# Blackberries for Amelia by Richard Wilbur

Fringing the woods, the stone walls, and the lanes,

Old thickets everywhere have come alive,

Their new leaves reaching out in fans of five

From tangles overarched by this year’s canes.

They have their flowers, too, it being June,

And here or there in brambled dark-and-light

Are small, five-petalled blooms of chalky white,

As random-clustered and as loosely strewn

As the far stars, of which we now are told

That ever faster do they bolt away,

And that a night may come in which, some say,

We shall have only blackness to behold.

I have no time for any change so great,

But I shall see the August weather spur

Berries to ripen where the flowers were—

Dark berries, savage-sweet and worth the wait—

And there will come the moment to be quick

And save some from the birds, and I shall need

Two pails, old clothes in which to stain and bleed,

And a grandchild to talk with while we pick.

# To Myself by W.S. Merwin

Even when I forget you

I go on looking for you

I believe I would know you

I keep remembering you

sometimes long ago but then

other times I am sure you

were here a moment before

and the air is still alive

around where you were and I

think then I can recognize

you who are always the same

who pretend to be time but

you are not time and who speak

in the words but you are not

what they say you who are not

lost when I do not find you

# Beginning Again by Franz Wright

“If I could stop talking, completely

cease talking for a year, I might begin

to get well,” he muttered.

Off alone again performing

brain surgery on himself

in a small badly lit

room with no mirror. A room

whose floor ceiling and walls

are all mirrors, what a mess

oh my God—

And still

it stands,

the question

not how begin

again, but rather

Why?

So we sit there

together

the mountain

and me, Li Po

said, until only the mountain

remains.

### My Fear by Lawrence Raab

He follows us, he keeps track.

Each day his lists are longer.

Here, death, and here,

something like it.

Mr. Fear, we say in our dreams,

what do you have for me tonight?

And he looks through his sack,

his black sack of troubles.

Maybe he smiles when he finds

the right one. Maybe he’s sorry.

Tell me, Mr. Fear,

what must I carry

away from your dream.

Make it small, please.

Let it fit in my pocket,

let it fall through

the hole in my pocket.

Fear, let me have

a small brown bat

and a purse of crickets

like the ones I heard

singing last night

out there in the stubbly field

before I slept, and met you.

**Wallflowers** by Donna Vorreyer

## I heard a word today I’d never heard before—

I wondered where it had been all my life.

I welcomed it, wooed it with my pen,

let it know it was loved.

They say if you use a word three times, it’s yours.

What happens to ones that no one speaks?

Do they wait bitterly,

hollow-eyed orphans in Dickensian bedrooms,

longing for someone to say,

“yes, you . . . you’re the one”?

Or do they wait patiently, shy shadows

at the high school dance,

knowing that, given the slightest chance,

someday they’ll bloom?

I want to make room for all of them,

to be the Ellis Island of diction—

give me your tired, your poor,

your *gegenshein,* your *zoanthropy—*

all those words without a home,

come out and play—live in my poem.

**The Double Play** by Robert Wallace

In his sea-lit  
distance, the pitcher winding  
like a clock about to chime comes down with  
  
the ball, hit  
sharply, under the artificial  
bank of lights, bounds like a vanishing string  
  
over the green  
to the shortstop magically  
scoops to his right whirling above his invisible  
  
shadows  
in the dust redirects  
its flight to the running poised second baseman  
  
pirouettes  
leaping, above the slide, to throw  
from mid-air, across the colored tightened interval,  
  
to the leaning-  
out first baseman ends the dance  
drawing it disappearing into his long brown glove  
  
stretches. What  
is too swift for deception  
is final, lost, among the loosened figures  
  
jogging off the field  
(the pitcher walks), casual  
in the space where the poem has happened.

#### Acquainted with the Night by Robert Frost (cr.1964)

I have been one acquainted with the night.

I have walked out in rain – and back in rain.

I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.

I have passed by the watchman on his beat

And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet

When far away an interrupted cry

Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-by;

And further still at an unearthly height

One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.

I have been one acquainted with the night.

**Much Madness is Divinest Sense**(w.1862)

byEmily Dickinson

Much madness is divinest sense

To a discerning eye,

Much sense, the starkest madness.

‘Tis the majority

In this, as all, prevail:

Assent, and you are sane;

Demur, you’re straightway dangerous

And handled with a chain.

#### Curiosity by Alastair Reid

may have killed the cat; more likely

the cat was just unlucky, or else curious

to see what death was like, having no cause

to go on licking paws, or fathering

litter on litter of kittens, predictably.

Nevertheless, to be curious

is dangerous enough. To distrust

what is always said, what seems,

to ask odd questions, interfere in dreams,

leave home, smell rats, have hunches

do not endear cats to those doggy circles

where well-smelt baskets, suitable wives, good lunches

are the order of things, and where prevails

much wagging of incurious heads and tails.

Face it. Curiosity

will not cause us to die—

only lack of it will.

Never to want to see

the other side of the hill

or that improbable country

where living is an idyll

(although a probable hell)

would kill us all.

Only the curious

have, if they live, a tale

worth telling at all.

Dogs say cats love too much, are irresponsible,

are changeable, marry too many wives,

desert their children, chill all dinner tables

with tales of their nine lives.

Well, they are lucky. Let them be

nine-lived and contradictory,

curious enough to change, prepared to pay

the cat price, which is to die

and die again and again,

each time with no less pain.

A cat minority of one

is all that can be counted on

to tell the truth. And what cats have to tell

on each return from hell

is this: that dying is what the living do,

that dying is what the loving do,

and that dead dogs are those who do not know

that dying is what, to live, each has to do.

### Alone by Edgar Allan Poe

From childhood’s hour I have not been

As others were—I have not seen

As others saw—I could not bring

My passions from a common spring—

From the same source I have not taken

My sorrow—I could not awaken

My heart to joy at the same tone—

And all I lov’d—*I* loved alone—

*Then*—in my childhood—in the dawn

Of a most stormy life—was drawn

From ev’ry depth of good and ill

The mystery which binds me still—

From the torrent, or the fountain—

From the red cliff of the mountain—

From the sun that ‘round me roll’d

In its autumn tint of gold—

From the lightning in the sky

As it pass’d me flying by—

From the thunder, and the storm—

And the cloud that took the form

(When the rest of Heaven was blue)

Of a demon in my view—

## Embrace by Billy Collins

You know the parlor trick.  
wrap your arms around your own body  
and from the back it looks like  
someone is embracing you  
her hands grasping your shirt  
her fingernails teasing your neck  
from the front it is another story  
you never looked so alone  
your crossed elbows and screwy grin  
you could be waiting for a tailor  
to fit you with a straight jacket  
one that would hold you really tight.