



AN 11th-HOUR, LATE-NOVEMBER, EARLY DECEMBER, SLOUCHING
TOWARDS JANUARY NOSEGAY ON CAUSES TO BE THANKFUL

“Clambering up to Cold Mountain, / The trail goes on & on: / The long
canyon is choked with scree & boulders; / The wild creek is lined with
mist-blurred grass. / The moss is slippery, though there’s been no rain. /
The pine sings, even without wind. / Who can leap the world’s ties / And
sit with me among the white clouds?” (based on Gary Snyder’s transla-
tion of the 9th-century CE Buddhist/Taoist Sage Han Shan’s “Cold Mountain Poems”)

“A well-kept forest begs Our Lady{Sophia}’s grace; / Someone is not disgusted, or at least / Is
laYin’ bets on the human race / Retaining decency enough to last; / The trees encountered on
a country stroll / Reveal a lot about a country’s soul . . . / A culture is no better than its woods.”
(from W. H. Auden’s ‘Woods,’ from his aptly titled “The Age of AnXIety”). “In the deserts of the
heArt / Let the healing fountain stArt, / In the prison of {her/}his days / Teach the Free how to
praise.” (the final stanza of Auden’s ‘In Memory of W. B. Yeats’). Dare say we Montanans can re-
late to both HAn sHAn & WHA.

Here’s another cognate thought from a few centuries ago :: “Wisdom & Love are infinitely to be
preferred to riches.” (this Sage InSight being from the great 17th-century Poet & Mystic, Thomas
Traherne). For what it’s worth, this same pasSage continues as follows :: “I awoke in my child-
hood to the beauties of the e’art’h with its rivers, mountains, seas, the sun & the stars of heaven.
This was cause to Rejoice!” (from T. Traherne’s “Centuries,” thought to date from ca. 1672).

All of which is summed up in the 20th-century Zen master Nakagawa Soen Roshi’s haiku :: “All
beings are blossoms blossoming in a blossoming UniVerse.” (as quoted by Clark Strand in his
“Seeds from a Birch Tree: Writing Haiku & the Spiritual Journey;” Hyperion, NYC, 1997). What
say we include in this Gladsome T-Day Nosegay Thomas Traherne’s remarkable “It’s not the
object, but the Light / That maketh Heaven: ‘Tis a clearer Sight, / Felicity / Appears to none but
them that truly See.” (from TT’s ‘The Preparative’).

Ah, shucks, as long as we’re into this Zen thing, why not Ki no Tsurayuki’s aMaZing “Unseen, in
mountain depths{= deep in the heArt of things} the autumn leaves scatter / Like brocade under
cloak of Night.” (as quoted in Teru Miyamoto’s “Kinshu: Autumn Brocade;” & translated by Rog-
er K. Thomas; New Directions, NYC, 2005).

And one could certainly do worse than close with these lines from the 1995 Irish Nobel laureate
Seamus Heaney’s ‘The Cure at Troy,’ which Joe Biden so memorably shared recently :: “Believe
that a farther shore is reachable from here. / Believe in miracles / And cures & healing wells . . .
/ If there’s fire on the mountain / And lightning & storm / And a god speaks from the {Big} Sky /
That means someone is hearing / The outcry & the birth-cry / Of a new life at its term. / It means
that once in a lifetime / That justice can rise up / And hope & history rhyme.”