

anonymous Greek, 2nd century BC

If gold could buy life,

I would guard my wealth

with jealous desire,

and when death came

he would take some

and leave me alone.

Yet being mortal

I cannot prolong

my life, so why

should I cry or moan?

If we must die,

what good is gold?

So bring sweet wine,

and when I've drunk

bring my good friends.

I'll lie on a soft bed

and be lost in love.

MOURNER BETRAYED

Josephine Jacobsen

He trusted death when it said "I am the end!

Nothing else exists now!" But the truth

seemed that the creeping June-green growth

covers the face of death and does not mind.

The sun is savage, the grass powerful—

the orchard scents and shadows filter

into his mind where death sought shelter...

He gives it, in his harried heart, a lull.

"Death!" says the heart, grim as a hard pressed fencer,

"Death the implacable, death the forever!"

But the white May-clouds in stillness travel over

and the fierce dandelions do not answer.

BRICABRAC.
A MONTHLY
POETRY
MIX.
04.09

THE RIVER-MERCHANT'S WIFE: A LETTER

Ezra Pound

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead

I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.

You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,

You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.

And we went on living in the village of Chokan:

Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.

I never laughed, being bashful.

Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.

Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling,

I desired my dust to be mingled with yours

Forever and forever and forever.

Why should I climb the look out?

At sixteen you departed,

You went into far Ku-to-en, by the river of swirling eddies,

And you have been gone five months.

The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.

You dragged your feet when you went out.

By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,

Too deep to clear them away!

The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.

The paired butterflies are already yellow with August

Over the grass in the West garden;

They hurt me. I grow older.

If you are coming down through the narrow of the river Kiang,

Please let me know beforehand,

And I will come out to meet you

As far as Cho-fu-Sa.

I WILL LOVE THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Mark Strand

Dinner was getting cold. The guests, hoping for quick,

Impersonal, random encounters of the usual sort, were sprawled

In the bedrooms. The potatoes were hard, the beans soft, the meat--

There was no meat. The winter sun had turned the elms and houses yellow;

Deer were moving down the road like refugees; and in the driveway, cats

Were warming themselves on the hood of a car. Then a man turned

And said to me: "Although I love the past, the dark of it, the all

Of it asking for nothing, I will love the twenty-first century more,

For in it I see someone in bathrobe and slippers, brown-eyed and poor,

Walking through the snow without leaving so much as a footprint behind."

"Oh," I said, putting my hat on. "Oh."

DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,

Old age should burn and rave at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,

Because their words had forked no lightning they

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright

Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,

And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,

Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,

Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Sonnet I

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Thou art not lovelier than lilacs,—no,
Nor honeysuckle; thou art not more fair
Than small white single poppies,—I can bear
Thy beauty; though I bend before thee, though
From left to right, not knowing where to go,
I turn my troubled eyes, nor here nor there
Find any refuge from thee, yet I swear
So has it been with mist,—with moonlight so.
Like him who day by day unto his draught
Of delicate poison adds him one drop more
Till he may drink unharmed the death of ten
Even so, inured to beauty, who have quaffed
Each hour more deeply than the hour before,
I drink—and live—what has destroyed some men.

THE SONG OF WANDERING AENGUS

William Butler Yeats

I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire aflame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And some one called me by my name:
It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

SMALL BOY AND MUSHROOM

Grace Freeman

Only the camera
in my hand and mind
makes record
of this quiet moment
when you squat to watch
what was not yesterday
and will not be tomorrow.

Almost overnight
your pocket will discard
its plastic treasures
and there'll not be time
for mushroom watching.

THE GOLD OF THE TIGERS

Jorge Luis Borges

Up to the moment of the yellow sunset,
how many times will I have cast my eyes on
the sinewy-bodied tiger of Bengal
to-ing and fro-ing on its paced-out path
behind the labyrinthine iron bars,
never suspecting them to be a prison.
Afterwards, other tigers will appear:
the blazing tiger of Blake, burning bright;
and after that will come the other golds—
the amorous gold shower disguising Zeus,
the gold ring which, on every ninth night,
gives light to nine rings more, and these, nine more,
and there is never an end.
All the other overwhelming colors,
in company with the years, kept leaving me,
and now alone remains
the amorphous light, the inextricable shadow
and the gold of the beginning.
O sunsets, O tigers, O wonders
of myth and epic
O gold more dear to me, gold of your hair
which these hands long to touch.

RAIN

Shel Silverstein

I opened my eyes
And looked up at the rain,
And it dripped in my head
And flowed into my brain,
And all that I hear as I lie in my bed
Is the slishity-slosh of the rain in my head.

I step very softly,
I walk very slow,
I can't do a handstand--
I might overflow,
So pardon the wild crazy thing I just said--
I'm just not the same since there's rain in my head.

A LIMINAL ZODIAC

Paul Boccaccio

Sidewalk bound, looking up into the rain,
I can see twelve fleeting constellations
formed by perfect drops too swiftly falling
to create relics of mythology.

So my mind helps, holds the afterimage
of their neighbors, painstakingly connects
relationships crudely sketched in broad strokes
by momentary, fresh-cut diamond quills.

I will have dribbling heroes in bard songs
to comfort me with scars, their charcoal flaws,
fleet demigods more noble than their sires,
the gambling gods etched deep between wet stars.

BONSAI

Billy Collins

All it takes is one to throw a room
completely out of whack.

Over by the window
it looks hundreds of yards away,

a lone stark gesture of wood
on the distant cliff of a table.

Up close, it draws you in,
cuts everything down to size.

Look at it from the doorway,
and the world dilates and bloats.

The button lying next to it
is now a pearl wheel,

The book of matches is a raft,
and the coffee cup a cistern

to catch the same rain
that moistens its small plot of dark, mossy earth.

For it even carries its own weather,
leaning away from a fierce wind

that somehow blows
through the calm tropics of this room.

The way it bends inland at the elbow
makes me want to inch my way

to the very top of its spiky greenery,
hold on for dear life

and watch the sea storm rage,
hoping for a tiny whale to appear.

I want to see her plunging forward
through the troughs,

tunneling under the foam and spindrift
on her annual, thousand-mile journey.