their worn-down humps
their pathless woods the rowboats by the shores
of placid lakes ready

for exploring. Young Wordsworth stole
a rowboat
rowed out on a lake one night and found himself
appalled
the mountain strode sublime
after him
and he trembled and his mind
as Burke had said it would
before sublimity
near failed. There are passages
in life
in Wordsworth
he called spots
of time and Mz N has some spots
she sometimes
recollects. But now
she’s happy incredulous
in love
and in strange anguish
wants to recollect
nothing. If it were now
to die
’twere now to be most happy
she murmurs
with the engine
nearly exploding
with the fragility
and perverse strength of all that lives
and moves and has its being
in the air on the ground in the sea.
Having reached a floating state
of grace, surprised
by joy
she wants to die
life
can only get worse
the mountain
receding below them as they climb
Thomas Campion  (1567-1620)

Canto Secundo from Songs appended to Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella*, in a 1591 pirated edition

What faire pompe have I spide of glittering Ladies;  
With locks sparckled abroad, and rosie Coronet  
On their yvorie browes, trackt to the daintie thies  
With roabs like *Amazons*, blew as Violet,  
With gold Aglets adornd, some in a changeable  
*Pale*, with spangs wavering, taught to be moveable.

Then those Knights that a farre off with dolorous viewing  
Cast their eyes hetherward: loe, in an agonie,  
All unbrac’d, crie aloud, their heavie state ruing:  
Moyst cheeks with blubbering, painted as *Ebonie*  
Blacke; their feltred haire torne with wrathfull hand:  
And whiles astonied, starke in a maze they stand.

But heark, what merry sound!  What sodaine harmonie!  
Looke, looke neere the grove where the Ladies doe tread  
With their knights the measures waide by the melodie!  
Wantons, whose travesing make men enamoured!  
Now they faine an honor, now by the slender wast  
He must lift hir aloft, and seale a kisse in hast.

Streight downe under a shadow for wearines they lie  
With pleasant daliance, hand knit with arme in arme;  
Now close, now set aloof, they gaze with an equall eie,  
Changing kisses alike; straight with a false alarme,  
Mocking kisses alike, powt with a lovely lip.  
Thus drownd with jollities, their merry daies doe slip.

But stay! now I discerne they goe on a Pilgrimage  
Toward Loves holy land, faire *Paphos* or *Cyprus*.  
Such devotion is meete for a blithesome age;  
With sweet youth it agrees well to be amorous.  
Let olde angrie fathers lurke in an Hermitage;  
Come, weele associate this jollie Pilgrimage!
No. 7 & 8 from **Fourth Booke of Ayres**, London, 1617:

There is a Garden in her face,
Where Roses and white Lillies grow;
   A heav’ly paradice is that place,
Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow.
   There Cherries grow which none may buy,
   Till Cherry ripe themselves doe cry.

Those Cherries fayrely doe enclose
Of Orient Pearle a double row;
   Which when her lovely laughter shows,
They look like Rose-buds fill’d with snow.
   Yet them nor Peere nor Prince can buy,
   Till Cherry ripe themselves doe cry.

Her Eyes like Angels watch them still;
Her Browes like bended bowes doe stand,
   Threatning with piercing frownes to kill
All that attempt with eye or hand
   Those sacred Cherries to come nigh,
   Till Cherry ripe themselves doe cry.

(This poem was also published in 1605 & 1606, but appeared with its music in 1617.)
To his sweet Lute Apollo sang the motions of the Spheares
The wondrous order of the Stars, whose course divides the yeares,

    And all the Mysteries above:
        But none of this could Midas move,
    Which purchast him his Asses eares.

Then Pan with his rude Pipe began the Country-wealth t'advance,
To boast of Cattle, flockes of Sheepe, and Goates on hils that dance,

    With much more of this churlish kinde:
        That quite transported Midas minde,
    And held him rapt as in a trance.

This wrong the God of Musicke scorn'd from such a sottish Judge,
And bent his angry bow at Pan, which made the Piper trudge:

    Then Midas head he so did trim
        That ev'ry age yet talks of him
    And Phoebus right revenged grudge.
poems by Bill Holshouser

WHY I LIVE IN CAMBRIDGE

They’re basically different approaches
he said.

You can either talk something to death
try to convey meaning by sheer force of words
or you can transform it, show it.

Take us, for example, sitting here
across your coffee table from each other.
We might be symbols, something about Apollonian and Dionysian
or something about the head/heart/mind/spirit/body dichotomy.
Multicotomy,
he said.

Or I, in my rust-colored velour shirt,
might be a metaphor for a more sensuous, embracing stance toward life,
while your suit and tie signify something more defensive
an armoring
or a mask
he said.

As I refilled our slivovitz, talk continued
to swarm from him, forcing his mouth hugely open until
upper teeth passing over the top of his head
he swallowed himself and was gone
left brain
right brain
and all.
Hell of a stance
I said.
JOB AND THE CROCODILE

Job became a virtuoso of suffering. He sat on an ashheap outside the city gates and challenged God Himself to face him in court.
"Explain it to me, if you can! The dead children, the boils like anthills in my skin, explain even the stolen sheep and camels."

Job saw an arabesque of light and dust picking its way casually over the plain, through the garbage and broken pots in the dump until it sat beside him and a voice from the whirlwind called him by name.

"Job, I wish you could have seen this place when it was new. It was dark when the mountains formed. The sea collected in all the hollows, and the living things began to make their ways. Everyone in my family gathered to look on. When the first light suddenly broke in the east we all shouted for joy! I remember the morning stars all sang together. What a song that was!"

"Look at me, I'm dying," said Job. "My skin is covered with sores and all I can do is scratch them with shards from this dump. I had seven sons and three daughters. Do You know where they are now?"

"Job, have you ever looked really closely at a crocodile? Look at his back some time, like a row of shields joined so tight even air can't pass between them. His teeth are surrounded by terror, but his eyes are the eyelids of dawn. When he sneezes—light flashes out! It's like he could kindle wood with his breath. Iron is like straw to him, bronze is like rotten wood, and his underparts are sharp as broken pottery—he could scratch your sores for you!"

"Don't interrupt, I'm not finished. You should watch a crocodile move, too. He spreads himself like a threshing sledge on the mud where the water's low and makes it boil like a pot! He leaves a wake like a torch thrown through the air, and he's afraid of nothing—ah, there's nothing else like him on earth! You could never make anything like that, Job."

It struck Job that the ways of God were stranger than he'd thought.
He found humility in the notion, and God found cause to bestow a new life on him—further camels, children, healing from his pain.

Then God left him and traveled once again as a dust dervish to a riverbank where He sat down, this time beside a crocodile.

"God," said the crocodile, "The fish in this river taste like cypress knees, and besides there's not enough of them."

"Shut up," said God. "Do you ever notice the people who come here and catch fish with you?"

"The little ones are tasty," said the crocodile, "but the big ones get loud and throw sharp sticks at me if I eat even one or two. I laugh at them. They can't hurt me."

"You should pay more attention. They have good hands, better than anything on a crocodile. They build boats of reeds and get inside. You can't eat them then, and they'll outswim you, too. It's their minds that fascinate me, though. There's no end to what they think up—heated houses, calendars, makeup, philosophy, alimony. Listen to this!" God sang a few measures of *Die Forelle* while the croc salivated appreciatively. "They'll think of ways to catch every fish in the river," God mused, "and then they'll starve because the fish are gone. They're clever, but they don't seem to think ahead very well."

"They sound like a damn menace," said the crocodile. "Speaking of fish, now..."

"Shut up," said God. "Look, do that thing where you make the water boil like a pot. That always knocks me out."

These conversations are a big part of God's work. What's the point? you may ask. Sometime in the future, in heaven, when Job is resting beside a river, a crocodile will crawl up and lie beside him and ask, "Did you folks ever learn to work things out with the fish?" And Job will answer, "At best, I guess we only muddled through it. Look, would you show me how to do that threshing-sledge trick I've heard so much about if I teach you to tie a clove hitch?"
Remembering the South of the Yangtze River
– to the Tune of Yijiangnan
by (Tang) Bai Juyi

How lovely the South of the Yangtze River!

I knew well its scenery, so enchanting.

The flowers are redder than fire in the rising beams;

The water is as green as emerald in the spring.

How could my yearning not haunt my dreams!

Whenever I recall the South of the Yangtze River,

Hangzhou first appears before my eyes.

In temples I sought osmanthus seeds when the moon was bright;

Lying on pavilion benches I watched the tide rise.

When shall I go to revisit these sights!

Tr. Huang Xingsheng
William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
Sonnet 119

What potions have I drunk of Siren tears,
Distilled from limbecks foul as hell within,
Applying fears to hopes, and hopes to fears,
Still losing when I saw myself to win!
What wretched errors hath my heart committed,
Whilst it hath thought itself so blessèd never!
How have mine eyes out of their spheres been fitted
In the distraction of this madding fever!
O benefit of ill, now I find true
That better is by evil still made better;
And ruined love when it is built anew
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.
   So I return rebuked to my content,
   And gain by ills thrice more than I have spent.
a song in the front yard
by Gwendolyn Brooks

I've stayed in the front yard all my life.
I want a peek at the back
Where it's rough and untended and hungry weed grows.
A girl gets sick of a rose.

I want to go in the back yard now
And maybe down the alley,
To where the charity children play.
I want a good time today.

They do some wonderful things.
They have some wonderful fun.
My mother sneers, but I say it's fine
How they don't have to go in at quarter to nine.
My mother, she tells me that Johnnie Mae
Will grow up to be a bad woman.
That George'll be taken to Jail soon or late
(On account of last winter he sold our back gate).

But I say it's fine. Honest, I do.
And I'd like to be a bad woman, too,
And wear the brave stockings of night-black lace
And strut down the streets with paint on my face.
backyard song
by Diane Seuss

Since it’s just me here I’ve
found the back and stayed
there most of the time, in
rain and snow and the
no-moon nights, dodging the front
I used to put up like a yard
gussied and groomed, all
edged and flower-lined, my
bottled life.
Uncorked, I had a thought: I
want the want
I dreamed of wanting once, a
quarter cup of sneak-peek
at what prowls in the back, at
what sings in the
wet rag space behind the garage, back

where the rabbits nest, where
I smell something soupish, sour and dank and it’s
filled with weeds like rough
cat tongues and
the wind is unfostered, untended,
now that it’s just me here and
I am so hungry
for the song that grows tall like a weed
grows, and grows.

When I was a
little girl
my ma said a woman gets
tired and sick
of the front yard, of
kissing the backside of a
rose.
poems by William Carlos Williams

LAST WORDS OF MY GRANDMOTHER
[First Version]

She stayed over after
the summer people had gone
at her little shack
on the shore, an old woman
impossible to get on with
unless you left her alone
with her things—among them
the young grandson, nineteen
whom she had raised.
He endured her because
he was too lazy to work
too lazy to think and
had a soft spot for her
in his bright heart, also a
moustache, a girl, bed
and board out of the old lady
the sea before him
and a ukelele—The two
had remained on and on
into the cold weather.

Thanksgiving day
after the heavy dinner
at a good neighbor’s table
Death touched the old lady
in her head—Home she must
go leaning heavily on the
boy who put her to bed and
gave her what she wanted—
water and Mother Eddy’s
Science and Health and
forgot her for other things.
But she began to rave in the night.

In the morning after frying
an egg for her
he combed his whiskers
picked his pimples
and got busy with
a telegram for help—
Gimme something to eat
Gimme something to eat

I'm starving
they’re starving me
was all I got out of
the dazed old woman
There were some dirty plates
and a glass of milk
beside her on a small table
near her stinking bed
Wrinkled and nearly blind
she lay and snored
rousing to cry
with anger in her tones—

They're starving me—
You won't move me
I'm all right—I won't go
to the hospital. No, no, no
Give me something to eat!—
Let me take you
to the hospital, I said,
and after you are well

you can do as you please—
She smiled her old smile:

Yes, you do what you please
first then I can do what I please—

Oh, oh, oh, she cried
as the ambulance men lifted her
to their stretcher on the floor—
Is this what you call

making me comfortable?—
Now her mind was clear
Oh you think you're awfully
smart, you young people,

she said to us, but I'll tell
you you don't know
anything—Then we started.
On the way

we passed a long row
of elms, she looked
a long while out of the
ambulance window and said—

What are all those
fuzzy looking things out there?
Trees? Well, I’m
tired of them.

-1924
The Last Words Of My English Grandmother
by William Carlos Williams

There were some dirty plates
and a glass of milk
beside her on a small table
near the rank, disheveled bed--

Wrinkled and nearly blind
she lay and snored
rousing with anger in her tones
to cry for food,

Gimme something to eat--
They're starving me--
I'm all right--I won't go
to the hospital. No, no, no

Give me something to eat!
Let me take you
to the hospital, I said
and after you are well

you can do as you please.
She smiled, Yes
you do what you please first
then I can do what I please--

Oh, oh, oh! she cried
as the ambulance men lifted
her to the stretcher--
Is this what you call

making me comfortable?
By now her mind was clear--
Oh you think you're smart
you young people,

she said, but I'll tell you
you don't know anything.
Then we started.
On the way

we passed a long row
of elms. She looked at them
awhile out of
the ambulance window and said,

What are all those
fuzzy looking things out there?
Trees? Well, I'm tired
of them and rolled her head away.

1939
DEDICATION FOR A PLOT OF GROUND

This plot of ground
facing the waters of this inlet
is dedicated to the living presence of
Emily Dickinson Wellcome
who was born in England; married;
lost her husband and with
her five year old son
sailed for New York in a two-master;
was driven to the Azores;
ran adrift on Fire Island shoal,
met her second husband
in a Brooklyn boarding house,
went with him to Puerto Rico
bore three more children, lost
her second husband, lived hard
for eight years in St. Thomas,
Puerto Rico, San Domingo, followed
the oldest son to New York,
lost her daughter, lost her "baby;"
seized the two boys of
the oldest son by the second marriage
mothered them—they being
motherless—fought for them
against the other grandmother
and the aunts, brought them here
summer after summer, defended
herself here against thieves,
storms, sun, fire,
against flies, against girls
that came smelling about, against
drought, against weeds, storm-tides,
neighbors, weasels that stole her chickens,
against the weakness of her own hands,
against the growing strength of
the boys, against wind, against
the stones, against trespassers,
against rents, against her own mind.

She grubbed this earth with her own hands,
domineered over this grass plot,
blackguarded her oldest son
into buying it, lived here fifteen years,
attained a final loneliness and—

If you can bring nothing to this place
but your carcass, keep out.
Division of an Estate
by George M. Horton

It well bespeaks a man beheaded, quite
Divested of the laurel robe of life,
When every member struggles for its base,
The head; the power of order now recedes,
Unheeded efforts rise on every side,
With dull emotion rolling through the brain
Of apprehending slaves. The flocks and herds,
In sad confusion, now run to and fro,
And seem to ask, distressed, the reason why
That they are thus prostrated. Howl, ye dogs!
Ye cattle, low! ye sheep, astonish'd, bleat!
Ye bristling swine, trudge squealing through the glades,
Void of an owner to impart your food!
Sad horses, lift your heads and neigh aloud,
And caper frantic from the dismal scene;
Mow the last food upon your grass-clad lea,
And leave a solitary home behind,
In hopeless widowhood no longer gay!
The trav'ling sun of gain his journey ends
In unavailing pain; he sets with tears;
A king sequester'd sinking from his throne,
Succeeded by a train of busy friends,
Like stars which rise with smiles, to mark the flight
Of awful Phoebus to another world;
Stars after stars in fleet succession rise
Into the wide empire of fortune clear,
Regardless of the donor of their lamps,
Like heirs forgetful of parental care,
Without a grateful smile or filial tear,
Redound in rev'rence to expiring age.
But soon parental benediction flies
Like vivid meteors; in a moment gone,
As though they ne'er had been. But O! the state,
The dark suspense in which poor vassals stand,
Each mind upon the spire of chance hangs fluctuant;
The day of separation is at hand;
Imagination lifts her gloomy curtains,
Like ev'ning's mantle at the flight of day,
Thro' which the trembling pinnacle we spy,
On which we soon must stand with hopeful smiles,
Or apprehending frowns; to tumble on
The right or left forever.
America
by James M. Whitfield

America, it is to thee,
Thou boasted land of liberty,—
It is to thee I raise my song,
Thou land of blood, and crime, and wrong.
It is to thee, my native land,
From whence has issued many a band
To tear the black man from his soil,
And force him here to delve and toil;
Chained on your blood-bemoistened sod,
Cringing beneath a tyrant’s rod,
Stripped of those rights which Nature’s God
Bequeathed to all the human race,
Bound to a petty tyrant’s nod,
Because he wears a paler face.
Was it for this, that freedom’s fires
Were kindled by your patriot sires?
Was it for this, they shed their blood,
On hill and plain, on field and flood?
Was it for this, that wealth and life
Were staked upon that desperate strife,
Which drenched this land for seven long years
With blood of men, and women’s tears?
When black and white fought side by side,
Upon the well-contested field,—
Turned back the fierce opposing tide,
And made the proud invader yield—
When, wounded, side by side they lay,
And heard with joy the proud hurrah
From their victorious comrades say
That they had waged successful war,
The thought ne’er entered in their brains
That they endured those toils and pains,
To forge fresh fetters, heavier chains
For their own children, in whose veins
Should flow that patriotic blood,
So freely shed on field and flood.
Oh no; they fought, as they believed,
For the inherent rights of man;
But mark, how they have been deceived
By slavery’s accursed plan.
They never thought, when thus they shed
Their heart’s best blood, in freedom’s cause
That their own sons would live in dread,
Under unjust, oppressive laws:
That those who quietly enjoyed
The rights for which they fought and fell,
Could be the framers of a code,
That would disgrace the fiends of hell!
Could they have looked, with prophet’s ken,
Down to the present evil time,
Seen free-born men, uncharged with crime,
Consigned unto a slaver’s pen,—
Or thrust into a prison cell,
With thieves and murderers to dwell—
While that same flag whose stripes and stars
Had been their guide through freedom’s wars
As proudly waved above the pen
Of dealers in the souls of men!
Or could the shades of all the dead,
Who fell beneath that starry flag,
Visit the scenes where they once bled,
On hill and plain, on vale and crag,
By peaceful brook, or ocean’s strand,
By inland lake, or dark green wood,
Where’er the soil of this wide land
Was moistened by their patriot blood,—
And then survey the country o’er,
From north to south, from east to west,
And hear the agonizing cry
Ascending up to God on high,
From western wilds to ocean’s shore,
The fervent prayer of the oppressed;
The cry of helpless infancy
Torn from the parent’s fond caress
By some base tool of tyranny,
And doomed to woe and wretchedness;
The indignant wail of fiery youth,
Its noble aspirations crushed,
Its generous zeal, its love of truth,
Trampled by tyrants in the dust;
The aerial piles which fancy reared,
And hopes too bright to be enjoyed,
Have passed and left his young heart seared,
And all its dreams of bliss destroyed.
The shriek of virgin purity,
Doomed to some libertine’s embrace,
Should rouse the strongest sympathy
Of each one of the human race;
And weak old age, oppressed with care,  
As he reviews the scene of strife,  
Puts up to God a fervent prayer,  
To close his dark and troubled life.
The cry of fathers, mothers, wives,  
Severed from all their hearts hold dear,  
And doomed to spend their wretched lives  
In gloom, and doubt, and hate, and fear;  
And manhood, too, with soul of fire,  
And arm of strength, and smothered ire,  
Stands pondering with brow of gloom,  
Upon his dark unhappy doom,  
Whether to plunge in battle’s strife,  
And buy his freedom with his life,  
And with stout heart and weapon strong,  
Pay back the tyrant wrong for wrong,  
Or wait the promised time of God,  
When his Almighty ire shall wake,  
And smite the oppressor in his wrath,  
And hurl red ruin in his path,  
And with the terrors of his rod,  
Cause adamantine hearts to quake.  
Here Christian writhes in bondage still,  
Beneath his brother Christian’s rod,  
And pastors trample down at will,  
The image of the living God.  
While prayers go up in lofty strains,  
And pealing hymns ascend to heaven,  
The captive, toiling in his chains,  
With tortured limbs and bosom riven,  
Raises his fettered hand on high,  
And in the accents of despair,  
To him who rules both earth and sky,  
Puts up a sad, a fervent prayer,  
To free him from the awful blast  
Of slavery’s bitter galling shame—  
Although his portion should be cast  
With demons in eternal flame!  
Almighty God! â† is this they call  
The land of liberty and law;  
Part of its sons in baser thrall  
Than Babylon or Egypt saw—  
Worse scenes of rapine, lust and shame,  
Than Babylonian ever knew,  
Are perpetrated in the name  
Of God, the holy, just, and true;  
And darker doom than Egypt felt,  
May yet repay this nation’s guilt.  
Almighty God! thy aid impart,  
And fire anew each faltering heart,  
And strengthen every patriot’s hand,  
Who aims to save our native land.  
We do not come before thy throne,  
With carnal weapons drenched in gore,  
Although our blood has freely flown,  
In adding to the tyrant’s store.  
Father! before thy throne we come,  
Not in the panoply of war,  
With pealing trump, and rolling drum,  
And cannon booming loud and far;  
Striving in blood to wash out blood,  
Through wrong to seek redress for wrong;  
For while thou ’rt holy, just and good,  
The battle is not to the strong;  
But in the sacred name of peace,  
Of justice, virtue, love and truth,  
We pray, and never mean to cease,  
Till weak old age and fiery youth  
In freedom’s cause their voices raise,  
And burst the bonds of every slave;  
Till, north and south, and east and west,  
The wrongs we bear shall be redressed.
Eliza Harris
by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Like a fawn from the arrow, startled and wild,
A woman swept by us, bearing a child;
In her eye was the night of a settled despair,
And her brow was o’ershaded with anguish and care.

She was nearing the river—in reaching the brink,
She heeded no danger, she paused not to think!
For she is a mother—her child is a slave—
And she’ll give him his freedom, or find him a grave!

’Twas a vision to haunt us, that innocent face—
So pale in its aspect, so fair in its grace;
As the tramp of the horse and the bay of the hound,
With the fetters that gall, were trailing the ground!

She was nerved by despair, and strengthen’d by woe,
As she leap’d o’er the chasms that yawn’d from below;
Death howl’d in the tempest, and rav’d in the blast,
But she heard not the sound till the danger was past.

Oh! how shall I speak of my proud country’s shame?
Of the stains on her glory, how give them their name?
How say that her banner in mockery waves—
Her “star-spangled banner”—o’er millions of slaves?

How say that the lawless may torture and chase
A woman whose crime is the hue of her face?
How the depths of forest may echo around
With the shrieks of despair, and the bay of the hound?

With her step on the ice, and her arm on her child,
The danger was fearful, the pathway was wild;
But, aided by Heaven, she gained a free shore,
Where the friends of humanity open’d their door.
So fragile and lovely, so fearfully pale,
Like a lily that bends to the breath of the gale,
Save the heave of her breast, and the sway of her hair,
You’d have thought her a statue of fear and despair.

In agony close to her bosom she press’d
The life of her heart, the child of her breast:—
Oh! love from its tenderness gathering might,
Had strengthen’d her soul for the dangers of flight.

But she’s free!—yes, free from the land where the slave
From the hand of oppression must rest in the grave;
Where bondage and torture, where scourges and chains
Have plac’d on our banner indelible stains.

The bloodhounds have miss’d the scent of her way;
The hunter is rifled and foil’d of his prey;
Fierce jargon and cursing, with clanking of chains,
Make sounds of strange discord on Liberty’s plains.

With the rapture of love and fullness of bliss,
She plac’d on his brow a mother’s fond kiss:—
Oh! poverty, danger and death she can brave,
For the child of her love is no longer a slave!

**Frederick Douglass**
by Robert Hayden

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this beautiful and terrible thing, needful to man as air, usable as earth; when it belongs at last to all, when it is truly instinct, brain matter, diastole, systole, reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more than the gaudy mumbo jumbo of politicians: this man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world where none is lonely, none hunted, alien, this man, superb in love and logic, this man shall be remembered. Oh, not with statues’ rhetoric, not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone, but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing.
Tell all the truth but tell it slant
by Emily Dickinson

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —

I dwell in Possibility
by Emily Dickinson

I dwell in Possibility –
A fairer House than Prose –
More numerous of Windows –
Superior – for Doors –

Of Chambers as the Cedars –
Impregnable of eye –
And for an everlasting Roof
The Gambrels of the Sky –

Of Visitors – the fairest –
For Occupation – This –
The spreading wide my narrow Hands
To gather Paradise –

The only news I know
by Emily Dickinson

The only news I know
Is bulletins all day
From Immortality.

The only shows I see,
Tomorrow and Today,
Perchance Eternity.

The only One I meet
Is God, -the only street,
Existance; this traversed

If other news there be,
Or admirabler show -
I'll tell it you.
MODERATORS

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

Rosemary Booth writes book reviews and essays. She has been participating in Pleasures of Poetry sessions since 2009.

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

Kimberly J. Brown is Assistant Professor of English and Africana Studies at Mount Holyoke College, and an MIT MLK Visiting Scholar in Literature and Women’s & Gender Studies for 2017-2018.

Bette Davis, as part of the SHASS Dean’s Office, was Director of the HASS (Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences) Office for 20 years, from 1990-2010. She has attended Pleasures of Poetry regularly since she retired in 2010.

Howard Eiland, long-time teacher of modern literature at MIT, is the co-author of an acclaimed biography of Walter Benjamin. He’s been participating in Pleasures of Poetry since its inception.

Mary Fuller is Head of the Literature Section. She works on the history of early modern voyages, exploration, and colonization. She is also interested in material books and how readers use them, in the past and in the present.

Mark Hessler, a friend of Lit, is a local 1987 lit and physics (21S) alum who has attended Pleasures of Poetry for many years and is pleased to be returning.

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

Noel Jackson teaches literature at MIT and is the current organizer of Pleasures of Poetry.
Wyn Kelley, Senior Lecturer in Literature, is author of *Melville's City: Literary and Urban Form in Nineteenth-Century New York* (1996) and of *Herman Melville: An Introduction* (2008), among other publications. Associate Director of MEL (Melville Electronic Library), she also works with the HyperStudio, MIT’s digital humanities lab, to develop digital pedagogy.

Anne Kazlauskas has been a regular at Pleasures of Poetry for at least the past 10 years. A longtime library worker at Cornell & MIT, she has spent much of her adult life singing Renaissance poetry in various languages, in period and contemporary settings. Since a 3 month 2002 walk around Scotland, she is engaged in self-directed Scottish Studies.

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

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

Daniel Evans Pritchard is a poet, translator, and essayist, as well as the founding editor of *The Critical Flame*, an online journal of literary nonfiction, criticism, and interviews. Recent work can be found online at *Kenyon Review, Anomaly, Harvard Review, the Los Angeles Review of Books, Missouri Review*, and elsewhere. He serves as Senior Communications Associate for the SHASS Dean’s office.

Stephen Tapscott teaches literature at MIT and congratulates David Thorburn on the happy anniversary of the Pleasures of Poetry sequence. Thank you to David Thorburn and the loyal Pleasures of Poetry participants. Thank you to Noel Jackson for organizing POP this year.

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

Alexander Wei has been participating in Pleasures of Poetry almost since the beginning. He took a degree in Chemical Engineering from MIT in 1979. He is an American-born Chinese.