

College Guild

P.O. Box 6448, Brunswick, ME 04011

POETRY CLUB II

Unit 5 of 7

Poems from the book, *This Art: Poems About Poetry*

This unit contains a selection of three poems from the book, *This Art: Poems About Poetry*. As you read each poem, consider what the poets are saying about writing poetry. What inspires their poems? How does writing poetry change or affect the way they see the world? How does writing poetry change or affect them as people?

1. Carefully read each poem. As you have in each previous unit, discuss all three.

2. Write four original poems of your own.

RECORDING THE SPIRIT VOICES

In the hollow below the hill vaults
I have placed a recorder
on the grave of a young woman killed in a fire
and have crouched under the arm of this angel
to wait for voices,
tree frogs whirring through the blue pines,
the Ocmulgee lapping the bank at the foot of Rose Hill.

So am I now
as leaves in the hollow rustle their dry tongues:
afraid to hear a woman scream from a burning house,
to record some evidence her tombstone lied,
bury the truth the angels stand on: *born* and *died*.

- David Bottoms

A gray moon over the Confederate graves
gleams on the water,
the white gallon jugs floating some man's trotline.
Like me, he's trying to bring things to the surface
where they don't belong.

And across the river
blue needles rasp like the voices
I heard on the television,
the documented whispers of spirits, *I'm afraid here, I'm afraid*.

ON EXPLORATION

A hawk drops to the treetop
 Like a falling cross.
 The haybarn is ticking.
 The Universe has everything.
 That's what I like about it.
 A single chubby cloud
 Beelines downwind
 Trying to catch up with the others.

Yellow leaves plane across the water,
 Drifting the inlet.
 The pond is a droozy eye.
 Details tend to equal each other,
 Making decisions harder.
 Is polio and endangered species?
 The Universe is mostly empty,
 That's important;
 A fractal palindrome of concentric

Emptinesses.
 Is there life out there?
 Are there lawns?
 Columbus is famous for discovering a place
 Where there were already people
 Killing each other.
 Nothing missing. Nothing new.

Let's pick wildflowers
 Let's take a meteor shower.
 Let's live forever and let's die, too.

- James Galvin

 POETS

Poets, minor or major, should arrange to remain slender,
 Cling to their skeletons, not batten
 On a provender, not fatten the lean spirit
 In its isolated cell, its solitary chains.
 The taut paunch ballooning in its network of veins
 Explodes from the cumberbund. The hardening artery of neck
 Cannot be masked by turtle-throated cashmere or foulard of mottled silk.

Poets, poets use rags instead; use rags and consider
 That Poe did not lie in the morgue swathed
 Beyond recognition in fat. Consider on this late March
 Afternoon, with violet and crocus outside, fragile as glass,
 That the music of Marianne Moore's small polished bones
 Was not muffled, the score not lost between thighs as black as bass-fiddles
 Or cat-gut muted by dropsy. Baudelaire did not throttle on corpulence,
 Rimbaud not strangle on his own grease. In the unleafed trees, as I write,
 Birds flicker, lighter than lace. They are the lean spirit,
 Beaks asking for crumbs, their voices like reeds.

William Carlos Williams sat close, close to the table always, always
 Close to the typewriter keys, his body not held at bay by a drawbridge of flesh
 Under doctor's dress, no gangway to lower, letting the sauces,
 The starches, the strong liquor, enter and exit
 With bugles blowing. Over and over he was struck thin.
 By the mallet of beauty, the switchblade of sorrow, died slim as a gondola,
 Died curved like the fine neck of a swan.

These were not gagged, strangled, outdone by the presence
 Of banquet selves. The knew words make their way through
 navel and pore,
 More weightless as thistle, as dandelion drift, unencumbered.
 Death happens to fatten on poets' glutton hearts. ("Dylan!"
 Death class, and the poet scrambles drunk and alone to what were once
 swift, bony feet,
 Casting a monstrous shadow of gargantuan flesh before he crashes.)

Poets, remember your skeletons. In youth or dotage, remain as
 light as ashes.

- Kay Boyle

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes