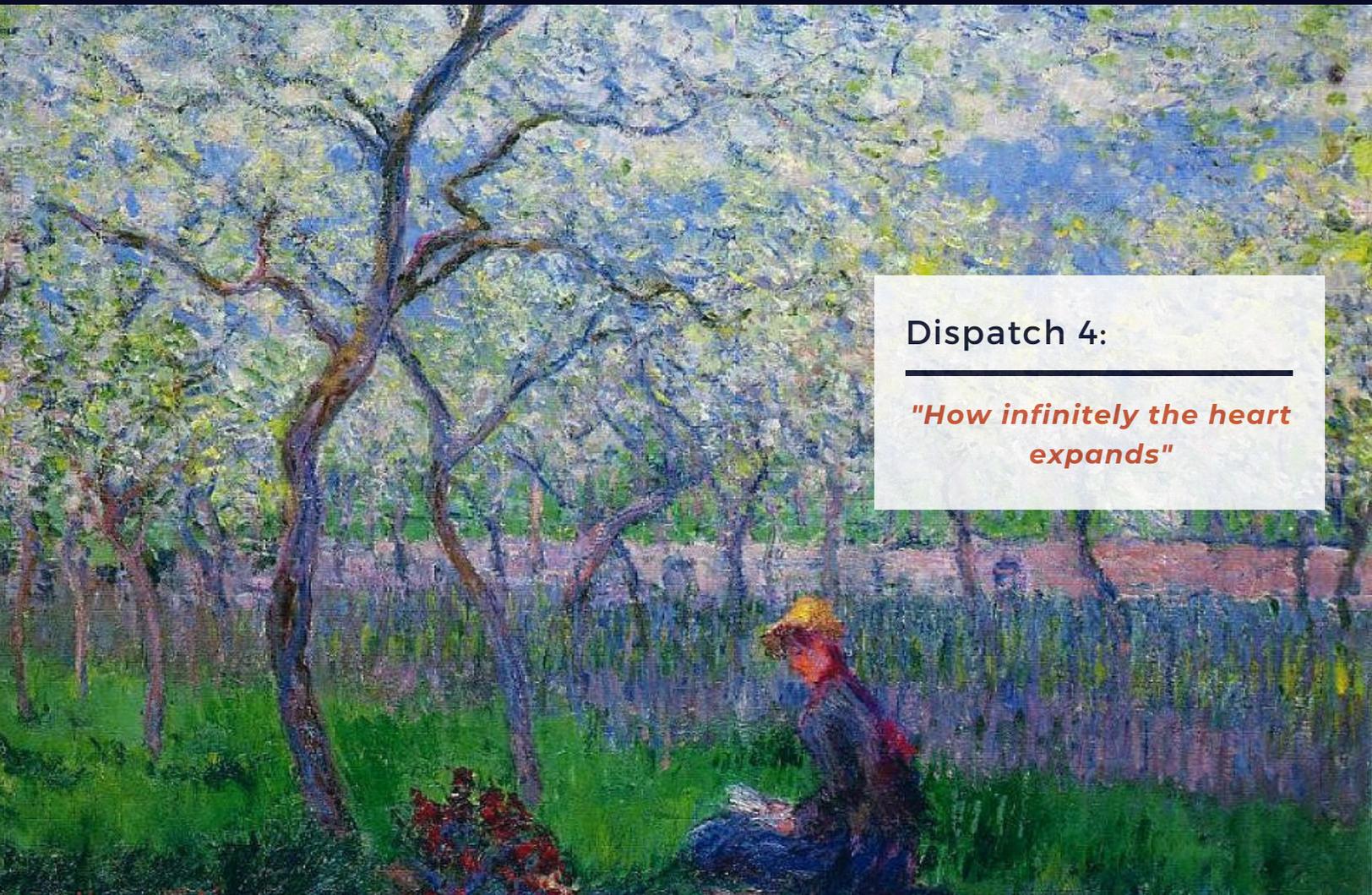


DISPATCHES FROM AN/OTHER PLACE



Dispatch 4:

"How infinitely the heart expands"

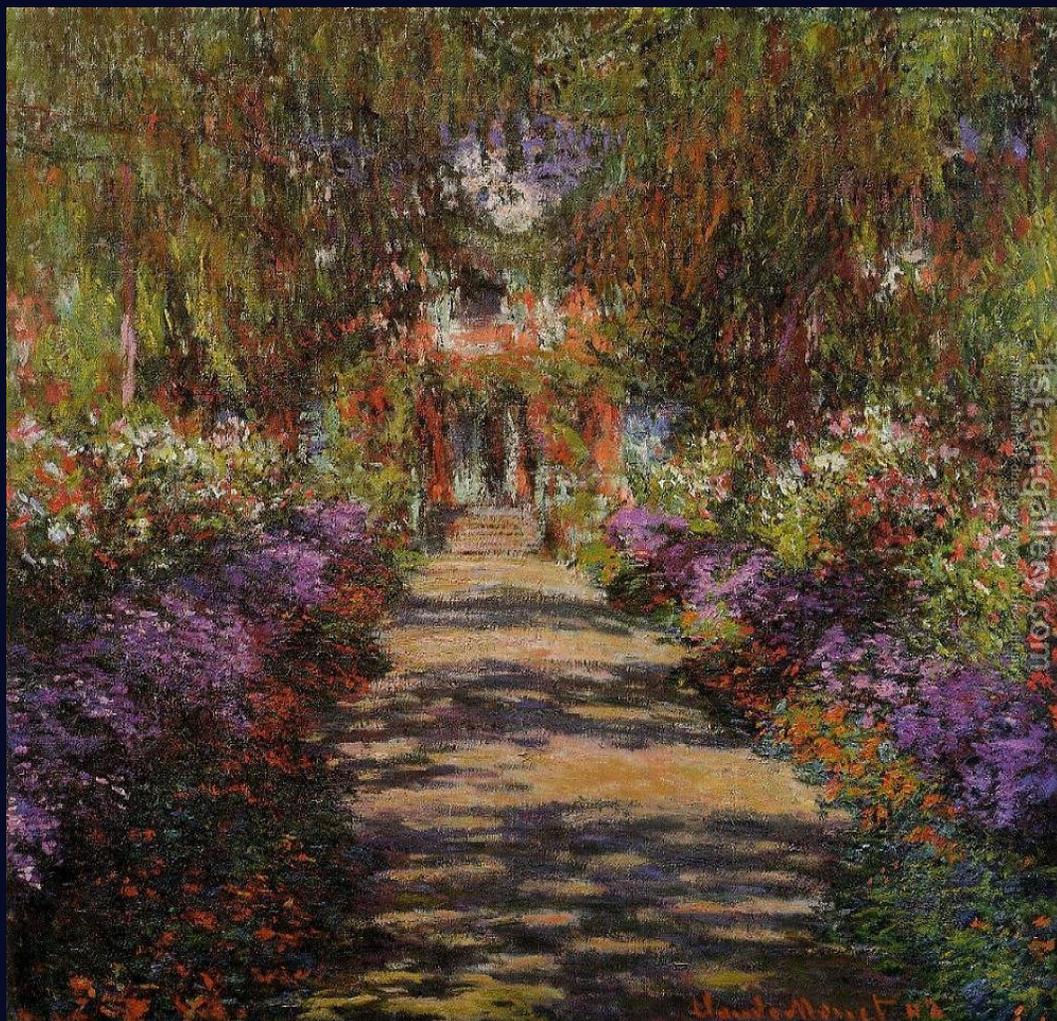
Dear students,

Spring is the most painterly of seasons. After the long gray months of winter, sparks of color emerge from the debris, and it feels as though a weight is lifting. Lavender crocuses, the sunny yellow of daffodils, tulips of every hue. Clouds of pink and white as cherries and magnolias bloom, giving way to washes of pale green. There is a dissonance to spring this year, the neighborhood unnaturally quiet on the first warm days, except for the songbirds [who are particularly exuberant](#). In a few weeks, we'll take for granted the lengthening days, the shifts in light and color, but just now, it's a daily thrill to watch the world coming awake.

Claude Monet, *An Orchard in Spring*



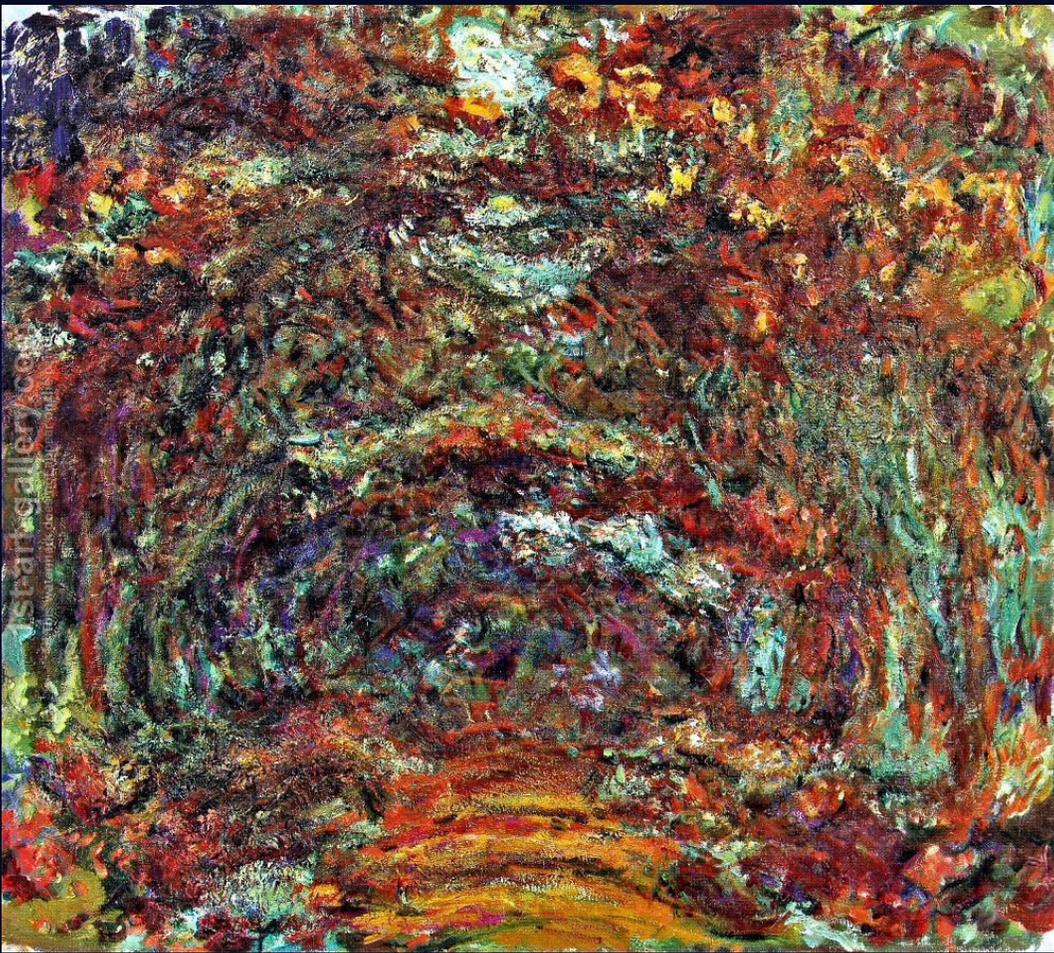
In the spring, I always think of the Impressionists, especially Claude Monet. Monet was an avid gardener and said "perhaps I owe it to flowers that I became a painter." He attended closely to the subtle shifts around him, delighting in seasonal changes, documenting hundreds of variations in his immediate landscape - the "impressions" that gave rise to a new style of painting. His lush gardens, which he called his greatest work, continue to thrive today (see modern day pictures below).



Claude Monet, *Pathway in Monet's Garden in Giverny*



Pathway in Monet's garden
(Francis Hammond, 2017)



Claude Monet, *The Path Under the Rose Trellises*



Path Under Trellises in Monet's Garden
(Francis Hammond, 2017)



Claude Monet,
The Water-Lily Pond and Bridge 2



*Lily Pond and Japanese bridge in
Monet's Garden*
(Francis Hammond, 2017)

A tour of Monet's garden [here](#). Other artists with famous gardens worth making a virtual visit to: [Frida Kahlo](#), [Georgia O'Keefe](#), [Sol Lewitt](#), and my personal favorite, Mary Mattingly's installation "[Swale](#)," a floating food forest on a barge in New York where city denizens can harvest their own food.

I've been trying to find an excuse to introduce you to Poets on Couches, [The Paris Review's](#) wonderful series of videograms that aim to "bring intimacy into our spaces of isolation, both through the affinity of poetry and through the warmth of being able to speak to each other across the distances." Each week, a poet reads and discusses a poem from their couch, and the first I heard was [this lovely piece about Monet](#):



"Monet Refuses the Operation"
by Lisel Mueller
Issue no. 84 (Summer 1982)

Doctor, you say there are no haloes
around the streetlights in Paris
and what I see is an aberration
caused by old age, an affliction.
I tell you it has taken me all my life
to arrive at the vision of gas lamps as angels,
to soften and blur and finally banish
the edges you regret I don't see,
to learn that the line I called the horizon
does not exist and sky and water,
so long apart, are the same state of being.
Fifty-four years before I could see
Rouen cathedral is built
of parallel shafts of sun,
and now you want to restore
my youthful errors: fixed
notions of top and bottom,
the illusion of three-dimensional space,
wisteria separate
from the bridge it covers.

What can I say to convince you
the Houses of Parliament dissolve
night after night to become
the fluid dream of the Thames?
I will not return to a universe
of objects that don't know each other,
as if islands were not the lost children
of one great continent. The world
is flux, and light becomes what it touches,
becomes water, lilies on water,
above and below water,
becomes lilac and mauve and yellow
and white and cerulean lamps,
small fists passing sunlight
so quickly to one another
that I despair, my brush not being
long, streaming hair. To paint
the speed of light! Doctor,
our weighted shapes, these verticals,
burn to mix with air
and change our clothes, skin, bones
to gases. If only you could see
how heaven pulls earth into its arms
and how infinitely the heart expands
to claim the world, blue vapor without end.

Finally, no literary dispatch about spring would be complete without mention of e.e. cummings. (Thanks to CAPS director Dr. D'Andrea for the recommendation!)

when faces called flowers float out of the ground
and breathing is wishing and wishing is having –
but keeping is downward and doubting and never
– it's april(yes, april;my darling)it's spring!
yes the pretty birds frolic as spry as can fly
yes the little fish gambol as glad as can be
(yes the mountains are dancing together)

when every leaf opens without any sound
and wishing is having and having is giving –
but keeping is doting and nothing and nonsense
– alive:we're alive, dear: it's(kiss me now)spring!
now the pretty birds hover so she and so he
now the little fish quiver so you and so i
(now the mountains are dancing,the mountains)

when more than was lost has been found has been found
and having is giving and giving is living –
but keeping is darkness and winter and cringing
– it's spring(all our night becomes day)o,it's spring!
all the pretty birds dive to the heart of the sky
all the little fish climb through the mind of the sea
(all the mountains are dancing;are dancing)

Each day we have a decision to make in how we face the world. The weeks of quarantine are beginning to wear on us - I have heard from many of you how overwhelmed you feel by the magnitude of what is happening. How you are grieving for milestones that won't happen this year - graduation, new jobs, cross-country moves. How you are growing irritable with family, weary with yourself. Some days it is enough simply to get out of bed, face what tasks we must, do our best to be kind to those we are sharing our spaces with. But what we might strive for, on our better days, is to notice, as the Impressionists did, that the passage of time need not be dreary, monotonous, but riveting, worthy of exultation. Around us, if we take care to notice, the mountains are dancing, and for now it is enough to say to another: *we're alive, dear.*

Be well,

Tamanna Rahman
your friendly neighborhood nurse practitioner



Tamanna Rahman is a psychiatric nurse practitioner who joined the CAPS team in January 2019. She completed her nurse practitioner training at Yale University and holds a BA from Williams College in American Studies, where she studied social movements and literature. Outside of work, she enjoys engaging in activism, gardening, cooking and baking, and hanging out with her Russian Blue cat and giant Newfoundland dog.