

After: Air Raids on Kafr Dan & Refugee Camps near Bethlehem

—Headline, Israeli Palestinian War

It has already begun, the chord that will shiver glass. —Wm Stafford

Horizon-to-horizon demolition . . . I stop watching news
and walk out toward hills, thinking it may be better
to have lived when wars were fought on foot or horseback . . .
and not so far away children still played tag,
the apple harvest started.

I've turned more to books—Stafford, Berry, Yeats:
. . . the center cannot hold . . . rough beast slouching. . . .
Now comes a mending of my gloom and barren thoughts
while I hike among the trees. I've photographed white birch
lined up like choir rows in Oregon; seedlings thriving
out of cliffs near Banff, pushing through vast red-rock
reflecting heat near Burr Trail Road.

Perhaps it is a miracle I can still walk out
to thick-treed wilderness not far from home;
that my father taught beauty is essential as bread,
and other things peaceful, like camp where you can hear water.
That early on I heard the word wild in bewilder. . . .
My thriving times have been like trees flourishing
on the north slopes of hills behind the farm where I grew.
I have been a disciple of quaking aspen
and ponderosa, a fan of coyotes and crickets.
I wish such choices for all the shattering world.

Where I walk now in the dusk, soothing cricket-songs
stop when I stop. There's tension in that silence . . .
as though only my moving on is acceptable, as though
staying quiet and blissfully bewildered
cannot be sustained.

—Dixie L. Partridge

This poem won second place in the 2025 BYU Studies Poetry Contest.