

Sadness Is the Correct Emotion

John Gallaher

You're raking leaves at some point. Because at some point everyone here rakes leaves. Which is our sadness, or else it's our joy, the icing over the top of our sadness that we love. It's how I'm in love with everyone on this empty street as the street tilts into a bowl. At some point you're in a city of leaves. When your heart is open wide, everything is music. And maybe the earth has other ideas. Maybe the sound of the city this morning is a laughter the earth makes as we debate leaves, because this is funny to the earth, as the earth had this itch, and invented people to scratch it, and when our scratching is done, our usefulness will be at an end. Remember those 1980s television ads for Zamfir, the master of the pan flute? The earth is listening. Zamfir was originally interested in becoming an accordionist. Pitter-pat, Zamfir is raking leaves, as, in economics, the marginal utility of a good or service is the utility gained (or lost) from an increase (or decrease) in the consumption of that good or service. You are here to service the leaves, and bad people are a plurality. They cut off your beard and shave your head. Economists sometimes speak of a law of diminishing marginal utility, meaning that the first unit of consumption of a good or service yields more utility than do subsequent units. Remember the Trans-Siberian Orchestra? Every cup of blood you've ever devoted yourself to. Every new hallowed day. The Christmas attic. People are throwing pumpkins again. Funny people. The earth holds the minutes from the Society of Leaves, and won't give them back, even as we don't know how to ask, even as we make these little fires and crouch before them.

However Bad You Had It We Had It Worse

John Gallaher

Because in this me/not-me universe, the not-mes have the advantage, as I'm concentrating on bending this spoon with my mind right now. I might be having some luck, I think, but not so much on the spoon. More in regards to the questions surrounding spoons, the things one thinks about while concentrating. The "thinking about it too much" that typifies one side of most relationships. Examples such as bodies and dinner. Or, on the flip side, the "falling asleep over the atlas" thing. Osmosis learning, they'd say in some former slice of last century. Maybe I'll get the whole of Southeast Asia figured out. The way they used to say that war is the way Americans study geography, "Us and Them" playing in the background. Some light petting. Then the lights come on, or, more recently, when everything gets quiet right when you come out with something truly offensive about someone's mother and Hieronymus Bosch as we move to the self-evaluation part of the living room, little rows and boxes along the carpet on a scale of one to five. It's called "elegy for the unitary self" and what else is there for the violent to do in their quiet hours? The break room has a sign on it that says BREAK ROOM, as if it were a command in a terrifying age. "I think purple's my favorite color. It's either that or yellow," you say or the person you're walking with says, or maybe it's piped in from someone (a talking plant maybe) hiding behind the newspaper racks, applicable to your own area of study or interest. Either way the fence faces the fence faces either way, in love, apparently, with the multi-modal process. Abraham Lincoln and the history of marbles clutter one yard, while on the other they're leaving their fingerprints all over the toy rocket. Maybe this just isn't a good time for me right now. I'm deliriously happy, waiting for tech support. I'll dance through the trees naked (in friendly weather). "Add this to your vertiginous undergrowth," I'll say, and later I'll be on permanent vacation on the dark side of the woods, as another entry of tossing horses from the gondola on fire, or as another flavor of scenting

ourselves with chicken soup. The sides negate each other. It's all part of your little black dress, and enough chicken soup and we're set. It's some argument you overhear from the next room over, where you agree with both sides equally. Or is it that you disagree? It's training day. We have files and files of important findings on the subject to ignore.

John Gallaher's fifth collection of poetry is *In a Landscape*, just out from BOA. He lives in rural MO, and co-edits *The Laurel Review*.