

CLASS TWO: PASSION FOR NATURE

WHEN I AM AMONG THE TREES

---Mary Oliver

When I am among the trees,
Especially the willows and the honey locust,
Equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
They give off such hints of gladness,
I would almost say they save me, and daily.

I am so distant from the hope of myself
In which I have goodness and discernment,
And never hurry through the world
But walk slowly, and bow often.

Around me, the trees stir in their leaves
And call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.

And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
And you too have come
Into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
With light, and to shine.

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SEA FEVER

John Masefield

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trip's over.

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WHEN DEATH COMES

---Mary Oliver

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox;

when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

When it's over I want to say all my life
I was a bride married to amazement
I was the bridegroom taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
If I have made of my life something particular
And real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
Or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply to have visited this world.

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STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

----Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though:
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

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ON PILGRIMAGE

Czeslaw Milosz

English version by Czeslaw Milosz and Robert Hass
Original Language Polish

May the smell of thyme and lavender accompany us on our journey
To a province that does not know how lucky it is
For it was, among all the hidden corners of the earth,
The only one chosen and visited.

We tended toward the Place but no signs led there.
Till it revealed itself in a pastoral valley
Between mountains that look older than memory,
By a narrow river humming at the grotto.

May the taste of wine and roast meat stay with us
As it did when we used to feast in the clearings,
Searching, not finding, gathering rumors,
Always comforted by the brightness of the day.

May the gentle mountains and the bells of the flocks
Remind us of everything we have lost,
For we have seen on our way and fallen in love
With the world that will pass in a twinkling.

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MUDDTIME

Marcy Heidish

Celebrate this season
when winter melts away;
trees dance in the wind
and earth is unlocked.

Suddenly, it seems to me,
nature is awakening:
daffodils rise inside
the coil of a garden hose;

Where it can, the ground
fills in our footprints--
you note their patterns,
bold marks of recent rain.

Look away, look again,
and you see a green haze
so ghostly it eludes you
when you stare too hard.

Here is a pocket of days
conducive to thought;
you can hear voices and
bells and returning birds

before saws and mowers
bite the air once again
before a flurry of cleaning,
before that rush of repairs.

Mudtime: beckoning to us,
pulling hair, tugging hems,
prankish, antic and alive,
demanding renewed joy.

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THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

William Butler Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

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LEAVING IRELAND

Marcy Heidish

We could not stop its
coming, our last day
in Ireland, in Kilcree.

Too soon the darkness
drained away like ink
poured into earth and
the sky turned the color
of our father's eyes.

And soon the sunrise
melting like butter over
fields and rock walls,
stone laid on stone by
hands long gone to dust.

Beyond, the pastures'
blue-green haze where
cows appeared to float
as if at sea and grasses
sparked with flowers,
reds hot as embers,
yellows like cat's eyes.

Out with us then, our

packing yet undone,
to have a wander in
the wet glitter of grass
and didn't we beg each
each branch and bush
to wait for us, to will us,
woo us back to Kilcree?

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DUSK ON CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN
Marcy Heidish

Evening deepens down to indigo
and takes into itself the pine trees;
melting needles, blurring branches,
finally dissolving every aged trunk,
until these woods, that sky are one.

Across a spreading sea of night
my house floats like a party hat,
a gaudy thing, a fragile thing, set
against the elegant simplicity of
black, unbound and bottomless.

Darkness washes over boulders,
over brush, over the backbone,
the shoulders and the skull
of this pensive mountain,
where time does not exist.

I hope for stories that repeat
themselves here if I can wait;
if I allow the darkness to reveal
what can't be heard at noontide:
the mountain's knowing voice.

Cupped in candlelight I sit
on my deck, hoping to hear it;
but not a word slides across the
eons to me until I lean down
and put out my own light.

Then I give myself over to this

place where silence speaks and
black is the rarest form of white.
Now I am one with the mountain
as we go into the ocean of night.