

1. Vernal Sentiment

Theodore Roethke (1913-1963)
from *Open House* (1941)

Though the crocuses poke up their heads in the usual places,
The frog scum appear on the pond with the same froth of green,
And boys moon at girls with last year's fatuous faces,
I never am bored, however familiar the scene.

When from under the barn the cat brings a similar litter, -
Two yellow and black, and one that looks in between, -
Though it all happened before, I cannot grow bitter:
I rejoice in the spring, as though no spring ever had been.

2. Tango (Dinner in the Courtyard)

Emily Grosholz
from *The River Painter* (1984)

When summer tears the maple leaves
to lace, and blue shows through the green
like those imagined distances,
weaving through all things close at hand,
then sunset looms for hours upon
the scarlet tenements of day,
unraveling curtains, windowpanes
ablaze. The house is close, I say,

and move the table underneath
the arches of the maple tree.
Not even the curious neighbors know
if I am host or stranger here,
nor if this roof of leaf and air,
the little courtyard of the world, is home.

3. Poem with a Moon

John Balaban
from *Blue Mountain* (1982)

One summer evening at an oak edged pond,
I saw shoals of frogs, or small toads, spawning,
bloated red, glued in pairs, rolling,
roiling the shallows under a full moon
which, oiled, sleek, dripping in the trees,
cast shadows from my hand onto the water.
Tonight, spring night, by your house the peepers trill,
and the moon, as you sit at your desk, looks in
to see if your face is still shadowed by mine.

4. Lieder

Deborah Austin (1920-2013)

from *Paradise of the World* (1964)

Birds sing, (but not for human hearts)
lean down the wind and so are gone.
This music wells from nearer home;
we listen and are not alone –
in places where no strangers come,
familiar strolls this least of arts

that is all art, all truth, all song;
that heals by wounding us, and by
always dividing false from true,
insists on beauty, gracefully
confirming what we really knew:
nothing not found here can last long.

5. Lovely October

Joseph Grucci (1918-1982)

from *This Autumn Surely* (1935)

Lovely October, red-gold and immortal,
Like a spread wing at sunset in my brain!
I have been waiting your outrageous coming,
Leaf-footed, treading down the wind-slain!

I have been such a lover of autumn;
Listened to bronze leaves make a fabulous sound
As they sucked their last breath from nervous boughs,
Then made a secret noise upon the ground.

I have watched boys plunge knee-deep into heaps
Of leaves and fill their shoes with copper-gold,
And heard their laughter mixed with joyous rage
At having so much beauty here to hold.

Lovely October, red-gold and immortal,
Like a spread wing at sunset in my brain!
I have been waiting your outrageous coming,
Leaf-footed, treading down the wind-slain!

6. Milonga del Sol (Sun)

Melinda Mucha

from *Pivot* (1977)

I went to the magical dandelion carnival.
Spanish hot,
Shimmering I danced.
I danced to the magic smokeblower.
He blew my name in the air glitter green,
It shone for an instant,
The rays of the sun beat down and it wavered.
I danced away
Danced under the sun.
El sol.
The eyes of the dwarf were yellow.
He blinked it was cloudy
He cried and it rained.
I dried his tears and we dipped and we whirled
And he sparkled all golden -
I could see him no more.
So I danced away
Danced under the sun,
The wonderful sun, the wonderful sun.
The carousel fluted,
I cried out with joy
And leaped on a pony with musical mane and fiery eyes.
We galloped away
And followed a rainbow
Up to the sun.