

# Poems by Peggy Rundle - September 17, 2025

## GREAT EXPECTATIONS\* AND THE FINE ART OF REVISION

Long into the darkness of the midnight hour  
Crisp autumn cut the stifle of piteous summer's hold.  
The driving draft of turning season's relief  
Lifted the leaves of heavy burden  
As layers of choking growth taxed even the sturdier limbs  
Bent and bowed with the oppression of a groaning forbearance.

The right measure in the balance of great expectations,  
One designed for a proportionate parade of the beauty and the bounty  
Of a hearty display that danced with the riches of a well proved, natural plan  
Which could boast both present fulfillment and future promise  
*Might* have given easy gait to the heart's saunter in the summer of the year.  
So now, at long last, relief seemed to straighten, to loosen  
The strangulated hold of oppressive overkill.

But, more often than desired, great expectations make for deceiving, rough beasts of  
overzealous hope.  
Sometimes, like the rise of liberating wind, expectation proves mere rank promise.  
Wind is stilled into the stifling of seized relief  
Thwarted by the intractable force of a something gone desperately awry.

And so necessity sends conception back to a *tabula rasa*.  
Imperative points to reformulation of the vital plan,  
Requires the delicacy of a propitiate appeal to both sense and the senses  
In the lessons come with the fine art of revision.

After the death of Chris Kirk--  
without deference to political leanings

\* with deference to Charles Dickens

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## WORLD'S MOURNING SONG

Gaunt on the harrowing horizon  
Sits a lone figure  
Trying to shelter under a tree  
Whose sturdy reach  
Strains against rude winds, searing rain, cold snow.  
The mumbled hope, the beseeching prayer  
Yearns for pied beauty  
To cling to rough rocks more and more bared  
By the relentless, callous sweep of assault,  
To reclaim the land  
Where balming breezes again do blow.

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## INTENTION

Only oblique view could afford true understanding of what I saw before me.  
Sear and brown, the over-neglected holiday decoration, begging for unmounting,  
Sported at its barely distinguishable center an elongated form feathered into the  
piney needles of the sapped swag.  
My intention had been to refresh the whitewashed wooden wall of my house with  
the appropriate seasonal adornment.  
But an instant and my newly discovered friend altered all of that.  
Straight-on view of decaying and, essentially lost, selfish pleasure had given way to  
the import of a refurbished, present need.

Momentary observation gave way to something underpinned by the mayhem of brooding thought. For now, in the rough and tumble rising out of scant, if any, consideration The eye seems no longer awarded genuine view, oblique or otherwise.

And so the bird, back to the world, loses the clever camouflage securing the safety  
of its beak-burrowed rest.  
The lion, in its affrighted majesty, loses the bellowing of its proclaimed presence.  
The child, cowering in the shadowy corner of existence, loses her stretch and laughter  
in the daylong sun.  
And intention, sometimes littering, not paving, the unhappy road to hell,  
Loses any hope even of proper definition, having neither inward nor outward direction,  
Its compass needle's having gone haywire in a world of craven calumny.

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## SHY-FACED MOON

Tonight, shy-faced moon, half turned from its sentient satellite,  
Attempts to hide from its cosmic peers its burden of projected shame.  
Proximity has its price—felt guilt by association.  
For the universe's judgment of our blighted world  
Hangs heavy as the moon cannot bear full-faced fronting of its impious planet.

Such violation of the sacred discharge of duty  
As the world, in too many quarters, turns *its* face  
From the misfortunes of war exacted on one aggrieved people after another,  
Now toil-worn in the hourly effort to rediscover communion  
With the persuasions of congenial and consecrated life!  
Such impudent and impervious profanation of an implied oath,  
meant to be cherished,  
But instead unsworn in the careless disruption of natural patterns formed  
by accident or clever plan  
In the time and tide dynamism of an evolving order!

Struggle to retrieve the hallowed right to the ease of roundtable, carefree consumption,  
To reclaim from perishing peril the small-bud wonder of whole-world import  
Can be discerned in the beseeching cries of the terrified and the anguished  
and the dispossessed.

And so the moon, shy in shame but, in hope, only *half*-turned from its near neighbor  
From the corner of its eye looks to find signs of unburdened day.

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# ON THE NATURE OF THOUGHT

The sputtering rise of synaptic gathering in the early dawn of day  
Calls to mind the elegant brocade bearing of coveted cultivation.  
Jonquil arrangement circulates the patterned planning  
Of yellow and white expense increased by the luxury of other, varied coin.  
Deep richness of purple tulip, layered extravagance of many petalled peony,  
swooning fragrance of delicate, dear rose  
Collect to form the careful assemblage in the nature of thought.

Long sigh and brow-furrowed struggle give outward sign of the effort to bend into  
pleasing shape  
The scattered growth of ruminative riot, to harness into fusing, decorous function  
the spurt flower.  
Meticulous rooting out of contrary contrivance in long-hour contemplation  
Strains to neaten the design of well-plotted thought.

More often than not, perhaps, the shunned weed is abandoned,  
Is, indeed, torn from its natural source to be cast aside, relegated to the dust heap,  
as just so much detritous.

But the cost there may be too dear.  
For there is a weedy wealth to be accumulated.

Who, in the deep of rich reflection, would deny  
The breeze-blown, delicate dance of muguet de bois in the chance-grown patch  
on a mountainside retreat?  
Who, in the tumbling roll of turned thought, would abandon  
The surprise discovery of elegant lady slipper couched in expensive grace in  
the clearing of a New England wood?

Sometimes too trim may be the cut of thought in the strain for neat patterning.

As sputtering synapses congregate for dawn-drawn daydreaming,  
I lie back in the luxury of a sea of wild daffodils.

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## BEFORE THE MOMENT

Dusky and vague in the distant amble of daylight coming,  
First stirrings of woolly thought, half-pedestrian, half-airborne,  
Rouse themselves from the sleepy sequestering of silent surrender.  
Something akin to mourning dove's soulful reveille,  
Something cousin to yawn and stretch of kindred cuddled rousing,  
Something attuned to drowsy wakening of the somnolent hour  
Begins the beckoning of slow beat toward the gathering melody.

There is a kind of conspiracy in the disparate elements  
Irresistibly, though almost reluctantly, drawn together—or so it seems.  
There is a magnetic convergence from the corners, near and far,  
In a malleable form taking organic shape in the once hollow haven of the  
mind's occurrence.  
And in that hollow, newly tenanted, crowds the company—fast-coming or slow--  
Of a thousand speculations, positings, poetic postures arced in the curves of a  
thousand forms.  
The thrill of overpopulation sets in motion the wheels of bright-carriage  
transportation to yet unimagined lands.  
And, in the comings and goings of slow or speedy footed thought,  
There is a sense of exaltation in the convening of such gathering company.  
The spirit feels well charged in a happy convocation.

There is something to be said for this moment—fleeting, in a sense illusory,  
though it may be--  
Before the moment passes and the soul is left blowing lonely as wind through  
prairie grass.

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## UNDER COVER OF NIGHT

Starlight hill of night's compassing affords a grand view.  
Even under winking darkness the covert actions of a world in only partial slumber,  
The hours of umbrage hiding the innocently suborned task committed in the name of  
the living trick  
Carry the open, albeit dusky hued, secrets of the world.

Bold daylight broadcasts the churning of earth ready for the seed of planting.  
Full-blown sun, in hearty trumpeting, proclaims the hawk's hunt as it plows the sky  
in search of small-prey harvest.  
And broad illumination shows the fox-trotted fields made bountiful in the cuff  
and tumble of serious play.

But night draws out the stealth of the barn owl to swoop in on its mousy meal.  
Night calls on the instinctive cleverness of the mare to bring her born babe into the fold.  
Night features the quiet conspiracy of all growing things to manifest their recombinant  
charge.  
And it is night that colludes with cognitive harrowing to plow the field of synaptic yield.

It is the undercover of night whose calm rest works to mend the threadbare tatters of the  
ravaged land,  
Whose nocturnal energies escort the elements of natural order to a vital balance,  
Whose *sotto voce* workings restore peace, gather thought, reassemble hope  
At the end of rueful day.

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## MANY RIBBED SUFFERANCE

Desert winds wrap the undulate walls of Antelope Canyon.  
There, pressed into the strata of layered antiquity,  
The rings of time, as with trees, speak the truths of sufferance.  
Rushing or slow, water—with its coursing speed--  
Gathered the released offerings of rock and stone and tree  
Which worked to smooth-polish the enduring tales of earthly formation written in  
the walls of the canyon.  
Once molten matter has ossified into the skeletal striping of the many ribbed surface.  
Such striping of rich amber and burnt orange and salmon  
Bodies forth both the riot and the romance in Nature's travel with its hoarding of  
collected memories inscribed in every gradated hue.

The true pilgrim venturing to this place, hearing the wind chatter inside the walls,  
Not only detects the recorded metamorphosis of liquid into rock but catches the echoes  
of many footed history  
As what is now firm and fixed has, in the current of creation,  
Carried, too, the stories, past and to come, of human habituation to the land.\*

Beyond this, though, is the sudden spawning of a miraculous transformation.  
As the sensitive pilgrim faces the ossified form, once molten and moving,  
Solid matter melts into the soul as past becomes inextricable from present.  
It flows in a rush of sensed immediacy as traces of the bygone intermingle with feelings  
of being and becoming.

So it is with memory, both collective and individual.  
Its rib walls, drawn with the recollection of only skeletal tracing,  
Begin to flesh out into fuller form, and, in so doing,  
Render what was figured first as mere armature, fixed and ossified,  
Into melting, liquifying infusion of a tale of sufferance—riotous and romantic--  
Filling the very pores.

\*Navajo Upper Antelope Canyon is located on Navajo land east of Lechee, Arizona.

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## UNWRAPPING

The strand pulled from the cosmic coil of the first holocaust  
Unwraps in the lines, petty and magnificent, of a thousandfold concurrences  
of time.

From the primordial deeps of a brimming ooze, a primal sea, the metamorphoses  
of evolutionary change  
Shape into the curiosities of surprised form molded by tide and wind and  
determinations of chance.

Unwrapping, elongating the strand, Zoroaster pulls from the better nature of  
followers the zeal for conquered evil.  
Helen pulls from their ports the thousand ships ravenous for the championed prize  
of her beauty.

Hannibal's elephants pull from the depths of the impossible feat their strained  
lumbering through the mountains.

Michelangelo pulls from the heart of hope in higher purpose the moment when  
deified touch charged Adam with human life.

And onto the battlefield of a hundred expressions the tired story of moral  
impoverishment

Or the glorified tales of righteous rebellion in the conquering cause of the noble wish  
Unwrap the empty fields populated with bodies that can speak now only in  
silent articulation.

But, too, from often-forgotten corners, the furrowed fields pull from laboring toils  
the bounties of the earth,

The hot ovens pull from yeasty yield the nourishment for a host of I's who  
Secure the aims of individual or collective purpose from conviction in the course  
of unwrapping civilized time.

Evil and good thread the strands of this unwrapping as the cosmic coil unwinds  
in the advancing motion of forward flux.

And even the smallest I's, sensing keenly the abbreviations of mortality,

May pull from the feeling of material part in the strand

A certain intention in the cosmic unwrapping.

Time, with its felt awareness, centers concentration on the importance of this  
grand uncoiling.

But has the moment arrived when felt awareness has devolved into the desperate feeling  
Of only unwrapped purpose, of errant cause, of a host of estranged I's?

Are we now witnessing, in the unwrapping of civilized time, a strand not merely  
frayed but frazzled, forworn?

Unwrapped now, the strand, rent into a thousand pieces,  
Seems returned to its primordial beginnings left to drift, desultory, on the wide sea.

## THE NATURE OF HOPE

Piteous in the air of crestfallen night  
Come beseeching cries of the wing-caught screech owl.  
Some act of fortune, circumstantial or evil-planned,  
Outrageous in its consequence,  
Has tethered the earned or owed potential  
For freewheel flight toward heights of imagined or inconceivable measure.

The owl—carefully wrought of down and feather and sharp-eyed cleverness,  
Well taught or promisingly self trained or both,  
Careening in calculated artistry of skyey navigation,  
Sheltering under the well secured protection of safe harbor--  
Has been caught in a trap of hobbling design.

But against frustrated attempt again and again,  
Ingenuity and heart-held desire seek the triumph of liberation,  
The untethering of the combined commotion of spirit and mastery and grace  
To catch release in the elevations of an upswept wind.

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## ATTUNED

In the drowse of an early dawn of unbidden day  
With a mind in a dozing, with a heart in a lazy desire,  
Coo and caw and scrape and scratch soon vexed a delay.  
Now the hope had undoubtedly been, indeterminate as any sin,  
That interrupted, corrupted extension of slumbering hours--  
By a rousing of various accumulated chords--  
In a hush, in a quiet suspension, remain free of din.

Coo and caw and scrape and scratch soon vexed a delay.

In the turn of a moment, an untamed, unencumbered emotion arose.  
Then a slowly, an emerging, distinct re-converging of sense  
Re-enlisted the heart, re-engaged the part of the self that a sleep  
Had so nearly, had so dearly, in a stupor, contrived to depose.

For the orchestra did swell from each heath, from the hill, from the dell.  
An accumulating timpani beat interposed when detached  
From the side of a beaten, a windblown bark, an errant  
An uncoupled, a buffeted branch—with an applied, an impressive knock of a tree--  
In a thump, with a bump gave resounding announcement of instrumental spree.  
Then a soft, an insinuating note of the fluttering, sputtering kind  
Did encircle, did enchant even the resistant, reluctant mind.  
And the heart, in its cunning, in plumbing the charm of the apparent,  
In unqualified reversal of disposition, of view,  
Did invite into its chambers the coo and the caw and scratch.

So to impale the impervious, reckon aright the need to imbue--  
From the alpha to the omega—with a new, an arising concert,  
An unlash of the senses, an awakening to harmonies of the field  
To the deeper refreshment of the waking entreaty  
A resistance to slumber, a recall of sluggishness did ensue.  
With the notable chorus, the unsealing eye, unresponding heart,  
The indifferent mind—in a strange dispassionate union--  
Did succumb to the rapture of hearing the harmony dear  
Of a cadence delightful assured to attune the waked ear.