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.
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)
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.
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.
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

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!)

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.