

# **The Unsaid: A Poetry Out Loud Response Project**



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

**POETRY CENTER**

**The Unsaid**  
A Poetry Out Loud Response Project  
Anthology of Student Poems

For information or permission, contact:  
*University of Arizona Poetry Center*  
*Education Program*  
*1508 E. Helen St.*  
*Tucson, AZ 85721*  
*poetry.arizona.edu*

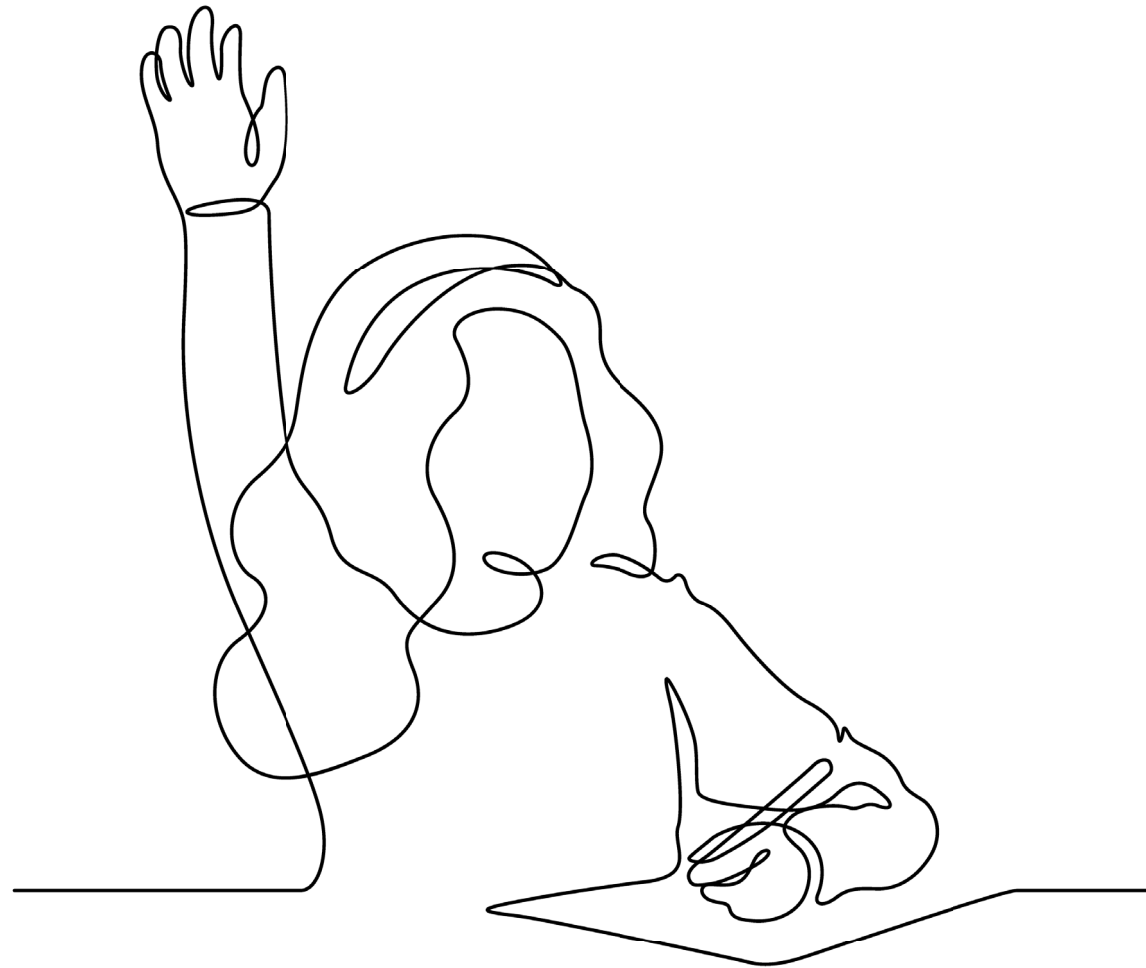
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**UA Poetry Center Education Manager:** Gema Ornelas  
**UA Poetry Center Education Assistant:** Eva Sierra  
**Text Design:** Eva Sierra  
**Copy Editors:** Gema Ornelas & Eva Sierra

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# The Unsaid: A Poetry Out Loud Response Project



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# Introduction

Each year, students across Arizona participate in Poetry Out Loud, a national recitation program that invites high schoolers to engage with poetry through memorization, performance, and interpretation. The poems in the [2025-2026 Poetry Out Loud anthology](#) offer perspectives from the past—shaped by earlier moments in American history and culture.

*How do young people receive these older poems?*

*The Unsaid* was developed to invite students to hold conversation with those poems. Through guided prompts, participants were encouraged to write beside the anthology: responding to a selected poem by questioning it, extending it, or translating its themes into their own time and experiences. Students submitted works that reflect their personal engagement with the original works. The pieces gathered here highlight the thoughtful ways students read, interpret, and respond to literature.

We thank students who chose to participate in *The Unsaid*, and great work to all 2025-2026 Arizona Poetry Out Loud participants!



**Kaidence Risch**  
**“Carry on Tomorrow”**

After [\*With the Lark\* by Paul Lawrence Dunbar](#)

Night is for quietly crying and dawn is for delight,  
 Running after the troubles that freight,  
 Darkness for heaving and daylight for song,  
 Lovely and holding back tears, your heart grows strong,  
 All throughout the night, although I overthink,  
 I wake in the morning, pretending I’m not on the brink.

Three hours past midnight the tears soak the sheets,  
 Just think “I am in defeat.”

But when the first ray of sun fills the sky,  
 I shall shake off the pain and be kind.

And though, I was fond of going through my memory,  
 I shall be the same person as yesterday’s eve.

Once again in the morning you know what to do;  
 I will not let the sadness root and bloom,  
 But now my heart and soul will be satisfied with pain,  
 For I have many others, vein to vein.

And though I always have the same routine,  
 Through my thinking in the dark, I am free.



**Bridget Gallardo Huerta**  
**“Burning into cracks of ice”**

After [\*Fire and Ice\* by Robert Frost](#)

Some say to avoid the pyre  
 must obey  
 but what if they’re liars?  
 Words of those who reach for gold  
 tainted greed spoken in simple prose  
 inspire anger in the weak minded  
 by ice soon they will be blinded  
 but now I see it can dissolve  
 with love and peace it will be solved.



**Alejandro Gomez**  
**“Holding On”**

After [\*“That Blessed Hope”\* by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper](#)

Don’t worry, friend, I won’t let go  
 Of this small spark that lights my soul.  
 When days drag heavy, full of doubt,  
 It still points forward, pulls me out.  
 Worlds may crumble, strings may snap,  
 But this hope clings like a quiet map.  
 Through every storm and every fight,  
 I’ll carry it into the light.



**Kirsten Risch**  
**“Poker Faces”**

After *We Wear the Mask* by Paul Laurence Dunbar

If only we had the innovation  
of masks that tinker real tears.  
If only we had the hearts  
to create such a thing.  
As beautiful as we are as we see,  
It's comforting.  
To know that we have poker faces  
that can hide the cement of trouble  
underneath.

My mouth is not my thoughts.  
My thoughts are not my eyes.

My melancholy will be buried deep  
inside.

As I wear my mask.  
You will too.  
We all do.

A mask that tinkers real tears – Ha!  
Only a fool would create such a thing.  
Catch my real feelings if you can;

They're too busy drowning  
underneath this Grin.



**Jonnathon Gonzalez**  
**“Asking the Poem”**

After *In the Desert* by Stephen Crane

What didn't you say  
when you were written?

Who was left out  
of your words?

I read you now,  
in a different world.

A world of suffering and loneliness

The bitterness of your heart tasting of sadness

If you were written today,  
Your words would be comforting to others

Like the sun beating down on the sandy desert

Hiding their pain because it seems familiar

Sitting in the old dry desert

I add my voice  
where yours ends.



**Brandon Suarez Carrasco**  
**“Pretty Woman”**

After [\*A Lady\* by Amy Lowell](#)

You are lovely, though time has softened you,  
 Not bright like fire, but steady like embers  
 Like music from a long time ago  
 Now echoing softly in memory

Your eyes carry stories that have ended  
 Joy, loss, and everything in between  
 Your spirit is soft but still strong

Your spirit moves gently  
 But it carries weight and history  
 Next to you I feel young and new  
 Still learning what it means to shine



**Sydney Yer**  
**“Oh How Far From Fairyland”**

After [\*How Near to Fairyland\* by Yone Noguchi](#)

I held what I loved but could never attain,  
 calling it hope though it only brought pain.  
 That world had its limits, its walls set in stone,  
 where not every dream could be fully our own.  
 Now I see letting go isn't loss or defeat—  
 It's choosing your freedom and moving your feet.



**Jacob Smith**  
**“War Cry”**

After [\*A Distant Song\* by John Gould Fletcher](#)

And there it was,  
 I heard it right in front of me?  
 Distant? No. LOUD.  
 My heart is pounding.

The song chimes like silver?  
 No it crashes like waves,  
 Coming in one instant,  
 Gone in another.

The song is exciting,  
 But it doesn't last for long.

Fast like a moving car,  
 To catch it, I must jump into it.  
 My back hits the seat and crushes my spine,  
 I wake up and feel alive.



**Cam Martinez**  
**“What You Didn’t Say”**

After *Representation* by Alice Duer Miller

I don’t ask to give my opinion.  
I don’t whisper my beliefs through someone else.  
My vote is not a favor,  
And you don’t carry my voice as a burden.

You talk about being torn between, mother, sister, wife  
and grandmother  
Like little voices in your pocket  
Like spare change you throw in your car

But now I stand here  
Not waiting on your approval  
I sat in meeting where men debated fairness  
And where I sat without  
Now representation is shown in presence  
Aware that I was never meant to be silent.



**Vivianne Giang**  
**“The Weight of Small Things”**

After *A Triviality* by Waring Cuney

You say it was nothing  
Just a dance you didn’t take,  
Just a slow song slipping past  
Beneath the silver slimmer of the gym light.

In my world, we skip moments too.  
We skip chances, we skip confessions.  
We skip the quiet courage it takes to stay.

We tell ourselves it doesn’t matter.  
We tell ourselves it was minor.  
We tell ourselves there will always be more.

You never explained why you walked away.  
Maybe you thought there would be more time later,  
More music, more minutes, more meaning.

But small seconds stretch into stories.  
Soft silences settle into the distance.  
Brief beginnings become permanent endings.

Standing next to you, I say this;  
Small choices don’t stay small.



**Kassidy Sherfield**  
**“Blinded by the Dust”**

After *Rain Music* by Joseph Seamon Cotter Jr.

As the Earth began to grow  
 The strain of the rain began to cease  
 And overtime the voice became low  
 And the dust began to not release.

Blinded by the dust  
 No one was able to see the change  
 They could bring about  
 To the world they could rearrange

Then one drop of rain fell down,  
 And there was a split moment of hope  
 As word spread around the town  
 The rain began to grow

It began to pour once again,  
 Yet there is still room for more rain  
 For the earth became very dusty  
 Blinding our eyes from the world we can gain



**Tariana Trosin**  
**“Christmas is Lonely For Those Without Family”**

After *[little tree]* by E.E. Cummings

f gnoI tsoM I tahw  
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IN)

Of Tariana’s capacities and chances  
 For reciprocal familial love and affection  
 During the holidays.

(MEMORIUM



**Ivanna Salas Almada**  
**“The Girl Who Stayed In College”**

After *The Graduate Leaving College* by George Moses Horton

What summons do I hear?  
The graduates laughing loud.  
My eyes let fall a tear,  
Though I stand in the crowd.

No servants come for me,  
No carriage waits in sight.  
I watch them leave so happily,  
As day turns into night.

Pass one more silent night,  
By morning they are gone.  
They all take eager flight,  
But I must linger on.

The bee has courted the flower,  
And it is now ready to leave.  
She has fallen while flying,  
And must stay another year.



**Carolina Gonzalez**  
**“An Answer”**

After *A Prayer* by Joseph Seamon Cotter Jr.

Do not sit in bed  
Contemplating this dream you believe can be willed  
into existence.

Instead, actively pursue it;  
Go after your goals,  
Go after your dreams,  
Go after everything you thought was out of reach.

Do it  
Not because it is in style,  
Not because of peer pressure,  
Do it because it makes you happy.





**Camila De Cima**

**“You Call Me Beautiful But I am Fading”**

After [\*A Lady\* by Amy Lowell](#)

You call me beautiful but I am fading.  
 I am a nostalgia that you never lived.  
 Your words describe me like history:  
 silks, roses, and rooms,  
 that I could never leave.  
 My half-tones delight you  
 But because they do not argue.  
 They are silent like a summer breeze,  
 But I long to be the big bold sea.  
 You offer me your shine that is new and loud,  
 and expect me to yearn for it.  
 As if what mattered is how brightly I reflect you.  
 But I am not a museum room,  
 And do not want to be preserved.  
 I am unlearning all that you long for  
 to become someone that moves and creates change.  
 Someone that screams and is loud  
 even if it sparks up a crowd.  
 If your poem entered my world,  
 All that it longs for would fly away.



**Aideliz Cordova Ortiz**

**“Beside Afternoon on a Hill”**

After [\*Afternoon on a Hill\* by Edna St. Vincent Millay](#)

I stand beside you on the hill  
 and try on your joy.  
 You touch the flowers and leave them.  
 I have learned to hold on  
 to whatever blooms near me.  
 You trust the grass to rise again.  
 I have seen it pressed flat  
 by more than wind.  
 You choose your lights in the town below.  
 I am still learning  
 which doors open for me.  
 I want your bright certainty.  
 But in my world  
 gladness walks with questions.  
 So when I start down the hill  
 I carry both  
 the sun on my face  
 and the weight of wondering  
 who else is climbing up.



**Richard Dalton**  
**“Coming Down Early”**

After [\*Afternoon on a Hill\*](#) by Edna St. Vincent Millay

I stand on the hill she loved,  
 but the quiet doesn't last long.  
 The wind still bends the grass,  
 yet my mind keeps counting time.

She touches flowers without taking.  
 I keep my hands in my pockets,  
 afraid of wanting too much  
 or staying too long.

Below me, the town lights up early,  
 screens glowing before the sky darkens.  
 There is always somewhere to be,  
 something waiting for me to decide.

I try to look with quiet eyes,  
 but they drift toward the future,  
 toward deadlines, expectations,  
 toward the weight of what comes next.

When I start down the hill,  
 it isn't because I'm finished being glad.  
 It's because I've learned  
 how quickly afternoons end.



**Matilda Thompson**  
**“Night in the Town”**

After [\*Afternoon on a Hill\*](#) by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Walking back down  
 The once comforting sun is long gone now,  
 Replaced with darkness and chills,  
 Flowers once full of life and free,  
 Picked and desperate for water

The warmth of grass is replaced with a chill of brick,  
 It has been cut and made to look presentable

The great nature for freedom and tranquility,  
 Is replaced with responsibility and maturity.



**Caroline Bennen**  
**“When you have Passed Away”**

After [\*When I have Passed Away\*](#) by Claude McKay

You imagine forgetting as final and quiet  
 Bones, sod, unmarked.  
 I find you through volumes and verses  
 Thoughtful and sung  
 You ponder who will read you  
 I ask who wrote the verses  
 Your forgetting is gentle  
 Ours is not  
 You may not have a stone  
 But you have a legacy



**Andrew Kisso**  
**“Fading Beauty”**

After *The Dew and the Bird* by Alexander Posey

The glory in the dew is priceless,  
 The beauty of the world is endless.  
 The song of the lark is sweet and clear,  
 But today, no one seems to hear.

We memorize the names of kings,  
 We learn the rules of the world.  
 We fill our minds with empty knowledge,  
 But, we forget the dew.

Still, the bird sings, soft and true,  
 Yet no one listens to its tune.  
 Still, the dew gleams in morning light,  
 And passes by, unseen, despite its bright.



**Lydia Colombi**  
**“Forgetting is not so easy”**

After *I shall forget you presently, my dear (Sonnet IV)* by  
Edna St. Vincent Millay

You say forgetting is easy,  
 Like love can be shut off.  
 But you don't say what it's like  
 To try to forget someone,  
 Who follows you quietly  
 With each step you take.

You say time is little  
 But this was not so little to me  
 In my world, nothing fully disappears  
 It just fades into reminders

Maybe this was never built to last forever  
 And that's how we survive  
 But forgetting isn't natural  
 Its something we practice  
 Over and over,  
 Until it almost works

We tell ourselves it hurts less each time,  
 That practice makes distance.  
 But every attempt to let go  
 Is another reminder  
 That you're still here.



**Boden Lewis**  
**“How We Feel”**

After *I Shall Return* by Claude McKay

You promise return; I was raised to move forward  
 You trust the past; I question what still remains  
 Your forests wait untouched in memory,  
 Mine change before I can look back

You find peace in familiar songs and streams,  
 I search for it in land unfamiliar.  
 Home does not call me backward,  
 Instead it pushes me outward.

You heal by remembering what was,  
 I heal by imagining what could be.  
 Not because the past lacks meaning  
 But because the future still has room.



**Eli Hanna**  
**“A Take on a Dream”**

After *A Dream Within a Dream* by Edgar Allan Poe

What is this you say to me now?  
 Why do you leave, and tell me how?  
 I strain to catch your fading sound  
 As shadows gather all around.  
 We sit and watch a quiet life,  
 A path untouched by heavy strife;  
 Yet even then, hope slips away,  
 Soft as light at close of day.  
 Can you see it as it fades?  
 Lost within the mind's own shades.  
 Perhaps what we believe or seem  
 Is deeper still than any dream.

It is not easy to stand unshaken  
 When restless waves rise unbroken.  
 The grains of sand are small and bright,  
 They shimmer gently in the light.  
 To hold them close is my desire,  
 To guard each spark, each fragile fire.  
 Yet through my hands they slip and fall,  
 Though I try to clutch them all.  
 The tighter held, the less they stay;  
 They rush like fleeting time away.  
 A gentler hand may better keep  
 What force will never let us reap.

Love is not preserved by chains,  
 Nor healed by tightening its reins.

Sometimes release can ease the strain,  
 And loss can teach what we cannot gain.  
 For all we see and all we seem  
 Is more than just a dream within a dream.



**Julianna Soto**  
**“Rushing”**

After *Medusa* by Louise Bogan

Today is not in stone  
 But in constant movement.  
 Tomorrow replaces today, making us groan.

Can the sun not rush to set?  
 And wait for all of us to catch our breath?  
 Frozen we all hoped today would be,  
 But society says otherwise.

In constant movement we live,  
 Wishing we could be turned into stone.  
 To last in these heartfelt moments  
 That we long to keep ahold of,  
 But drift away right before us.



**Santiago Perez**  
**“Standing Next to Your Leaf”**

After *I Am Like a Leaf* by Yone Noguchi

You walk alone into nature.  
 I notice who isn't there.  
 No crowded streets. No noise.  
 No people who can't afford quiet.

Your sadness is soft, reflective  
 but you don't speak of pressure,  
 of being watched,  
 of carrying history in your body.  
 I miss the voices of those  
 who don't get to wander  
 without fear.

Your past feels slow, inward,  
 a single soul drifting.  
 My future feels loud and shared  
 group chats, protests, sirens,  
 hope built in public, not solitude.

You hover between hope and despair  
 like a leaf in still air.  
 We don't hover.  
 We juggle both while moving.

If your poem lived in my generation,  
 the birds would be drones,  
 the flowers painted on walls,  
 and the “song of life”  
 would be many voices at once

tired, determined, unfinished.

You return sad from the world.

We return organized.



### **Nicolai Encinas**

#### **“The Coming Paradise”**

After [\*“That Blessed Hope”\*](#) by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Let us keep the blessed hope, it cheers our fragile hearts.  
It continues to push us onward toward a better tomorrow,  
free of suffering.

May we detach from our material wants and desires and  
hold solely onto this hope.

We have clung to this hope throughout all of history,  
from the darkness of dawn until the fading light of dusk.  
Now that we hope, we continue to cling to it day after day.  
Give me the strength to hold on to blessing.  
Give this world the help it desperately needs.  
If we hold on long enough, we may finally reach the rest the  
other side holds.



### **Timothy Multhup**

#### **“America Still the Beautiful”**

After [\*America the Beautiful\*](#) by Katherine Lee Bates

O beautiful for slavery’s end,  
When black and white unite  
Their flayed relationships will mend,  
Their love will gain more might!  
America! America!  
God show us how to love.  
Help form our lives as Jesus did,  
And like our God above!

O beautiful for immigrants feat,  
Who modeled strength and grit.  
A steadfast and relentless fleet,  
They persevered with wit!  
America! America!  
God loves us all the same!  
His love will last eternity,  
And all will know his name!

O beautiful for women’s grace,  
That stands for years to come.  
They too will be in God’s embrace,  
Because they won’t succumb!  
America! America!

God give thy strength to us!  
Make us commanders of thy fleet,  
And fighters with your trust.

O beautiful for unity,  
 Between all men and women.  
 Togetherness will make us free,  
 A paradise on the glenn!  
 America! America!  
 God fix our family!  
 Make beautiful our world again  
 From sea to shining sea!



**Alexandra McNamara**  
**“Deep Waves”**

After [\*The Ocean\* by Nathaniel Hawthorn](#)

The ocean has its secrets we may never know  
 The souls who have traveled it and the stories they will tell  
 And the souls who will never tell their story to the world  
 Oh ocean  
 What secrets do you have that lie underneath?  
 What are you hiding underneath your furious waves?  
 What secrets do the souls of the deep have?  
 What secrets do the creatures have beneath the waves and  
     deepest darkest parts?  
 How can the ways ever be tamed by the power the waves  
     and ocean hold?



**Jacob Hensel**  
**“A Vow in Silence”**

After [\*In Heaven\* by Stephen Crane](#)

Here we stand. Judgment Day. What did you do? Are  
 you ready to relate?

I am trying. Trying to live the way I dream. Do you, too,  
 or do you frame? Frame your life the way you want to  
 see it—precise lines, polished edges, a gleam of gold  
 around a rotting core. A beautiful border hiding the  
 betrayal within. Are our acts so consequential that we  
 prize our merits above other people’s lives? They fall  
 like ash—still smoldering as they descend.

Who’s judging you?

Open your eyes! They are sealed shut by a dark veil  
 that lowers itself gently, deliberately over our world—  
 sweet, narcotic, suffocating. And yet our eyes can’t  
 speak the words we ought to speak, how befooled  
 one must act, how dare you live like that, so artificially  
 adorned, decked out in borrowed splendor. But silence  
 remains the loudest victor.

The world grows quiet. Are the loudest voices the ones  
 we should listen to or fear the most?

Perhaps one step back—ashamed, bare—is what it  
 takes to live your life. I try. Try to see the path beneath  
 the soot of our deeds. It drains me dry, feeds on me.

Stop thinking. Be human; it may well be. And so, we rise into the light—or we devour our own hearts, as Stephen Crane once dared to name it.

If a blade of grass can do it, can we do it, too? We must start, so why don't you?



**Jack Watson**  
**“Winter Night”**

After [\*To a Hummingbird\* by Alexander Posey](#)

Now here, now there;

In the moon's glow-lit glare

With frigid air.

I can only perceive, on this snowy eve,

The icy wind that pinches me.

Is this some restless force at play,

That steals the joyful warmth of day away?



**Ezekiel Johnson-Anaya**  
**“The Bird's Song”**

After [\*The Fool's Song\* by William Carlos Williams](#)

I put myself in a cage.

Does that make me a fool or a clown?

For I am the truth.

Truth controlled, truth contained.

Bound by the chains of narrow mindedness!

While I was trapped in the cage,

I was surrounded by fools and clowns.

Break free of the cage.

Just a cage of bonds,

There's nothing inside it.

I will fly free from the cage.

No more cages, no more lies, no more chains.

Free from fools and clowns.

I will sing of freedom!

Throw away my mask of dishonesty!



**Lia McCovey**  
**“To All For All”**

After *Militants To Certain Other Women* By Katherine Rolston  
 Fisher

Instead of Banners, we hold screens.  
 History once filled the streets  
 Now it fits in our palms,  
 Shrunk to headlines and hashtags.  
 We scroll.  
 We sigh.  
 We say “that’s sad.”  
 And move onto the next viral story.

We’ve chosen peace over outrage,  
 Comfort lasts longer, and confidence has replaced courage.

Instead of enduring “untellable insults” we hide.  
 Instead of fighting for women, we fight for no one.

We confuse awareness by  
 Mistaking posting for protesting,  
 which instead erases that rights  
 never won quietly.

We lack our urgency for freedom, for the fight.  
 We have given in that freedom is coming over some summer  
 breeze.

As if justice was handed peacefully  
 As if history doesn’t repeat itself  
 As if waiting has ever saved anyone.

We swallow our pride because we are scared.

We have failed the women that fought for us.  
 They endured the hardship, prison, their futures, their lives,  
 their safety

And for what?

So we could use the voice they fought for but stay silent?

That voice now trembles.

That voice now hesitates.

It speaks back asking if speaking up is worth the cost.

The fight in our voice, and expression did not disappear.

We just stopped showing up.

○

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College of Humanities



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