

# Three Poems

by [Sam Buntz](#) (April 2021)



*Afternoon by the Water*, Emil Nolde, 1930-35

## *Cave Point, Wisconsin*

The surface unfolded and refolded in our sight  
As the waves beat froth against the wide gray shelf,  
Each droplet cast up and made gold in the light—  
The climactic thoughts of the lake's vast self.  
It was strange to discern its varied voice  
Now like a low moan and now a sound of mirth:  
The lake seemed to warn us and then to rejoice  
Casting a cry to un-awakened earth.

We laughed helplessly at each jet of spray  
That suddenly misted over the trail  
And peered at the crevice cut along the way  
Where wind made noise like the song of a whale.  
Impressions found the heart and the heart believed—  
A message given and a message received.

## *Ragged End*

The months whittle down to the ragged end  
A stick broken off from the Tree of Life.  
The old carver works not to break or bend  
Carefully applying that well-whetted knife.  
So much of life is in what's cast aside—  
Foraged from the rubble, the brush, the wreck.  
We gather odds and ends left by the swelling tide,  
Misshapen souvenirs of our inward trek.  
We live in pieces that serve to remind  
Of a primordial fracture from the long-lost whole:  
A ball of yarn that quickly rolls to unwind  
Or ancient roots torn-up to leave a hole.  
We shudder in that knowledge, beholding alone  
A broken branch or a fragment of bone.

## *Ghazal Blues*

The nightlong vigil melts into dawn again—  
Dew kisses the red cups spread on the lawn again.

Your disgrace was published on a glowing screen—  
The destitute slave drunk in Ramadan again.

You've been truckin' and travellin' for far too long  
Shine God's shoes til the graveyard blues are gone again.

You're a king in exile, enslaved in a dream,  
Checkmated by the pawn again!

But outer loss reaps inward dividends—

Defeated in sprints, you won the marathon again.

God's hidden card flashes from inside His sleeve—  
He's playing the long game, the most elaborate con again.

Samuel breathes on the train window and writes the Highest  
Name—

Tell the Station Master, "Turn your light on again!"

## [Table of Contents](#)

---

Sam Buntz a legal writer and part-time freelancer based in Chicago. He's been published in *The Washington Monthly*, along with articles in *Fare Forward* and *Pop Matters*, *The Stonefence Review*, and in the now-defunct *The Fossil Record*.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)