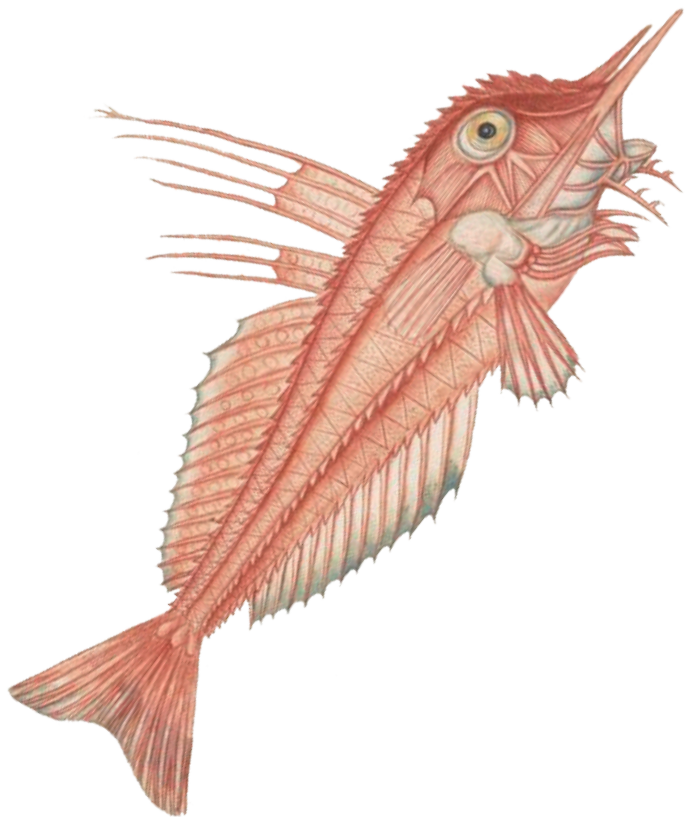


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**MARGARET DANNER**

**1915- 1984**



Poet and editor Margaret Esse Danner grew up in Chicago and was educated at Loyola University, Roosevelt College, Northwestern University, and YMCA College. She was the first African American assistant editor at *Poetry* magazine, during Henry Rago's tenure as editor. As a member of the South Side Community Art Center, she met with a group of writers that included Margaret Goss Burroughs and Gwendolyn Brooks. Danner also corresponded frequently with the poet Langston Hughes.

Her poetry often engages African artwork and culture. Her collections of poetry include *Impressions of African Art Forms* (1960), *To Flower* (1963), *Nor Light, Nor Bright, Nor Feathery* (1968), and *The Down of a Thistle: Selected Poems, Prose Poems, and Songs*

(1976) as well as the collaboration *Poem Counterpoem* (1966) with Dudley Randall. Her work was included in Langston Hughes's anthology *New Negro Poets* (1963) and in the audio recording *Poets of the Revolution* (1970), also with Langston Hughes.

Danner served as poet-in-residence at Wayne State University and LeMoyne Owen College and received the John Hay Whitney Fellowship, the Harriett Tubman Award, the Poets in Concert Award, and the African Studies Association Award. Danner joined the Baha'i faith in the 1960s. She died in Chicago in 1984, and the University of Chicago holds a selection of her papers.

—quoted in full from the [POETRY FOUNDATION](#)

## **Studies Of A Honeypeach Philosopher Of Art**

Lovers and others cliché about  
the moon without ever thinking  
upon its mold. My drifting towards this  
remote shimmer summons the "soon, June"  
temperament, shyly bold smile.

And you are so intricately with it  
that you have placed it in all  
of its light right here.

For as you strode through my doorway  
its glow rode in with the strength of the grey steel  
wool wires of your hair  
and poured its rare balm through the shadowy hall  
caressing my rooms.

Call it sun, call it moon; you have surged  
its grace into my very lap, submerged me  
in its whisperings that wrap around  
my ears interpreting until I know it; you underwrite  
my dream with its might and my eyes  
will never as gladly greet another light.

## **On The Day When Nobody Smiled**

Straight lines erased all curving  
on that day of stun,  
when the mist crushed down around the so bright one.

Yet, though taking the toll of a hurricane,  
no momentary autumn can resist vitality, or restrain  
a sun.

For, see  
everywhere his brilliance, like forsythia, regains  
perpetually.

*for Dr. Martin Luther King  
and other martyrs of our cause*

## **Prejudice**

And there like a huge scaly rat in a mesh  
hunched prejudice; this vile hyena that  
bites at the parts of its own wounded flesh  
which irk, or being weak, offend it.

It chases its tail round the trunk of a tree  
till it trails its crude head and bends  
its crude knee in the bed it has made.

It brays  
insane laughter when fat  
and brays  
insane laughter when flat.  
It is loyal to nothing, itself nor another, and has ways  
more ugly, repulsive, than that,

for nauseating to me are its co-habiting habits. It has  
no preference. Each sex is the other at will,  
and all clans are brothers in bed.  
Male begets male, female begets female,  
and hunched in bisexual orgy, they roar  
their laughter and loathsomely propagate more.  
My breath has turned sour, my stomach is wrenched and sore.

## **Witches II**

Some other witches, those more deeply dipped  
into the quinine-cauldron of their trade,  
emerge, with even wizard-tipped gestures.  
And minds, deep-dyed a brilliant emerald shade,  
with shallow eyes, and wide, enchanting smiles,  
feather manners, sweet “my loves”... “you dears”  
silk chattered nothings, big with inbred guile,  
that reassures us, quiets, foils our fears  
as we are eased along. This kind requires  
much thinking of, in order to escape.  
Yet, I have the key. Their artful fires  
do not burn deep, but like the tinsel cape,  
the artificially loving smile they wear  
if let alone, will vanish in burnt air.

Margaret Danner  
from *The Down of a Thistle*



**FRANK S. HORNE**

**1889 - 1974**

## **To Mother**

**I came  
in the blinding sweep  
of ecstatic pain,  
I go  
in the throbbing pulse  
of aching space –  
in the aeons between  
I piled upon you  
pain on pain  
ache on ache  
and yet as I go  
I shall know  
that you will grieve  
and want me back ...**

## **To all of you**

**My little stone  
sinks quickly  
into the bosom of this deep, dark pool  
of oblivion ...  
I have troubled its breast but little  
yet those far shores  
that knew me not  
will feel the fleeting, furtive kiss  
of my tiny concentric ripples ...**



## Walk

I am trying  
to learn to walk again ...  
all tensed and trembling  
I try so hard, so hard ...

Not like the headlong patter  
of new and anxious feet  
or the vigorous flailing of the water  
by young swimmers  
beating  
a new element  
into submission ...  
It is more like  
a timorous Lazarus  
commanded  
to take up the bed  
on which he died ...

I know I will walk again  
into your healing  
outstretched arms  
in answer  
to your tender command ...

I have been lost  
and fallen  
in the dark underbrush  
but I will arise  
and walk  
and find the path  
at your soft command.

## To 'Chick'

Oh Achilles of the moleskins  
and the gridiron  
do not wonder  
nor doubt that this is I  
that lies so calmly here –  
this is the same exultant beast  
that so joyously  
ran the ball with you  
in those far-flung days of abandon.  
You remember how recklessly  
we revelled in the heat and the dust  
and the swirl of conflict?  
You remember they called us  
The Terrible Two?  
And you remember  
after we had battered our heads  
and our bodies  
against the stonewall of their defense,  
you remember the signal I would call  
and how you would look at me  
in faith and admiration  
and say 'Let's go' ...  
how the lines would clash  
and strain,  
and how I would slip through  
fighting and squirming  
over the line  
to victory.

You remember, Chick?

When you gaze at me here  
let that same light  
of faith and admiration  
shine in your eyes  
for I have battered the stark stonewall  
before me ...  
I have kept faith with you  
and now  
I have called my signal,  
found my opening  
and slipped through  
fighting and squirming  
over the line  
to victory ...

## To You

All my life  
they have told me  
that You  
would save my soul  
that only  
by kneeling in Your house  
and eating of Your body  
and drinking of Your blood  
could I be born again ...  
And yet  
one night  
in the tall black shadow  
of a windy pine  
I offered up  
the Sacrifice of Body  
upon the altar  
of her breast ...  
You  
who were conceived  
without ecstasy  
or pain  
can You understand  
that I knelt last night  
in Your house  
and ate of Your body  
and drank of Your blood  
... and thought only of her?



**ART HOMER**



Art Homer was born in 1951 in the Missouri Ozarks. Many of Homer's poems are set in this landscape, as well as in the Pacific Northwest where he lived for many years before joining the Creative Writing faculty at University of Nebraska-Omaha. Homer's poetry has deep lyric affinities and resonances with the natural world. His is also a world of lost fathers, scarring childhood poverty, characters trapped within the grind of subsistence farming, factory work, broken marriages and ruptured families. But despite these themes of hardship, Homer's poems typically transcend into an exquisitely written, restorative (though ever clear eyed) grace, even as we understand how momentary such transcendence can be for his speakers. There are few poets whose work makes me feel the landscape as deeply and with such particularity as Homer's

poems do. A poetic descendent of Theodore Roethke and (his mentor) Richard Hugo, Homer was a much beloved and influential teacher for several decades at the UNO workshops. Homer is the author of *The Drownt Boy* (University of Missouri 1994) a memoir and linguistic history of the Ozarks and finalist for the AWP prize in 1993 for creative non fiction. He is also the author of two full-length poetry collections, *What We Did After Rain* (Abattoir Editions 1984) and *Skies of Such Valuable Glass* (Owl Creek, 1990).

—Erin Belieu, author of *Come Hither, Honeycomb*

## TRYING TO SLEEP

When I lie down, two breaths  
and a fish lifts off,  
nosing up from my backbone  
with the bulk of a catfish, nervous  
dart of a sculpin. I must rise,  
claw the night, dramatic sweat  
spreading into my sheet.

At the service station outside town  
the photo under glass preserves  
a ninety-two pound catfish--  
blue, not channel--  
hung between two men  
on an ironwood staff.  
Their overalls end  
in rolls above white knees.  
Their arms are bunched  
in sharp recurve.

Hooked in the mouth, a wind  
rings my porch chimes,  
unburdens night air of everything:  
pears from the tree, torpid bees  
at work in rot, vinegar smell.  
Reeled into my chest again,  
the fish becomes simply  
another disgruntled organ.  
I may sleep, ripen for dawn,  
for day's many jobs,  
the hooks and barbs.

## INCENTIVES FOR NIGHT WORK

Where we work they call the barmaid Forklift,  
work a fucking shame. I like driving swing shift  
down the corner pocket, chalking up to shoot again.

More often I miss. The foreman says two more  
then home to give the old lady something  
to live for. His moons rise hairy off the stool.

Better this, the juke box begging us to stop  
the world and let it off, than work, the steward  
lost to reason. The Mafia is out to run us,

corner the world market in widgets, he figures.  
His finger tests the broken window pane. Bullet.  
After closing Jean's, the last place we try

wants cover. The waitress never thinks it fair,  
having to ask if we're looking for love. The dancer  
still on duty doesn't care. Asks if I've seen Paris.

I've seen the old man come home late and Irish,  
hating the fifty cents an hour that makes it  
hard to get up mornings, cursing the Army.

Naples, 1946. The citizens line up to spit  
on M.P.s at the embassy. Short-changed at a bar,  
he breaks, and every beer thereafter buys dishonor.

Maybe someone's out to corner the market on dreams.  
Look at me, living it all different. I remember  
his terrible fists swinging back like a broken gate.

It's me now coming home, finding it funny  
some mistaken skunk has drifted by to check  
a leak at the gas reservoir two blocks away--

nose and tail aloft for love or war.

## SUMMER SOLSTICE

Still cool enough for crickets, the morning  
creaks toward my back porch. The garbled  
dialect of starlings describes a town  
so set in its ways that a local who paints  
his house blue, returns from vacation  
to find it white again. The spruce,  
like birds, are introduced. Not so black crickets  
omnipresent in discarded charcoal bags  
and grass clippings molding in sun.

We love here, when we can bear the heat,  
working out a tenuous truce with church  
and state, a peace with the lawns of the rich,  
though they accuse us through the goggle-eyed  
stares of cast iron stable boys. We grow  
gardens. Tomatoes and peppers burn our palates  
in season, but grow so well we can't stop using them.  
In spring we find one morel so large  
we slice it into stuffing for two omelettes.  
See how our lives proscribe us? Wherever we walk  
we are home, no matter that we'll die  
and be buried in clay we fought from our shoes  
and out from the base of our tongues.

The grass is gone to seed. Sun gathers crickets  
crossing the walk, their color walnut,  
cross-grained when seen in the light. Truly black  
are the squirrels knocking undersized pears  
into the grass. The first fruits of the year  
disappoint. Small and hard, they are as nicely  
formed as our hearts. We might can them,  
though we know where a dozen quarts  
pale in a cellar. Past the windmill impaled  
by a maple, the abandoned farmyard awaits  
the Caterpillar, come to terrace the field.  
On shelves, ranks of jars fester at their mouths  
with the sweetness of summers past.

## CANOEING THE JACK'S FORK

The gar cruising in formation  
have somewhere to get to and sail  
upstream past our rented canoe.  
Oaks arch above us  
with the bronze gravity of Rodins.  
We trace the Confederacy to caves  
where the wounded screamed  
their terror into dolomite, locals  
bringing more by johnboat until wind  
or economy changed and the Union  
began dying for victory.

This is history peculiar to my eyes,  
the shade you recognize in pools  
and rapids neither of us could name,  
just as we could not say whether cliffs  
survive by the integrity of granite  
or because porous chalk accepts water.  
If I am marked by this river, each of ninety  
species of fish endemic here must hunt  
one another through my carnivorous springs.  
You call me cruel.

Our love must mount forays  
across the Mason-Dixon lines  
threading our palms, legible perhaps  
to one of the many Madams Louise  
I am too impatient to visit in Jefferson City.  
Allegory is simply another bad import,  
foreign as starlings to Pawnee water  
skipping with fry. We drift sideways:  
two broadwing hawks cry against the cliffs,  
their primaries white on sky, exhorting us  
to pry ourselves from the dead stretch.

## HOMILY FOR AUTUMN

Though I detest it, the pear  
tastes most like the time of year

I love best for its wind  
and the way it leaves behind

leaves and the rags of horizon  
to sink with the last of the garden

back into last year's marl.  
A great owl of sleep takes the squirrel

with the notched tail to nest.  
Trees hurl their fruit across the grass,

the swift at clouds its worried turns.  
So the homeowner rakes and burns

his small account of autumn, admires  
his work, as lies must please liars.

## INDIAN CAVES STATE MONUMENT

The red deer hangs in sandstone,  
constellation of joints in space  
smoke-worried with time: campfire  
to refinery. Billings sends envoys,  
drunks from graveyard shift,  
asking after bats and fishing limits.  
Ages out of season, the rimrock  
scarred by water and first thought.

Coup sticks circle the ochre hunter  
whose bones from one brief rest on earth  
were trapped in rock. Ignorant as stone,  
I reach for that simple hand  
branching stiffly from his arm--  
fingers on bowstring confused,  
though his stance is sure.

Light shift from a distant star implies  
these older figures drawn in black  
truly hesitate, travel deeper into rock.  
in the further shift of time, accretions  
frozen in the arch of sandstone form  
phases of a single moon. Lonely for sea,  
I am desperate to watch again the stars  
reach water at their ease, recede,  
gutter in low mist, turn red and dim.



Covered Bridge at Elk Run Creek

NO one meant it to be lovely. You might  
mistake it for a barn, white, its black arch  
taking up road. Alders boil in wind above  
the cedar shakes. Driving out from Loon Lake,  
sun low in your mirror, you know the man  
who put it there wasn't thinking cattle  
in the fields, girl on horseback riding  
out of shadow. Timber was cheap, buckled  
in rain that weighed these ridges off their  
bedrock. Logging roads sweep hills of second  
growth like searchlights. A high rig  
passed this way, and in a lapse, the trimmer  
left one branch to take out slats.

The creek still passes anybody's door.  
Truck farms try and some produce. A few  
bright settlers brought cows, but most a habit  
for seasonal work and river. The only light  
is rain, trees shadowed dry to lee side.  
As long as upkeep is paint every other year,  
chainsaw for the rotten joist, the bridge  
can stay. Scenic guidebooks don't list it  
and weather never cared. At night, or years  
I've been away, something—rain, economy—  
may have taken it. History will still be gray,  
water-stained as photos in Coos Bay Museum.  
Oxen, fat as fog, drew water in the logs  
they hauled, and no one moves to the Coast Range  
hunting for love.

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Autumnal for a Friend in the Desert

TREES mean business when they  
say fall. Smoke is loitering  
in my house. Outside, the sky  
will not be serious. I've been  
wrong about the clouds before.  
Here it is, autumn. My small fire  
prays for leaves and clouds.  
They can't stay up there forever.

The leaves know that, moon  
too yellow for this time of year.  
Yes, now I'm sure. Clouds  
are simple and do not care,  
their affairs Platonic, ideal  
in this respect. It would be wrong  
of trees to want to be like clouds.  
Yet they are.

Between trees, the field  
is stuck in my window. A chestnut horse  
grazes like a huge bassoon gulping air.  
His perfect lips are luminous  
with hair. He passes through  
staves in the window frame. Not so,  
the tall blond aspen blushing  
against a flat blue patch.  
The slightest breeze will set  
the thin wrists flapping, leaves  
waving all the way to earth.

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This bright rhythm of the brain  
dodges frequency, a wreck  
driven blind by the headlights  
of the oncoming lane. Damnation  
written in his nerves, the driver

weaves home, choking on his tongue.  
Inheritance ties itself through flesh,  
simple as the wicker handcuffs  
barkers sell at carnival. The harder  
I pull, the tighter the weave.

Touching my fingers together,  
the loose shackles fall away.  
Why are my hands steady? Light  
trembles in leaves, in delicate  
ears of two mule deer.

Even my heart  
stumbles, another father dissolved  
in moments of not-looking,  
lost in the strobe of trains  
speeding for opposite states.

Indifferent son, I palm loose duff,  
split the good grain, and watch it  
unravel in the mad dance of fire.

### A Child's Fear of Numbers

TO judge the height of trees, I'd find my own,  
compare the length of shadows for a scale.  
The way the missing piece fit what was known  
was just the way light draws a triangle.

I don't know what it taught to pace the pear  
tree off across the yard. I'd forget  
more important things: the rule for square  
roots or how the neighbor kids got beat.

When I was four foot eight, my favorite trees  
were always over forty. Maybe I  
learned something's not quite perfect. Even leaves  
can't forget their origins. To try

this exercise yourself, think how rule one  
says none of this will work without the sun.



**FRANK X. GASPAR**

One of my missions in life is introducing Frank Gaspar's poetry to a wider audience.

Frank X. Gaspar was born and raised in the old Portuguese West End of Provincetown, Massachusetts. A graduate of the MFA program in writing at the University of California, Irvine, he is the author of six collections of poetry, including *The Poems of Renata Ferreira* (Tagus Press, 2020), *Late Rapturous* (Autumn House Press, 2012), *Night of a Thousand Blossoms* (Alice James Books, 2004), and *A Field Guide to the Heavens* (Wisconsin University Press, 1999). Among his many awards are the Morse, Anhinga, and Brittingham Prizes for poetry, multiple inclusions in Best American Poetry, four Pushcart Prizes, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Literature, and a California Arts Council Fellowship in poetry. His debut novel, *Leaving Pico* was a Barnes and Noble Discovery Prize winner, a recipient of the California

Book Award for First Fiction and a New York Times Notable Book (paperback edition). His second novel *Stealing Fatima* was a Massachusetts Book of the Year in Fiction (Massachusetts Foundation for the Book). His work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Nation*, *The Harvard Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and others.

He has taught at Long Beach City College, in the Graduate Writing Program at Antioch University, and he held the Helio and Amelia Pedrosa/Luso-American Foundation Endowed Chair at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. Currently he teaches in the low-residency MFA program at Pacific University.

Frank's poems are ecstatic and generous, full of everything from a bowl of soup to the stars, overflowing with paradox and praise. They're poems that make you grateful for the things of the world, for language and the willingness of the poet to work to shape that language, for the way one soul can speak to and for another, weaving rapture and despair, chaos and holiness. Frank Gaspar is a poet who can not only get you through the night, but can wake you up to see the day more vividly than you've ever seen it before.

—Ellen Bass, author of *Indigo*



## LATE RAPTUREOUS

Well, the cold iron wind and the Hudson River from whence it blew, thirteen degrees on all the instruments and water in my eyes, but there was a fire someplace, it made my ears burn and sting, and me buffoonish in my old dirty down parka that I used to sleep in up in the Sierras with my little tent in the snow—I'd go in on skis by myself and write haiku in the candlelight because I believed such things would improve my inner being. But now I was leaning sideways walking up to 54th street to finally have a look at the de Koonings. I don't know what I expected, I don't know what I was looking for exactly, except that I'd seen too many prints, too many cramped photos, and I wanted the full brunt of it, that late rapturous style, that sexual confrontation that I'd read so much about, the crazy man in the Fourth Avenue loft before lofts were ever cool, drinking and working, working, re-working, wrapping paintings in wet newspaper so he could rub things out the next day and start over and over and over, yes, it was that, I will admit it, I wanted to stand in the presence of the real thing and feel it—it's never the aboutness of anything but the wailing underneath it, and there was a pain behind my heart and some kind of weird music inside my ears, so that riding up in the escalators, there came a slow panic at the swirl of a woman's long skirt, or a man's head turned at just the right moment—no explaining the sources of this, not the smells of body heat and heavy coats, though I know that every time you run toward something you love, you run away from it too, you get blinded by the colors or you miss something important and the moment collapses and takes whole worlds with it, forever, into some kind of blackness. It was crowded, that room, but almost everybody was just passing through and I found I could walk right up to those canvasses, and I believe I could have laid hands on them before anyone jumped me, but of course I just leaned and stared. I don't know how long. It didn't matter. What I needed was to take them with me and slant them against a wall someplace safe and curl up next to them at night instead of trying to sleep. It would be the only way. Back outside, I staggered up against the wind and it blew my tears back, and I finally ducked into a little place selling hot soup in paper bowls, and everyone was taking something off or putting something on—they were all talking and moving like they knew absolutely

how to spend every hour of their lives, and not in darkness, either, or in despair or regret, and when I could see that the winter dusk was running to silver against the high roofs and towers, I stepped out again into the street, the shiny cabs cruising and the men and women bundled in long coats and bright scarves, and the hundreds of windows of the city's dark pavilions each showing its square of yellow light, and I walked back into that other kingdom.

## THE ONE GOD IS MYSTERIOUS

*from an illustration of Babylonian sculpture*

The king and his queen are feasting.  
They recline, sumptuously, on long divans  
and are attended by naked servants. They  
can have anything they want, this much is  
clear, and I believe they have been having  
sex with one another and with the servants.  
Why wouldn't they? Who among the servants  
would not be honored to help? And it's Babylon  
after all, and doesn't Babylon exist in your  
memory? Isn't Babylon the clear rumbling  
of your heart at ease with its every craving--  
not the way it is now, fenced off with spiked wire  
and old pipes, with signs telling the pedestrians  
to beware: the litter, the old cans rusting. No,  
this is my own memory of excess and extravagance,  
of abandonment to the weight of everything  
that pulls me down to ruin, those same ticks  
and voices that lift me up and fill me with breath.  
And don't you want to drink the breath of your  
beloved? And his beloved? And her beloved?  
You see how it goes. The One God is mysterious  
and He has made me crazy. Maybe I am the king  
or the queen. Or one of those sculpted figures  
that bend so sweetly toward them, so graceful,  
so finely formed and desirable in every way.  
I remember being desired like that, and desiring  
like that also. And I remember my heart in its deep  
voice, commanding. Now that my common neighborhood  
is tucked in for the night, the cars parked in the driveways,  
the blinds drawn and everyone's drapes closed and the garage  
doors locked, I can breathe easier. Now, in Babylon,  
you see what is possible. The queen and her king are  
dining, forever, in a gray frieze, but even so, they make  
a fire in us, they free the ache from my shoulders,  
they make every dark wish lie down with every bright wish,  
they bring a great comfort to the harried in this land.

## ONE THOUSAND BLOSSOMS

Well, is it really wise to search for guidance in a small room  
cluttered with books and papers, with a glass of whiskey  
and a box of wheat crackers, with my eyes ticking like  
the brass tide-clock on the plaster wall? When the house sleeps  
huddled in the city's jasmine night? Night of a thousand blossoms  
I can't name? Night of a soft marine layer, Pacific fog  
hanging about a hundred yards up, a gauze, a parchment?  
I am hidden thus from my duties, I can escape the moral law.  
Isn't it written, didn't Lord Krishna himself say that we mustn't  
relinquish the action we are born to, even if it is flawed?  
Didn't he say a fire is obscured by smoke? You can't see far  
into the city on a night like this, the blanket, the cool smell  
of the sea, the dampness that sits like velvet on the rose bushes  
and the African lilies and the fenders of the neighbor's truck.  
You don't want less love--this ground has been covered before--  
you want more love, even when you can't say what it means,  
even though it binds you to the world, which you can only lose.  
Then it is jasmine in the night, night of a thousand blossoms,  
and my wife in one room breathing and my son in one room  
breathing, and me in one room breathing. It's how loving this  
place comes, slowly, and then suddenly with great surprise, and then  
vanishing again into mystery. Am I dreaming all of this? Is that  
a train's long whistle riding the heavenly fog? Am I drunk again  
on holy books and the late hours? Now a car rolls down the street,  
filling it with light then emptying it again. It's like that. Just like that.

## JUNE/JULY—ELEVEN BLACK NOTEBOOKS AT THE DESERT QUEEN MOTEL

Then night again. The dry lightning like artillery over the far reefs  
of stone and the thunder-god shearing the air—all the gods in foment  
and calamity, but it is not enough. The rumble and rupture, the shattering.  
Out there in the wilderness. Isaiah, Ezra, their lamentations, insufficient  
in the madness, and me with my tall can of iced beer leaning  
at the railing outside my door, like at the taffrail of a ship, but instead  
of the big turbines thrumming on blackoil, now only the small throats  
of the air conditioners gagging and moaning. The cold aluminum sweats  
in my hand, and I'm pleased for this small miracle, water out of the  
cracked desert air, but it is not enough. My happiness now, with the  
work coming forth in fits and then gouts, is not enough, for it saves  
nothing, yet it is a happiness after all, and therefore inexplicable.  
The stars crowd one another out of their familiar lines. The arm  
of the galaxy, its bright muscle against the belly of the sky. Not enough.  
My heart full or empty, not enough. Now, to set something down in  
the midst of folly, one true word, one simple cry out of the black arroyos  
and dangerous washes, the canyons, the granite redoubts, but the lone sob  
of the desert hen is not enough, the television's mangled voices creeping  
through the drywall and stucco are not enough, and I am running out of  
time and money, always time and money. And love, I don't forget love,  
but it's not enough either, it doesn't save anything, the graves open for all  
the beloved to lie down in and all the despised as well, and it is still not enough.  
Stepping back into the cramped room I think of that ship again. How a ship will  
Fit into the poem at this juncture. Perhaps my own ship from that other time.  
One hundred thousand tons of death and empire. Grand under my feet. Rolling  
with the long ocean swells. Sky like desert sky, shot with the unutterable trillions.  
And the engines banging forward blindly. Into that darkness. Under that blaze.

## QUAHOGS

It was for the wind as much as anything.  
It was for the tidal flats, for the miles of bars  
and the freezing runs between them,  
blued and darkened in the withering gusts.  
For the buckets, for the long-tined rakes.  
For our skin burning and the bones  
beneath, all their ache. For the bent backs,  
for the huddle toward warmth beneath  
our incapable layers, how we beat  
ourselves with our arms. The breath  
we blew, the narrow steam that spun away.  
How we searched their tell-draggle marks.  
Then the feel of them as we furrowed. Then it  
was surgery and force together. Like stones.  
Opal or pearl or plain rock, ugly except  
they were beautiful, their whorls and  
purple stains. The bucket's wire cutting  
with their weight. For the sky blazing, its  
sinking orange fire. For the sky's black streaks  
with night rising, winter-sudden. Back,  
shoreward, home, the tide creeping like a wolf.  
For the little stove warming, its own orange fire.  
The old pot, the steam, the air in savor,  
the close room, the precious butter, the  
blue fingers throbbing, our bodies in all  
the customs of weariness, the supper,  
succulent of the freezing dark sea come up,  
and hunger, its own happiness, its own  
domain immeasurable. It was for the hunger.



**YONE NOGUCHI**

**1875 - 1947**

I first learned about Yone Noguchi by accident—I was reading about his son, the sculptor, Isamu Noguchi who was known for experimentation and his work in ceramics, drawings, lighting, and furniture (he designed the beautiful mid-century IN-50 coffee table for Herman Miller). Once I started researching Isamu's father, I learned that he was the first Japanese-born poet to publish in the English-language. He was born in 1875 and moved to San Francisco in 1893 where he worked as a journalist and as the live-in handyman/domestic servant for the poet-adventurer Joaquin Miller. Miller helped Noguchi focus on writing. Noguchi's freestyle poetry was unconventional at the time and was inconsistently received, but W.B. Yeats, Thomas Hardy, Marianne Moore, and Rabindranath

Tagore all admired his work. Noguchi's book, *The Pilgrimage* was a likely influence on the Imagist movement in the early 1900s.<sup>1</sup>

In 1904, Noguchi published an essay in *Reader* magazine that encouraged American poets to write Japanese Haiku (or hokku, an older term). He called the hokku "a tiny star...carrying the whole sky at its back" and a "slightly open door, where you may steal into the realm of poesy." He wrote: "I always compare an English poem with a mansion with windows widely open, even the pictures of its drawing-room visible from the outside. I dare say it does not tempt me much to see the within."

Noguchi had many relationships with men and women (often at the same time), but his relationship with editor Léonie Gilmour produced the son Isamu Noguchi. He moved back to Japan in 1905 and wrote Japanese-language poetry and poems in English until his death in 1947.

—Victoria Chang, author of *OBIT*

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1. <https://www.brinkerhoffpoetry.org/poets/yone-noguchi>.

2. <https://www.huntington.org/verso/2018/08/yone-noguchi-and-haiku-united-states>.

## AT NIGHT

At night the Universe grows lean, sober-  
faced, of intoxication,  
The shadow of the half-sphere curtains  
down closely against my world, like a  
doorless cage, and the stillness chained by  
wrinkled darkness strains throughout the Uni-  
verse to be free.  
Listen, frogs in the pond, (the world is a pond itself)  
cry out for the light, for the truth!  
The curtains rattle ghostlily along, bloodily biting  
my soul, the winds knocking on my cabin door  
with their shadowy hands.

## I AM LIKE A LEAF

The silence is broken: into the nature  
My soul sails out,  
Carrying the song of life on his brow,  
To meet the flowers and birds.

When my heart returns in the solitude,  
She is very sad,  
Looking back on the dead passions  
Lying on Love's ruin.

I am like a leaf  
Hanging over hope and despair,  
Which trembles and joins  
The world's imagination and ghost.



## UPON THE HEIGHTS

And victor of life and silence,  
I stood upon the Heights; triumphant,  
With upturned eyes, I stood,  
And smiled unto the sun, and sang  
A beautifully sad farewell unto the dying day.  
And my thoughts and the eve gathered  
Their serpentine mysteries around me,  
My thoughts like alien breezes,  
The eve like a fragrant legend.  
My feeling was that I stood as one  
Serenely poised for flight, as a muse  
Of golden melody and lofty grace.  
Yea, I stood as one scorning the swords  
And wanton menace of the cities.  
The sun had heavily sunk into the seas beyond,  
And left me a tempting sweet and twilight.  
The eve with trailing shadows westward  
Swept on, and the lengthened shadows of trees  
Disappeared: how silently the songs of silence  
Steal into my soul! And still I stood  
Among the crickets, in the beauteous profundity  
Sung by stars; and I saw me  
Softly melted into the eve. The moon  
Slowly rose: my shadow on the ground  
Dreamily began a dreamy roam,  
And I upward smiled silent welcome.

## WHERE IS THE POET

The inky-garmented, truth-dead Cloud—woven by  
dumb ghost alone in the darkness of phantasmal  
mountain-mouth—kidnapped the maiden Moon,  
silence-faced, love-mannered, mirroring her golden  
breast in silvery rivulets:  
The Wind, her lover, grey-haired in one moment, crazes  
around the Universe, hunting her dewy love-letters,  
strewn secretly upon the oat-carpet of the open field.  
O, drama! never performed, never gossiped, never rhymed!  
Behold—to the blind beast, ever tearless, iron-  
hearted, the Heaven has no mouth to interpret  
these tidings!  
Ah, where is the man who lives out of himself?—the poet  
inspired often to chronicle these things?

## THE POET

Out of the deep and the dark,  
A sparkling mystery, a shape,  
Something perfect,  
Comes like the stir of the day:  
One whose breath is an odour,  
Whose eyes show the road to stars,  
The breeze in his face,  
The glory of Heaven on his back.  
He steps like a vision hung in air,  
Diffusing the passion of Eternity;  
His abode is the sunlight of morn,  
The music of eve his speech:  
In his sight,  
One shall turn from the dust of the grave,  
And move upward to the woodland.

## TO AN UNKNOWN POET

When I am lost in the deep body of the  
mist on the hill,  
The world seems built with me as its pillar!  
Am I the god upon the face of the deep, deepless  
deepness in the Beginning?



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