
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Sydney Lea: Three Poems

Sydney Lea · Monday, March 30th, 2026

Late May

The season's here again now
when pine pollen coats so much:
like the upright piano

and our dog (I hear her wheeze,
lolling on the dust-caked floor).
All is jaundiced by the trees.

Down in the village, schoolhouse,
town hall, church's spire— each seems
to have been sloppily smeared

with makeup by novice clowns.
My eyes burn, I gag, I choke.
I want this haze to be gone,

scarcely alone in that wish.
All of us crave full summer,
though it will land like a fist.

We'll sweat and yearn for winter.
I notice my dreamy face
there in the dust-veiled mirror.

I'm ensnared by things that are.
I know that well yet I ache
for some pure seasonless state,
its limpid, breathable air.

*

Everywhere

There's always a war someplace. On this June day there's also our younger son's voice as he calms his younger son, who's skinned his knee. Scraped knees and weaponized rape— granted, lightning

bug and lightning, as Mark Twain said. And yet. My brother is forty years dead today. I rekindle my grief as I skim through “Hymns to the Night” by Novalis: *Your luster must vanish/ Yon mound underneath—/Cool shadows will bring thee/Thy wreath.* Is it meant to console? Not sure. I don’t understand a word. Or I do, but... So why wipe my eyes with my sleeve? How many sleeves would I need if my son’s boy were among the children, say, bombed in Iran or killed on the way to school in the Land of the Free? That doesn’t make my pain vanish. Novalis supervised salt mines. Some “Romantic”! Here he is again, hifalutin. *I feel the flow/ Of Death’s youth-giving flood/ To balsam and ether/ Transform my blood.* Get lost, I think. He did. At 29. I whisper, *Count your blessings.* I do, like that precious son and grandson. Enough to cancel my mourning that brother? Cancel’s too strong, but without offsetting joy I would die. Call me Merchant of Treacle. Sticks and stones. And I’m still here, not overwhelmed. Not yet anyhow.

*

Edge of Fall

Forty years together, yet some lust figured
in my response, I admit,
but a great deal more than that.
Some other thing. Some other things.
When she rounded a bend
and disappeared,

I felt despair. I’d been watching her graceful gait
from behind on this backcountry trail.
It’s September now, so sweet
an interlude. Like life. I shivered,
sensing the change,
subtle but deep.

Why remember just now my grandmother’s Secret Garden
behind her house in the woods?
Its small flowers kept their color
into autumn. When she picked the last red bloom,
she’d softly weep.
Am I feeling a pang?

I suppose I am. No, that’s too narrow a word,
but I can’t fetch a better one.
There’s a scarlet scarf at the crown
of that one maple. I won’t weep myself
for knowing my love
and I aren’t forever.

Oh, of course I will. Of course I will. Why deny it?
But I’ll mourn for more than that,
a thousand times more than that.
Our afternoons will slowly die.
A flicker flushes

and rounds the same bend,

as if its small white rump-patch could light the way.

(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

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