

Three Poems

Gail Hanlon

Pop-up Poem #33

Oct. 31, 2015. The borders in Hungary are closing to the Syrians. After a ruling that they will have to stay in the country where they are finger printed, they are burning the tips of their fingers. I hold my breath as I wash the little red glass dish Lisle gave me in the summer, full of strawberry-rhubarb pie. Help the reader bear it, David W. says. You have to help the reader bear it. White, black, and red candles for equinox. A brief visit to the ocean. Do certain kinds of air have negative ions: ocean air, after rain, and night air? The candles whispering. Milk shining in a cup for the dead. All our dead. The young woman who was gang raped with metal pipes on a bus in New Delhi. Sending her metta. The heavy set man in a green shirt who got out of his car and ran, shot by the police. What could he possibly do to them? Whatever happened to giving chase? Now the refugees are riding bikes through Russia to Sweden. All along the route, people are providing pop-up concerts for them.

Pop-up Poem #72

I could poke holes in this picture, make it smell delicious as strawberry-rhubarb pie. We all see the dark holes where the blackbird beaks emerge, four and twenty, like the empty hours of the day, but we don't want to look in. Well, if it's the end of the world, a friend says, and heads to Amalfi, leaving an ellipsis in her wake. Help the reader bear it. Everything is Abu-Graibed. We're all Abu-Graibed. We try not to think about it. One-two, buckle my shoe. Three-four, shut the door.

Future Pop-up

After drones became the size of hummingbirds (and even the size of a grain of dust, it was rumored), we started to reevaluate the whole idea of shame. It was a sort of Garden of Eden scenario. But we could no longer cover ourselves. No longer seek cover. Except in our minds and they were rapidly seeking ways to enter those as well. Just like people we called crazy had always feared: with their talk of implanted chips or probing rays they were trying to deflect with tin-foil hats. What did it mean to be exposed or unpeeled that way? To be seen through, inside out. Transparent as the Visible Lady in the Museum of Science—all her veins and organs in view. It made us think of ourselves in a new way. To value something that could not be measured or taken from us. It was sort of like a new Catholicism, the idea that we had to examine our lives the ways we had our consciences. We didn't know for sure that we were being watched but we began to assume it. And to change our behavior. And we began to think of these vast data storage facilities full of our "sins." Intangible assets. We wanted to bolster our sense of ourselves. But with what? Indifference?

