

# The Poetry Porch: Introduction 2024

## Sunday Drive

For *The Poetry Porch 2024*, I sent out a call for papers under the heading of an Open Forum. During the winter months, I received submissions of poetry and prose in a variety of settings, of various times, from singular perspectives. Among the narratives and personal histories, there were several poems about dreams.

In her poem “Da Vinci’s Dream,” Catherine Mayes depicts her exhilaration in watching an experimental contraption at a Cape Cod beach as a fulfillment of the inventor’s dream of a flying machine. Joan Soble dreams of a “Moon House” where she can maintain the clarity of distance necessitated by difficult conversations. Beth Brown Preston evokes the sense of a romantic honeymoon in Vermont where all the simple dreams of life come true for a couple learning the importance of keeping secrets. Elaine Sorrentino’s poem about driving south from Maine after a family gathering becomes a nightmare involving a car accident. Her title shares the title of the collection, “Sunday Drive.”

The poems from “Dream Sessions” by Richard Fein introduce humorous narratives of what could never happen and what might wake him up at night. He is being called to serve in the Korean War in a poem that details his mixed feelings about joining, or re-joining, his friends in the army on a mission of duty to his country, again, at age ninety-three. He details the slippage from his concern about his forthcoming book publication in the poem “the book’s been delayed at the printer” into his anxiety about birthing a child, in which he and his wife have traded roles, and *she* must give *him* a ride to the hospital and wait with *him* there, through the mild contractions, worrying when *his* water will break, when suddenly he sees that the woman beside him is not his wife but a woman he never saw before, . . . and so on.

In another poem, Fein describes a visitation from Robert Lowell, with whom he feels pressed to explain their differences, one with roots in Boston, the other Brooklyn, one a devotee of Latin, the other Yiddish. Together, they welcome the ghost of the poet they both admire, Delmore Schwartz.

As I worked on this collection, I often thought about the phrase “In Dreams Begins Responsibilities,” the title of a short story by Delmore Schwartz and the epigraph to a sequence of poems by W. B. Yeats. Schwartz’s story unfolds on a Sunday afternoon, June 12, 1909. Yeats’s collection was published in 1914 as the onslaughts of the First World War were asserting themselves. But I do not wish to suggest parallels here.

The cover painting by Allegra Printz *Song of Route One* depicts a drive through a California landscape on what might be a Sunday, where trees loom ahead at the bend of the road like sentinels, shadowy and foreboding. Despite the reverie of colors, I cannot rid my mind of reports about the sections of Route One in Big Sur that keep breaking off and falling into the sea in fragments, the result of excessive rains.

In this time of strife on many fronts, I remember the lines crafted by a poet decades ago, from a Greek play of centuries before, that although history might say there is no hope on this side of the grave, sometimes, perhaps once in a lifetime, hope and history rhyme.

Joyce Wilson

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See *The Cure at Troy*, a version of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, by Seamus Heaney. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991.