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D'Alessio, Alice

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# Conversations With Thoreau

Poetry by **Alice D'Alessio**

**PARALLEL PRESS**    **POETRY SERIES**



A Parallel Press Chapbook



# Conversations With Thoreau

Poetry by  
Alice D'Alessio

**Parallel Press**  
University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries

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University of Wisconsin–Madison Libraries  
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“Questions for Henry” in *Free Lunch*

“Conversations with Thoreau” and “Spring Overture” in *Wisconsin Poets’ Calendar*

“Seeking Green” in *Wisconsin Academy Contest*

“Regeneration” in *Prairie Promoter Newsletter*

“Flannel” in the *Poetry Jumps Off the Shelf* program, Woodrow Hall Editions

“Green Heron in Marsh” in the Overture Center Exhibit titled *Text and Texture*

“From all that haunts us” in *Albatross*. Reprinted on *Littleeaglereverse.com*

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All the epigraphs under poem titles in part one are taken from the writings of Henry David Thoreau, (1817–1862) unless otherwise noted. I have indicated this with his initials, and the title of the publication from which the quote was taken.



This book is dedicated to all those who, in the spirit of Henry David Thoreau, have taught us to understand, love and care for the natural world, and to the untold thousands of volunteers who give of their time, resources and labor in stewardship.

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**Part I.**

**Conversations With Thoreau**

## A Walk to Wachusett

H.D.T. from *Excursions*

May I join you, Henry,  
to hike the Massachusetts hills?  
The country open and fresh  
the morning exuberant with birds:  
*a place where gods might wander  
so solemn and solitary.*

You are seeking that blue boundary  
of distant mountains, with only  
your stout staff, a tent  
and Virgil tucked under one arm.  
I would come along.

We'll drink from springs  
and scavenge wild berries,  
unhurried for appointments.  
We'll pause to contemplate  
our natural world, ample, roomy,  
with time *bounded by wide margins.*

Only an occasional farmer  
to share his bread and milk,  
and pique our interest with his strange accent—  
in that halcyon time before trucks  
when travelers *had no fellow travelers  
for miles, before or behind!*

And I know I was born too late  
or that we'll have to find each other  
in some warp of time. You  
and I and Virgil, perhaps, can strike off  
to see those undiscovered  
unmined mountains,  
beyond wild fields and forests.

## Star-Crossed

You and me, Henry,  
we would've made a pair.  
Two lopsided apples in a barrel,  
weird birds, odd ducks.

Too bad we missed each other—  
passing like comets  
in eccentric orbits.  
I needed your assurance,

your fearless contention. You  
never cared what people thought—  
I always did. It wouldn't matter  
out there in the sloughs and wallows

discovering star-shaped seeds  
and purple pokeweed. *It appears  
a rare triumph of Nature*, you said,  
*to have produced and perfected such a plant*

*as if this were enough for a summer.*  
I'd have been enchanted there beside you—  
an outcast, no doubt. And you, transported  
to *my* world, would be appalled.

## Our Holy Howling Mother

*Here is this vast, savage, howling mother of ours, Nature, lying all around,  
with such beauty*

H.D.T. from *Excursions*

Bad news, Henry,  
it's hard to find Her anymore,  
She's been so scraped,  
so raped, so scavenged.  
And yet you'd be amazed to watch us  
seek the relics left behind—  
each lonely riff of trees,  
each butterfly. Girded with late reports  
we hurry to be the one who gets there first  
who pokes the camera  
at the purple prairie clover  
chases the tattered Mourning Cloak  
through ditches, races home  
to post the photos on the web.

Yes, we fret about Her savage howling—  
louder now in hot dry creek beds  
and blown-off mountain tops.  
But we are lulled by the sight  
of an Oriole at the feeder  
as Our Mother rumbles deep in her core  
breathes fire and wind  
in retribution.

## Questions for Henry

*My greatest skill has been to want but little*  
H.D.T. from *Walden*

How little, Henry?  
Didn't you hanker for a haunch  
of venison, and a pint  
with the local lads? A fierce game  
of bowls on the lawn,  
pummeling the backs of the winning team?  
A ride on that newfangled train,  
racing at 30 miles an hour  
with the wind  
licking your cheeks, ruffling your whiskers?

Or, how about  
a warm and breathing body  
next to yours?  
Yes, dandelion fluff  
is nice enough, in its place.  
But does it really set your pulses tingling,  
light up the nerve ends, like shorted wires?  
Does it answer  
that craving for a gentle touch,  
the sensuous message human fingers  
etch on skin?



## What I'm Doing

*What are you doing today? Write in your journal!*

Letter, R.W. Emerson to H.D.T.

**As soon as I** check my balance and pay some bills  
before they're overdue, scrub up  
spilled spaghetti sauce  
from last night's cooking spree,  
do my exercises—stretch, bend, reach, groan—  
take a pain pill, strip the purple sheets  
and dump them in the wash, check my email,  
invite a widowed friend to dinner  
call the furnace man, the dentist

**then I plan to** walk among  
the gold and crimson trees, listen  
to leaves fall, cranes squabble  
in the marsh; gather seeds from bee-balm,  
milkweed pods, coneflower—all ripe and waiting  
but time slips by, and I see the clouds  
clump overhead, draining the color, but

**before the rain comes,** maybe a few miles  
or so to name each plant and bird,  
butterfly, and beetle (in Latin)  
muse on the succession of trees—  
contemplate our oneness with nature,  
and take meticulous notes in my journal,  
accompanied by sketches,  
I know that's how you did it, Henry.

**But my watch says** it's after 4, and the phone  
rings, the mail comes, and I must start the evening meal,  
peel potatoes, pound a meatloaf into shape.  
If you could join us for dinner, Henry,  
maybe you could explain how to simplify.

## Choices

*Be not simply good; be good for something*

H.D.T. from *Walden*

Be good for *something*!

Is there a formula, or scale of one to ten?

Does writing poetry count?

And is watching a blue heron preen himself  
on the branch above the early morning pond—  
mist rising now in mid-September  
bluestem and goldenrod competing to make a show—  
does this amount to good? Dawdling here?  
It feels good, and moral, too, I think.  
It's also what I *want* to do, and yet,  
a nagging Puritanism in me says  
some sacrifice is necessary.  
Shouldn't I be tutoring children, visiting sick friends?

Or may I take instruction from your life, Henry?  
Gather to me what is left  
of that great wilderness you loved so well,  
look and listen, wander and inhale the smell of fall.  
Write a poem now and then, and post a letter  
damning those who drain the last wild marsh.

## Transcendentalism

*What in other men is religion is in me love of nature*  
H.D.T. from *Walden*

Today, Henry, even you  
might find Religion, speak to gods  
in grateful murmurs,  
offer sacrifice and bow before the Maker  
who fashioned this day for perfection  
as if to say, see, *this* is an aspen leaf,  
and *this* a limestone tablet,  
veined in gray on chalky white.

As if to demonstrate  
the way cedars should nod and shrug  
in just the right breeze  
and how the water dances toward us  
ribboned and spangled, then retreats  
to where the bay meets sky.  
And the light! Our sun—  
*sine qua non*—how it kisses,  
gilds, tempers the air.

You have said there is no need to conjure gods,  
since all nature is one  
and we are sacred as the single leaf,  
the rock, the breeze. But humans are not easy  
without fable. We need our temples,  
deities and demons; need comfort to quell the fear  
of drifting, all alone.

## Mutterings of Thunder

*As for poetry, I have not remembered to write any for some time; it has quite slipped my mind. But sometimes I think I hear the mutterings of thunder*

Letter, H.D.T. to R.W. Emerson

It won't leave you alone, you know,  
like a tree swallow  
swooping in dizzying dives  
or the hummingbird that roars in at dawn  
to dip nectar from the feeder. Insistent.  
Not to be ignored. It may come silently at night  
rising in moon glow like a mushroom tip  
hiding the vastness of its body  
far below. Or drift on a breeze  
through a summer window,  
a flicker of purple heat lightning.

Sometimes it's more like the sting  
of a mosquito—and perhaps you fight it  
or swat it but you can't get rid of it,  
like an itch that swells and festers,  
troubling your sleep.

Then, like the guest that stops in unexpectedly,  
a lucent phrase comes knocking at the door  
and you welcome it in  
patch it together with some more loose bits  
to shape a poem; hone and pare, never  
losing the spark at its heart, until it is ready,  
its voice filling the gap  
you needed to fill.

## Walden Pond Restoration

First, they covered the concrete bathhouse  
with cedar shingles,  
*restoring the area to a natural state*, they said.  
I imagine you perched on a branch, bemused—  
your spirit destined to inhabit  
whatever woods is left.  
Bathhouse? Concrete?

*Walden*. It's now synonymous, you know,  
with the *quiet life of contemplation*,  
as iconic as Shangri-La or Camelot.  
We are desperate to make the pilgrimage  
to be infused with your serenity  
but we're told the parking lot for 350 cars  
is often filled by noon; the concrete wall  
around the pond is lined three-deep with fishermen,  
while nearby stands hawk snacks and souvenirs.

When you wrote, *I love my fate*  
*to the very core and rind*, we believed you  
and we wanted a bite of that same melon.  
Why did we have to consume it, seeds and all,  
rip up the vines and poison the garden?

## Conversations With Thoreau

Because I'm tired of myself, I say,  
tired of the fretful gnawing in the brain,  
like rats in a landfill. All the news  
is bad. Even the snow,  
sifting hypnotically on weeds and fence line  
doesn't stifle the static—  
shut it out, seal it off.  
I need other voices  
to repeat the sweet banalities,  
the *Hey—how's it going?*  
I call everyone I know.  
We talk about weather  
cooking kids books do lunch  
see a movie have a drink.

Do you know what I'm saying, Henry?  
Weren't there times when contemplation  
of that mucky pond and trees  
got wearisome, and you found yourself  
stopping in to chat with Emerson,  
having a cup of tea  
with Bronson Alcott? Or perhaps—  
and I can only guess—  
your thoughts were less on loss  
and more on reverence.

## 120 Years Later, A Boy Reads *Walden*

*I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sight and sound around my house*

H.D.T. from *Walden*

The boy just didn't get  
what you were talking about, Henry.

He was angry. It was a  
hot day that melted tar  
    on the tenement roof. Just a kid,  
but he knew things weren't like you said  
and he knew they wouldn't change  
so he tore the pages from the book  
    one by one  
and watched them drift across the toppled cans  
    where ripe garbage clogged the gutters  
and when the wind picked up  
they sailed like pigeons  
all the way to the Harlem River  
    to join the rats that floated by  
in that stinking slough he'd walked along  
trying to understand your words.

## Winter Choir

*I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beechtree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines*

H.D.T. from *Walden*

You knew they'd wait until you came.  
Hurrying off to other obligations  
is not their habit.

At night, they greeted you somberly,  
dark pillars, heavy  
with indigo meditation. They danced in storms  
to wind's wild tunes,  
shedding drizzle from every knot and twig.

Yet calling on them in the snow  
at first light  
you found them at their best—  
a joyful chorus, clad in gilt-edged robes,  
chanting all together:  
*Alive Alive Alive.*



## **Immortality**

*We are becoming the tools of our tools*  
H.D.T. from *Walden*

*No man had a better unfinished life,*  
said your friend Channing when you died  
with the work you planned unfinished—  
hand-scribbled journals to sort and organize,  
more books to write. And barely a taste  
of the fame that was to come—  
the hundred thousand copies  
of your books on bookshelves,  
the chiseled and painted quotes  
on monuments, museum walls.

Time, Henry, has speeded up  
and fame is transitory. Today's headliners  
escape us as we roar about on busy highways,  
guided by our GPS, owned  
by the cell phones clamped and tweeting  
at our ears; by the television pundits  
and social networks who tell us  
what to think. All day. All night.

You died tranquilly, they say, and unafraid,  
before we named schools in your honor,  
before teachers assigned your books to students  
who Google you with the tools  
that control their lives.

**Part II.**

**Revelations**

## Games of Love

*What would I wear if I were sad?* he asks.  
*Coming to breakfast for instance, with my loss still fresh?*  
*You, gone, inexplicably, and the silence?*

Another challenge. I didn't know  
that lepidopterists played games.  
No Nabokov, he—  
a manic, willowy boy,  
already bent from peering.  
I'd been captivated  
by his intensity  
his moss-green eyes.

He quizzes me on genus and species;  
we vacation with nets,  
to fields and marshy places, ripe  
and buzzing with concerts of black flies,  
mosquitoes, leopard frogs.

*An important personage...* he prompts,  
crouching before the pulsing wings.  
*Monarch*, I say triumphantly,  
*Danaus plexippus*.  
*No! Viceroy*, he crows, triumphant.  
*See the lateral black line?*

Men with no passions leave me yawning,  
but sometimes I'd prefer another bent—  
Civil War relics, perhaps,  
or medieval lute. Well, this for that.  
I play for pay.  
*Oh, you're my Spicebush swallowtail*  
he murmurs at my ear.

*A Mourning cloak!* I say. I've won the game!

## In Borrowed Glasses

The chicory has lost its outlines,  
become puddles of Monet sky  
at highway edge; the cornlands blur  
in swirls of Van Gogh green and ochre.  
Yellow elephants line up  
to scratch pale furrows in chocolate earth.

If I were clear-sighted they'd be bulldozers  
gouging new roads. But I am not,  
and see the backhoe as a sandhill crane,  
dipping and bobbing;  
uprooted trees  
are abstract streaks on hempen fields.

How much less the stress the rural ride  
without the edges; soft and quaint  
the urban landscape  
when greens and whites of plastic trash  
are daubs of pointillistic art.  
Bifocals lost, I see the scene I choose,  
uncovering a truth as comforting as gin,  
as free as disability.

I'll watch the TV news in borrowed glasses—  
mute the sound, transform catastrophe  
into a lily pond at Giverny.

## Green Heron in Marsh

Not everything that happens is for the best.  
Ask the heron, round-eyed, wary—  
a plump meal for coyote,  
her nest a serendipity  
for crows, raccoons, hawks,  
and yet she is at home  
in the greens and tawnies,  
spangled webs, slurry of leaf rot,  
puddle and seep. She is tuned  
to buzz and hum, to roiling water  
and flash of minnow.

Like the heron, we are beset.  
Things happen, sudden or insidious,  
our fragile package of bone and skin  
defenseless. Renegade viruses,  
crumbling walls, smell of oily water rising,  
and worse, the violence  
of tormented minds. Ghouls  
hype our terrors. We can gird  
ourselves with cannon, with gates and armor,  
chant supplications to the great deaf ears,  
line up for one-way spaceship,

or we can nestle warily in our niche,  
relearn the solace of root and stem,  
of fattening bud. Furl our wings about us  
with a soft sigh. Suffer the coyote.

## Continuo

Season of ripening and letting go.  
Walnuts and apples, roundly complete,  
take the Newtonian plunge,  
another yellow leaf severs its cord. Mist  
lingers on tuft and seed and bract,  
the asters' patchwork purple,  
the sumac's crimson. Like pools of blood.  
*I will not think about the war.*

Season of reckoning, of counting our riches:  
these singing fields and hills, this tousled thistle,  
clinging bee. These clouds, white petals on a lover's path.  
The bullwhip cracks, but doesn't curl its thong  
around *our* necks. Oakleaf and sweetfern hide  
the dead and dying here, but they are small  
with bones and voices easy to ignore.  
*I cannot think about the war.*

Season of gathering and stocking seeds  
to replenish the prairie. Indian grass bends plumes  
in morning breeze that doesn't carry dust  
from bull-dozed homes, or stench of blown-up bus  
and burning flesh. The only cries I hear are jays  
and chickadees collecting bounty. And yet  
beyond the hills the rough chimera breathes,  
tolling the names, weighing the awful harvest.

## Night Voices

In the marsh, geese punctuate  
their gabbling with outraged exclamations,  
cranes trumpet wildly  
to a lopsided moon. It's 2 a.m.

but it's the voices inside my head  
that feed insomnia, human voices  
that ricochet around dark corners  
incessant rants and robocalls  
pandering to irrational  
minds. Three days to go.  
We cosset our hopes and dreams  
like delicate goslings, feed them tiny scraps,  
as we contemplate a world unbalanced.

Be wary of those who say  
God speaks to them.  
He speaks to me too, and tells me  
they are lying.

Democracy sputters on, our rusted  
tractor, threatening breakdown  
at every soggy hollow in the path.  
And we are like the geese, gathering  
for the long trip, debating  
which route to take. And who will lead.

## Reaching for Light

*October 2008*

All morning, clouds  
like flotillas of warships darken the sky  
prescient with symbolism.  
The election inches toward us,  
saturating our dreams and waking hours.  
Which way will the wind blow?

A harbinger arrives at mid day  
as though a switch is flicked:  
gold light pours from a patch of blue  
through oak leaves  
trying out new colors, blushes the  
marsh grass, sparkles on the wide  
inky elbow of the Branch  
where cranes gather, like  
pearl gray sails.

I am lofted  
like these noisy birds, wheeling upward  
with the currents. It has been so long  
since we have soared.



## From all that haunts us

I escape, drawing close  
the green walls of my world.  
A chorus of birdsongs mutes,

for these brief moments, the sirens of unholy wars.

At the top of the meadow, nestled  
among the bird's foot violets

and early grasses too short for cover  
a freckled newborn, legs neatly tucked,  
pretends to be invisible.

Only the twitching of a moist nose  
gives it away. I tiptoe on, unwilling  
to contemplate its small, doomed life.

*Isn't there a place where the deer can be safe?*  
says my grandson, crying,  
when he learns about hunters. I turn  
his question over as I turn the parchment skull

of the scavenged hawk,  
puzzling for answers. Oh, let me slip  
into my burrow, blind and dumb. *Safe*

is not a word that we can teach  
to four year olds any more. Only  
this moment, this sunshine, this fawn.

## Regeneration

Given a choice  
of granite columns, bronze  
statues—the hewn and carved  
and polished monuments to  
man's misjudgments, names  
of those who died  
for someone else's cause—  
you prefer the prairie.  
Wilderness invades you, paces your  
uncertain heart with steady thrubbing.  
Disoriented in crowds, you  
forget where you are, walk into  
strange doorways, wince at  
the howls, the clatter,  
forget to say hello.

The pampered pansies  
of the public tombs  
offend you. You conjure drifts  
of tallgrass swaying  
in unrehearsed ballet, in perfect  
synchrony—like schools of minnows  
swarms of dragonflies—dancing  
October homage, spilling  
their tiny packets of rebirth.  
You walk among the rustling stalks  
soft-footed, hearing whispered voices  
of those who came before,  
knowing, as sure as sun and rain  
they will return; while pillars crumble.



**Part III.**

**Seeds of Hope**

## Prelude

December night  
fades at the seam like washed denim.  
Street lights still glow.  
The dark soft blue of early morning  
creeps above rooflines  
and bony fingers of trees—  
blue with such luminous depth and density  
you could wrap yourself in its thickness,  
sink into unknowing.

Last stars die.  
In dark houses coffee pots turn on,  
newspapers snuffle on doorsteps  
waiting to howl their seamy recitations.  
Dogs twitch on rugs.  
More than 90 per cent of the universe  
is composed of matter that can't be seen.  
What will happen today  
has already set itself in motion.

## January Burn

Winter has broken its frigid grip.  
The thermometer leaps and dives  
like a teeter-totter,  
in ominous response to  
gases in the atmosphere.

Still, we can't regret  
this gentle January day  
of warm monochromes,  
scant snow, grasses sodden in fields  
under low-slung sun,  
chickadees berserk with celebration.  
We strip off scarves and jackets,  
our bodies steamy as August,  
and drag culled brush and branch  
to feed the crackling flames;  
leap back from searing towering heat.

We pronounce it  
New Year's Eve in Iceland,  
Epiphany in Italy.  
Toss in the thigh bone of a deer  
for Celtic forbears  
and banish evil spirits with our Samhain,  
assuage our guilt  
for spewing a plume of greenhouse gas.  
Celebrate our festival of purification.

## Seeking Green

Drove south that year,  
looking for spring;  
in Wisconsin, the suspense  
can make you crazy.

Saw first faint green  
tinge stubble by the highway  
in northern Illinois.  
Further along,  
a red-wing staked out assignments  
in the cattail marsh; willows  
yellowed.

Kentucky: emerald fields  
were lapped by  
muddy ditches, lakes, puddles  
roiling rivers. Treetops, dressed  
in chartreuse foliage, gasped  
in swollen currents.

In Mississippi, saw shades  
of green like samples  
at the paint store; tiny satin leaves  
unfold in woods  
strung with redbud, dogwood—  
like Christmas lights  
among green branches.

Kept on driving, giddy with green,  
to where Big Muddy meets the Gulf,  
gushing torrents of latte, draining  
the sagging midlands  
like a giant sluice.

Found New Orleans, raucous  
night city, breathing jazzbeat,  
hot Cajun aromas; danced down dirty  
streets under balconies hung with  
greenswinging vines,  
thick with laughter.

The problem was coming back:  
Wheels rolled north  
and green reversed itself,  
withdrawing underground—  
a nature film going backwards.

At end, a bleached-brown world,  
frozen in obstinacy. Had to  
shut our eyes to picture  
what we'd lost  
(eyelid linings saturated  
with new green). Unloaded  
dirty shorts and t-shirts, hot pepper  
sauce, oysters, Spanish moss,  
pralines. Cranked up the furnace.  
Fed ourselves on spinach,  
pea soup, asparagus,  
Key lime pie. Waited.



## Spring Overture

Funny how we forget  
from one year to the next  
the joyful crescendo—  
how it intensifies each day  
from the pianissimo of catkins trembling  
and violets purpling  
to the underground tympany of earthworms  
and finally the brassy fanfare  
of redwing blackbirds  
shouting *hoo-wee!* as they ride  
the willows.

## Morning Rain

like playful fingertips  
                                across the skylight  
as morning lightens  
branches  
                                emerge from shadow  
sprouting nubbins of spring leaf  
                                dripping silver  
edges unblur

small voices  
embellish the stillness  
                                patter of rain  
                                rasp of your inhaled breath  
  against my shoulder

I summon music  
float back into dream  
accompanied by birdsong  
                                rendered on flute

the day opens softly  
as days should  
not bursting into brightness  
                                loud with words  
not splitting ragged seams and leaking grief  
but easing into possibility  
                                unfurling like tulips  
                                blessing the rain

## Unfathomable Fortune

*I* wasn't here  
but something of me was  
a windblown husk of seed  
and *you* perhaps a breath  
inhaled  
exhaled millenniums ago

In every tidal pool and crevice  
an alchemy of cosmic dust  
and water  
bubbles and transforms  
the velvet muck of life  
divides elaborates

Each hairy tendril spore and scale  
clutches regrows re-dies  
creates anew. Perhaps  
we've met before or shall again  
in other form. Our brief days—  
fashioned by happenstance  
ephemeral as borealis.

## Sunset on Rainy Lake

Since there were days,  
since rocks congealed and cooled  
since there were eyes to see,  
some creature watched the sun  
slide earthward, trailing  
bright swaths across a boundless lake  
where islands like ships  
with ragged sails and broken masts  
deflect the waters' push  
in ripples of indigo, apricot, alizarin, mauve—  
then plunge, swallowed in a sombre  
underworld.

We cluster on our rock  
like moths on an upturned hull  
silent and fragile  
as tissue, we are tentative  
breathless we wait  
as though some giant moan  
will rise among the islands  
mourning this dazzling death.  
And in the greeny afterglow  
a loon wails. What we have to say  
is small, inconsequential.  
Nothing bears repeating.

## Flannel

like a soft skin, caresses your neck,  
wraps you in its arms;  
faded, rumpled, saturated with nostalgia  
of brawny men and woodsmoke,

its rugged comfort to the shoulder  
like pea soup to the tongue.  
Sheets of flannel warm your body  
as silk and satin never could, fashion

a tender cocoon, a nest, a womb.  
When the mind wakes  
to its nightly rampage, undoing  
daytime's careful collage, like a child

in tantrum, replays grisly headlines,  
dredges worries like sand crabs  
from a beach. When the wind  
rattles the window sash, whispers

cold blasphemies in your ears,  
slide deeper into flannel  
with a sigh, buffered from a world  
at odds with softness.

## **Seeds of Hope**

Curl your hand roundly  
while I fill it with milkweed.  
Watch morning glide toward you  
from the end of the valley  
like a Botticelli woman  
with skirts of mist, and the field,  
ragged with mint  
and the mint spangled with dew  
and the finches  
dipping and chittering  
and the twigs pregnant with seeds  
heavy and ripe.

Keepers of tomorrow,  
yours is the earth—  
its trees, air and water.  
Be kind to your treasures.  
Look to the ridgetop that brightens in sunlight  
and float to its beckoning fringe.  
Let the wind whisper secrets.  
You are the milkweed silk rising.



**Alice D'Alessio** is a Middleton, Wisconsin, poet with a degree in English literature from Allegheny College in Pennsylvania and additional post-graduate course work at the Iowa Writers School, Split Rock Arts Program (University of Minnesota), and the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She was director of communications for Marshall Erdman and Associates, Madison, for eleven years, and editor to the dean of Letters and Science at UW–Madison from 1996–2000. She has attended classes at The Clearing in Ellison Bay, and teaches for Elderhostel at Green Lake.

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