

## Why Art Matters

"What is life? Every true work of art answers that question, every painting, every statue, every poem, every scene on the stage." (Arthur Schopenhauer on the Inner Nature of Art). Yet another Schopenhauerian InSight comes centrally to HeArt & Mind in this conTeXt, namely when he 'defines' poetry as "The art of bringing the imagination into play by means of words." (Good Luck improving on that attempt to quantify the unquantifiable!). Which brings to this poetry-addled lad's mind these words, which Ivan Doig uses for an epigraph in his "Sweet Thunder" (Riverhead Bks., NYC, 2013) :: "I was with Hercules & Cadmus once, / When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear / with hounds of SpARTa . . . I never heard / So musical a discord, such sweet thunder." (this passage being culled from Wm. Shakespeare's "A MidSummer Night's Dream"). Yeah, I'm quite aware that it's MidWinter in Montana rather than MidSummer somewhere South of the SeaCoast of Bohemia, but, along with much else, the AntipOdes Matter, especially in Light of Amanda Gorman's extraordinary Inauguration Day poem 'The Hill We Climb,' wherein the 22-year-old poet reminds us that "For while we have our eYes on the future, / History has its eYes on us" . . . and "our people diVerse & beautiful will {re}emerge, / battered & beautiful . . . / For tHere is always Light, / if only we're brave enough to see it, / if only we're brave enough to be it."

And speaking of the centrality of poetry among the Muse-besotted Arts, here's a wee poem hight 'On the Prairie' from the remarkable hitherto-unknown-to-me, pArt-Choctaw Lloyd Van Brunt, that I suspect we here in Montana can all relate to :: "The house leans back / like an old {wo}man / fallen asleep in the waning sun. / A porch plank lifts / a rusty nail. // No one lives here now. / No other house for miles. / Nothing but yellow grass / and sandstone, / keeping quail for company." (from LVBs "Poems New & Selected, 1962-1992; as pub. by The Smith {my own father having been a horseshoe-forging blacksmith in his youth}, bROOKlyn, NY, 1993 -- incidentally, this amazing compendium turned up at Aunt Bonnie's 2nd-hand book emporium on a snowy & subzero Sunday in the life, namely on February 7th, 2021). And just for good {poetic} measure, here are a couple of other lines from the far-from-readily-quantifiable Van Brunt that we slouching-towards-Valentine's Day NorthCountry aficionados cum mavens will no doubt resonate with :: "Seeing range after range of mountain woods / lit up by dark lamps of sn<sup>o</sup>w." (from a poem entitled 'Untitled,' dating from the later-1980s).

By way of a pARTHian salvo of sorts, I'm thinking a contribution from the aptly titled "Art as Therapy" by Alain de Botton & John Armstrong (Phaidon Press {Un} Ltd., All Saints Street, London, & Bleeker Street, NYC, 2015) might be in order. Which volume, curiously enough, opens with the ever-so-timely query 'What is Art for?' -- but, to cut to the chase, how about ending/rebeginning on this note :: "Stephane Mallarme's 'One Toss of the Dice' was the birth certificate of modern poetry in the same way that Picasso's 'Demoiselles d'Avignon' was the inaugural {!} work of modern painting, & Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring,' of modern music." And, Yes, all these time-honored, yet eternally cutting-edgy, art forms will be coming to a MUSEum near you soon . . . I'd advise staying tuned. Welcome to the ReImagined