Petition

Brigit Pegeen Kelly

These are the long weeks. The weeks Of waiting. Let them be Longer. Let the days smolder Like the peat slung In plastic sacks by the greenhouse And let the seedlings not rush Into growth but climb the air slowly As if it were a ladder, One small foot at a time. Let the fetid smell of bone meal Be the body unlocking As the river does, slowing to a hazy laze That pulls the boaters in And makes the fish rise up. And As the wide-wheeled yellow tractors Roll along the highway, Stalling traffic in their wakes, And the dust from the playing fields Settles over us like pollen, Like the balls dropping softly Into our mitts, let The willow's love of water-Its dark and beaded rain-Be the only storm we long for.

Musée des Beaux Arts

About suffering they were never wrong, The Old Masters: how well they understood Its human position; how it takes place While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along; How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting For the miraculous birth, there always must be Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating On a pond at the edge of the wood: They never forgot That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel's *lcarus*, for instance: how everything turns away Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry, But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky, Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

December 1938

Auden, W. H. "Musée des Beaux Arts." Collected Poems. Faber and Faber, 1976.



Sestina in Prose

BY <u>KATHARINE COLES</u>

- It was like climbing a mountain to those of us who'd climbed one. To the others, it was like, I suppose, something else. In other words, we let everybody find her own figure of speech.
- Not that it—speech—lay thick on the ground, or mountain; it presented itself one word at a time, far between. A body had to keep an eye out, like for firewood at dusk, or else
- miss her chance. Nobody else, let's face it, cared about metaphor, or even simile, the like-it-or-not-ness of the mountain pretty much getting between a body and her musing, in its going. One
- step at a time, anyone could lose herself or someone else just staring at her feet. And *if a body meet a body* is not mere speech but something that could happen, like hopping a bus—though on the mountain
- you'll catch no rides, worse luck, the mountain requires to be climbed on foot, one after the other, nothing else will get you up it. There's nothing like such obduracy but in the wild, nobody can tell you otherwise. No simple figure,
- this struggle: just a crag, your burden, and your own two feet. Say otherwise, talk through your hat, which I don't care for.

Source: Poetry (April 2019)