**Mending Wall**

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,

That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,

And spills the upper boulders in the sun;

And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

The work of hunters is another thing:

I have come after them and made repair

Where they have left not one stone on a stone,

But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,

To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,

No one has seen them made or heard them made,

But at spring mending-time we find them there.

I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;

And on a day we meet to walk the line

And set the wall between us once again.

We keep the wall between us as we go.

To each the boulders that have fallen to each.

And some are loaves and some so nearly balls

We have to use a spell to make them balance:

‘Stay where you are until our backs are turned!’

We wear our fingers rough with handling them.

Oh, just another kind of out-door game,

One on a side. It comes to little more:

There where it is we do not need the wall:

He is all pine and I am apple orchard.

My apple trees will never get across

And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.

He only says, ‘Good fences make good neighbors.’

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder

If I could put a notion in his head:

‘*Why* do they make good neighbors? Isn’t it

Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.

Before I built a wall I’d ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,

And to whom I was like to give offence.

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,

That wants it down.’ I could say ‘Elves’ to him,

But it’s not elves exactly, and I’d rather

He said it for himself. I see him there

Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top

In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.

He moves in darkness as it seems to me,

Not of woods only and the shade of trees.

He will not go behind his father’s saying,

And he likes having thought of it so well

He says again, ‘Good fences make good neighbors.’

—Robert Frost

**Facing It**

My black face fades,

hiding inside the black granite.

I said I wouldn’t,

dammit: No tears.

I’m stone. I’m flesh.

My clouded reflection eyes me

like a bird of prey, the profile of night

slanted against morning. I turn

this way—the stone lets me go.

I turn that way—I’m inside

the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

again, depending on the light

to make a difference.

I go down the 58,022 names,

half-expecting to find

my own in letters like smoke.

I touch the name Andrew Johnson;

I see the booby trap’s white flash.

Names shimmer on a woman's blouse

but when she walks away

the names stay on the wall.

Brushstrokes flash, a red bird’s

wings cutting across my stare.

The sky. A plane in the sky.

A white vet’s image floats

closer to me, then his pale eyes

look through mine. I’m a window.

He’s lost his right arm

inside the stone. In the black mirror

a woman’s trying to erase names:

No, she’s brushing a boy’s hair.

—Yusef Komunyakaa

**San Sepolcro**

In this blue light

       I can take you there,

snow having made me

       a world of bone

seen through to. This

       is my house,

my section of Etruscan

       wall, my neighbor’s

lemontrees, and, just below

       the lower church,

the airplane factory.

       A rooster

crows all day from mist

       outside the walls.

There’s milk on the air,

       ice on the oily

lemonskins. How clean

       the mind is,

holy grave. It is this girl

       by Piero

della Francesca, unbuttoning

       her blue dress,

her mantle of weather,

       to go into

labor. Come, we can go in.

       It is before

the birth of god. No one

       has risen yet

to the museums, to the assembly

       line—bodies

and wings—to the open air

       market. This is

what the living do: go in.

       It’s a long way.

And the dress keeps opening

       from eternity

to privacy, quickening.

       Inside, at the heart,

is tragedy, the present moment

       forever stillborn,

but going in, each breath

       is a button

coming undone, something terribly

       nimble-fingered

finding all of the stops.

—Jorie Graham

**The Thing in the Gap-Stone Stile**

I took the giant’s walk on top of the world,  
peak-striding, each step a viaduct.  
  
I dropped hankies, cut from a cloth of hills,  
and beat gold under fields  
for the sun to pick out a patch.  
  
I never absolutely told  
the curl-horned cows to line up their gaze.  
But it happened, so I let it be.  
  
And Annual Meadow Grass, quite of her own accord,  
between the dry-stone spread out emerald.  
  
(I was delighted by her initiative  
and praised the dry-stone for being contrary.)  
  
What I did do (I am a gap)  
was lean these elbows on a wall  
and sat on my hunkers pervading the boulders.  
  
My pose became the pass across two kingdoms,  
before behind antiphonal, my cavity the chord.  
  
And I certainly intended  
anyone to be almost  
abstracted on a gap-stone between fields.

—Alice Oswald

**The Boundary Commission**

*You remember that village where the border ran*

*Down the middle of the street,*

*With the butcher and baker in different states?*

Today he remarked how a shower of rain

Had stopped so cleanly across Golightly’s lane

It might have been a wall of glass

That had toppled over. He stood there, for ages,

To wonder which side, if any, he should be on.

—Paul Muldoon