Poems in Your Pocket

**Admissions**

**Pruning**

for Bardwell Smith

In Japan old trees are honored
Their dark and twisted limbs cherished
Like the crippled limbs of old people
Who are also loved and respected.

Well, that's how it was when I lived there, the old man said.
But maybe things have changed, maybe it's different now
It's been a while.

He told us to look inside the hedge of arbor vitae
edging this Japanese garden
"See the bones?"
We bent down
Felt our own brittle bones creak
And saw ourselves inside the old hedge
Our lovely wrapping of leaves gone
Our limbs thick and twisted with age
Our bones stripped and naked
Our bodies beautiful.

Submitted by Mary Steil for Admissions

**Biology**

**Looking West**

Billy Collins

Just beyond the flower garden at the end of the lawn
the curvature of the earth begins,
sloping down from there
over the length of the country
and the smooth surface of the Pacific
before it continues across the convex rice fields of Asia
and, rising, inclines over Europe
and the bulging, boat-dotted waters of the Atlantic,
finally reaching the other side of the house
where it comes up behind a yellow grove of forsythia
near a dilapidated picnic table,
then passes unerringly under the spot
where I am standing, hands in my pockets,
feet planted firmly on the ground.

Submitted by Noel Ponder for Campus Services

**Campus Services**

**Buckingham Palace**

A. A. Milne

They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace -
Christopher Robin went down with Alice.
Alice is marrying one of the guard.
"A soldier's life is terribly hard,"
Says Alice.

They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace -
Christopher Robin went down with Alice.
We saw a guard in a sentry-box.
"One of the sergeants looks after their socks,"
Says Alice.

They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace -
Christopher Robin went down with Alice.
We looked for the King but he never came.
"Well, God take care of him, all the same,"
Says Alice.

They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace -
Christopher Robin went down with Alice.
They've great big parties inside the grounds.
"I wouldn't be King for a hundred pounds,"
Says Alice.

They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace -
Christopher Robin went down with Alice.
A face looked out, but it wasn't the King's.
"He's much too busy a-signing things,"
Says Alice.

They're changing guard at Buckingham Palace -
Christopher Robin went down with Alice.
"Do you think the King knows all about me?"
"Sure to, dear, but it's time for tea,"
Says Alice.

Submitted by Noel Ponder for Campus Services
The Career Center

The Knot
by Stanley Kunitz

I've tried to seal it in,
that cross-grained knot
on the opposite wall,
scored in the lintel of my
doors,
but it keeps bleeding
through
into the world we share.
Mornings when I wake,
curled in my web,

I hear it come
with a rush of resin
out of the trauma
of its lopping-off.
Obstinate bud,
sticky with life,
mad for the rain again,
it racks itself with shoots
that crackle overhead,
dividing as they grow.
Let be! Let be!
I shake my
wings
and fly into its boughs.

Submitted by Brian Murphy for The Career Center

Chaplain

A Gift
Denise Levertov (Sands of the Wall)

Just when you seem to yourself
nothing but a flimsy web
of questions, you are given
the questions of others to hold
in the emptiness of your hands,
songbird eggs that can still hatch
if you keep them warm,
butterflies opening and closing themselves
in your cupped palms, trusting you not to injure
their scintillant fur, their dust.
You are given the questions of others
as if they were answers
to all you ask. Yes, perhaps
this gift is your answer.

Submitted by Carolyn Fure-Slocum for the Office of the Chaplain

English

Birdwings
Rumi

Your grief for what you’ve lost lifts a mirror
up to where you’re bravely working.

Expecting the worst, you look, and instead,
here’s the joyful face you’ve been wanting to see.

Your hand opens and closes and opens and closes.
if it were always a fist or always stretched open,
you would be paralyzed.

Your deepest presence is in every small contracting
and expanding,
The two as beautifully balanced and coordinated
as birdwings.

Submitted by Susan Jaret McKinstry for English

French

On Living
Nazim Hikmet

I

Living is no laughing matter:
you must live with great seriousness
like a squirrel, for example—
I mean without looking for something beyond and
above living,
I mean living must be your whole occupation.
Living is no laughing matter:
you must take it seriously,
so much so and to such a degree
that, for example, your hands tied behind your back,
your back to the wall,
or else in a laboratory
in your white coat and safety glasses,
you can die for people—
even for people whose faces you’ve never seen,
even though you know living
is the most real, the most beautiful thing.
I mean, you must take living so seriously
that even at seventy, for example, you’ll plant olive
trees—
and not for your children, either,
but because although you fear death you don’t
believe it,
because living, I mean, weighs heavier.
II

Let's say you're seriously ill, need surgery--
which is to say we might not get
from the white table.
Even though it's impossible not to feel sad
about going a little too soon,
we'll still laugh at the jokes being told,
we'll look out the window to see it's raining,
or still wait anxiously
for the latest newscast ...
Let's say we're at the front--
for something worth fighting for, say.
There, in the first offensive, on that very day,
we might fall on our face, dead.
We'll know this with a curious anger,
but we'll still worry ourselves to death
about the outcome of the war, which could last years.
Let's say we're in prison
and close to fifty,
and we have eighteen more years, say,
before the iron doors will open.
We'll still live with the outside,
with its people and animals, struggle and wind--
I mean with the outside beyond the walls.
I mean, however and wherever we are,
we must live as if we will never die.

III

This earth will grow cold,
a star among stars
and one of the smallest,
a gilded mote on blue velvet--
I mean this, our great earth.
This earth will grow cold one day,
not like a block of ice
or a dead cloud even
but like an empty walnut it will roll along
in pitch-black space ...
You must grieve for this right now
--you have to feel this sorrow now--
for the world must be loved this much
if you're going to say "I lived" ...

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Submitted by Chérif Keïta for French

Library

Numbers

I watched them chase each other
across the page,
the 1 grimacing into a 2,
and then a 3;
the 6 bouncing a ball up
to the 7,
the 7 bouncing it back.
The 8 skated elegantly,
entirely self absorbed.

When the 1 married the 0
and became a 10,
I thought I'd had a glimpse
of heaven,
though I supposed the 9 was jealous.

I wanted to leave the numbers alone,
and let them have their stories.
But we learned to add,
and take away, and Sister said
that 2 plus 2
was always 4.

I knew this could not be,
but I liked her,
and pretended for her sake.

Dividing was hard,
and it always seemed we lost something:
a fraction would trail away
forever, vaguely accusing,
like an unbaptized baby
on its way to Limbo.

Multiplying
was the worst for all,
as glorious and impossible
as angels dancing in the playground.

I couldn't hold the numbers
in my head anymore; they'd become too big
and strange, standing off
to the side where
I couldn't see the,
even as they reached into my life.

Faith is a sad business.

Submitted by Kristin Partlo for the Library
Mathematics and Statistics

Reluctance
Robert Frost

Out through the fields and the woods
And over the walls I have wended;
I have climbed the hills of view
And looked at the world, and descended;
I have come by the highway home,
And lo, it is ended.

The leaves are all dead on the ground,
Save those that the oak is keeping
The ravel them one by one
And let them go scraping and creeping
Out over the crusted snow,
When others are sleeping.

And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,
No longer blown hither and thither;
the last lone aster is gone;
The flowers of the witch hazel wither;
the heart is still aching to seek,
But the feet question “Whither?”

Ah, when to the heart of man
Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things,
To yield with a grace to reason,
And bow and accept the end
Of a love or a season?

Submitted by Sam Patterson for Mathematics and Statistics

Pi
Wislawa Szymborska

The admirable number pi:
three point one four one.
All the following digits are also initial,
five nine two because it never ends.
It can’t be comprehended six five three five at a glance,
eight nine by calculation,
seven nine or imagination,
not even three two three eight by wit, that is, by comparison
four six to anything else
two six four three in the world.
The longest snake on earth calls it quits at about forty feet.
Likewise, snakes of myth and legend, though they
may hold out a bit longer.
The pageant of digits comprising the number pi
doesn’t stop at the page’s edge.
It goes on across the table, through the air,
over a wall, a leaf, a bird’s nest, clouds, straight into
the sky,
through all the bottomless, bloated heavens.
Oh how brief – a mouse tail, a pigtail – is the tail of a
comet!
How feeble the star’s ray, bent by bumping up against
space!
While here we have two three fifteen three hundred
nineteen
my phone number your shirt size the year
nineteen hundred and seventy-three the sixth floor
the number of inhabitants sixty-five cents
hip measurement two fingers a charade, a code,
in which we find hail to thee, blithe spirit, bird thou
never wert
alongside ladies and gentlemen, no cause for alarm,
as well as heaven and earth shall pass away,
but not the number pi, oh no, nothing doing,
it keeps right on with its rather remarkable five,
its uncommonly fine eight,
it’s far from final seven,
nudging, always nudging a sluggish eternity
to continue.

Submitted by Deanna Haunsperger for the Mathematics and Statistics

Philosophy

The Day is Done
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of Night.
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight

I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o’er me
that my soul cannot resist:
A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

Come, read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,
That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.

Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time.
For, like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavor;
And to-night I long for rest.

Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart,
As showers from the clouds of summer,
Or tears from the eyelids start;

Who, through long days of labor,
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.

Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.

Then read from the treasured volume
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares, that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

Submitted by Sarah Jansen for Philosophy

Research and Assessment

Pour faire le portrait d'un oiseau
Jacques Prévert (Paroles, 1945)

Peindre d'abord une cage
avec une porte ouverte
peindre ensuite
quelque chose de joli
quelque chose de simple
quelque chose de beau
quelque chose d'utile
pour l'oiseau
placer ensuite la toile contre un arbre
dans un jardin
dans un bois
ou dans une forêt
se cacher derrière l'arbre
sans rien dire
sans bouger ...
Parfois l'oiseau arrive vite
mais il peut aussi bien mettre de longues années
avant de se décider
Ne pas se décourager
attendre
attendre s'il le faut pendant des années
la vitesse ou la lenteur de l'arrivée de l'oiseau
n'ayant aucun rapport
avec la réussite du tableau
Quand l'oiseau arrive
s'il arrive
observer le plus profond silence
attendre que l'oiseau entre dans la cage
et quand il est entré
fermer doucement la porte avec le pinceau
puis
effacer un à un tous les barreaux
en ayant soin de ne toucher aucune des plumes de
l'oiseau
Faire ensuite le portrait de l'arbre
en choisissant la plus belle de ses branches
pour l'oiseau
peindre aussi le vert feuillage et la fraîcheur du vent
la poussière du soleil
et le bruit des bêtes de l'herbe dans la chaleur de l'été
et puis attendre que l'oiseau se décide à chanter
Si l'oiseau ne chante pas
c'est mauvais signe
signe que le tableau est mauvais
mais s'il chante c'est bon signe
signe que vous pouvez signer
Alors vous arrachez tout doucement
une des plumes de l'oiseau
et vous écrivez votre nom dans un coin du tableau.

Submitted by Jim Fergerson for Institutional Research and Assessment

Physics and Astronomy

The Purist
Ogden Nash

I give you now Professor Twist,
A conscientious scientist,
Trustees exclaimed, "He never bugles!"
And sent him off to distant jungles.
Camped on a tropic riverside,
One day he missed his loving bride.
She had, the guide informed him later,
Been eaten by an alligator.
Professor Twist could not but smile.
"You mean," he said, "a crocodile."

Submitted by Nelson Christensen for Physics and Astronomy
Russian

Silentium
Фёдор Тютчев

Speak not, lie hidden, and conceal
the way you dream, the things you feel.
Deep in your spirit let them rise
akin to stars in crystal skies
that set before the night is blurred:
delight in them and speak no word.
How can a heart expression find?
How should another know your mind?
Will he discern what quickens you?
A thought once uttered is untrue.
Dimmed is the fountainhead when stirred:
drink at the source and speak no word.
Live in your inner self alone
within your soul a world has grown,
the magic of veiled thoughts that might
be blinded by the outer light,
drowned in the noise of day, unheard...
take in their song and speak no word.

Submitted by Laura Goering for the Russian Department
Grandma sleeps with
my sick
grand-
pa so she
can get him
during the night
medicine
to stop
the pain

In
the morning
clumsily
I
wake
them
Her eyes
look at me
from under-
neath
his withered
arm
The
medicine
is all
in
her long
un-
braided
hair.
One Art
Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn’t hard to master;
so many things seem filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother’s watch. And look! my last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn’t a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan’t have lied. It’s evident
the art of losing’s not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

Submitted by Becky Boling, for the Spanish Department

Writing Program

My Last Duchess
By Robert Browning

FERRARA

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf’s hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said
“Fra Pandolf” by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ’twas not
Her husband’s presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek; perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, “Her mantle laps
Over my lady’s wrist too much,” or “Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat.” Such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, ’twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody’s gift. Who’d stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—which I have not—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, “Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—
E’en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master’s known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we’ll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Submitted by Carol Rutz for the Writing Program