**Art is an Act**

BY [JODY GLADDING](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/jody-gladding)

                                                                  not self

**of**                                                                                     **violence**

**against**                   will  not  be  gainsaid

                                                                                         will  brook  no  argument

                                                                                         won't  suffer  the  fools

                                                                                                                                 gladly

                   would   I   climb   a

            mountain         of       salt       with       you

before  dawn                                      lodestar             my  freight                    **the  violent**

**silence**                                            the  most  beautiful                       word

                                                                                  is

                                                                                 trespass

Jody Gladding, "Art is an Act" from *Translations from Bark Beetle*. Copyright © 2014 by Jody Gladding.  Reprinted by permission of Milkweed Editions. www.milkweed.org

Source: *Translations from Bark Beetle* (Milkweed Editions, 2014)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Musee des Beaux Arts**  W. H. Auden  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 Breughel's Icarus, 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. | **Pieter Brueghel, The Fall of Icarus**  Oil-tempera, 29 inches x 44 inches. Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels.  QRCode[http://english.emory.edu/classes/paintings&poems/Icarus.gif](javascript:openwin('Icarus.jpg',530,330))  Scan here to see the painting this poem is based on |

Ozymandias

[Percy Bysshe Shelley](https://www.poets.org/node/45726), 1792 - 1822

I met a traveller from an antique land

Who said: “Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:

‘My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

**SONNET 55 by William Shakespeare**

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments   
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;  
But you shall shine more bright in these contents   
Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.   
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,   
And broils root out the work of masonry,   
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn  
The living record of your memory.   
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity  
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room  
Even in the eyes of all posterity   
That wear this world out to the ending doom.  
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,   
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

**Ode on a Grecian Urn**

BY [JOHN KEATS](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/john-keats)

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,

       Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

       A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape

       Of deities or mortals, or of both,

               In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

       What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

               What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

       Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,

       Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave

       Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

               Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;

       She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,

               For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed

         Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;

And, happy melodist, unwearied,

         For ever piping songs for ever new;

More happy love! more happy, happy love!

         For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,

                For ever panting, and for ever young;

All breathing human passion far above,

         That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,

                A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?

         To what green altar, O mysterious priest,

Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,

         And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

What little town by river or sea shore,

         Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,

                Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

And, little town, thy streets for evermore

         Will silent be; and not a soul to tell

                Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede

         Of marble men and maidens overwrought,

With forest branches and the trodden weed;

         Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

         When old age shall this generation waste,

                Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,

         "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all

                Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."