

COMMON PLACES

By Betesha Bloise

05.2026



“But once in a while the
odd thing happens,
Once in a while the dream
comes true,
And the whole pattern of
life is altered,

Once in a while the moon
turns blue.”

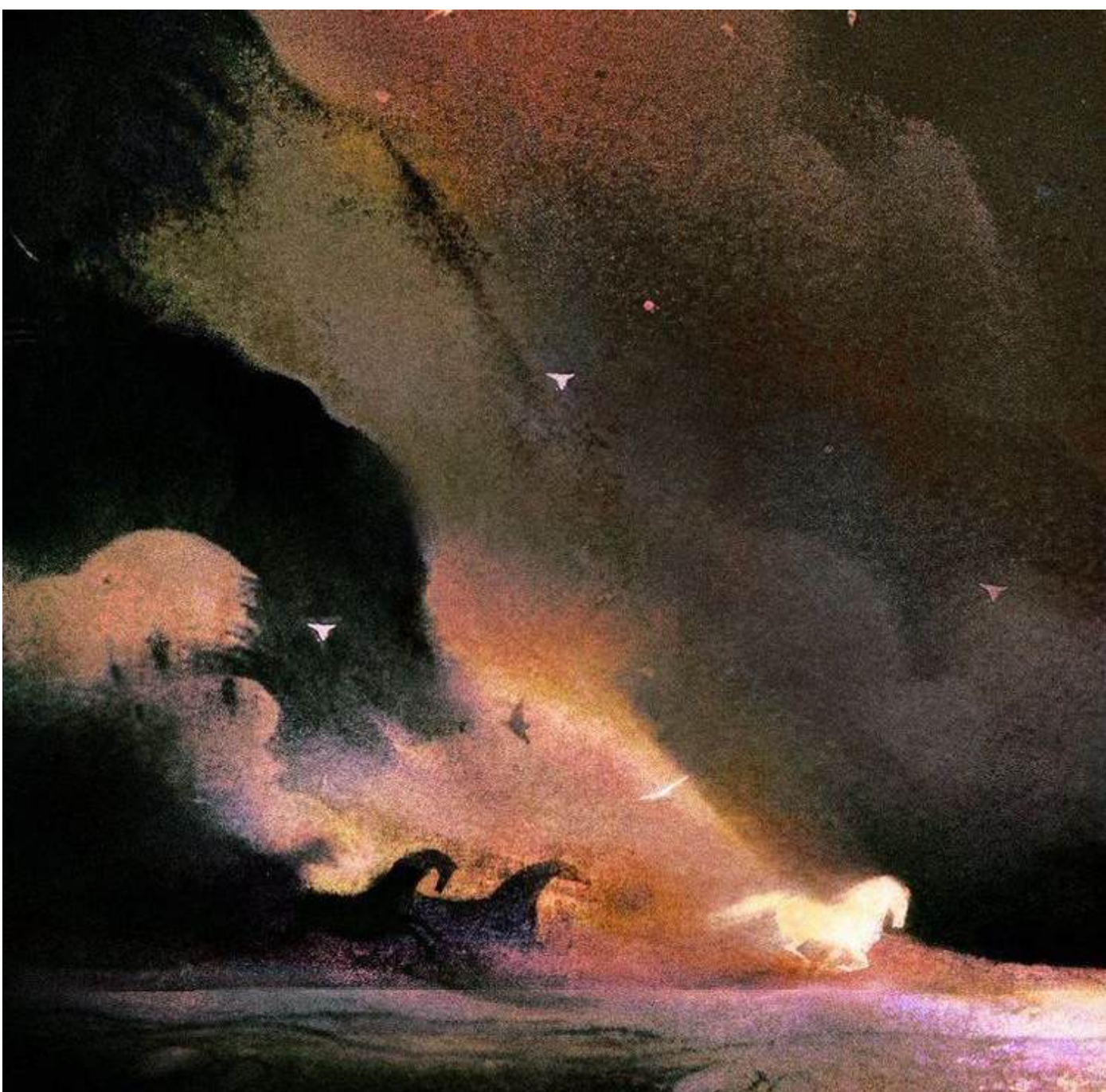
—*W.H. Auden*



"Stepping out of the elevator that had brought her to the roof, she was led to a table just in front of a long window whose gently moving curtains suggested a cool breeze."

—p.10, *Passing*, Nella Larsen

02.53



03.53

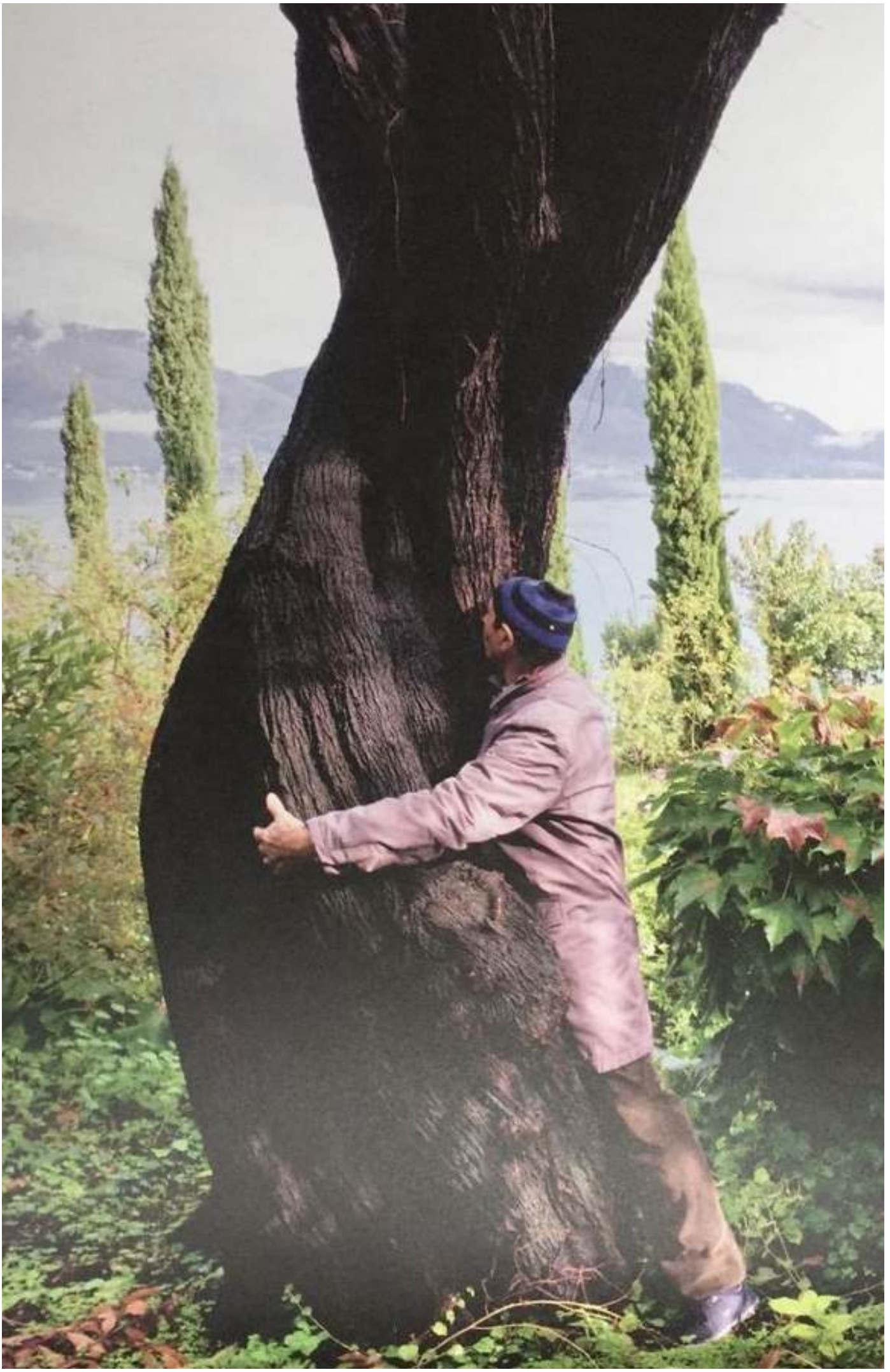


"The awakening is not gentle. It is the sudden knowledge that no one is coming to save you"

—*Marguerite Duras*

"I am fully aware and in full possession of myself. I have no desire to be understood, admired, pitied, or even known"

—*Simone de Beauvoir*



“I worried a lot. Will the garden grow, will the
rivers
flow in the right direction, will the earth turn
as it was taught, and if not how

shall I correct it?

Was I right, was I wrong,
will I be forgiven,
can I do better?

Will I ever be able to sing,
even the sparrows
can do it and I am,
 well,
 hopeless.

Is my eyesight fading or am I just imagining
it,
am I going to get rheumatism,
lockjaw, dementia?

Finally I saw that worrying had come to
nothing.

And I gave it up. And took my old body

and went out into the morning,

and sang.”

—*Mary Oliver*



“If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain:
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.”

—*Emily Dickinson*

06.07.53



08.53



“Oh me! Oh life! of the questions of these
recurring,

Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities
fill'd with the foolish,

Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who
more foolish than I, and who more faithless?)

Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects
mean, of the struggle ever renew'd,

Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and
sordid crowds I see around me,

Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with
the rest me intertwined,

The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What
good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer.

That you are here—that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may
contribute a verse.”

—*Walt Whitman*



“I’m sorry, but I don’t want to be an emperor. That’s not my business. I don’t want to rule or conquer anyone. I should like to help everyone - if possible - Jew, Gentile - black man - white. We all want to help one another. Human beings are like that. We want to live by each other’s happiness - not by each other’s misery. We don’t want to hate and despise one another.

In this world there is room for everyone. And the good earth is rich and can provide for everyone. The way of life can be free and beautiful, but we have lost the way.

Greed has poisoned men’s souls, has barricaded the world with hate, has goose-stepped us into misery and bloodshed. We have developed speed, but we have shut ourselves in. Machinery that gives abundance has left us in want. Our knowledge has made us cynical. Our cleverness, hard and unkind.

We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery we need humanity. More than cleverness we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, life will be violent and all will be lost...

The aeroplane and the radio have brought us closer together. The very nature of these inventions cries out for the goodness in men - cries out for universal brotherhood - for the unity of us all. Even now my voice is reaching millions throughout the world - millions of despairing men, women, and little children - victims of a system that makes men torture and imprison innocent people.

To those who can hear me, I say - do not despair. The misery that is now upon us is but the passing of greed - the bitterness of men who fear the way of human progress.

The hate of men will pass, and dictators die, and the power they took from the people will return to the people. And so long as men die, liberty will never perish...

Soldiers! don’t give yourselves to brutes - men who despise you - enslave you - who regiment your lives - tell you what to do - what to think and what to feel! Who drill you - diet you - treat you like cattle, use you as cannon fodder. Don’t give yourselves to these unnatural men - machine men with machine minds and machine hearts! You are not machines! You are not cattle! You are men! You have the love of humanity in your hearts! You don’t hate! Only the unloved hate - the unloved and the unnatural! Soldiers! Don’t fight for slavery! Fight for liberty!

In the 17th Chapter of St Luke it is written: “the Kingdom of God is within man” - not one man nor a group of men, but in all men! In you! You, the people have the power - the power to create machines. The power to create happiness! You, the people, have the power to make this life free and beautiful, to make this life a wonderful adventure. Then - in the name of democracy - let us use that power - let us all unite.

Let us fight for a new world - a decent world that will give men a chance to work - that will give youth a future and old age a security. By the promise of these things, brutes have risen to power. But they lie! They do not fulfil that promise. They never will!

Dictators free themselves but they enslave the people! Now let us fight to fulfil that promise! Let us fight to free the world - to do away with national barriers - to do away with greed, with hate and intolerance. Let us fight for a world of reason, a world where science and progress will lead to all men’s happiness. Soldiers! in the name of democracy, let us all unite!”

—*The Great Dictator*,
Charlie Chaplin

10.53



“I never saw a wild thing
sorry for itself.

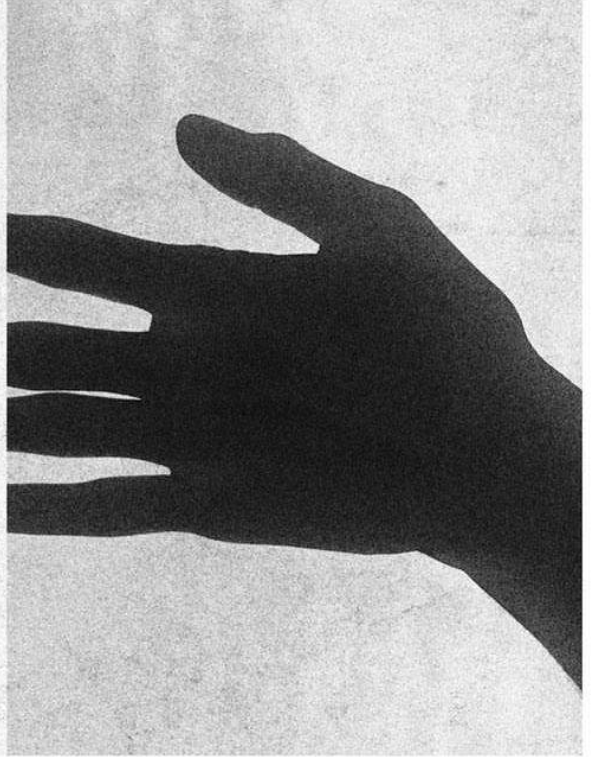
A small bird will drop frozen
dead from a bough
without ever having felt sorry
for itself.”

—*D. H. Laurence*

11.53



12.53



“Everything comes with an inherent sacrifice – whatever makes us feel good will also inevitably make us feel bad.

What we gain is also what we lose.

What creates our positive experiences will define our negative experiences.”

—*Mark Manson*



“The more you struggle to live,
the less you live.

Give up the notion that you must
be sure of what you are doing.

Instead, surrender to what is
real within you, for that alone is
sure....you are above everything
distressing.”

—*Spinoza. Nov. 1632*



“My God, my God,

whose performance am I watching?

How many people

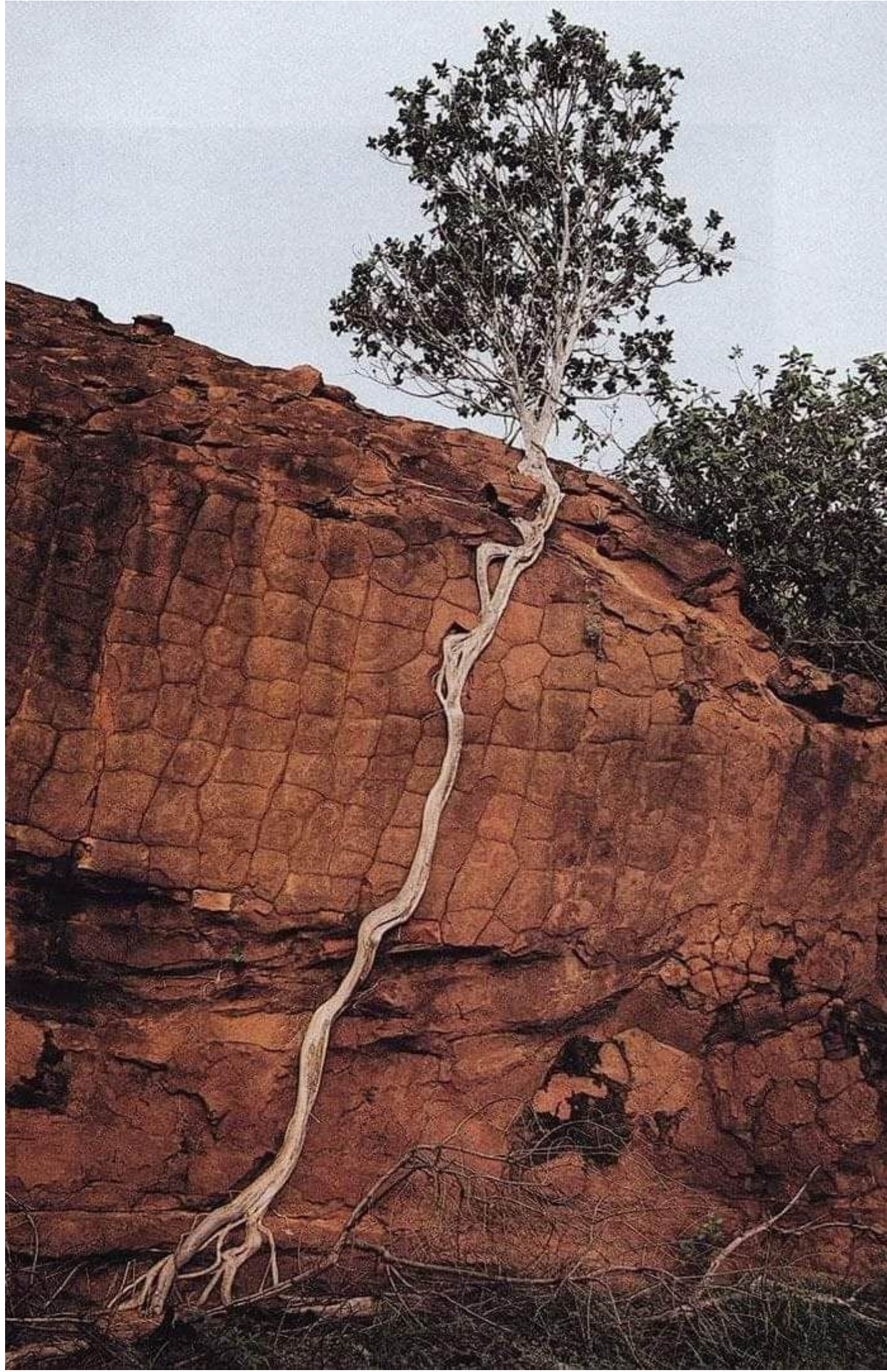
am I?

Who am I?

What is this space between

myself and myself?”

—*Fernando Pessoa,*
The Book of Disquiet



“Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

—*Dylan Thomas*



“I exist.’ In thousands of agonies — I exist.

I’m tormented on the rack — but I exist!

Though I sit alone in a pillar — I exist!

I see the sun, and if I don’t see the sun, I know it’s there. And there’s a whole life in that, in knowing that the sun is there.”

— *Fyodor Dostoyevsky,*
The Brothers Karamazov



“I cannot remember the books I've read any more than the meals I have eaten; even so, they have made me.”

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

18.53



19.53



"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

— *J.R.R. Tolkien,*
The Fellowship of the Ring



“I’m not going to try to be polite anymore. I am going to hopefully become a less behaved, less likeable, ballsier, more outspoken, more dangerous woman.

All these rules I have followed,
these rules will not save me.”

— *Aline Mello, Marietta, GA*



“You would stand in the room so still
sometimes, as if the greatest betrayal
of yourself would be to reveal
one
more inch of your character.”

—*Espinoza. Nov. 1632*

22.53



23.53



“I'm not telling you to make the world better, because I don't think that progress is necessarily part of the package.

I'm just telling you to live in it.

Not just to endure it, not just to suffer it, not just to pass through it, but to live in it. To look at it. To try to get the picture.

To live recklessly. To take chances. To make your own work and take pride in it. To seize the moment.

And if you ask me why you should bother to do that, I could tell you that the grave's a fine and private place, but none I think do there embrace. Nor do they sing there, or write, or argue, or see the tidal bore on the Amazon, or touch their children. And that's what there is to do and get it while you can and good luck at it.”

— *Joan Didion*



“It’s spring, you’re young, you’re lovely, you
have a right to be happy.

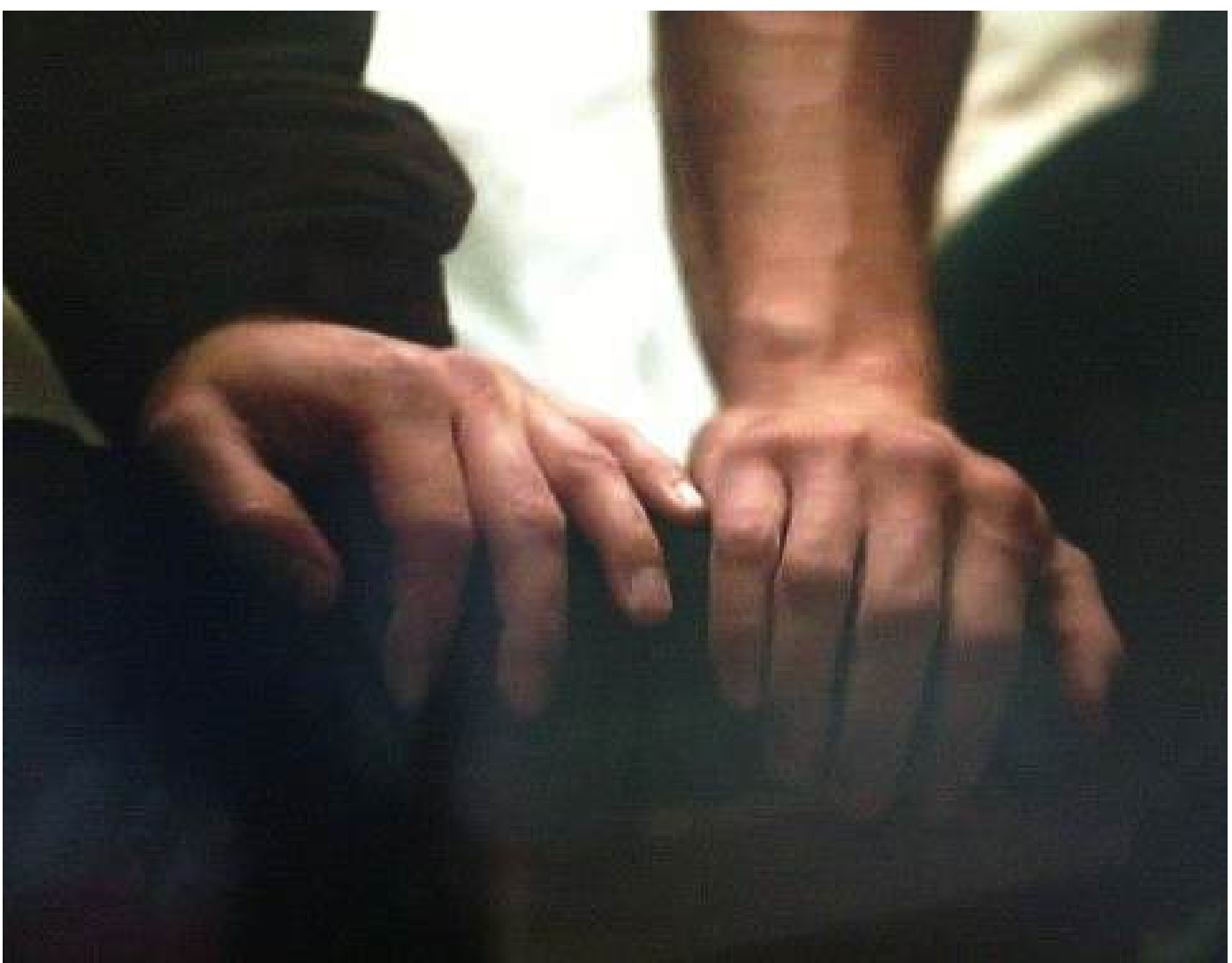
Come back into
the world.”

— *Shirley Jackson*



" a springtime,
sun-drenched landscape
that is childhood "

— *Annie Ernaux,*
Remain in Darkness



27.28.53



29.53



“So boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by.”

— *Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p38*

“She bore about with her, she could not help knowing it, the torch of her beauty; she carried it erect into any room that she entered;”

— *Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p41*

“...and that all this desire of hers to give, to help, was vanity. For her own self satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give, that people might say of her, O Mrs. Ramsay!”

— *Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p41*

“Was it wisdom? Was It knowledge? Was it, once more, the deceptiveness of beauty, so that all one’s perceptions, half-way to truth, were tangled in its golden mesh?”

— *Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p50*



“The words (she was looking out the window)
sounded as if they were

floating like flowers and
water out there,
cut off from them all,

as if no one had sent them, but they had come
into existence of themselves.

“And all the lives we are lived in all the lives to be
are full of trees and changing leaves.”

— *Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p110*

31.53



32.53

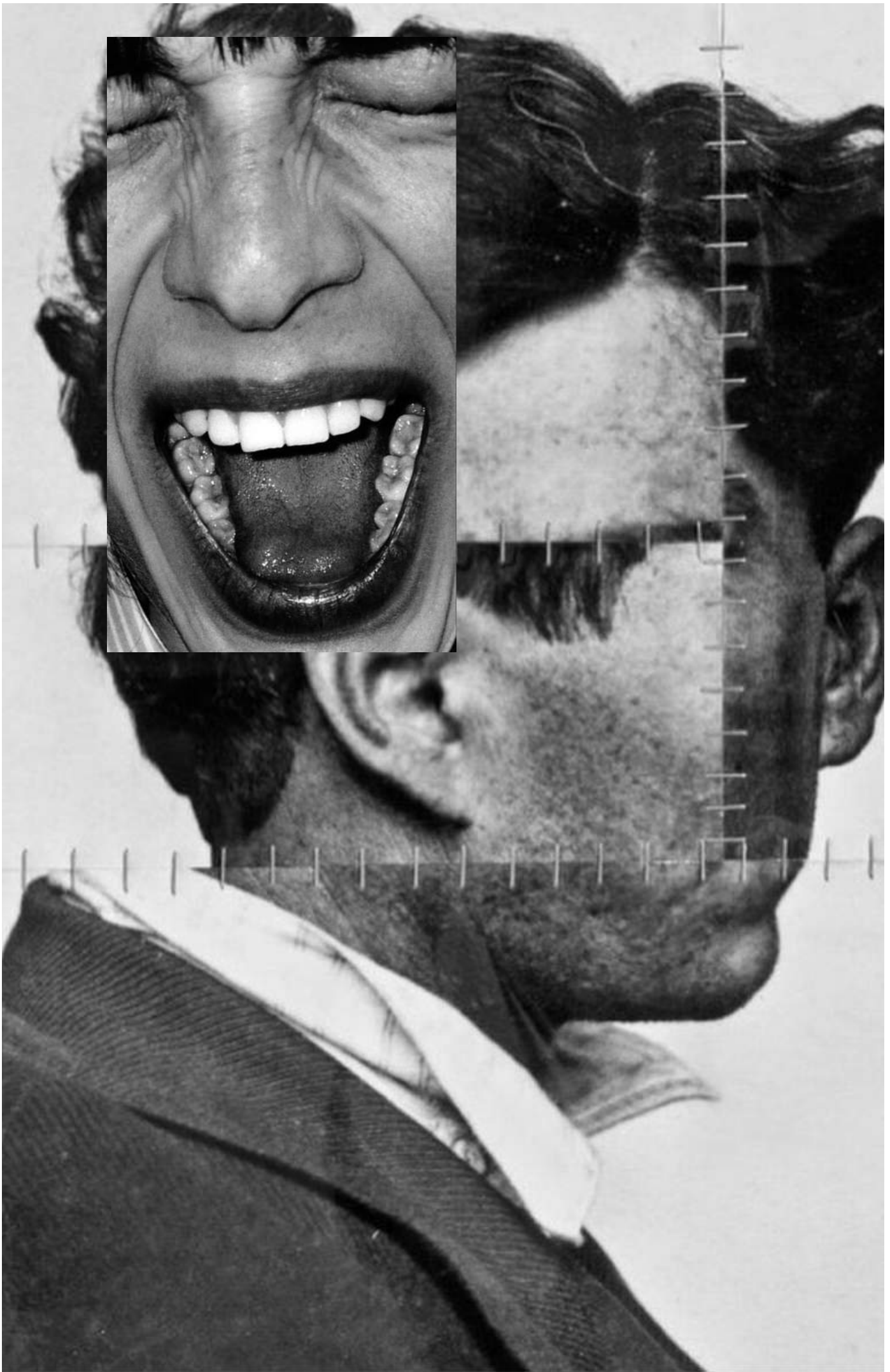


“Men, and women too, letting go the multiplicity of things, had allowed themselves with her the relief of simplicity.”

— *Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p41*

“It was one of those unclassified affections of which there are so many”

— *Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p104*



“Sitting opposite him, could she not see, as in an X-Ray photograph, the ribs and thigh bones of the young man's desire to impress himself, lying dark in the mist of his flesh...”

“...whatever her occupation may be, to go to the help of the young man opposite so that he may expose and relieve the thigh bones, the ribs of his vanity, of his urgent desire to assert himself.”

— *Virginia Woolf,*
To The Lighthouse, p91



"Rise up, then.

Mend your ways, start
seeing what you are
instead of calculating
what you should
become."

— *Franz Kafka*

35.53



36.53



"No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world.

I see that look in Mr Pitts' eyes like 19th century literature has nothing to do with going to business school or medical school, right?

Maybe.

You may agree and think yes, we should study our Mr. Pritcher and learn our rhyme and meter and go quietly about the business of achieving other ambitions.

Well, I have a secret for you.

Huddle Up...Huddle UP!

We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion.

Medicine, law, business these are all noble pursuits necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, and love; these are what we stay alive for.

To quote from Whitman "Oh me, Oh life of the question of these recurring. of the endless trains of the faithless of cities filled with the foolish. What good amid these? Oh me, Oh life." "Answer...that you are here and life exists....You are here. Life exists, and identity. The powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse."

The powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse.

What will your verse be?"

— *Prof. John Keating,
Dead Poets Society*



"I haven't yet tasted
everything that can keep
me alive."

—*Albert Camus, Caligula*



“You lived

Two decades

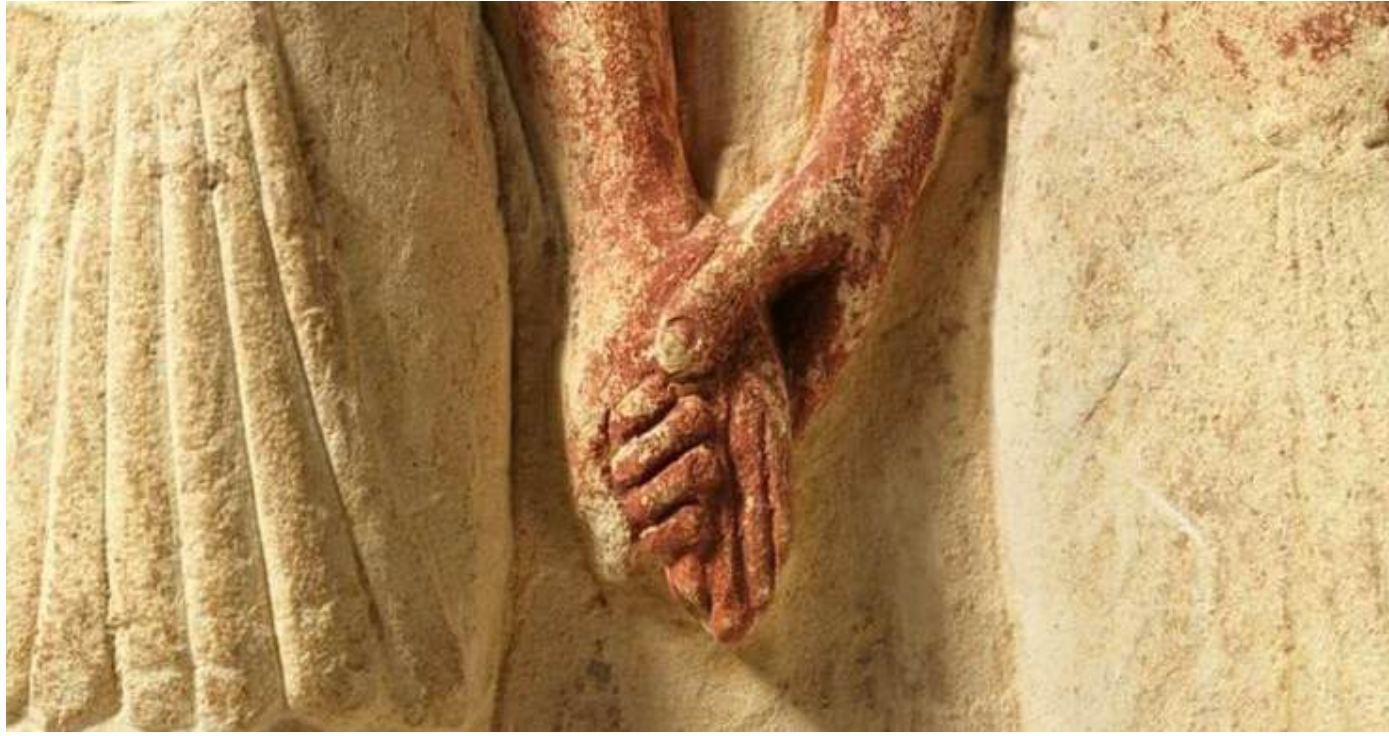
with nothing but your spine holding you
up.

The way light does not care if shadows
follow

you do not have to be wanted
to prove you are real..”

— *Natalie Wee, Never Been kissed*

39.53



"But what is grief, if not love
persevering?"

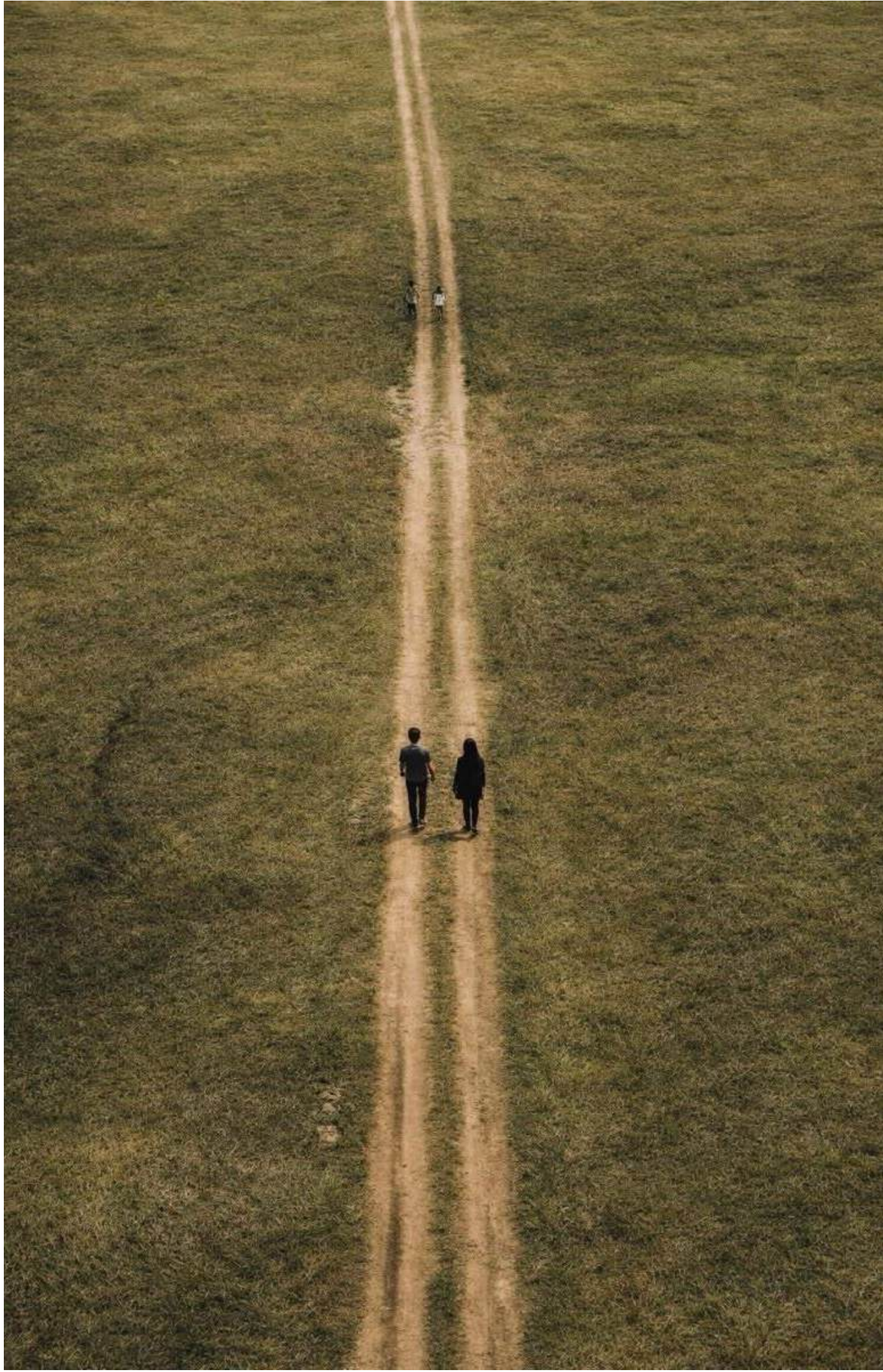
—*Vision, Wandavision, Ep. 8*



“The best translations into English do not, in fact, read as if they were originally written in English.

The English words are arranged in such a way that the reader sees a glimpse of another culture’s patterns of thinking, hears an echo of another language’s rhythms and cadences, and feels a tremor of another people’s gestures and movements.”

— *Ken Liu, Translator’s Post Script from The Three-Body Problem*



“I am trying to wander more. I
am trying to breathe more, to
love my lostness.”

—Noor Hindi, from *“On Language
and Mourning,”*
The American Poetry Review
(vol. 48, no. 4, July/August 2019)

42.53



43.53



“I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story.

From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked.

One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Ee Gee, the amazing editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantin and Socrates and Attila and a pack of other lovers with queer names and offbeat professions, and another fig was an Olympic lady crew champion, and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out.

I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose.

I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground
at my feet.”

— *Sylvia Plath, The Bell Jar*



"Hung on my bedroom wall is the quote attributed to Joan of Arc: "I am not afraid. I was born to do this." However my life unfolds, goes my thinking; however my life unspools itself, I was created to bear it."

—*Esme Eijun Wang,*
The Collected Schizophrenias



“I never liked jazz music because jazz music doesn't resolve. But I was outside the Bagdad Theater in Portland one night when I saw a man playing the saxophone. I stood there for fifteen minutes, and he never opened his eyes.

After that I liked jazz music.

Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something before you can love it yourself. It is as if they are showing you the way.

I used to not like God because God didn't resolve. But that was before any of this happened.”

— *Donald Miller, Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality*

46.53

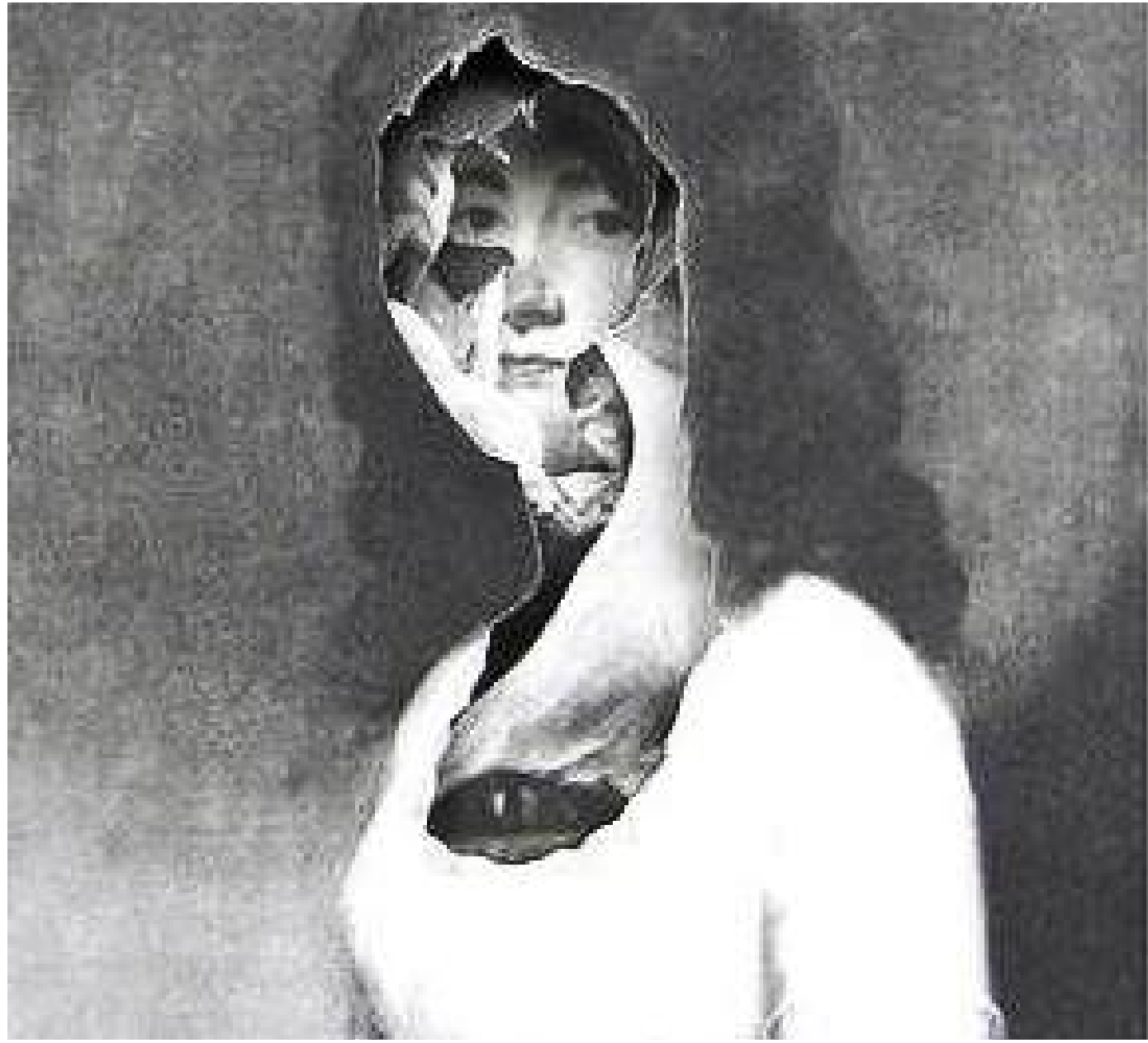


47.53



“I was always attracted not by some quantifiable, external beauty, but by something deep down, something absolute. Just as some people have a secret love for rainstorms, earthquakes, or blackouts, I liked that certain, undefinable something.”

—*Haruki Murakami,*
The Unvisited



“For all the terror, for all the commotion, for all the unease you feel, you cannot close your eyes. You see. You see voraciously. You cannot stop seeing”

—*Cristina Rivera Garza, La creste de ili6n,
translated by Sarah Booker*



“I sought to hear the voice of God and climbed the topmost steeple, but God declared: ‘Go down again - I dwell among the people.’”

—*John Henry Newman*



"We cannot live in a world that is interpreted for us by others. An interpreted world is not a home. Part of the terror is to take back our own listening. To use our own voice. To see our own light."

*—Hildegard von Bingen,
from "Selected Writings"*

51.53



52.53



“But if these years have taught me anything it is this: you can never run away. Not ever. The only way out is in.”

—*Junot Diaz, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*



“We do not grow absolutely, chronologically. We grow sometimes in one dimension, and not in another, unevenly. We grow partially. We are relative. We are mature in one realm, childish in another. The past, present, and future mingle and pull us backward, forward, or fix us in the present. We are made of layers, cells, constellations.”

— *Anais Nin*

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