

Happenstance

Rita Dove

When you appeared it was as if
magnets cleared the air.
I had never seen that smile before
or your hair, flying silver. Someone
waving goodbye, she was silver, too.
Of course you didn't see me.
I called softly so you could choose
not to answer—then called again.
You turned in the light, your eyes
seeking your name.

Those Winter Sundays

BY ROBERT HAYDEN

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

This is just to say

William Carlos Williams

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

Landscape

Mary Oliver

Isn't it plain the sheets of moss, except that
they have no tongues, could lecture
all day if they wanted about

spiritual patience? Isn't it clear
the black oaks along the path are standing
as though they were the most fragile of flowers?

Every morning I walk like this around
the pond, thinking: if the doors of my heart
ever close, I am as good as dead.

Every morning, so far, I'm alive. And now
the crows break off from the rest of the darkness
and burst up into the sky—as though

all night they had thought of what they would like
their lives to be, and imagined
their strong, thick wings.

Cherries, Shira Abramovich

Claudia Ann Seaman Awards for Young Writers, 2017, Poetry

We were rafting.
up near the borders
of Jordan & Lebanon
the water gushed dark
& cold from snowmelt.
later, we stood
watching Arabs across the fence
cool a melon in a splintered stream.
we ate black cherries from a roadside
stand, each bite explosive & feral.
juice – like blood, trickled
across lips & white
teeth & chins, river rushing
black behind us.
cherries glistened
obsidian in the blue-sky sun
as roadside dust shot up in clouds.
my stomach still wobbled, as when
we were rafting.

The Snowfall Is So Silent

Miguel de Unamuno, 1864 – 1936

Tr. Robert Bly

The snowfall is so silent,
so slow,
bit by bit, with delicacy
it settles down on the earth
and covers over the fields.
The silent snow comes down
white and weightless;
snowfall makes no noise,
falls as forgetting falls,
flake after flake.
It covers the fields gently
while frost attacks them
with its sudden flashes of white;
covers everything with its pure
and silent covering;
not one thing on the ground
anywhere escapes it.
And wherever it falls it stays,
content and gay,
for snow does not slip off
as rain does,
but it stays and sinks in.
The flakes are skyflowers,
pale lilies from the clouds,
that wither on earth.
They come down blossoming

but then so quickly
they are gone;
they bloom only on the peak,
above the mountains,
and make the earth feel heavier
when they die inside.
Snow, delicate snow,
that falls with such lightness
on the head,
on the feelings,
come and cover over the sadness
that lies always in my reason.

A Stop Before Starting

BY DAVID YEZZI

The only time I've been to Switzerland
was early one spring on a train through the mountains.
There was a lake—I guess it was Lucerne?
Above me cliff tops ridged with snow fanned out
so that where I stood at the edge of the platform
light bathed the empty siding all around
with a diffused opalescence off the water.

Behind the station must have been a town,
spires of churches, municipal arcades,
and coffee squelching in the fogged cafés.
I never saw the place, though I remember
thinking this is Switzerland and took
a mind-shot of the pines, breathing in the cold
as the porter whistled at us to reboard.

Snow

BY LOUIS MACNEICE

The room was suddenly rich and the great bay-window was
Spawning snow and pink roses against it
Soundlessly collateral and incompatible:
World is suddener than we fancy it.

World is crazier and more of it than we think,
Incorrigibly plural. I peel and portion
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkenness of things being various.

And the fire flames with a bubbling sound for world
Is more spiteful and gay than one supposes—
On the tongue on the eyes on the ears in the palms of one's hands—
There is more than glass between the snow and the huge roses.

Words are Birds

BY FRANCISCO X. ALARCÓN

words
are birds
that arrive
with books
and spring

they
love
clouds
the wind
and trees

some words
are messengers
that come
from far away
from distant lands

for them
there are
no borders
only stars
moon and sun

some words
are familiar
like canaries
others are exotic
like the quetzal bird

some can stand
the cold

others migrate
with the sun
to the south

some words
die
caged—
they're difficult
to translate

and others
build nests
have chicks
warm them
feed them

teach them
how to fly
and one day
they go away
in flocks

the letters
on this page
are the prints
they leave
by the sea