

*I wish for us*

—to my poetry students

I wish for us  
commitment and resolve  
to love language other than our own,  
to avidly seek it out  
celebrate and proclaim it  
and if need be defend it.

I wish for us  
awareness that in any occasion,  
troubled or carefree, tragic, comic,  
public, intimate, mundane or heroic,  
poetry is there for us to  
articulate.

I wish for us  
a wealth of seizures  
neurons-firing madly  
discharging into language,  
found poems galore  
in any and every direction,

and I wish for us  
the pen at hand  
and the insistence that  
nothing is more important than  
to capture the essence of things  
in living language,

and I wish for us  
the urgency to take the vision  
rawly rendered  
to our places of solitude,  
and the artist's temperament  
to labor over it.

I wish for us  
ecstatic toil and trouble,  
hours and hours of  
Rumi-esque whirling, focusing  
energies upon the center

*A Poetic Pen*

My quest in life is for a perfect pen  
that writes well tempered words unfailingly,  
a pen that knows the needed intervals,  
whose strokes convey the images and beats  
to paint in mind and memory undeniably  
those thoughts and sentiments that must emerge,  
the predetermined tone and taste that say,  
“Here we are, just waiting to be caught in words.”

Dear muse, I need a pen that writes just so,  
in color for the eye and sound for the ear,  
a pen that sings on key so others may hear  
just that feeling we intend. Send an instrument  
of caring, one that always has good taste,  
is never inappropriate or dull,  
a tool so delicate and true and strong  
it leaves behind a sweet yet powerful  
scent of a life that has spilled out  
quit decently after all, cheering up  
a wife, a world, emboldening the children  
to be happy and good first, then smart and sure.

This pen of mine will fly above all creed,  
beyond the locked senses to seek the real,  
towards a patient search for spiritual ideas,  
to putting others on a par in life and love.  
This pen will make indelible marks  
with power to heal our worst mistakes.  
It will be a measured guide that points  
beyond the grief of days, telling us to  
claim now and ever a life worth the living.

David Mutch

*The Light That Found Her, Years Before We Met*

The snapshot is an intercept of high-noon sun.  
Freeze frame against backdrop of Greek dolomite.  
Skirt, dark as any widow's, is countered  
by blue eyes and the bright gold circle  
of an earring floating just above an iridescent,

*Winter at Lake Temescal*

Upside down trees  
Ripple in gray-green water  
Bordered by an army of reeds.  
A lacy ribbon of clouds  
Streaks the bashful sky.  
A delicate landscape  
painted by some anonymous genius.  
Monkish trees  
With shorn scalps.  
Their secular brethren  
Sport full shocks  
Of brilliant hair.  
Nature's abundance  
Despite winter's winnowing.  
Birds glide,  
A gossamer vision,  
A delegation of diplomats  
Forging a treaty with winter.  
My teachers, the birds.  
Their flight so effortless.  
Green-headed mallards,  
Web-footed, wobbly,  
Scuttle with mincing steps,  
Peck at spiky grass  
For nuggets of fuel.  
Remind me how cold it is.  
A team of black dogs  
Bounds over a grass carpet,  
Snags balls and sticks  
Like Willie Mays in his prime  
I watch, mesmerized,  
By this joyous spectacle.  
The wild dance of life  
Pulsates every place I look,  
Fills my heart and senses.

Ralph Dranow

*Friday, 4 P.M.*

Used to be I'd come home