

## Lee Slonimsky

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### Ancestor

“There was a light film of dust, such as accumulates in the cleanest room when it is left shut up.”  
Raymond Chandler, *The Lady in the Lake*

Dust is at the very core of the universe.  
Stars formed from clouds of dust.  
So did we.

So when you're sitting at your baby grand,  
11 AM on a Tuesday morning,  
sunlight from the bay window  
luminescing its polished ebony,  
and you're troubled by a few spinning motes  
or a smatter of speckles on one onyx key,  
say hello to your venerable,  
cosmic, distinguished and meek ancestor,  
a speck of *Is*  
that wouldn't harm a fly.

The meek not only inherit the earth,  
they *are* the earth.

And when your gaze strays to  
the glimmering ocean beyond the window,  
breezetossed winks of seaspray  
blinking back at you in agreement  
that you're both a matter of dust  
arranged, rearranged by the cosmos  
in *Is's* eternal howl;  
your first tentative keystroke in “C”  
puts an exclamation  
on slim aeronautics of dust,  
and your second seems to rejoice  
at how smoothly one intrepid note  
comes in for a filmy landing  
on a stretch of mahogany  
as blank as primordial zero.

## A Walk Long After Class

Three ways to start a poem, I tell my morning students:  
an image, word, or an abstract idea.

“Shimmer” is still my word that evening and  
it’s not too long before I see it, radiant  
in thick-crowned grove of oaks; the way their leaves  
reflect a pale red sun, a deep slow glow.  
I walk under the tangled canopy  
and spy a bright red apple--  
yes apple tree, amidst these oaks--  
a shade or two darker than  
the rosy setting sun.

Amazingly

I suspect it’s *that* apple tree  
as if to add idea to image, word:  
Eden’s fruit still hanging for decision.

I pause, quite hesitant, as fading rays  
splash light of purpling sky upon this fruit  
that dangles like a piece of history  
and seems somehow to bring Fate very near.

I choose to just hear crickets, watch the wind  
shake leaves into small shimmers. Branches sway.  
Then suddenly the apple drops, and rolls away.

I take a bite, instead, of evening air;  
I haven’t found a poem yet, but there’s truth  
in rising hawk that scythes this purple night,  
in shimmer that’s now dark as evening’s breeze.

## Poet At Work

A courtesan of loops, this wind-smoothed oak:

at 10 AM, branch-curlicues of white  
flash brightly as surrounding snow. One look,  
and twenty blackbirds settle down, alight  
on this or that sharp twist in bark. Their eyes  
can help this tree see winter's end; blackbirds  
have fallen for tree-twirls. And, no surprise,  
you'd like to turn such winter love to words:

“How loops are quite seductive. Morning light  
caresses branches with such delicacy  
that birds arrive, to savor rapture. Quite  
a grand tableau, black feathered tapestry  
of wings at rest upon a *writhe* of branch,  
so convoluted.” Then: ten larks. A finch.

## Stock Trader's Nap

I brood

this summer morning, trading on my phone  
alone in sunsoaked woods. I am worn out  
by market math: no breaks. Yes quite fatigued,  
and then I hear my own blue atoms' moan,  
electrons' whine mixed with the protons' shout.

I've never felt so thoroughly besieged;  
electrons, protons, me, we all should nap,

slow down,

become one with the sun until we've found  
the silence of pure stillness. All around.

## Photon Nostalgia

We used to dance delightedly last May;  
we'd shimmer on streams and sparkle on quartz, and gleam  
on airplane wings six miles above the earth.

And summer's fever sparked yet wilder play  
with midday lightning's crackle; our fused beam  
of noon seethe warming glaciers.

What's it worth  
to go back to those days in this sad freeze?  
No calculating that! We'd settle for  
an inch of warmth to glow amidst. A breeze,  
majestic as a falcon's deep blue soar:  
south-stirring, tickling naked branches. We  
cannot bring warmth, when air's cold steel, to trees  
but oh, we thrilled to dance once! Lovingly,  
we dwelled in May's soft splash. Her brilliant leaves.

**Lee Slonimsky's** poems have appeared in *Blue Lyra Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Fox Cry Review*, *Measure*, and *32 Poems*. His latest collection, *Wandering Electron*, was published in 2014 by Spuyten Duyvil Press. He conducts a monthly poetry writing workshop in New York City called "Walking with the Sonnet."