

# Song

William Shakespeare

*The Merchant of Venice,*  
III.2.63

Tell me where is fancy bred,  
Or in the heart, or in the head?  
How begot, how nourishèd?

Reply, reply.

It is engendered in the eyes,  
With gazing fed, and fancy dies  
In the cradle where it lies.

Let us all ring fancy's knell.  
I'll begin it – Ding, dong, bell.  
Ding, dong, bell.

## Poems on the Underground

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# A Bunch of Consolation

Maura Dooley

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of Bloodaxe Books  
from *Five Fifty-Five* (2023)

You think they'll always be there,  
(the ones who always have been).  
They showed you the way,  
not their way  
but how to find your own  
(and what to say),  
sweeping the path of leaves  
or snow

but then they leave, they go,  
before you were ready  
(how could you ever be ready?)  
to wonder, wondering,  
what have you learned exactly?  
To love, to speak up, to hold steady.  
Hold steady.

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# When I Was a Fish

Krystyna Lenkowska

translated by the author  
and Cecilia Woloch

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from *Decompression*

© Krystyna Lenkowska (Fraza 2026)

When I was a fish  
or a bird  
I didn't need reputation  
nor the safe tomorrow

nor a solid bed  
with a soft pillow  
for the body

I wasn't looking for reasons and answers  
I wasn't carving holes in the table with my elbows  
nor in the mattress  
I was keeping silent or singing  
when I was a fish  
or a bird.

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# Letter

Yesterday I sent you a letter. And today on the phone you tell me you are pregnant. I pack up and return, you greet me at the airport, you're even lovelier than in my letter that's on its way to you. We build a house, our child grows, our parents shrink, then a few years of sweat and tears, in which we prudently pickle cabbage and gherkins for the ever colder days.

Tadeusz Dabrowski translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones  
Reprinted by permission of Arrowsmith Press from *The Scent of Man* (2025)

In the colouring book of our life there are fewer and fewer blank spaces, the crayons grow shorter, we try to be precise, but even so we go over the lines. We busy ourselves with everyday matters, and our paths are ever deeper, they start to look like tunnels. Meanwhile my letter's on its way to you. You'll open it when it suits you best.

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# A Rousing Speech

Glyn Maxwell

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By stock-still flags on the hottest day  
Recorded,  
He delivered a rousing speech to about six  
Hundred.

At the end of his speech the caps would be hurled  
Skyward.  
The sky was the blue of the blue sky on a  
Postcard.

There it all is in a black-and-white shot in the  
Paper.  
Depicting the memorable scene at his alma  
Mater.

The sky is the grey it would turn and, in capitals  
Under:  
PRESIDENT RALLIES THE TROOPS FOR THE WAR  
ON THUNDER.

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# No One Mentioned the Roofer

Rita Ann Higgins

from *Living with Wasps*  
(Bloodaxe Books 2026)

We met the Minister,  
we gave him buns, we admired his suit.  
The band played, we all clapped.

No one mentioned the roofer;  
whose overtime was cut  
whose under time was cut  
whose fringe was cut  
whose shoelaces were cut  
whose job was lost.

We searched for his job  
but it had disappeared.  
One of us should have said:  
Hey Minister, we like your suit  
have a bun, where are our jobs?  
But there was no point,  
he was here on a bun eating session  
not a job finding session.  
His hands were tied.  
His tongue a marshmallow.

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