



## *Spiritual Poetry Meetup*

*Poems to take home with you*

*October 20, 2024*

*The Rapture – Mary Oliver*

*Turning – Julie Cadwallader Staub*

*Where Water Comes Together With Other Water –  
Raymond Carver*

*The Beauty of the Living World – Wendell Berry*

*The Layers – Stanley Kunitz*

*Rain – Raymond Carver*



To join the Spiritual Poetry Meetup Group, go to

<https://www.meetup.com/Spiritual-Poetry-Meetup-International/>

For more Take-Home Poetry Packs, assorted poems, and the Intrinsic Heart blog, go to

<https://intrinsicheart.com>

## The Rapture - Mary Oliver

All summer  
I wandered the fields  
that were thickening  
every morning,

every rainfall,  
with weeds and blossoms,  
with the long loops  
of the shimmering, and the extravagant-

pale as flames they rose  
and fell back,  
replete and beautiful-  
that was all there was-

and I too  
once or twice, at least,  
felt myself rising,  
my boots

touching suddenly the tops of the weeds,  
the blue and silky air-  
listen,  
passion did it,

called me forth,  
addled me,  
stripped me clean  
then covered me with the cloth of happiness-

I think there is no other prize,  
only rapture the gleaming,  
rapture the illogical the weightless-

whether it be for the perfect shapeliness  
of something you love-  
like an old German song-  
or of someone-

or the dark floss of the earth itself,  
heavy and electric.  
At the edge of sweet sanity open  
such wild, blind wings.





## Turning

There comes a time in every fall  
before the leaves begin to turn  
when blackbirds group and flock and gather  
choosing a tree, a branch, together  
to click and call and chorus and clamor  
announcing the season has come for travel.

Then comes a time when all those birds  
without a sound or backward glance  
pour from every branch and limb  
into the air, as if on a whim  
but it's a dynamic, choreographed mass  
a swoop, a swerve, a mystery, a dance

and now the tree stands breathless, amazed  
at how it was chosen, how it was changed.

- Julie Cadwallader Staub



## **Where Water Comes Together With Other Water**

by Raymond Carver

*I love creeks and the music they make.  
And rills, in glades and meadows, before  
they have a chance to become creeks.  
I may even love them best of all  
for their secrecy. I almost forgot  
to say something about the source!  
Can anything be more wonderful than a spring?  
But the big streams have my heart too.  
And the places streams flow into rivers.  
The open mouths of rivers where they join the sea.  
The places where water comes together  
with other water. Those places stand out  
in my mind like holy places.  
But these coastal rivers!  
I love them the way some men love horses  
or glamorous women. I have a thing  
for this cold swift water.  
Just looking at it makes my blood run  
and my skin tingle. I could sit  
and watch these rivers for hours.  
Not one of them like any other.  
I'm 45 years old today.  
Would anyone believe it if I said  
I was once 35?  
My heart empty and sere at 35!  
Five more years had to pass  
before it began to flow again.  
I'll take all the time I please this afternoon  
before leaving my place alongside this river.  
It pleases me, loving rivers.  
Loving them all the way back  
to their source.  
Loving everything that increases me.*

## The Beauty of the Living World



The yellow-throated warbler, the highest remotest voice of this place, sings in the tops of the tallest sycamores, but one day he came twice to the railing of my porch where I sat at work above the river. He was too close to see with binoculars. Only the naked eye could take him in, a bird more beautiful than every picture of himself, more beautiful than himself killed and preserved by the most skilled taxidermist, more beautiful than any human mind, so small and inexact, could hope ever to remember. My mind became beautiful by the sight of him. He had the beauty only of himself alive in the only moment of his life.

He had upon him like the whole  
beauty of the living world that never dies.

~ Wendell Berry ~  
Sabbaths 2003 (VI)  
*(for Jonathan Williams)*  
from *Given: Poems*  
Photo by Dan Behm

# The Layers

by Stanley Kunitz

I have walked through many lives,  
some of them my own,  
and I am not who I was,  
though some principle of being  
abides, from which I struggle  
not to stray.

When I look behind,  
as I am compelled to look  
before I can gather strength  
to proceed on my journey,  
I see the milestones dwindling  
toward the horizon  
and the slow fires trailing  
from the abandoned camp-sites,  
over which scavenger angels  
wheel on heavy wings.

Oh, I have made myself a tribe  
out of my true affections,  
and my tribe is scattered!  
How shall the heart be reconciled  
to its feast of losses?

In a rising wind  
the manic dust of my friends,  
those who fell along the way,  
bitterly stings my face.

Yet I turn, I turn,  
exulting somewhat,  
with my will intact to go  
wherever I need to go,  
and every stone on the road  
precious to me.

In my darkest night,  
when the moon was covered  
and I roamed through wreckage,  
a nimbus-clouded voice  
directed me:

“Live in the layers,  
not on the litter.”

Though I lack the art  
to decipher it,  
no doubt the next chapter  
in my book of transformations  
is already written.  
I am not done with my changes.

## Rain



Woke up this morning with  
a terrific urge to lie in bed all day  
and read. Fought against it for a minute.

Then looked out the window at the rain.  
And gave over. Put myself entirely  
in the keep of this rainy morning.

Would I live my life over again?  
Make the same unforgivable mistakes?  
Yes, given half a chance. Yes.

- Raymond Carver