

Fourth Week

I. Images

Images are not quite ideas. They do not have explanatory power. They are not always metaphors. They do not say this is that, they say this is. Often, imagery makes our poetry become an experience for the reader, rather than simply talk about the experience.

II. Similes and Metaphors

III. Practice:

1. Describe a pair of shoes in such a way that a reader will think of death. Do not mention death in the poem.
Or
2. Write a poem using a simile or metaphor which goes on for at least five lines.

Where you go When she Sleeps T. R. Hummer

What is it when a woman sleeps, her head bright
In your lap, in your hands, her breath easy now as though it had never
been
Anything else, and you know she is dreaming, her eyelids
Jerk, but she is not troubled, it is a dream
That does not include you, but you are not troubled either,
It is too good to hold her while she sleeps, her hair falling
Richly on your hands, shining like metal, a color
That when you think of it you cannot name, as though it has just
Come into existence, dragging you into the world in the wake
Of its creation, out of whatever vacuum you were in before,
And you are like the boy you heard of once who fell
Into a silo full of oats, the silo emptying from below, oats
At the top swirling in a gold whirlpool, a bright eddy of grain, the boy,
You imagine, leaning over the edge to see it, the noon sun breaking
Into the center of the circle he watches, hot on his back, burning
And he forgets his father's warning, stands on the edge, looks down,
The grain spinning, dizzy, and when he falls his arms go out, too thin
For wings, and he hears his father's cry somewhere, but is gone
Already, down in a gold sea, spun deep in the heart of the silo,
And when they find him, his mouth, his throat, his lungs
Full of the gold that took him, he lies still, not seeing the world
Through his body but through the deep rush of the grain
Where he has gone and can never come back, though they drag him
Out, his father's tears bright on both their faces, the farmhands
Standing by blank and amazed—you touch that unnamable
Color in her hair and you are gone into what is not fear or joy
But a whirling of sunlight and water and air full of shining dust
That takes you, a dream that is not of you but will let you
Into itself if you love enough, and will not, will never let you go.

Oranges Gary Soto

The first time I walked
With a girl, I was twelve,
Cold, and weighted down
With two oranges in my jacket.
December. Frost cracking
Beneath my steps, my breath
Before me, then gone, as I walked toward
Her house, the one whose
Porchlight burned yellow
Night and day, in any weather.
A dog barked at me, until
She came out, pulling at her gloves, face bright
With rouge. I smiled.
Touched her shoulder, and led
Her across the street, across
A used car lot and a line
Of newly planted trees.
Until we were breathing
Before a drugstore. We
Entered, the tiny bell
Bringing a saleslady
Down a narrow aisle of goods.
I turned to the candies
Tiered like bleachers,
And asked what she wanted—
Light in her eyes, a smile
Starting at the corners
Of her mouth. I fingered
A nickel in my pocket,
And when she lifted a chocolate
That cost a dime I didn't say anything.
I took the nickel from
My pocket, then an orange,
And set them quietly on
The counter. When I looked up,
The lady's eyes met mine,

And held them, knowing
Very well what it was
About.

Outside,
A few cars hissing past,
Fog hanging like old
Coats between the trees.
I took my girl's hand
In mine for two blocks,
Then released it to let
Her unwrap the chocolate.
I peeled my orange
That was so bright against
The gray of December
That, from some distance, someone might have thought
I was making a fire in my hands.

How Many Times Marie Howe

No matter how many times I try I can't stop my father
from walking into my sister's room

and I can't see any better, leaning from here to look
in his eyes. It's dark in the hall

and everyone's sleeping. This is the past
where everything is perfect already and nothing changes,

where the water glass falls to the bathroom floor
and bounces once before breaking

Nothing. Not the small sound my sister makes, turning
over, not the thump of the dog's tail

when he opens one eye to see him stumbling back to bed
still drunk, a little bewildered.

This is exactly as I knew it would be.
And if I whisper her name, hissing a warning,

I've been doing that for years now, and still the dog
startles and growls until he sees

It's our father, and still the door opens, and she
makes that small *oh* turning over.

Feared Drowned Sharon Olds

Suddenly nobody knows where you are,
your suit black as seaweed, your bearded
head slick as a seal's.

Somebody watches the kids. I walk down the
edge of the water, clutching the towel
like a widow's shawl around me.

None of the swimmers is just right.
Too short, too heavy, clean-shaven,
they rise out of the surf, the water
rushing down their shoulders.

Rocks stick out near shore like heads.
Kelp snakes in like a shed black suit
and I cannot find you.

My stomach begins to contract as if to
vomit salt water

when up the sand toward me comes
a man who looks very much like you,
his beard matted like beach grass, his suit
dark as a wet shell against his body.

Coming closer, he turns out
to be you—or nearly
Once you lost someone it is never exactly
the same person who comes back.

Finding Something Jack Gilbert

I say moon is horses in the tempered dark,
because horse is the closest I can get to it.
I sit on the terrace of this worn villa the king's
telegrapher built on the mountain that looks down
on a blue sea and the small white ferry
that crosses slowly to the next island each noon.
Michiko is dying in the house behind me,
the long windows open so I can hear
The faint sound she will make when she wants
watermelon to suck or so I can take her
to a bucket in the corner of the high-ceilinged room
which is the best we can do for a chamber pot.
She will lean against my leg as she sits
so as not to fall over in her weakness
How strange and fine to get so near to it.
The arches of her feet are like voices
of children calling in the grove of lemon trees,
where my heart is as helpless as crushed birds.

Michiko Dead Gilbert

He manages like somebody carrying a box that is too heavy, first with his arms underneath. When their strength gives out, he moves the hands forward, hooking them on the corners, pulling the weight against his chest. He moves his thumbs slightly when the fingers begin to tire, and it makes different muscles take over. Afterward, he carries it on his shoulder, until the blood drains out of the arm that is stretched up to steady the box and the arm goes numb. But now the man can hold underneath again, so that he can go on without ever putting the box down

Archaeology Katha Pollitt

You knew the odds on failure from the start,
That morning you first saw, or thought you saw,
Beneath the heatstruck plains of a second-rate country
The outline of buried cities. A thousand to one
You'd turn up nothing more than the rubbish heap
Of a poor Near Eastern backwater:
A few chipped beads,
Splinters of glass and pottery, broken tablets
Whose secret lore, laboriously deciphered,
Would prove to be only a collection of ancient grocery lists.
Still, the train moved away from the station without you.

How many lives ago
Was that? How many choices?
Now that you've got your bushelf of shards
Do you say, give me back my years
Or wrap yourself in the distant glitter of desert stars
. . .
When out of that random rubble you'll invent
The dusty market smelling of sheep and spices,
...
Come strong veiled women, bearing their perfect jars.