

Poetry Potluck Thanksgiving Celebration November 12, 2025

A Christmas Carol

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim, worship night and day,
Breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels fall before,
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

Japanese Lullaby

Eugene Field (1850-1895)

Sleep, little pigeon, and fold your wings,—
Little blue pigeon with velvet eyes;
Sleep to the singing of mother-bird swinging—
Swinging the nest where her little one lies.

Away out yonder I see a star,—
Silvery star with a tinkling song;
To the soft dew falling I hear it calling—
Calling and tinkling the night along.

In through the window a moonbeam comes,—
Little gold moonbeam with misty wings;
All silently creeping, it asks, "Is he sleeping—"

Sleeping and dreaming while mother sings?"

Up from the sea there floats the sob
Of the waves that are breaking upon the shore,
As though they were groaning in anguish, and moaning—
Bemoaning the ship that shall come no more.

But sleep, little pigeon, and fold your wings,—
Little blue pigeon with mournful eyes;
Am I not singing?—see, I am swinging—
Swinging the nest where my darling lies.

In a Station of the Metro

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.

The Lammas Hireling

Ian Duhig (1954)

After the fair, I'd still a light heart
and a heavy purse, he struck so cheap.
And cattle doted on him: in his time
mine only dropped heifers, fat as cream.
Yields doubled. I grew fond of company
that knew when to shut up. Then one night,

disturbed from dreams of my dear late wife,
I hunted down her torn voice to his pale form.
Stock-still in the light from the dark lantern,
stark-naked but for one bloody boot of fox-trap,
I knew him a warlock, a cow with leather horns.
To go into the hare gets you muckle sorrow,

the wisdom runs, muckle care. I levelled
and blew the small hour through his heart.
The moon came out. By its yellow witness
I saw him fur over like a stone mossing.
His lovely head thinned. His top lip gathered.
His eyes rose like bread. I carried him

in a sack that grew lighter at every step
and dropped him from a bridge. There was no
splash. Now my herd's elf-shot. I don't dream

but spend my nights casting ball from half-crowns
and my days here. Bless me Father for I have sinned.
It has been an hour since my last confession.

A Note on Animals

N. Scott Momaday

Do elephants quest? I have seen them lumbering with purpose. Young foxes are so bold as to tease large predatory birds. Ravens watch. Penguins are poker-faced comedians, The Little Tramps of the polar ice. North of Greenland's dog equator, the dogs are alert even as they sleep. Teddy bears are cute and cuddly. Real bears are humiliated. Horses are majestic; the head of a blooded horse is among the most noble images in the world. Within every tropical bush the promise of an iguana. The buffalo is the animal representation of the sun. The nature of whales is Godlike. Of all creatures the mosquito is the most irritating and the least necessary. Cats are more dangerous and less intelligent than they appear. Dogs are less dangerous and more intelligent than they appear. The pedigree of dogs is the most distinguished; all dogs are descended from wolves. Wolves are superior and misunderstood. Snakes are the wise Keepers of the underworld. The less said about marmots, the better. Man is the most arrogant of the apes.

#599 Emily Dickinson (Franklin)

There is a pain - so utter
It swallows substance up -
Then covers the Abyss with Trance -
So Memory can step
Around - across - upon it -
As one within a Swoon -
Goes safely - where an open eye -
Would drop Him - Bone by Bone

#403 Emily Dickinson (Franklin)

I reason, Earth is short -
And Anguish - absolute -

And many hurt
But, what of that?

I reason, we could die -
The best Vitality
Cannot excel Decay
But, what of that?

I reason, that in Heaven -
Somehow, it will be even
Some new Equation, given -
But, what of that?

Shrinking Woman

By Lily Meyers

Across from me at the kitchen table, my mother smiles over red wine that she drinks out of a measuring glass. She says she doesn't deprive herself, but I've learned to find nuance in every movement of her fork. In every crinkle in her brow as she offers me the uneaten pieces on her plate. I've realized she only eats dinner when I suggest it. I wonder what she does when I'm not there to do so.

Maybe this is why my house feels bigger each time I return; it's proportional.

As she shrinks the space around her seems increasingly vast. She wanes while my father waxes. His stomach has grown round with wine, late nights, oysters, poetry. A new girlfriend who was overweight as a teenager, but my dad reports that now she's "crazy about fruit." It was the same with his parents; as my grandmother became frail and angular her husband swelled to red round cheeks, round stomach, and I wonder if my lineage is one of women shrinking, making space for the entrance of men into their lives

not knowing how to fill it back up once they leave.

I have been taught accommodation. My brother never thinks before he speaks. I have been taught to filter. "How can anyone have a relationship to food?" he asks, laughing, as I eat the black bean soup I chose for its lack of carbs. I want to say: we come from difference, Jonas, you have been taught to grow out, I have been taught to grow in. You learned from our father how to emit, how to produce, to roll each thought off your tongue with confidence, you used to lose your voice every other week from shouting so much. I learned to absorb. I took lessons from our mother in creating space around myself. I learned to read the knots in her forehead while the guys went out for oysters, and I never meant to replicate her, but spend enough time sitting across from someone and you pick up their habits-

Stanzas for Music

Lord George Gordon Byron

They say that Hope is happiness
But genuine Love must prize the past;
And Mem'ry wakes the thoughts that bless:
They rose first -- they set the last.

And all that mem'ry loves the most
Was once our only hope to be:
And all that hope adored and lost
Hath melted into memory.

Alas! It is delusion all--
The future cheats us from afar:
Nor can we be what we recall,
Nor dare we think on what we are.

A Letter to Lord Byron

W.H. Auden

You could not shock her more than she shocks me;

Beside her Joyce seems innocent as grass.

It makes me most uncomfortable to see

An English spinster of the middle-class

Describe the amorous effects of 'brass',

Reveal so frankly and with such sobriety

The economic basis of society.