

## **The City Planners**

**by Margaret Atwood**

Cruising these residential Sunday  
streets in dry August sunlight:  
what offends us is  
the sanities:  
the houses in pedantic rows, the planted  
sanitary trees, assert  
levelness of surface like a rebuke  
to the dent in our car door.  
No shouting here, or  
shatter of glass; nothing more abrupt  
than the rational whine of a power mower  
cutting a straight swathe in the discouraged grass.

But though the driveways neatly  
sidestep hysteria  
by being even, the roofs all display  
the same slant of avoidance to the hot sky,  
certain things;  
the smell of spilt oil a faint  
sickness lingering in the garages,  
a splash of paint on brick surprising as a bruise,  
a plastic hose poised in a vicious

coil; even the too-fixed stare of the wide windows

give momentary access to  
the landscape behind or under  
the future cracks in the plaster

when the houses, capsized, will slide  
obliquely into the clay seas, gradual as glaciers  
that right now nobody notices.

That is where the City Planners  
with the insane faces of political conspirators  
are scattered over unsurveyed  
territories, concealed from each other,  
each in his own private blizzard;

guessing directions, they sketch  
transitory lines rigid as wooden borders  
on a wall in the white vanishing air

tracing the panic of suburb  
order in a bland madness of snows.

## **The Peace of Wild Things**

**by Wendell Berry**

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

## **Wild Geese**

**by Mary Oliver**

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees  
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
are moving across the landscapes,  
over the prairies and the deep trees,  
the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
the world offers itself to your imagination,  
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—  
over and over announcing your place  
in the family of things.

## **The Builders**

**by Henry W. Longfellow**

All are architects of Fate,  
Working in these walls of Time;  
Some with massive deeds and great,  
Some with ornaments of rhyme.

Nothing useless is, or low;  
Each thing in its place is best;  
And what seems but idle show  
Strengthens and supports the rest.

For the structure that we raise,  
Time is with materials filled;  
Our to-days and yesterdays  
Are the blocks with which we build.

Truly shape and fashion these;  
Leave no yawning gaps between;  
Think not, because no man sees,  
Such things will remain unseen.

In the elder days of Art,  
Builders wrought with greatest care  
Each minute and unseen part;  
For the Gods see everywhere.

Let us do our work as well,  
Both the unseen and the seen;  
Make the house, where Gods may

dwell,  
 Beautiful, entire, and clean.

Else our lives are incomplete,  
 Standing in these walls of Time,  
 Broken stairways, where the feet  
 Stumble as they seek to climb.

Build to-day, then, strong and sure,  
 With a firm and ample base;  
 And ascending and secure  
 Shall to-morrow find its place.

Thus alone can we attain  
 To those turrets, where the eye  
 Sees the world as one vast plain,  
 And one boundless reach of sky.

## **Still Here**

**by Langston Hughes**

I been scarred and battered.

My hopes the wind done scattered.

Snow has friz me,

Sun has baked me,

Looks like between 'em they done

Tried to make me

Stop laughin', stop lovin', stop livin'—

But I don't care!

I'm still here!

## **Hope Is The Thing With Feathers**

**by Emily Dickinson**

'Hope' is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops – at all –  
And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –  
And sore must be the storm –  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm –  
I've heard it in the chilliest land –  
And on the strangest Sea –  
Yet – never – in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb – of me.

# **I Don't Know What Will Kill Us First: The Race War or What We've Done to the Earth**

**by Fatimah Asghar**

so I count my hopes: the bumblebees  
are making a comeback, one snug tight  
in a purple flower I passed to get to you;  
your favorite color is purple but Prince's  
was orange & we both find this hard to believe;  
today the park is green, we take grass for granted  
the leaves chuckle around us; behind  
your head a butterfly rests on a tree; it's been  
there our whole conversation; by my old apartment  
was a butterfly sanctuary where I would read  
& two little girls would sit next to me; you caught  
a butterfly once but didn't know what to feed it  
so you trapped it in a jar & gave it to a girl  
you liked. I asked if it died. you say you like  
to think it lived a long life. yes, it lived a long life.

## **Lore**

**by R. S. Thomas**

Job Davies, eighty-five  
Winters old, and still alive  
After the slow poison  
And treachery of the seasons.  
Miserable? Kick my arse!  
It needs more than the rain's hearse,  
Wind-drawn to pull me off  
The great perch of my laugh.  
What's living but courage?  
Paunch full of hot porridge  
Nerves strengthened with tea,  
Peat-black, dawn found me  
Mowing where the grass grew,  
Bearded with golden dew.  
Rhythm of the long scythe  
Kept this tall frame lithe.  
What to do? Stay green.  
Never mind the machine,  
Whose fuel is human souls.  
Live large, man, and dream small.

## Characteristics of Life

by Camille T. Dungy

Ask me if I speak for the snail and I will tell you

I speak for the snail.

    speak of underneathedness

and the welcome of mosses,

    of life that springs up,

little lives that pull back and wait for a moment.

I speak for the damselfly, water skeet, mollusk,

the caterpillar, the beetle, the spider, the ant.

    I speak

from the time before spinelessness was frowned upon.

Ask me if I speak for the moon jelly. I will tell you

    one thing today and another tomorrow

    and I will be as consistent as anything alive

on this earth.

    I move as the currents

move, with the breezes.

What part of your nature drives you? You, in your cubicle  
ought to understand me. I filter and filter and filter all day.

Ask me if I speak for the nautilus and I will be silent  
as the nautilus shell on a shelf. I can be beautiful  
and useless if that's all you know to ask of me.

Ask me what I know of longing and I will speak of distances  
between meadows of night-blooming flowers.

I will speak  
the impossible hope of the firefly.

You with the candle  
burning and only one chair at your table must understand  
such wordless desire.

To say it is mindless is missing the point.

## **Any Human to Another**

**by Countee Cullen**

The ills I sorrow at

Not me alone

Like an arrow,

Pierce to the marrow,

Through the fat

And past the bone.

Your grief and mine

Must intertwine

Like sea and river,

Be fused and mingle,

Diverse yet single,

Forever and ever.

Let no man be so proud

And confident,

To think he is allowed

A little tent

Pitched in a meadow

Of sun and shadow

All his little own.

Joy may be shy, unique,

Friendly to a few,

Sorrow may be scorned to speak

To any who

Were false or true.

Your every grief

Like a blade

Shining and unsheathed

Must strike me down.

Of bitter aloes wreathed,

My sorrow must be laid

On your head like a crown.

## **Ice Would Suffice**

**by Risa Denenberg**

How swift, how far

the sea

carries a body from shore.

Empires fail, species are lost,

spotted frogs

and tufted puffins forsaken.

After eons of fauna and flora, hominids have stood

for mere years

baffled brains atop battered shoulders.

In a murky blanket of heavens

an icy planet

made of diamond spins.

Our sun winks like the star

it was

billions of years ago, without ambition.

We bury bodies in shallow dirt, heedless of lacking space

or how long

our makeshift planet will host us.

## **The Future Is...**

**by Katie Grace**

The future is the babies next nap

The future is nothing like you think it will be

The future is a total mystery

The future is whatever we make it

The future is full of hope and wonder

The future is uncertain the future is hopeful

The future is both hopeful and terrifying

The future is out of my hands. I thought I could control it, but I can't. I wait in hope.

The future is a promise to ourselves to stay connected to our hearts, to nature and to our community.

The future is decisions based on love, rather than fear

The future is unfolding, always coming but never here

The future is full of opportunities, fears, hopes but most of all uncertainty.

The future is a long time away

The future is scary

The future is not a place to live in

The future is scary and bleak

The future is bleak i'm not looking forward to it, however i want to be in it

The future is a place where we can break free of greedy machine consumption

The future is happiness in accepting that you don't need more than you have

The future is unpredictable

The future is... Not going to be televised

The future is where we remember to progress the planet as a whole

The future is up ahead

The future is willingness to change

The future is transparent, versatile, all encompassing with no boundaries

The future is adventure

The future is the seed we planted yesterday; the fruit we pick tomorrow

The future is nothing like any pasts

The future is created in the present

The future is the apple tree Mabel planted today

The future is the ripple of my actions in the now

The future is every second after now

The future is what we do today that will impact tomorrow

The future is only ever in your imagination, so have fun with it!

The future's bright the future's orange

The future is going to be fine ..... I think

The future is ecologically restorative

The future is a yellow brick road yet to be travelled

The future is full of possibility

The future is constantly unfolding at my feet

The future is unfolding in this moment like a tiny flower

The future is cyclical

The future is full of opportunity and potential

The future is jittery and jangly, wide open and exciting

The future is precarious and peculiar

The future is . . . . forgiveness

The future is us.

## **Our Futures Are...**

**by Katie Grace**

Our futures are fair, equitable and bright  
They bear ripe fruit on green trees despite  
A present full of longing and signs of decay  
Our futures begin today  
they are full of hearts that convey compassion  
Sense of belonging is back in fashion

Our futures are dressed in polka dots and sequins and gold  
Our futures are forever bold  
Our futures are the right amount of hot and cold  
Where seasons are defined and farmers thrive and wildlife survives  
Our futures are a hive of brilliant minds working together, living together, learning together

Our futures are full of children being free  
Playing on the street, saying what they think and feel with ease  
Of children full of big hopes and big dreams

Guided by adults with extreme humility, open to learning from growing minds  
with vulnerability, taking on such divine responsibility with gratitude, honour and  
care.

Our futures are full of clean air and peaceful sleeps for every human everywhere

Our futures are pieced together with wisdom of the past, of histories and cultures  
that have far surpassed  
the years any one of us may lead.

Our futures are full of gracious thoughts and inclusive deeds that lead to dynamic  
democracy

Our futures are acceptance and surrender even when it's hard to comprehend

Our futures are full of one hit wonders and latest trends

Are we going round the bend as we let robots rule the earth?

Our futures are understanding the worth of conversations with our neighbours  
demonstrations of our human-ness

the stuff we blur out in the background of a zoom call

let it all fall .... into focus

time to reveal the colour coded bookshelf, a wealth of Grandma's china cups, a dog  
bark interrupts, our too full too hot coffee erupts yet how we maintain a demure  
conduct, wearing pyjamas under the table.

Our futures are steady and stable, we are ready to rewrite the old fable no more

'once upon a time' coz now the cards are on the table

Once upon a time our futures were fair, equitable and bright.

This is why we are here, this is why we fight, this is why the world needs foresight.

This is change, this is now, this is us, hold tight.

## **Tywydd Mawr**

**gan Gwyneth Lewis**

Gwylanod a gwylwyr y glannau'n cytuno

Bod storm ar y ffordd.

Lleuad lawn, penllanw

Yn llusgo'r dŵr

Fel cwrlid dros glustiau aberoedd.

Llifogydd heno!

Mae e'n poeri a thucan - ei geg

Fel twll clo.

Mae'r dyfroedd yn treiglo fesul defnyn

I fae ei ysgyfaint, codi gwymon

Fel cudyn gwallt merch. Gwth

O gesair, fel cerrig mân ar wydr:

Y tywyllwch, fel cariad, yn ceisio dod

mewn

## **Great Weather**

**by Gwyneth Lewis**

*Seagulls and observers on the shore all  
agree*

*That a storm is on the way.*

*Full moon, high tide*

*Dragging water*

*Like a duvet over the ears of the  
rivermouths*

*There'll be floods tonight!*

*It's spitting and grumbling - its mouth  
Like a keyhole.*

*The waters stumble drop by drop*

*The bay its lungs, lifting seaweed  
Like a lock of a girl's hair. Casting  
hail, like tiny stones on glass*

*The darkness, like love, trying to come  
in*