

## Selections by OLLI Authors for Sunday, March 29, 2020

### After the Rain

This morning the street is strewn  
with dead worms. I've always  
wondered why this follows heavy rain.  
Forced to evacuate their loamy lair  
by rising waters, are they then stranded  
on hard macadam? Does rain pounding  
on their fragile lengths leave them  
too weak to retreat to soft ground?

Many are already dissolving  
in the puddles that stayed them,  
their bodies transformed to shapeless  
piles of colorless cells. Some are still intact,  
stretched out in one direction or another,  
as if seeking the way home,  
beseeching the earth to take them back.  
This morning I see no living, writhing worms.

But once, while walking another road,  
I came upon a neighbor carefully salvaging  
still writhing worms. "Trying to save some lives,"  
he called out to me as I watched him carefully  
placing each one in the grass. I stood  
and watched his patient work and thought  
of the worms working their way through  
the blades and tunneling into the soil.  
I wonder if they knew, like us,  
the hunger for home,  
the joy of arrival.

Joan Weiner

**Joan Weiner** is a retired English teacher who arrived in Asheville 23 years ago. Now she has much more time for writing poetry!

*She chose to share this poem because she imagines that lots of other folks have noticed the stranded worms after a rainfall, and wonder if they too feel a kinship among all living things.*

## THE FOUR JOYS OF TURNING 80

### REALIZATION

They told the old man he was eighty, but he wasn't so sure.  
His life was too full to be that old.  
Life does move quickly but it must be a mistake.  
All those years and so many remaining dreams.  
No, he won't believe them...there is still so much to be done.

### LIVING

Considering his age, they all said he should be more serious.  
But the old man loved to laugh.  
It was the least he could do in a somber world.  
He had learned to look for humor in every day.  
It is an aptitude for appreciating life.  
A survival skill for accepting a life lived with gradual loss.

### LOSS

So much had been taken away from him,  
But there was so much to discover in a simpler way.  
The lesson of his 80 years was to love and appreciate.  
Mourning does an injustice to the art of living.  
He lives each day for all its lovely possibilities.

### FUTURE

He plucks his future from low hanging clouds.  
Opportunities are subtler with promises that are easily kept.  
There are no grand plans, instead a determined simplicity.  
At last, each moment comes with all its promise and little compromise.

Dave Castel

**David Castel** has been happily retired for eighteen years and he thinks turning eighty is a real-life benchmark.

*Dave wrote his poem as his personal mission statement for the next decade. He wrote it for himself but hopes others may find something in it that might apply to their lives.*

## Vegetable Gardening Guide

In good dirt with bare hands  
cradle the seed  
in season and in light.

Water with diligence,  
weed with persistence.  
Yield to time.

Time yields ripeness.  
On that day with gentle hands  
gather food.  
(Hum while washing.)

Eat the life that gives you life,  
that lets you cradle with bare hands  
in season and in light.

Sarah Scott

**Sarah Scott** has been a freelance writer and is author of the mystery *Lies at Six*, but her heart writes poetry. She worked as a broadcast news producer and video writer/producer/director. From a remote cabin by Mt. Rainier, this east TN native returned in August to her mother mountains. OLLI is one reason she chose Asheville.

Regarding her poem, Sarah reminds us that gardening connects us to the generous vitality of the green world. "We are what we eat" is a transcendent concept.

## At the Borghese: Bernini's Statue of David

In Sunday school we learned how David fit  
a river-smoothed rock into his sling.  
Hurled it at Goliath. Struck the giant's head  
so hard the stone burrowed into his brow  
and he fell dead to the ground.

Bernini chiseled physique in action.  
A white marble warrior fiercely determined  
to do or die, not some bland-faced,  
beefcake boy. Look at this David's face:  
Lips compressed. Jaw clenched.  
Eyes lasered on his target. Look at  
this David's torqued body: right arm stretched  
behind, fist clutching taut sling straps.  
Torso coiled, a catapult ready to release.  
A killing machine frozen in time.

There is an unsculpted sequel to this static moment:  
A segue from battlefield to green pastures,  
from soldiering to shepherding.  
David putting down his sling, picking up his lute,  
singing praises to The Eternal for all eternity.

My friends, this poem is neither psalm nor paeon  
To some Whatever There Is if, indeed, there is a  
Whatever There Is. It is a stone I fling  
into the air at no particular target. Folks,  
I'm aiming to stun the sensibilities of the world.

Bill Swarts

**Bill Swarts** received a bachelor's degree in English from Brown University and a JD from the University of Pennsylvania. He practiced law in New York and Paris. Bill studied poetry with David Ignatow at the YM-YWHA in NYC. Bill has been involved with OLLI since he moved to Asheville 15 years ago.

Bill selected his poem because it showed David with a fierceness that was such a contrast to the psalmist David who is so passive.

