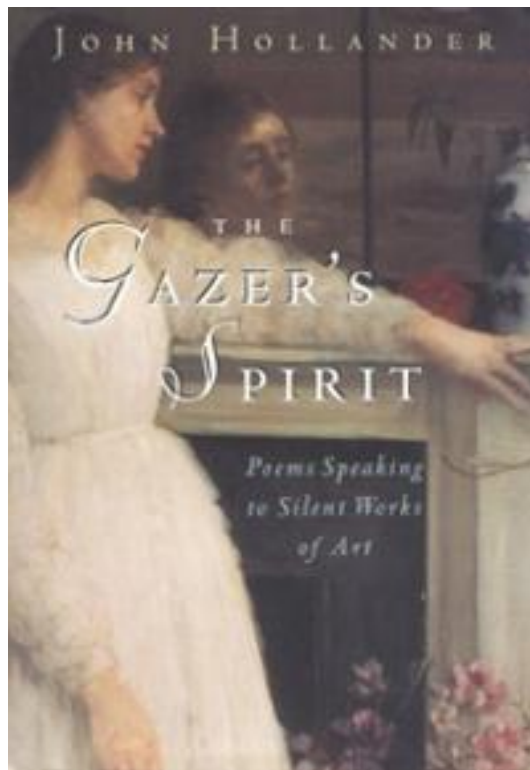


# Texas Christian University

2014 APSI for English

**The Gazer's Spirit: Visual Art and Poetry**



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Many of these poems and paintings can be found at:

<http://english.emory.edu/classes/paintings&poems/titlepage.html>

### Brueghel's Winter

Walter de la Mare

Jagg'd mountain peaks and skies ice-green  
Wall in the wild, cold scene below.  
Churches, farms, bare copse, the sea  
In freezing quiet of winter show;  
Where ink-black shapes on fields in flood  
Curling, skating, and sliding go.  
To left, a gabled tavern; a blaze;  
Peasants; a watching child; and lo,  
Muffled, mute--beneath naked trees  
In sharp perspective set a-row--  
Trudge huntsmen, sinister spears aslant,  
Dogs snuffling behind them in the snow;  
And arrowlike, lean, athwart the air  
Swoops into space a crow.

But flame, nor ice, nor piercing rock,  
Nor silence, as of a frozen sea,  
Nor that slant inward infinite line  
Of signboard, bird, and hill, and tree,  
Give more than subtle hint of him  
Who squandered here life's mystery.

### Winter Landscape

John Berryman

The three men coming down the winter hill  
In brown, with tall poles and a pack of hounds  
At heel, through the arrangement of the trees,  
Past the five figures at the burning straw,  
Returning cold and silent to their town,

Returning to the drifted snow, the rink  
Lively with children, to the older men,  
The long companions they can never reach,  
The blue light, men with ladders, by the church  
The sledge and shadow in the twilit street,

Are not aware that in the sandy time  
To come, the evil waste of history  
Outstretched, they will be seen upon the brow  
Of that same hill: when all their company  
Will have been irrecoverably lost,

These men, this particular three in brown  
Witnessed by birds will keep the scene and say  
By their configuration with the trees,  
The small bridge, the red houses and the fire,  
What place, what time, what morning occasion

Sent them into the wood, a pack of hounds  
At heel and the tall poles upon their shoulders,  
Thence to return as now we see them and  
Ankle-deep in snow down the winter hill  
Descend, while three birds watch and the fourth flies.

### **Hunters in the Snow: Brueghel**

Joseph Langland

Quail and rabbit hunters with tawny hounds,  
Shadowless, out of late afternoon  
Trudge toward the neutral evening of indeterminate form  
Done with their blood-annunciated day  
Public dogs and all the passionless mongrels  
Through deep snow  
Trail their deliberate masters  
Descending from the upper village home in lowering light.  
Sooty lamps  
Glow in the stone-carved kitchens.

This is the fabulous hour of shape and form  
When Flemish children are gray-black-olive  
And green-dark-brown  
Scattered and skating informal figures  
On the mill ice pond.  
Moving in stillness  
A hunched dame struggles with her bundled sticks,  
Letting her evening's comfort cudgel her  
While she, like jug or wheel, like a wagon cart  
Walked by lazy oxen along the old snowlanes,  
Creeps and crunches down the dusky street.

High in the fire-red dooryard  
Half unhitched the sign of the Inn  
Hangs in wind  
Tipped to the pitch of the roof.  
Near it anonymous parents and peasant girl,  
Living like proverbs carved in the alehouse walls,  
Gather the country evening into their arms  
And lean to the glowing flames.

Now in the dimming distance fades  
The other village; across the valley  
Imperturbable Flemish cliffs and crags  
Vaguely advance, close in, loom  
Lost in nearness. Now  
The night-black raven perched in branching boughs  
Opens its early wing and slipping out  
Above the gray-green valley  
Weaves a net of slumber over the snow-capped homes.

. And now the church, and then the walls and roofs  
Of all the little houses are become  
Close kin to shadow with small lantern eyes.  
And now the bird of evening  
With shadows streaming down from its gliding wings  
Circles the neighboring hills  
Of Hertogenbosch, Brabant.

Darkness stalks the hunters,  
Slowly sliding down,  
Falling in beating rings and soft diagonals.  
Lodged in the vague vast valley the village sleeps.

### **The Hunter in the Snow**

William Carlos Williams

The over-all picture is winter  
icy mountains  
in the background the return

from the hunt it is toward evening  
from the left  
sturdy hunters lead in

their pack the inn-sign  
hanging from a  
broken hinge is a stag a crucifix

between his antlers the cold  
inn yard is  
deserted but for a huge bonfire

that flares wind-driven tended by  
women who cluster  
about it to the right beyond

the hill is a pattern of skaters  
Brueghel the painter  
concerned with it all has chosen

a winter-struck bush for his  
foreground to  
complete the picture

### **The Parable of the Blind**

William Carlos Williams

This horrible but superb painting  
the parable of the blind  
without a red

in the composition shows a group  
of beggars leading  
each other diagonally downward

across the canvas  
from one side  
to stumble finally into a bog

where the picture  
and the composition ends back  
of which no seeing man

is represented the unshaven  
features of the des-  
titute with their few

pitiful possessions a basin  
to wash in a peasant  
cottage is seen and a church spire

the faces are raised  
as toward the light  
there is no detail extraneous

to the composition one  
follows the others stick in  
hand triumphant to disaster

### **The Man with the Hoe**

Edwin Markham

God made man in His own image  
In the image of God He made him.--Genesis

Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans  
Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,  
The emptiness of ages in his face,  
And on his back the burden of the world.  
Who made him dead to rapture and despair  
A thing that grieves not and that never hopes,  
Stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox?  
Who loosened and let down this brutal jaw?  
Whose was the hand that slanted back this brow?  
Whose breath blew out the light within this brain?

Is this the Thing the Lord God made and gave  
To have dominion over sea and land;  
To trace the stars and search the heavens for power;  
To feel the passion of Eternity?  
Is this the dream He dreamed who shaped the suns  
And marked their ways upon the ancient deep?  
Down all the caverns of Hell to their last gulf  
There is no shape more terrible than this--  
More tongued with censure of the world's blind greed--  
More filled with signs and portents for the soul--  
More packed with danger to the universe.

What gulfs between him and the seraphim!  
Slave of the wheel of labor, what to him

Are Plato and the swing of Pleiades?  
What the long reaches of the peaks of song,  
The rife of dawn, the reddening of the rose?  
Through this dread shape the suffering ages look;  
Time's tragedy is in that aching stoop;  
Through this dread shape humanity betrayed,  
Plundered, profaned and disinherited,  
Cries protest to the Powers that made the world,  
A protest that is also prophecy.

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,  
Is this the handiwork you give to God,  
This monstrous thing distorted and soul-quencht?  
How will you ever straighten up this shape;  
Touch it again with immortality;  
Give back the upward looking and the light;  
Rebuild in it the music and the dream;  
Make right the immemorial infamies,  
Perfidious wrongs, Immedicable woes?

O masters, lords and rulers in all lands,  
How will the future reckon with this Man?  
How answer his brute question in that hour  
When whirlwinds of rebellion shake all shores?  
How will it be with kingdoms and with kings--  
With those who shaped him to the thing he is--  
When this dumb Terror shall rise to judge the world,  
After the silence of the centuries?

### 1195. The Man with the Hoe

A Reply

By John Vance Cheney

Let us a little permit Nature to take her own way: she better understands her own affairs than we.—MONTAIGNE.

NATURE reads not our labels, "great" and "small";  
Accepts she one and all



Who, striving, win and hold the vacant place;  
All are of royal race.

Him, there, rough-cast, with rigid arm and limb,           5  
The Mother moulded him,

Of his rude realm ruler and demigod,  
Lord of the rock and clod.

With Nature is no "better" and no "worse,"  
On this bared head no curse.                                   10

Humbled it is and bowed; so is he crowned  
Whose kingdom is the ground.

Diverse the burdens on the one stern road  
Where bears each back its load;

Varied the toil, but neither high nor low.               15  
With pen or sword or hoe,

He that has put out strength, lo, he is strong;  
Of him with spade or song

Nature but questions,— "This one, shall he stay?"  
She answers "Yea," or "Nay,"                               20

"Well, ill, he digs, he sings;" and he bides on,  
Or shudders, and is gone.

Strength shall he have, the toiler, strength and grace,  
So fitted to his place

As he leaned, there, an oak where sea winds blow,   25  
Our brother with the hoe.

No blot, no monster, no unsightly thing,  
The soil's long-lineaged king;

His changeless realm, he knows it and commands;  
Erect enough he stands,                                       30

Tall as his toil. Nor does he bow unblest:

Labor he has, and rest.

Need was, need is, and need will ever be  
For him and such as he;

Cast for the gap, with gnarlèd arm and limb, 35  
The Mother moulded him,—

Long wrought, and moulded him with mother's care,  
Before she set him there.

And aye she gives him, mindful of her own, 40  
Peace of the plant, the stone;

Yea, since above his work he may not rise,  
She makes the field his skies.

See! she that bore him, and metes out the lot,  
He serves her. Vex him not

To scorn the rock whence he was hewn, the pit 45  
And what was digged from it;

Lest he no more in native virtue stand,  
The earth-sword in his hand,

But follow sorry phantoms to and fro,  
And let a kingdom go.

### **Number 1 by Jackson Pollock (1948)**

Nancy Sullivan

No name but a number.  
Trickles and valleys of paint  
Devise this maze  
Into a game of Monopoly  
Without any bank. Into  
A linoleum on the floor  
In a dream. Into  
Murals inside of the mind.  
No similes here. Nothing  
But paint. Such purity  
Taxes the poem that speaks

Still of something in a place  
Or at a time.  
How to realize his question  
Let alone his answer?

### **DEATH'S VALLEY.**

BY WALT WHITMAN.

NAY, do not dream, designer dark,  
Thou hast portray'd or hit thy theme entire:  
I, hoverer of late by this dark valley, by its confines, having glimpses of it,  
Here enter lists with thee, claiming my right to make a symbol too.

For I have seen many wounded soldiers die,  
After dread suffering—have seen their lives pass off with smiles;  
And I have watch'd the death-hours of the old; and seen the infant die;  
The rich, with all his nurses and his doctors;  
And then the poor, in meagreness and poverty;  
And I myself for long, O Death, have breathed my every breath  
Amid the nearness and the silent thought of thee.

And out of these and thee,  
I make a scene, a song, brief (not fear of thee,  
Nor gloom's ravines, nor bleak, nor dark—for I do not fear thee,  
Nor celebrate the struggle, or contortion, or hard-tied knot),  
Of the broad blessed light and perfect air, with meadows, rippling tides, and trees  
and flowers and grass,  
And the low hum of living breeze—and in the midst God's beautiful eternal right  
hand,  
Thee, holiest minister of Heaven—thee, envoy, usherer, guide at last of all,  
Rich, florid, loosener of the stricture-knot call'd life,  
Sweet, peaceful, welcome Death.

On the Same Picture

Intended for first stanza of "Death's Valley"

Aye, well I know 'tis ghastly to descend that valley:  
Preachers, musicians, poets, painters, always render it,  
Philosophers exploit—the battlefield, the ship at sea, the myriad beds, all lands,  
All, all the past have enter'd, the ancientest humanity we know,  
Syria's, India's, Egypt's, Greece's, Rome's:

Till now for us under our very eyes spreading the same to-day,  
Grim, ready, the same to-day, for entrance, yours and mine,  
Here, here 'tis limin'd.

### Compare three poems and the paintings

#### In Goya's Greatest Scenes We Seem to See ...

By Lawrence Ferlinghetti

In Goya's greatest scenes we seem to see	
the people of the world	
exactly at the moment when	
they first attained the title of	
'suffering humanity'	5
They writhe upon the page	
in a veritable rage	
of adversity	
Heaped up	
groaning with babies and bayonets	10
under cement skies	
in an abstract landscape of blasted trees	
bent statues bats wings and beaks	
slippery gibbets	
cadavers and carnivorous cocks	15
and all the final hollering monsters	
of the	
'imagination of disaster'	
they are so bloody real	
it is as if they really still existed	20
And they do	
Only the landscape is changed	
They still are ranged along the roads	
plagued by legionnaires	
false windmills and demented roosters	25
They are the same people	

only further from home  
on freeways fifty lanes wide  
on a concrete continent  
spaced with bland billboards 30  
illustrating imbecile illusions of happiness

The scene shows fewer tumbrils

but more strung-out citizens  
in painted cars  
and they have strange license plates 35  
and engines  
that devour America

**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 5  
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 10  
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 15  
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, 20  
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

**Landscape with the Fall of Icarus** William Carlos Williams

According to Brueghel  
when Icarus fell  
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing  
his field 5  
the whole pageantry

of the year was  
awake tingling  
with itself

sweating in the sun 10  
that melted  
the wings' wax

unsignificantly  
off the coast  
there was 15

a splash quite unnoticed  
this was  
Icarus drowning

### **Matisse: "The Red Studio"**

W. D. Snodgrass

There is no one here.  
But the objects: they are real. It is not  
As if he had stepped out or moved away;  
There is no other room and no  
Returning. Your foot or finger would pass  
Through, as into unreflecting water  
Red with clay, or into fire.  
Still, the objects: they are real. It is  
As if he had stood  
Still in the bare center of this floor,  
His mind turned in in concentrated fury,  
Till he sank  
Like a great beast sinking into sands  
Slowly, and did not look up.  
His own room drank him.  
What else could generate this  
Terra cotta raging through the floor and walls,

Through chests, chairs, the table and the clock,  
Till all environments of living are  
Transformed to energy--  
Crude, definitive and gay.  
And so gave birth to objects that are real.  
How slowly they took shape, his children, here, Grew solid and remain:  
The crayons; these statues; the clear brandy bowl;  
The ashtray where a girl sleeps, curling among flowers;  
This flask of tall glass, green, where a vine begins  
Whose vines circle the other girl brown as a cypress knee.  
Then, pictures, emerging on the walls:  
Bathers; a landscape; a still life with a vase;  
To the left, a golden blonde, lain in magentas with flowers scattering like stars;  
Opposite, top right, these terra cotta women, living, in their world of living's colors;  
Between, but yearning toward them, the sailor on his red cafe chair, dark blue, self-absorbed.  
These stay, exact,  
Within the belly of these walls that burn,  
That must hum like the domed electric web  
Within which, at the carnival, small cars bump and turn,  
Toward which, for strength, they reach their iron hands:  
Like the heavens' walls of flame that the old magi could see;  
Or those ethereal clouds of energy  
From which all constellations form,  
Within whose love they turn.  
They stand here real and ultimate.  
But there is no one here.

### **American Gothic**

after the painting by Grant Wood, 1930

John Stone

Just outside the frame  
there has to be a dog  
chickens, cows and hay

and a smokehouse  
where a ham in hickory  
is also being preserved

Here for all time  
the borders of the Gothic window  
anticipate the ribs

of the house  
the tines of the pitchfork  
repeat the triumph

of his overalls  
and front and center  
the long faces, the sober lips

above the upright spines  
of this couple  
arrested in the name of art

These two  
by now  
the sun this high

ought to be  
in mortal time  
about their businesses

Instead they linger here  
within the patient fabric  
of the lives they wove

he asking the artist silently  
how much longer  
and worrying about the crops

she no less concerned about the crops  
but more to the point just now  
whether she remembered

to turn off the stove.

## **The Street**

Stephen Dobyns

Across the street, the carpenter carries a golden  
board across one shoulder, much as he bears the burdens  
of his life. Dressed in white, his only weakness is  
temptation. Now he builds another wall to screen him.



The little girl pursues her bad red ball, hits it once with her blue racket, hits it once again. She must teach it the rules balls must follow and it turns her quite wild to see how it leers at her, then winks.

The oriental couple wants always to dance like this: swirling across a crowded street, while he grips her waist and she slides to one knee and music rises from cobblestones--some days Ravel, some days Bizet.

The departing postulant is singing to herself. She has seen the world's salvation asleep in a cradle, hanging in a tree. The girl's song makes the sunlight, makes the breeze that rocks the cradle.

The baker's had half a thought. Now he stands like a pillar awaiting another. He sees white flour falling like snow, covering people who first try to walk, then crawl, then become rounded shapes: so many loaves of bread.

The baby carried off by his heartless mother is very old and for years has starred in silent films. He tries to explain he was accidentally exchanged for a baby on a bus, but he can find no words as once more he is borne home to his awful bath.

First the visionary workman conjures a great hall, then he puts himself on the stage, explaining, explaining: where the sun goes at night, where flies go in winter, while attentive crowds of dogs and cats listen in quiet heaps.

Unaware of one another, these nine people circle around each other on a narrow city street. Each concentrates so intently on the few steps before him, that not one can see his neighbor turning in exactly different,

yet exactly similar circles around them: identical lives begun alone, spent alone, ending alone--as separate as points of light in a night sky, as separate as stars and all that immense black space between them.