

# **OLLI POETRY**



**OLLI at Auburn  
Fall 2024**

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## **The Collector**

Ken Autrey

An orange knuckle-boom truck stops  
beside two piles of branches and brush,  
each six feet high, near the curb  
in front of my house. The driver steps  
from the cab and takes the controls  
of a crane with a hinged iron neck  
attached to a gaping maw  
that spreads wide and bites shut  
at his command.

He works levers  
to position the great toothed jaws  
above one pile and lowers them  
to clench a snarl of leaf and limb,  
lifting it jerkily up and onto  
the truck's wide bed. He repeats  
the move, coaxing the contraption  
to hover over and clamp down  
on the second pile.

He corrals  
and gingerly loads it before stilling  
the crane and descending to toss  
a few remnant limbs onto the truck.  
With that, the work of no more than  
eight minutes, he revs the motor  
and drives off to forage elsewhere,  
leaving behind a scattering of twigs  
on the matted grass.

To survive  
in this world, we must set  
the machinery of our lives to grasp  
what is possible, what is at hand,  
while learning our limits and knowing  
enough to move on when we've done  
what we can, hoping to leave  
behind not perfection, but a plot  
cleaner than we found it.

## **To My Left Hand**

Ken Autrey

You've hung by me for decades,  
underworked, underappreciated, playing  
a support role without complaint.  
Deploring jewelry, despite 53 years  
of wedded bliss, I have not even graced  
your third finger with a gold band,  
although my watch marks time on the wrist  
above your freckled, age-scarred skin.  
Your thumb suffers the hammer's blow,  
your index finger the blood test's puncture.  
Sinister, gauche, stuck with a bad rap,  
you with your five wrinkled digits  
have grown as gnarled  
as your overworked partner,  
the one getting all the credit.  
Thank goodness for my guitar playing,  
where you have a chance to shine,  
forming chords, moving gamely  
to make up for lost time,  
a bleak history of neglect.

## Fireflies

Wendy Cleveland

Like stars that fall  
when day merges with night,  
fireflies flick their patterns  
across the grass, between the pines -  
eight to ten flashes of light  
then eight to ten seconds of darkness -  
and once again in the month of May  
I'm a youngster with a jar  
and hole-poked lid  
whisking through the air  
scooping bugs into a glass lair  
of grass and leaves,  
then bringing them inside  
for the night, their light show  
growing dim as I dream,  
by morning snuffed out for good.

So palpable, even now,  
that weight of naïve unknowing,  
unlike the brute meanness  
of the neighbor boy who  
detached those long black wings,  
pulled them off one at a time  
then peeled away the luminous lantern  
and crowed about its flicker,  
its glowing magic slow  
pulsing on his finger.  
I wonder these many years later, if,  
when living lights fill his yard  
and his grandchildren dance  
in the flutter of blinking bugs  
he will recall how long ago  
he stole that tiny fire  
and wore it as a ring.

## The Virgin Meets Mary

Wendy Cleveland

When my granny had one too many wines  
she lit up the party with stories only she could tell –

like the trip to the beach with a suitcase of cash for the casino  
and the ride back home with ice-packed shrimp and blue crabs,

miasma unleashing its stink as the cooler ice melted  
in the trunk of the car waiting to cross the bay.

But the story I remember best she called The Virgin Meets Mary  
about the family legend of Auntie Alyssa, a guileless bride in 1918

who was tight with nerves about seeing her new husband nude,  
his man parts revealed as he soothed her edgy nerves

with the exploration of gentle hands, words lovingly whispered,  
lulling her at last to sleep, this naked mingling new and delicious.

But in the stark sun of morning her eyes opened and fixed upon  
his shoulder wearing a heart bearing the name *Mary* in delicate font

so elegantly etched announcing in the dawn's early light a precursor,  
a flame that conjured visions of stolen rapture, deceitful ruse.

She rose and donned her robe, tearful, livid, and he, confused, stared  
as she pointed to the pitch-black name. With a tender kiss on her teary cheek

he feigned his esteem for the British battleship *HMS Queen Mary*,  
so valiant in combat against a deadly German foe.

So Alyssa learned to live with Mary, and her lover kept his tat,  
its inky truth disguised as an illusion of nautical affection.

## A

Carole Corsby

(a poem using only the 50 most common words in English)

She would say it be for his,  
But he to her, not so!

Up there, they get their all,  
at an in and out of one.

On the who, what, or when  
about my will, as if.

Do I have this with you?  
From which we go by that?

## Mama at Ninety-Seven

Carole Corsby

With grateful heart she greets each morning light.  
Alone, she could be lonely, yet she's bold;  
Sweet life to live before the coming night.

Wise eyes that face the world, shining bright,  
Thankful for this day, all it may hold.  
With grateful heart she greets each morning light.

No wish to squander hours in some fierce fight,  
Nor linger over schemes: too hot, too cold.  
Sweet life to live before the coming night.

Elder eyes perceive with clearer sight,  
An aging world, now altered from its mold.  
With hopeful heart she greets each morning light.

A day of gifting love brings her delight.  
Essence spent, shared stories all are told.  
Less life to live before the coming night.



Peace is her measure, not the heights,  
nor lows; treasures neither bought, nor sold.  
With grateful heart she greets each morning light.  
Sweet life to give into the coming night.

### **The Gift of Nick (a sestina)**

Carole Corsby

He surprises us by tumbling into our arms,  
with almost no warning, on one lovely day.  
Fetching him home, to our plywood house,  
we tuck him in gently, in a small, borrowed bed.  
Without notice or design, he reshapes our lives,  
and becomes our prime reason for being.

Past pleasures and cares of everyday being  
give way to new treasure, now in our arms.  
The rhythm of joyfully, rearranged lives  
thrum to odd beats, throughout night and day.  
While sleeping for hours, in his own little bed,  
his essence imbues every angle of the house.

Repositioning most things, in our unfinished house,  
accommodating ourselves, to this new style of being;  
gives us sweet reasons to seek early bed,  
and deep, dreamless sleep to restore and re-arm.  
Replenished, we wake to another fine day,  
of learning and earning our rewritten lives.

Before we had two; changed now, to three lives,  
bonding with love, in an incomplete house.  
We lean together, framing each day,  
surrendering ourselves to this wonder of being.  
We share three-way hugs, with wide-open arms,  
embracing delight, before crashing in bed.

No more making time to make up the bed,  
we wake, rising up to get on with our lives.  
We hold thriving baby and diapers in arms,

while clutter, covertly, wolfs down the house.  
Returning to old jobs, new living and being,  
leaves our nurturing nanny to tend him all day.

It's rough, leaving him at home every day,  
not present at nap time, to lie him in bed.  
It's hard on our hearts, this new/old way of being.  
Work becomes tedious, in these richer lives.  
We're earning while yearning to return to our house,  
and hold him again, again close in our arms.

As each day appears, we make peace with these lives,  
rising early from bed, and quitting the house,  
swiftly being, while waiting, to return to his arms.

## **Altar Call**

Bill Deutsch

The wind bloweth where it listeth  
And the congregants leave their lofty pews  
To move toward the Altar.

First a few, and then a mighty throng  
As the Spirit moves through the trees.  
Spiraling, wafting, tumbling, gliding,  
Leaves detach their cords from the Mother Tree  
And ride the currents to the Altar of the Earth.

The rhapsodic tumble of each ends abruptly  
In stillness and silence,  
A first and last dance before consumption.

Take. Eat. This is my body.  
Chew my cellulose into smaller portions for smaller mouths,  
As a mother breaks off a piece of Communion bread for her child.  
Millipedes, walk over me with your thousand legs,  
And dismember this orange-red-golden tapestry for the microbes.

Hyphae, enter my veins and extract my nutrients to redistribute to the others.  
Do this in remembrance of me,  
And next Spring may be as glorious and colorful  
As the one I remember from seven thousand years ago.

## Waiting Game

Bill Deutsch

I come upon a box turtle while strolling through an October wood.  
Before I see him, he's already perceived me, and conceals enough  
By partly raising the trap door of its plastron.  
Brown, shiny eyes stare out in Stoic silence from the cavern.

I sit and wait. Wait for an opening, a resumption of normality,  
Perhaps even a friendly greeting.

But nothing comes.  
Five, ten, fifteen minutes pass,  
And the turtle remains a domed, keratin statue.  
He then telepathically begins to speak.

*Why should I resume my day?  
I take things deliberately, and I only think inside the box.  
I spend winters in cold mud under rotting leaves, never inhaling once.  
I have been waiting for two hundred million years as a hopeful monster.  
My kind made it through the Fifth Extinction, when our larger reptilian brothers  
bit the dust.*

*I'm not in a hurry...you are.  
You rush to the Jiffy Lube...I remember Chicxulub.  
You've got the clocks...we've got the time.*

He's right.  
I grow impatient, and my monkey brain overrides my reptilian medulla.  
It's time for lunch...maybe yellow, sweet bananas.

In manic curiosity, I pick him up and the trap door closes.  
I study the shell's intricate, sculpted patterns of yellow flecked with brown.  
The front edge has a jagged notch where something tried to chew to meat.  
They failed, perhaps impatient, too.

I turn the turtle over and notice the plastron is flat,  
Lacking the bowl-shaped depression males use for mounting.  
She, not he, endures my probing with a flinty determination  
To wait me out.

## **Maybe the Dead Know**

Stephen Gresham

Kansas, my January boyhood, and  
winter inhabits our farmhouse,  
refusing to leave, writing its  
account in ice and snow and a  
frigid howl of north wind.

My father, the man who almost  
returned, sobs quietly at the kitchen table,  
my mother's hand softly, wordlessly  
on his shoulder, as if he is her son  
and not her husband.

A phantom of hope, I watch from  
the doorway, glad that the man  
made of sadness isn't aflame with  
anger; he won't strike or swear on this  
particular night.

This man, his rough hands cradling  
the face he no longer recognizes,  
carries two items on his morning  
treks to survey the property: a cup  
filled with hot coffee and a gun  
loaded with cold death.

Maybe the dead know his fate.

When first light finally arrives  
this man, my forever wounded  
father, pours his coffee and tucks his  
revolver in his belt as if readying  
to meet that which needs killing.

He walks into the deadly ever after.

His sorrow is a surrender  
surrounded by surrender. My

mother's tenderness touches a  
deeper tenderness, and something  
within me ceaselessly caresses  
both of them.

Maybe the dead know that it  
is always the hour of feeling,  
and that the only gift is knowing  
we belong to nothing.

My father will depart, tracing minutes,  
piecing together the puzzle of  
himself, knowing his humanity and  
his soul have been stolen from him,  
buried with the other Nazi victims.

I want to follow him, pursue the  
path of his unsettled longing.  
He is lost within the winds of  
no return. When he speaks, his  
is a voice in search of a face.

"Why does he cry?" I say to my  
mother. "It's that ole war," she  
murmurs. Smiles sadly at me:  
"Go on," she says. "He won't  
hurt himself if he feels you near."

I fall behind. With an eager hunger,  
I strain to catch up and hug his  
legs with my love, a love that  
maybe the dead know.

I want to step into each of his  
snowy tracks and magically  
bring him back to a place where  
I will not be the boy left behind.

Maybe the dead know how I feel.

My father. What he left behind has  
not disappeared, and the world in which  
he breathes now is never enough.

This time, this time, he finishes his  
coffee and lets me carry the cup home.  
This time, this time---thankfully---he  
does not choose to end winter and  
all his days of nameless terror.

Maybe the dead know why.  
And maybe the dead know  
the impossible moment of  
plenitude and emptiness.

Death and whatever is  
beyond the witchery of longing  
where stillness ripens deeply  
and then takes us.

One evening it took my father,  
and perhaps only the dead know  
whether he is at peace.

## **Passau**

Daydrie Hague

In Passau  
the travelers navigate  
cobble streets and expectations.

Above,  
blossoms of red umbrellas attempt cheer.

Beneath,  
the privileged scuffle with damp joints,  
contend with scaffolded cathedrals.

Nearby and in flight,  
A schoolboy  
resplendent in purple patterned wellingtons  
cavorts in puddles  
master of splashes  
the rain an invitation and embrace.



## **The Child Away**

Daydrie Hague

When you come to mind  
you are alone.  
Always alone.

You wake to see the Ukrainian Church  
framed in your Tulsa window.  
You press the clamorous alarm twice  
before you face the day.  
Your phone and ESPN on low to keep you company,  
you drink your coffee for one.

You work remotely.

On calls,  
I monitor your breathing,  
the inflections of your voice,  
the level of vitality that vibrates across the cells.

Once, I could cover you-  
assuage, reorder, lullaby your distress.  
Now, I am powerless to allay your solitude-  
one part loneliness, one part solace.  
This unused tenderness is painful, useless to us both.

To release your child is salutary, I guess.  
Is it wrong to want a guarantee that the universe is kind,  
before you trust it with that which is beloved?

## Divine Madness

by Steve Harrison

*Socrates named four forms of divine madness:  
augury, prophecy, poetry, and love.*

If we were more erudite  
and grasped the wisdom of the past,  
would we know how our souls are tied  
to our aging bodies, and what  
part of us, if any, will last?

Being ignorant, let us hold fast  
to the little we know: the light  
in the east when the sun comes up  
and the light in your eyes when you know,  
if just for a moment, that we,  
though battered, can yet be possessed  
by a madness that Socrates declared  
divine. I don't mean augury,  
though I can read the signs  
of our stiffness when we walk  
and our restraint when we drink whiskey.

Poetry still makes our hearts forget  
they have only a finite number of beats.  
And yet, our prophecies are not jolly.  
We've earned our scars. We no longer look  
to the stars for our fortunes. Socrates,  
inspired by all he thought divine,  
was a madman. But this is not Athens,  
where he deduced eternal forms;  
this is Alabama, where crickets and cicadas  
are murmuring as millennia before  
that life is furious and short.

Saffron light from streetlamps  
glows at the edge of our curtains,  
and night presses down, mingling  
the scent of your smooth skin

with those of tea olives and gardenias.

We need not speak or understand,  
for this is not wisdom, but madness and love.

### **Visiting the Past**

by Steve Harrison

When Marie Antoinette and her ladies in waiting  
retreated to her make-believe village,  
it was only a mile from the palace,  
yet it felt like a different world.  
She felt like a girl instead of a queen.

They came costumed as peasants,  
but wearing frocks of fine cotton,  
that had been carefully fitted  
by tailors in Marie's retinue.  
It was like being young in Austria,  
taking a walk with her playmates.  
Her donkey, her cow, and her rabbit  
reeked of innocence as they ate from her hand,  
and if the donkey brayed and the rooster crowed,  
there were no angry demands, no hunger  
that went unappeased. It was all  
in a spirit of fun. To imagine herself  
in an innocent world, responsible  
only to her calm beasts and to God,  
was a charming endeavor, but costly,  
as living in the past often proves to be.

When I took my granddaughters to Paris,  
we went on to Versailles, and, in imagination,  
back to seventeen-eighty-three.  
Marie Antoinette's farm was a place  
for a doomed woman's imagined self,  
but for us it was a sideshow,  
nothing like the hall of mirrors,  
with so much gold and glass,  
such long views over the lake.

## Train of Thought

Laura Henry

Astride a garden seat I bend my back  
against persistent weed  
Like my mother and hers before  
compelled to cull our plots.

Most of their names I know from childhood days  
In Valley Shenandoah  
Yet years in lovely village on the plains  
leave an unknown fierce foe.

By chance a gardener, Master Ralph,  
pens answer to my quest:  
*Phyllanthus urinaria* by many names is known:  
chamber bitter, gripeweed, shatterstone.

Each time I face this pesky enemy  
rehearse its many names,  
I'm, like a diver on a board,  
launched into deeper planes.

Ten, twenty, thirty years  
my thought goes swanning back  
to land on soft, green, backyard, lawn  
where sit four silent souls.

It's Ralph the vet, syringe in hand,  
Myself with young husband,  
and in the midst lies our sweet aged pup,  
first child and loyal friend.

They watch, they wait, they listen well,  
our dog and vet so wise,  
Our words to her encouraging,  
fondly we speak goodbyes.

Time slips away as it must do,  
tears flowing all around,  
Only when we nod in sad release  
are all four then prepared.

Away from pain and strong call of duty  
Ralph gently gives assist  
We usher her from weary world  
to dream her final chase.

My grip on gripe weed startles closed.  
Reverie snaps into now,  
as loosened, tightened memory  
plucks heartstrings taut once more.

Into the station pulls the train  
My thoughts slow to a crawl.  
Two questions float and settle there.  
Their answers can't be known -

Did Ralph find kindness, care, and peace  
such as he always gave  
when his time came to breathe his last  
and leave this world he loved?

As light faded to darkest rest  
As consciousness gave way  
was Ralph, like his beloved creatures  
ready to leave us, his pack?

## **Up in Her Mighty Room**

Scott Melville

Nowadays, a lot of people feel the need to have  
guns in their house, carry loaded guns in their  
car or rig, in their purse, or have one holstered,  
tightly strapped somewhere on their body.  
I don't think Emily Dickinson had a Spencer  
repeating carbine leaning in the Corner, or  
a Colt revolver in the drawer of her little desk,  
resting atop her scribbled poems. Nor when  
her good Day was done would she have had  
a gun under her Mattress straight or Pillow round.  
But apparently she had some kind of deadly Foe,  
toyed with the idea of handling a Loaded gun,  
having it go off Vesuvian like, and reverberate  
off the Mountains.

## **Elected Silence**

Scott Melville

Singers, still your lips,  
players put down your instruments,  
stop your horns, no strumming  
or plucking please. You cannot help me,  
not even you, not here, not now, no matter  
how clear, liquid-slow, soft and low.  
Leave me to myself, in glassy stillness,  
to thoughtful silence. Go hone your skills,  
rehearse, refine, work on something new.  
I too wish to put sweet sounds together,  
a chorus of words, something which sways,  
drifts and flows, surpasses prose.  
I have this line to untangle, as snarled,  
knotted as any fisherman's reel,  
and it must play out just so.

**Passed By**  
Scott Melville

There's this single, small-to-medium sized tree out in the middle of the median. I drive by it each week, have been doing so for years. I look for it, read its signs more than those of Dunkin' Donut and Jiffy-Lube, whether or not the Pancake House is hiring or McDonald's has brought back its McRibs. I wonder how it makes do, surrounded by pavement, pretty much encased in cement, breathing exhaust. Where do its roots go, how does it get enough water? Its never had a pleasant self-enriching bed of leaves, each one immediately whirled away or washed down the curb. No organism, in the wildest dreams of germinating nature could have foreseen, prepared for such an unearthly site. Slighted amongst the clamor and commotion, no nest was ever built, ever considered here. Off limits to squirrels, the perch of city sparrows, unvisited by ant or bee — and yet it buds and flowers, boldly leafs out again and again for me.

## Long Light Remembered

Diane Miller

As I look east at sunset, the sand gleams pearlescent.  
I walk in the nacre at the cusp of the shell  
created by the sea that laps against the quiet shore,  
where hinge is the sea horizon and flesh the pulsing wave,  
where arching heaven forms the open dome.  
Protected, I enjoy the sanctuary.

Long light of the sun paints ever-shifting patterns  
as the water seeks retreat through sparkling grains,  
like time through the very moments of my life.  
Ahead is the promise of unspoiled passage,  
no whisper of footsteps yet disturbing it.  
I stop, anticipating, poised in brief regret.

I look back to the west and see  
the blood-red sky now fading,  
pursuing, as it will, the close of day.  
The sand where I walked is marred and tumbled,  
but the water rises fast to smooth my footprints.  
It is time to turn for home along this way.

And so, reluctant, I turn and take  
the halting steps that mark again my journey,  
no more to seek the splendor and the glow  
of pristine paths still waiting to be trod.  
I glance back in yearning over tiring shoulders,  
the east behind me, yet finally, before.



## **Black Hole**

Crystal Rogers

What happens  
when 2 black holes  
swallow each other?  
Is there a gurgling sound,  
Or do they swallow  
the sound, too?  
Is a black hole  
like death,

And after that, nothing?  
Absolutely  
nothing?  
Is it a rip in time  
and space,  
Taken together, mending  
the whole thing?

Circling,  
with outstretched arms,  
Covered in sequins,  
Our galaxy speeds  
on through time,  
Cradling the hot, cold,  
Rocky, gaseous.

Welcoming all, shunning none.  
Where else would they go?  
Would you leave them alone  
in the dark, shivering?

On a cold winter evening  
Look up,  
And be thankful.

## **A poem can be**

Crystal Rogers

Hiding anywhere  
In the dark under

the trees, in a car  
wreck by the side

of the road  
in a cloud

or a wall of clouds  
rumbling in the east

A poem is a mouse that creeps  
from under the refrigerator  
with a ball of lint on its nose

Three ants struggling  
to carry a worm home

Chiggers  
on the eyelids of a turtle.

Sometimes on Tuesdays,  
bits of poems fall

from the clouds, thick as rain.  
Once there was a poem

caught in the claws of my  
father's hammer and another

one in the drill  
where the bit should go.

I have never seen a poem  
with my eyes, only with my heart.

It may take time, sometimes  
years, for my heart

to see a poem  
my eyes forgot.

When a poem  
comes to me, I sit down

no matter the traffic,  
lest it disappear before

I can shake its hand. Poetry is  
a dangerous way

to live, but if I die  
with a poem

in my heart,  
I will not regret it.

## What Does Poetry Do?

Mary Ann Rygiel

*When that I was and a little tiny boy,  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,  
A foolish thing was but a toy,  
For the rain it raineth every day.*

Feste's song, *Twelfth Night*

When we were children, everything was new  
On that first day—books, pencils, erasers,  
Shoes—the nicest Buster Brown tie shoes with two tones,  
Or blue suede tie shoes, some kind of sensible shoe,  
Shiny loafers that needed to be polished on Sunday morning.  
Book bags, lunch pails, socks, uniforms, white blouses.  
With luck, our teachers gave us book covers.  
Otherwise, we had to use paper bags  
Carefully cut and fit, with names bold and proud  
Or shy and demure. But either way  
Our whole future was at stake that first day.

Now things are more cerebral, less sensory,  
It's not portentous. Or is it?  
Why do we study and write poetry?  
Our teacher gave us a list of reasons  
On the first class day.  
All were excellent and motivated me.  
Yesterday, we even heard another:  
Poetry solves problems.

Was Euclid ever "*and a little, tiny boy*"?  
He cast a long shadow on mathematics  
Which was fit and proper  
He started with a little,  
A couple definitions, axioms,  
And assumptions,  
And built a big edifice  
That was pretty air-tight  
Until the arrival of owl-eyed Riemann  
Who could see through cracks in Euclid's shadow,  
And who imagined space differently.

So, if one thing poetry is for  
Is to solve problems,  
Poets, you start with a little,  
Say a man and a woman,

And you can build a lot  
From that premise,  
You don't even need new shoes  
To do your building.  
If there's wind and rain, all the better!

## **The Bravery of Tragedians**

Mary Ann Rygiel

Tragedians do not break up their lines  
To weep, even in the worst of times.  
Lear and Cordelia could talk and laugh  
At who's in, who's out, always something  
At court. Those up, come down. Those down, fly up.  
Fortune's wheel keeps turning, never stopping.

Consolation beyond this knowing  
Comes from pure, deep springs in the earth.  
The decent there when needed, Lear's Tom,  
In disguise, standing ready to serve.  
He disappears after Act III  
Critics find it a mystery.  
Why though? My brother, who was wise,  
Once said, "You have some people only for a time."

Like Simon, in town from Cyrene  
On the Mediterranean coast of Africa  
Placed there by a Ptolemy  
In a dispersion.

Pressed into service to help Someone  
going to a Roman execution  
His wounds streaming from their flogging  
After judgment by a second rate judge  
Good at little beyond hand washing  
Pushed by the rioting crowd  
So he could hang on to being up, not down  
It wouldn't help the judge if Rome heard.

Rufus and Alexander, Simon's sons,  
Were followers of the Man on the cross  
Who said he would make all things new  
A man on another cross said  
He did nothing wrong  
And asked to be included in his kingdom.  
No longer fearing the judge, the crowd, and Rome.

## Marking Time

William Tolliver Squires

A moment may be all you have  
when flint and steel are struck.  
A spark ignites, a fuse is lit,  
like shattered glass a day breaks.  
*Imagine a boy falling out of the sky.*

Within a moment, the present  
widens and narrows at once---  
ice and rain thunder on a tin roof,  
streams run clear over polished stone,  
breezes stir, and moths are drawn to light.

I puzzle words, making marks,  
inscribing lines that disappear.  
Impressions fade to nothingness,  
blank and whispered pages scatter.  
*Emptiness has an exquisite function.*

I remark the time at ten-fifteen,  
and find myself in middle-space  
where neither early nor late persists.  
Paused between hither and yon,  
I am held in the sway of timelessness.

Pedals turn, and I take flight  
circling the Earth on an exercise bike.  
I am spinning toward sublimity.  
Memory fading, and recall passing,  
my water boils in an empty pot.

## **The Persistence of Memory**

William Tolliver Squires

In Dali's imagery of desolation,  
Dreams meld with yielding fate.

Time hangs like *Monday's wash*.  
Ants creep across an orange clock.

Soft watches conjure duration by  
Incantation and silly-putty craft.

Overhead, a slow fan idly twiddles.  
A fly sits on a melting camembert.

Sleeper awake to wind, weather,  
*Shifting seas and yeasty waters*.

*Step through a window, make time fly.*  
*Time is just one freckle past a hair.*

## **A Fantasy in Sepia**

Bill Wilson

You're brown, and you are beautiful, my Love—  
a gift most likely given by a god  
who deigned to bless mere mortals from above—  
else who would pity me, an earth-bound clod?

But gift was giv'n; grateful, I rejoice  
my nut-brown boon to savor and enjoy.  
Poor poetaster, I dare give you voice,  
who'd be master, but in skill mere boy.

Each day you're mine you fill my happy heart.  
You warm my body and enrich my soul.  
A bounteous treasure daily you impart.  
I savor you. Your richness makes me whole.

My empress, goddess, Venus, and my queen!  
Oh, how I love my coffee, my caffeine!

## **Irish Ancestors**

Bill Wilson

I stand where my grandparents lay—  
in a ruined graveyard  
littered with tumbled stones,  
a centuries-old churchyard  
long since fallen to ruin.  
No crucified Christ is worshipped here.  
No yawling babe feels the wet chill of Baptismal water.  
Lichen and mildew obscure aged words on ancient markers.  
Long-dead ancestors, effaced by time, already anonymous,  
are lost to me— obscured uncles and aunts  
I have never known and will never know.

A recent marker from my Aunt Hannah stands out,  
Dark marble shines forth oddly amid the time-wrecked sandstone.  
Boldly the words announce “Erected by Hannah Wilson Doherty  
in loving memory of her parents, William & Mary Ann Wilson.”  
Thank you, Aunt Hannah. I knew you. You knew  
William and Mary Ann and long-dead siblings,  
names no longer legible on moss-laden stones.

My time will come—ashes interred in a hillside in West Virginia  
or in a new-built columbarium in Alabama.  
Where matters little. When matters not at all.  
My last day is already written  
in some celestial calendar. The date lies beyond my ken.  
Will I then have some Hannah Doherty  
to immortalize me?