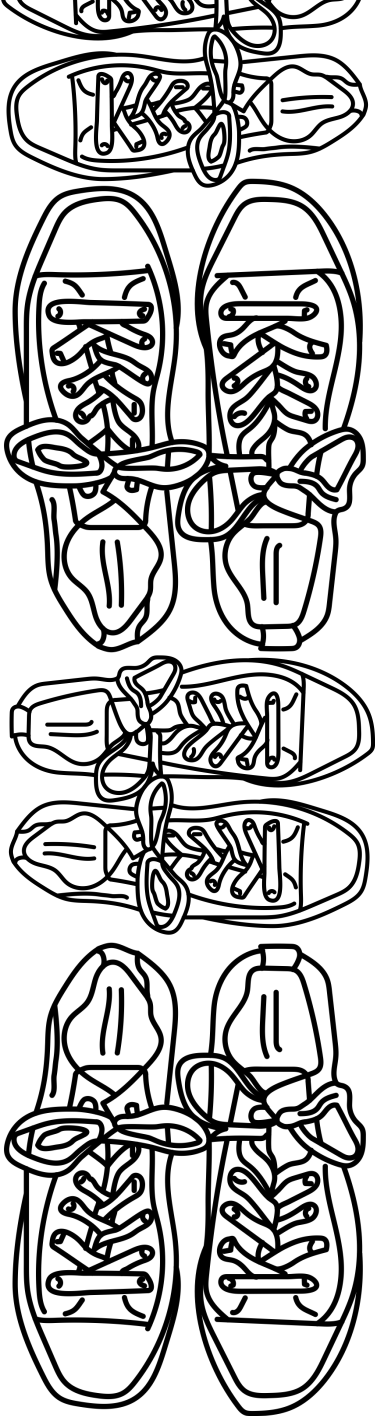


## Printing note

Print pages 2-3 two-sided on the short edge and the front and back should line up



**DURHAMTECH**  
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POETRY MONTH



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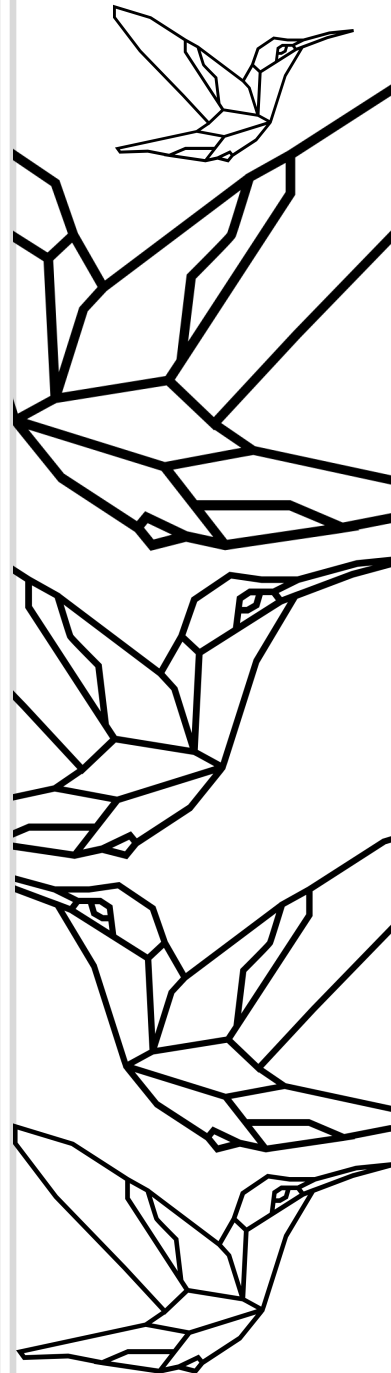
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The female, and two chicks,  
each no bigger than my thumb,  
scattered,  
Shimmering

in their pale-green dresses;  
then they rose, tiny fireworks,  
into the leaves  
and hovered;

then they sat down,  
each one with dainty, charcoal feet –  
each one on a slender branch –  
and looked at me.

I had meant no harm,  
I had simply  
climbed the tree  
for something to do

on a summer day,  
not knowing they were there,  
ready to burst the ledges  
of their mossy nest

and to fly, for the first time,  
in their sea-green helmets,  
with brisk, metallic tails –  
each tulle wing,

with every dollop of flight,  
drawing a perfect wheel  
across the air.  
Then, with a series of jerks,

they paused in front of me  
and, dark-eyed, stared –  
as though I were a flower –  
and then,

like three tosses of silvery water,  
they were gone.  
Alone,  
in the crown of the tree,

I went to China,  
I went to Prague;  
I died, and was born in the spring;  
I found you, and loved you, again.

Later the darkness fell  
and the solid moon  
like a white pond rose.  
But I wasn't in any hurry.

Likely I visited all  
the shimmering, heart-stabbing  
questions without answers  
before I climbed down.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mary Oliver  
"Hummingbirds"  
*Poetry Magazine* (July 1992)

A young man learns to shoot  
& dies in the mud  
an ocean away from home,  
a rifle in his fingers  
& the sky dripping  
from his heart. Next to him  
a friend watches  
his final breath slip  
ragged into the ditch,  
a thing the friend will carry  
back to America—  
wound, souvenir,  
backstory. He'll teach  
literature to young people  
for 40 years. He'll coach  
his daughters' softball teams.  
Root for Red Wings  
& Lions & Tigers. Dance  
well. Love generously.  
He'll be quick with a joke  
& firm with handshakes.  
He'll rarely talk  
about the war. If asked  
he'll tell you instead  
his favorite story:  
Odysseus escaping  
from the Cyclops  
with a bad pun & good wine  
& a sharp stick.  
It's about buying time  
& making do, he'll say.  
It's about doing what it takes  
to get home, & you see  
he has been talking  
about the war all along.  
We all want the same thing  
from this world:  
*Call me nobody. Let me live.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Amorak Huey  
"We Were All Odysseus in  
Those Days"  
Academy of American Poet's  
Poem-a-Day (March 20, 2019)

When some people talk about

money

They speak as if it were a  
mysterious lover  
Who went out to buy milk and

never

Came back, and it makes me

nostalgic

For the years I lived on  
coffee and bread,  
Hungry all the time, walking to

work on payday

Like a woman journeying  
for water

From a village without a well,

then living

One or two nights

like everyone else

On roast chicken and  
red wine.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tracy K. Smith  
"The Good Life"  
*Life After Mars* (2011)

Gray whale  
Now that we are sending you to  
The End  
That great god  
Tell him  
That we who follow you invented  
forgiveness  
And forgive nothing

I write as though you could un-  
derstand  
And I could say it  
One must always pretend some-  
thing  
Among the dying  
When you have left the seas nod-  
ding on their stalks  
Empty of you  
Tell him that we were made  
On another day

The bewilderment will diminish  
like an echo  
Winding along your inner moun-  
tains  
Unheard by us  
And find its way out  
Leaving behind it the future  
Dead  
And ours

When you will not see again  
The whale calves trying the light  
Consider what you will find in the  
black garden  
And its court  
The sea cows the Great Auks the  
gorillas  
The irreplaceable hosts ranged  
countless  
And fore-ordaining as stars  
Our sacrifices

Join your word to theirs  
Tell him  
That it is we who are important

\*\*\*\*\*

W.S. Merwin  
"For a Coming Extinction"  
*The Lice* (1967)

my shoes  
rest  
all night  
under my bed

tired  
they stretch  
and loosen  
their laces

wide open  
they fall asleep  
and dream  
of walking

they revisit  
the places  
they went to  
during the day

and wake up  
cheerful  
relaxed  
so soft

\*\*\*\*\*

Francisco X. Alarcon  
"Ode to My Shoes"  
*Bellybutton of the Moon* (1998)