

Two Poems

by [Martha Shelley](#) (May 2021)



Three Women in the Garden, Edvard Munch, 1926

Found Under the Raspberries

Things crawl over me,
under me, drop into my hair,
dangle from my glasses frames
bring me to my knees
down to the earth I'm weeding:
something so small I can only name it
by its eight-legged gait;
something that curls into an armored ball;
a long-legs picking its delicate way
around a dying bee—still dangerous—
stumbling in circles
on a pile of moldering leaves.

Who'd hire a worker as slow as me
to weed? To be so happy,
distracted by every bug, every perfect
minute thing in my small yard
running through
their brief lives and mine
on this summer afternoon.

The Ecstasy of the Banana Slug
(in response to Shakespeare's Sonnet 55)

Not sonnets nor the marble Taj Mahal
can last until the universal night.
The monuments we build to love must fall,
our couplings brief, a meteoric flight.
Insects and galaxies, all are in thrall
to death, and each has its allotted time.
The slug knows this. On dewy nights it crawls
through leaf decay, leaving a trail of slime
perfumed with pheromones to lure a mate.
Each is both he and she. When they unite
they form a yin and yang to penetrate,
throbbing for hours in circular delight.

Seize then, and stretch the moment, hoping we
can reach a gastropodal ecstasy.

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Martha Shelley, a native of New York's concrete jungles, now lives with her wife, Sylvia Allen, in Portland, OR, where they run a small urban farm. She is the author of four poetry collections, numerous essays and short stories, and a trilogy of historical fiction about the life of Jezebel, Queen of Israel. Her most recent work is available through www.ebisupublications.com.

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