

Girls' Writing



High Rocks
Hillsboro, West Virginia

I Come From

by Courtney Russell

I come from coalmine dust that darkens my fathers and grandfathers lungs.
I come from a legacy of hard workers that earn their keep.
I come from torn cut offs that are sexy and comfortable.
I come from lovers and fighters.
I come from being a coal miner's daughter.
I come from tuff times.
I come from ruff and rowdy honky tonks.
I come from mudding late a night.
I come from baying coon and bear hounds baying at their prey.
I come from tuff times.
I come from lots of laughter and good food is served in bountiful amounts.
I come from a home where Chevy and Dodge is a household name.
I come from red necks all the way

In the Truck

by Amanda Peaytt

They seem so content with the
scene which is set for them.
She on the right and he on the left.
Silence rules within them
but yet I see them so comfortable
and relaxed.
This is a scene I have watched
many a many a time.
And every time I watch
I get the same feeling.
The love is there,
I think.
They don't know it but I do!
I refuse to believe that they have
been together for so long
for what...the sake of time.
He on the left and she on the right.
He intently watches the road
awaiting the twists and bends.
She sits quietly and thinks...
about what I can't even begin to imagine.
Stop signs and the clicking of
the turn signal.
She on the right and he on the left.
Wheel at hand
and the silence is broken.

No they are not mad...I think.
They just got nothing much
To say...I guess.
The silence to them is not
disturbing.
This is how they lived before
I came.
And will continue long after
I leave.
Pen at hand and the scratching
Of the paper never bothers them.
He on the left and she on the right.
The chewing of the gum quickens
hoping home will come faster...
I suppose.
The love is there,
yes, I see it.

Where I'm From

by Hannah Ormsbee

I'm from Philip Sheridan and Dawn Elisa, the ivy tree next to the sand box, and Jack, the Donkey running in the yard
I'm from barefoot souls and bonfires, antique furniture and rhinestone jewelry
I'm from heartaches and bruises, broken bones and scrapped knees
I'm from Lynard Skynard and Johnny Cash, lip-gloss and make-up, tight jeans and High Heels
I'm from boy shorts and t-shirts with big shoes to fill
I'm from Clorox bleach and water, comet and toilet bowl cleaner
I'm from the Indians dancing and singing to the fire and the Scots and Irish who can Never get along
I'm from abuse and doubt, put-downs and runaways
I'm from the soul of a wise one and my Nanny's home remedies I'm from a family broken yet whole

My Hands

by Courtney Gililan

My hands could tell the story of ten million lies and one hundred truths. Lies about life and who I am. Lies about pain and heartache.

My hands could tell you about love. Ones lost, and those yet to be found. They could tell you about reaching for the stars but never finding one bright enough to satisfy me.

My hands create.

My hands destroy.

My hands are strong enough to survive the test of time. But will they? Will they do things I never thought possible?

My hands glide the pen across the paper as if it was connected directly to my heart, to my mind, to my soul.

My hands show how I feel. And sometimes my hands talk when I can not. My hands are my tools for creating works of art, building houses, and getting the job done.

My hands are my canvas and my roadmap, taking me where I need to be.

Without my hands, I would be lost.

What are your hands? What are they going to do to play your role in making a difference?

My Song, Join Me

by Brittany Carden

My song sounds like...
A child beaten
And curled up in a corner
Just learning to take a stand

My song looks and feels like...
Thousands of pissed off protesters
Fighting passionately
For their Beliefs

My song dreams about...
A day when racism is in the past
Coal and oil won't be depended on
Everyone has a home and food
And greed doesn't blow away mountains

My song dances and moves like...
A tough old boxer
He'll never stay down for the count

My song is...
As precious as earth
Care for it
Like a mother for her child

Shout it like...
A church choir
Make sure everyone hears you

Sing it like...
A love song
Passion in every sound

Cherish it like...
Children with candy
Every piece is treasured.

Hard Choices

by Ashia Johnson

Larry Gibson standing on the edge of his property line, looking down on what used to be a tall, beautiful mountain. This particular part of land is now gravel and rocks and a lot of big trucks. This man is being forced out of the place he literally spent all his life in. He is being pushed and shoved and beaten because he refuses to go down without a fight. His whole family was on this land for their entire lives and now the ones who have passed away are buried on the other side of the hill. He has tried everything to keep what he deserves, but the companies are literally taking the land out from under him.

As I think back on our trip to Larry's home, I think about the two totally different sides of the matter. I'm kind of in the middle. On one hand, my grandpa was a coal miner and without the coalmining industry, I wouldn't have half of the stuff I have now. On the other hand, the chemicals from the coal companies and the soot and dust from the coal is causing many, many problems for our environment. Not only that, but also it's damaging the lungs of people and animals. The number one thing I will always remember about that day was the look on Larry's face when he said, "I just don't know what else to do." Sad, depressing, lost and hopeless.

What should be done about this conflict? I honestly don't know. All I know is that this particular issue is still going on. Right now. Really close to here. Think about it and together we will decide.

Academic Papers
for High Rocks
Poetry Class

My House

By: Nikki Giovanni

I only want to
Be there to kiss you
As you want to be kissed
When you need to be kissed
Where I want to kiss you
Cause its my house
And I plan to live in it

I really want to hug you when I want to hug you
As you like to hug me
Does this sound like a silly poem

I mean its my house
And I want to fry pork chops
And bake sweet potatoes
And call them yams
Cause I run the kitchen
And I can stand the heat

I spend all winter in
Carpet stores gathering
Patches so I could make
A quilt
Does this really sound
Like a silly poem
I mean I want to keep you
Warm

And my windows might be dirty
But its my house
And if I cant see out sometimes
They cant see in either

English isn't a good language
To express emotion through
Mostly I imagine because people
Try to speak English through it
I don't know maybe it is
A silly poem

Im saying its my house
And ill make fudge and call
It love and touch my lips
To the chocolate warmth
And smile at old men and call
It revolution cause whats real
Is really real
And I still like men in tight
Pants cause everybody has some
Thing to give and more
Important need something to take

And this is my house and you make me
Happy
So this is your poem

My House

By: Nikki Giovanni

Is your house really a structure with a foundation that you live in? Does it have to be a building with four walls and a roof? Nikki Giovanni expresses in many different ways exactly what a “house” is to her in the poem, “My House.” This poem opens up your mind and heart to look at things in a way you wouldn’t have before. It allows you to think about your body being a house and that you should be proud of it. She backs this by showing that she is letting this person in but keeping them at arms length, like I feel a lot of women do.

*I only want to
Be there to kiss you
As you want to be kissed
When you need to be kissed
Where I want to kiss you
Cause it’s my house
And I plan to live in it*

*I really want to hug you
When I want to hug you
As you like to hug me
Does this sound like a silly poem*

These stanzas she is expressing much emotion. It suggests that there is a romantic connection between the “you” and the author, but she is unwilling to give it her all. (“cause it’s my house”) But what is her all? She knows that she wants to kiss and hug this person and only wants to do so when it is what she wants to do because she wants to have control over the interaction between the two. She expresses this by saying “cause it’s my house.” By saying that she wants to hug this person it suggest that the relationship between the two is more than sexual,

that there is emotion involved. On the other hand she is trying to cover up the fact that she is expressing real emotion by asking if it is just a silly poem.

*I mean it's my house
And I want to fry pork chops
And bake sweet potatoes
And call them yams
Cause I run the kitchen
And I can stand the heat*

Ownership of the “house” (her body) is so very important to her. (In life the one thing that we truly have control over in almost all aspects is what we do with ourselves.) She wants to make it clear that she “can stand the heat.” Also by putting things into her body such as pork chops and sweet potatoes she may be trying to make it so that she does not appeal to anyone. It could make it less likely that anyone would want to take the ownership she has of herself. At the same time cooking and eating are two things that if done right could make people want “in” more than ever. So she uses what she uses to cook for herself and to put into her body it as a type of defense.

*I spent all winter in
Carpet stores gathering
Patches so I could make
A quilt
Doe this really sound
Like a silly poem
I mean I want to keep you
Warm*

Again the narrator is trying to cover up the real emotion that it takes to spend all winter gathering patches to make a quilt to keep someone warm by playing it off as just a silly poem. She must something real for them, maybe even love, or she wouldn't have taken the time to carry out such an act. This poem expresses the extent to which the narrator wants to have a relationship with reader but is simply scared of what that may come with. She is scared that if she lets them

in she will not still be able to keep that arms length distance, and that she may be worried about them taking over her body, and she isn't ready for that. Maybe she never will be.

*And my windows might be dirty
But it's my house
And if I can't see out sometimes
They can't see in either*

This is the most powerful part in this poem to me. It is where she admits that she knows she has secrets and that she knows she may be hard to read sometimes, but that; that is okay. She lets the reader know that she has an emotional wall and sometimes its going to be hard to deal with, but I think she is also putting that out there to see how really dedicated they are willing to be to her.

*English isn't a good language
To express emotion through
Mostly I imagine because people
Try to speak English instead
Of trying to speak through it
I don't know maybe it is
A silly poem*

If English isn't a good language to express emotion through then what is?

Giovanni is suggesting that non-verbal communication, specifically sexuality, perhaps is more effective, and that you could replace "English" with any other language and the emotion wanted would not be expressed. The narrator does not think that words can truly say how she feels towards the "you". I think that it would takes something much deeper than words, a common hug, or simple touch given away easily all of the time and that she is looking for something more intimate that only she and this person will share. She also repeats the line that "it is just a silly poem" so that she can pretend as if she did not put herself out there to be stuck in a vulnerable state.

*I'm saying it's my house
And I'll make fudge and call it love and touch my lips
To the chocolate warmth
And smile at old men and call
It revolution cause what's real
Is really real
And I still like men in tight
Pants cause everybody has some
Thing to give and more
Important need something to take*

She continues to say that it is her house and she will do whatever she wants to do in it. She will do one thing and call it something totally different. Such as she calls her fudge love with no explanation as to why, other than it is her house, and that she can. Also she tells the reader that she is still going to look at other people and that it is okay, because even if it is just being someone to look at they have that to offer and need people to take it. This implies that even though she is very unwilling to give her “house” (her body) that there is something she has to offer that she is willing to give.

*And this is my house and you make me
Happy
so this is your poem.*

She has realized that this person makes her happy so she is willing to give a small part of herself to this person even if it is just the silly poem. Throughout the poem the author is growing fonder of the idea that giving some of herself might be a good thing. I feel that she has learned by writing the poem that she can keep her “house” (her body) hers and still have that title of ownership, but she can let all people in. By giving the reader this poem she a new level of vulnerability she had not before showed.

Giovanni is simply stating that if you find something or someone that truly makes you happy you have to give up some of yourself but keep some sacred. Trust is a vital thing to have when dealing with matters of the heart. You must be sure that you have a high level of trust before giving any of yourself. "My House" in a subtle way, walks us (the unintentional reader) through the process of deciding if that level has been reached. You could argue that this poem has nothing to do with a body and that being interpreted literally it would be talking about a four walled structure with a roof, but either way the lesson needed to be learned from Giovanni is that sometimes it is okay let people in just don't let them take over.

In general, humanity fears the wilderness, both natural and human. We fear the untamed growth that threatens to creep into our lives, the wild forces that do not obey human structure, the way there seems to be a greater force than ourselves controlling our world. We fear the creativity we find in others who seem to be following a different beat. In response, we repel this wilderness by trying to stem the strange creativity, by building towns and clearing trees for roads that lead us everywhere and nowhere. "Boundaries," a poem by Mary Oliver, begins with these assumptions and then argues that we, as naturally wild beings, need the wilderness, and by attempting to civilize and isolate the world's wilderness, we are separating ourselves from and depriving ourselves of the very thing we need the most.

In the first stanza, Oliver states there is a place "where the town ends,/ and the fields begin." This beginning and ending suggests a boundary, as also indicated by the title. But what does it mean to have a boundary? According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a boundary is defined as something that indicates or fixes a limit or extent. Though common sense would imagine this to mean that there is a clear end to the subject being bounded, mathematics shows that in many cases, a subject does not have to end when it approaches a boundary. This is demonstrated in the phenomenon of asymptotical limits.

An asymptote is an imaginary line that represents a set of values that a line will never touch. When a line has an asymptotical limit, it means that this line will continue to grow infinitely closer to, but never touch, the value of the asymptote. Though the value of the line will never touch the asymptote, it does increase or decrease infinitely and can

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Mary Oliver, "Boundaries"

also, in special circumstances, cross this imaginary boundary. The boundary where "the town ends,/ and the fields begin" could have the same attributes.

The idea of there being such a boundary between the town and fields immediately shows the separation between us, the humans, with our civilization, i.e. "the town," and the wilderness, i.e. "fields." The town as a representative of human civilization as a whole and with it all the artless structures and ideas it includes, and the fields, assumedly unfarmed and wild, as the natural, innate world full of wild ideas and impulsive structures reinforces the idea of mathematical asymptotes in that it clearly shows how these two worlds are clearly unlike, but can and often will intertwine. How often have we seen a tree house, or an impulsive artist design a skyscraper?

Such vague boundaries make finding the crossing point a difficult task. With the line "It's not marked but the feet know it," Oliver not only shows that she is aware of such ambiguity, i.e. "It's not marked," but also provides us with the answer to finding and crossing the boundary. The phrase, "the feet know it," suggests that the "feet," our innate selves, are the key to crossing such a border. The idea of the feet representing our innate selves makes sense if we remember how often humans use repetitive motion and practice to internalize a lesson, like practicing a piece of music until we know it so well we don't have to think about it. Since we walk with our feet and walking is something we have internalized, transitively the feet could represent innate thinking. If the feet represent our innate selves, then that implies that finding such a boundary cannot be done using mental logic and "brain power" alone. Possibly the human soul, i.e. the "sole" of a foot, could be the tool available for us to use.

An additional idea is presented in the line "also the heart that is longing for refreshment/ and, equally, for repose." Oliver uses the "heart," which could also represent our souls, to imply that the "wilderness" could be good for us. Our heart, our soul, is longing for emotional refreshment and repose, and the heart "knows" where the boundary is. This indicates that the thirst and tiredness suggested by the terms "refreshment" and "repose" will be satisfied by reaching and breaching this boundary.

Based on the ideas above, the first stanza can be assumed to center about the boundary between our logical minds and our wild "souls," a vague line which can only be crossed by our own innate inclinations, and the belief that connecting to our "wild" sides is not only preferable, but needed for our own emotional health. Oliver then breaks away to the second stanza with the phrase "Someday we'll live in the sky." The word "someday" suggests that this event is not imminent, but inevitable, and the reference to "living in the sky" implies a connection to heaven. This "heaven" could be a literal religious heaven, or the usage of "sky," a large part of nature, could suggest that "heaven" could be a type of wilderness. If so, then "living in the sky" could either mean a new life with acceptance of our "wildness" or that when we die, "heaven" will be very much like a wilderness.

The next line furthers the idea of a "wild" heaven by stating, "Meanwhile, the house of our lives is this green world." "Meanwhile," possibly meaning "until then," reinforces the idea that this "heaven" is inevitable and the phrase "the house of our lives" implies the place our lives are being "housed," meaning our present state of being. This very "meanwhile" and inevitability both tie into the infinite asymptotical limits in that our present state of being is actually going to continue infinitely, but will "someday"

Elizabeth Mae Scott
Professors Riley and Mountcastle
Mary Oliver, "Boundaries"

cross into the "sky," reinforcing the idea that on one side of the boundary lies our present lives, i.e. "house of our lives," and on the other lies a new kind of life.

This ties to the idea that "This green world" represents literally our planet earth and its wilderness, meaning that our present state of being is on this planet, along with the wilderness. Though this does not seem to follow with the idea that humans are based in civilization and thus starving for the wilderness, Oliver is actually stating that we need to appreciate our "green world," which is supposed to be the "house of our lives," and by avoiding it and civilizing it we are selling ourselves short.

Oliver then describes what she considers to be "this green world" in the subsequent line, "The fields, the ponds, the birds." Since she doesn't list "the roads, the cars, the buildings," it is safe to say that Oliver considers the better choice of the world we live in, which will be our substitute, or present state of being, until we "live in the sky," to consist of natural wilderness, not of manmade buildings and creations. She implies that the substitute for "heaven" is a positive and natural one; the wilderness is preferable to civilization.

The next two lines, "The thick black oaks- surely they are/ the invention of something wonderful," once again emphasize the positive aspect of the wilderness. Oliver takes a piece of the wilderness, "the thick black oaks," and asserts that they must be "the invention of something wonderful." By using the term "invention," Oliver makes it clear that the wilderness is still planned, but with the phrase "something wonderful" she implies that the planner was not just an ordinary human, but a greater, more "wonderful," being.

Oliver maintains this thread in the final two phrases of the stanza where she emphasizes the naturalness and wildness and qualifies the other inventions of this "something wonderful." "And the tiger lilies" suggests yet another invention, as well as the phrase "And the runaway honeysuckle that no one/ will ever trim again," which not only adds honeysuckles to the list, but emphasizes that they are part of the wilderness with "runaway" and "no one/ will ever trim again." This "no one" could possibly represent humans, for we are the ones who trim flowers, restricting them, and we most likely are not trimming them because they have "run away" to join the wilderness.

In the third stanza, Oliver asks the question, "Where is it?" and she answers, "and then/ my feet know it." It seems clear that she is asking where the boundary lies, but the switch from "the feet" in the first stanza to "my feet" determines that she is asking herself the question. This implies that she could also be asking of the location of our innate selves in us, and how to find it. The actual question, "Where is it?", indicates that we do not consciously know where the boundary is. The continuation of the line, "and then/ my feet know it," brings back the earlier point of our innate selves knowing "the way" to find the boundary.

The final line, "One jump, and I'm home," Oliver again asserts that her feet know the answer but do not necessarily tell her and instead show her with the "one jump." This showing instead of telling stresses the notion that actual conscious instructions are not as effective as innate understanding when we actually try to move into that wilderness within us. The parallel of using "the house of our lives" in the second stanza and then "home" indicates that though our current state, i.e. "the house of our lives", is a mixture of both civilized decisions, i.e. "fields," and innate understanding, i.e. wild "fields," the

Elizabeth Mae Scott
Professors Riley and Mountcastle
Mary Oliver, "Boundaries"

wild part of our lives is truly a superb substitute for the future life "in the sky." The wild side can only be reached through innate understanding, and that wild side is our rightful place, our home.

"Boundaries" explores and expresses how humans need to have this connection with nature and the wilderness, whether it is outside, or within ourselves. It tells how innate understanding is the only way to truly approach this vague asymptotical boundary between our normal structured world and our natural wild selves, and it helps us understand how we, by trying to separate ourselves from the wilderness, are only hurting ourselves.