

from *milk and honey*  
by rupi kaur

you tell me  
i am not like most girls  
and learn to kiss me with your eyes closed  
something about the phrase—something about  
how i have to be unlike the women  
i call sisters in order to be wanted  
makes me want to spit your tongue out  
like i am supposed to be proud you picked me  
as if i should be relieved you think  
i am better than them

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

# It was long ago

By Eleanor Farjeon

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

I'll tell you, shall I, something I remember?  
Something that still means a great deal to me.  
It was long ago.

A dusty road in summer I remember,  
A mountain, and an old house, and a tree  
That stood, you know,

Behind the house. An old woman I remember  
In a red shawl with a grey cat on her knee  
Humming under a tree.

She seemed the oldest thing I can remember.  
But then perhaps I was not more than three.  
It was long ago.

I dragged on the dusty road, and I remember  
How the old woman looked over the fence at me  
And seemed to know

How it felt to be three, and called out, I remember  
"Do you like bilberries and cream for tea?"  
I went under the tree.



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And while she hummed, and the cat purred, I remember  
How she filled a saucer with berries and cream for me  
So long ago.

Such berries and such cream as I remember  
I never had seen before, and never see  
Today, you know.

And that is almost all I can remember,  
The house, the mountain, the gray cat on her knee,  
Her red shawl, and the tree,

And the taste of the berries, the feel of the sun I remember  
And the smell of everything that used to be  
So long ago,

Till the heat on the road outside again I remember  
And how the long dusty road seemed to have for me  
No end, you know.

That is the farthest thing I can remember.  
It won't mean much to you. It does to me.  
Then I grew up, you see.



from **Jane Eyre** (ch 23, in *A Little Aloud with Love*)

By Charlotte Bronte

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

'Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong! - I have as much soul as you - and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal - as we are!'

'As we are!' repeated Mr Rochester - 'so,' he added, enclosing me in his arms, gathering me to his breast, pressing his lips on my lips: 'so, Jane!'

'Yes, so, sir,' I rejoined: 'and yet not so; for you are a married man - or as good as a married man, and wed to one inferior to you - to one with whom you have no sympathy - whom I do not believe you truly love; for I have seen and heard you sneer at her. I would scorn such a union: therefore I am better than you - let me go!'



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#SharedReading

from **Maya Angelou**

I am grateful to be a woman. I must have done something great in another life.

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#SharedReading

from **Emma Watson**  
at a press conference, July 2011

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

I think women are scared of feeling powerful and strong and brave sometimes. There's nothing wrong with being afraid. It's not the absence of fear, it's overcoming it and sometimes you just have to blast through and have faith.



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# Green, Green is My Sister's House (from *A Thousand Mornings*)

by Mary Oliver

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Don't you dare climb that tree  
or even try, they said, or you will be  
sent away to the hospital of the  
very foolish, if not the other one.  
And I suppose, considering my age,  
it was fair advice.

But the tree is a sister to me, she  
lives alone in a green cottage  
high in the air and I know what  
would happen, she'd clap her green hands,  
she'd shake her green hair, she'd  
welcome me. Truly.

I try to be good but sometimes  
a person just has to break out and  
act like the wild and springy thing  
one used to be. It's impossible not  
to remember *wild* and not want to go back. So

if someday you can't find me you might  
look into that tree or – of course  
it's possible – under it.



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#SharedReading

from ***Women, Race and Class,***  
***a study of the women's liberation movement in the US***

By Angela Davis

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

"Expediency governed the slaveholders' posture toward female slaves: when it was profitable to exploit them as if they were men, they were regarded, in effect, as genderless, but when they could be exploited, punished and repressed in ways suited only for women, they were locked into their exclusively female roles.

[...] During the decades preceding the Civil War, Black women came to be increasingly appraised for their fertility (or for the lack of it): she who was potentially the mother of ten, twelve, fourteen or more became a coveted treasure indeed. This did not mean, however, that as mothers, Black women enjoyed a more respected status than they enjoyed as workers. Ideological exaltation of motherhood - as popular as it was during the nineteenth century - did not extend to slaves. In fact, in the eyes of the slaveholders, slave women were not mothers at all; they were simply instruments guaranteeing the growth of the slave labor force. They were "breeders" - animals, whose monetary value could be precisely calculated in terms of their ability to multiply their numbers.



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#SharedReading



from *milk and honey*  
by rupi kaur

the name kaur  
makes me a free woman  
it removes the shackles that  
try to bind me  
uplifts me  
to remind me i am equal to  
any man even though the state  
of this world screams to me i am not  
that i am my own woman and  
i belong wholly to myself

and the universe  
it humbles me  
calls out and says i have a  
universal duty to share with  
humanity to nurture  
and serve the sisterhood  
to raise those that need raising  
the name kaur runs in my blood  
it was in me before the word itself existed  
it is my identity and my liberation  
-kaur

a woman of sikhi

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
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#SharedReading

# Atlas (from *Safe as Houses*)

By U. A. Fanthorpe

There is a kind of love called maintenance  
Which stores the WD40 and knows when to use it;

Which checks the insurance, and doesn't forget  
The milkman; which remembers to plant bulbs;

Which answers letters; which knows the way  
The money goes; which deals with dentists

And Road Fund Tax and meeting trains,  
And postcards to the lonely; which upholds

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

The permanently rickety elaborate  
Structures of living, which is Atlas.

And maintenance is the sensible side of love,  
Which knows what time and weather are doing  
To my brickwork; insulates my faulty wiring;  
Laughs at my dryrotten jokes; remembers  
My need for gloss and grouting; which keeps  
My suspect edifice upright in air,  
As Atlas did the sky.



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#SharedReading

from **Ruth Bader Ginsburg**  
in a speech given at Stanford University

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In every good marriage, it helps sometimes to be a little deaf. I have followed that advice [given by her mother-in-law on her wedding day] assiduously, and not only at home through 56 years of a marital relationship nonpareil. I have employed it as well in every workplace, including the Supreme Court. When a thoughtless or unkind word is spoken, best tune out. Reacting in anger or annoyance will not advance one's ability to persuade.



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from **Far From the Madding Crowd** (ch 4, in *A Little Aloud with Love*)

By Thomas Hardy

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He went forward and stretched out his arm again. Bathsheba had overtaken him at a point beside which stood a low stunted holly bush, now laden with red berries. Seeing his advance take the form of an attitude threatening a possible enclosure, if not compression, of her person, she edged off round the bus.

'Why, Farmer Oak,' she said over the top, looking at him with rounded eyes, 'I never said I was going to marry you.'

'Well - that is a tale!' said Oak, with dismay. 'To run after anybody like this, and then say you don't want him!'



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#SharedReading

from **Far From the Madding Crowd** (ch 4, in *A Little Aloud with Love*)

By Thomas Hardy

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
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'What I meant to tell you was only this,' she said eagerly, and yet half-conscious of the absurdity of the position she had made for herself - 'that nobody has got me yet as a sweetheart, instead of my having a dozen, as my aunt said; I hate to be thought men's property in that way, though possibly I shall be had some day. Why, if I'd wanted you I shouldn't have run after you like this; 'twould have been the forwardest thing! But there was no harm in hurrying to correct a piece of false news that had been told you.'

'Oh, no - no harm at all.' But there is such a thing as being too generous in expressing a judgement impulsively, and Oak added with a more appreciative sense of all the circumstances - 'Well, I am not quite certain it was no harm.'



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#SharedReading

# Bungalows and Biscuit Tins

by Hollie McNish

My grandmas are officially old now

94 and 86

They tell me war was not romantic, not a bit,  
don't believe the posters of the handsome soldiers  
kissing loved who waited for them to come back

Most endings were not like that

Most loved ones died or loves burnt out

My grandmas go to more funerals than parties now It hurts

Neither of them like this

And they sit

Observing everything

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

# Bungalows and Biscuit Tins

by Hollie McNish

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Their Christmas's as kids had sock stockings and a single bouncy ball and now I watch them watching as great grandchildren open hoards of presents throwing half onto the floor

Sometimes we disagree with what's right and wrong for us to do

My pregnancy without a wedding ring was something that we struggled through

Talked it through and agreed to disagree

And though I felt a little shamed

When she offered me her ring to wear I knew she was just protecting me

From how people would've been to her if she had done the same

The other took me to the side and held my waist tight like a glove

“Loads of my generation got knocked up too” she whispered

“They just kept it covered up And married bloody quickly”



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#SharedReading

# Bungalows and Biscuit Tins

by Hollie McNish

I love it when she winks at me

Telling secrets

Drinking tea

I ask about their history

They know a lot of things my grans

They sit and watch it all

Articulate, intelligent

Kind and bossy,

Sly sometimes

As clocks tick time with icing topped

And I watch as people stop to ask them if they want another cup of tea

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LIVERPOOL  
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# Bungalows and Biscuit Tins

by Hollie McNish

“Ten thousand and eighty three I’ve had” she jokes to me  
They all taste just the bloody same  
She says “I’m bored of my friends dying”  
And people are so patronizing  
Bending over, talking shyly,  
Slowly and politely like my grandmas are both kids  
Telling me to “leave nan” she’s just nattering for the sake of it  
Call their conversations gossip  
Like older people are all the same  
And ignore everything they thought before their brown hairs turned to silver grey  
“If you ever call it lilac I will slap your little face” she says

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
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# Bungalows and Biscuit Tins

by Hollie McNish

She says

She wishes she could dance again

But I see her dancing all the time

And I love the fact me and my mum's mum tell dirty jokes my mum won't like

We watch reruns of CSI

The oldest says she's ready to die

Her younger siblings are all gone now

Funerals a daily song, now

The tea is sipped

My daughter loves the way they live

Bungalows and secret tins of biscuits

She nicks while my grandma sleeps

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LIVERPOOL  
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#SharedReading

# Bungalows and Biscuit Tins

by Hollie McNish

My youngest grandma does 'chairbics' for the over eighties twice a week  
And lives a larger life than most people my age that I meet  
I see life-lines run through both their faces,  
Both of them my saving graces,  
I think our country's strongly ageist  
I wish more grandmas filled the pages of our youth-obsessing TV screens  
You teach me what real wisdom means  
And though there's things we argue on  
And your mindsets can be militant  
And you always say I swear too much  
I think you're fucking brilliant.

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LIVERPOOL  
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# My Mother Goes to Vote

By Judith Harris

We walked five blocks  
to the elementary school,  
my mother's high heels  
crunching through playground gravel.  
We entered through a side door.

Down the long corridor,  
decorated with Halloween masks,  
health department safety posters—  
we followed the arrows  
to the third grade classroom.

My mother stepped alone  
into the booth, pulling the curtain behind her.  
I could see only the backs of her  
calves in crinkled nylons.

A partial vanishing, then reappearing  
pocketbook crooked on her elbow,  
our mayor's button pinned to her lapel.  
Even then I could see—to choose  
is to follow what has already  
been decided.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

# My Mother Goes to Vote

By Judith Harris

We marched back out  
finding a new way back down streets  
named for flowers  
and accomplished men.  
I said their names out loud, as we found  
  
our way home, to the cramped house,  
the devoted porch light left on,  
the customary meatloaf.  
I remember, in the classroom converted  
into a voting place—

there were two mothers, conversing,  
squeezed into the children's desk chairs.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
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from **Simone de Beauvoir**

To be free is not to have the power to do anything you like; it is to be able to surpass the given toward an open future.

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# Height

by Ann Morrow Lindberg

When I was young I felt so small  
And frightened, for the world was tall.

And even grasses seemed to me  
A forest of immensity,

Until I learned that I could grow  
A glance would leave them far below.

Spanning a tree's height with my eye,  
Suddenly I soared as high;

And fixing on a star I grew,  
I pushed my head against the blue!

Still, like a singing lark, I find  
Rapture to leave the grass behind.

And sometimes standing in a crowd  
My lips are cool against a cloud.

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LIVERPOOL  
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# My Winged Soul

by Emily Pfeiffer

My soul is like some cage-born bird, that hath  
A restless prescience—howsoever won—  
Of a broad pathway leading to the sun,  
With promptings of an oft reprovèd faith  
In sun-ward yearnings. Stricken through her breast,  
And faint her wing with beating at the bars  
Of sense, she looks beyond outlying stars,  
And only in the Infinite sees rest.

Sad soul! If ever thy desire be bent  
Or broken to thy doom, and made to share  
The ruminant's beatitude,—content,—  
Chewing the cud of knowledge, with no care  
For germs of life within; then will I say,  
Thou art not caged, but fitly stalled in clay!

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LIVERPOOL  
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# Warning

by Jenny Joseph

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple  
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.  
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves  
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.  
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired  
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells  
And run my stick along the public railings  
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.  
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain  
And pick flowers in other people's gardens  
And learn to spit.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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# Warning

by Jenny Joseph

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat  
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go  
Or only bread and pickle for a week  
And hoard pens and pencils and beer mats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry  
And pay our rent and not swear in the street  
And set a good example for the children.  
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

# Warning

by Jenny Joseph

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

But maybe I ought to practice a little now?  
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised  
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.



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from **How To Be a Woman**  
By Caitlin Moran

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Any action a woman engages in from a spirit of joy, and within a similarly safe and joyous environment, falls within the city-walls of feminism. A girl has a right to dance how she wants, when her favourite record comes on.



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#SharedReading

from **Three Dreams in a Desert** (*Dreams*, 1890)

By Olive Schreiner

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

I saw a desert and I saw a woman coming out of it. And she came to the bank of a dark river; and the bank was steep and high. And on it an old man met her, who had a long white beard; and a stick that curled was in his hand, and on it was written Reason. And he asked her what it was she wanted; and she said, "I am woman; and I am seeking for the land of Freedom."

And he said, "It is before you."

And she said, "I see nothing before me but a dark flowing river, and a bank steep and high, and cuttings here and there with heavy sand in them."

And he said, "And beyond that?"

She said, "I see nothing, but sometimes, when I shade my eyes with my hand, I think I see on the further bank trees and hills, and the sun shining on them!"



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#SharedReading

from **Three Dreams in a Desert** (*Dreams*, 1890)

By Olive Schreiner

He said, "That is the Land of Freedom."

She said, "How am I to get there?"

He said, "There is one way, and one only. Down the banks of Labor, through the water of Suffering. There is no other."

She said "Is there no bridge?"

He answered, "None."

She said, "Is the water deep?"

He said, "Deep."

She said, "Is the floor worn?"

He said, "It is. Your foot may slip at any time, and you may be lost."

She said, "Have any crossed already?"

He said, "Some have *tried!*"

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

from **Three Dreams in a Desert** (*Dreams*, 1890)

By Olive Schreiner

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
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She said, "Is there a track to show where the best fording is?"

He said, "It has to be made."

She shaded her eyes with her hand; and she said, "I will go."

[...]

*[The woman has been carrying a tiny child at her breast, and is instructed by the old man to put him down so that he can grow and find the Land of Freedom for himself. The child bites her when she tries to release him, and as the woman puts him down on the ground she suddenly changes from youth to age.]*



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#SharedReading

from **Three Dreams in a Desert** (*Dreams*, 1890)

By Olive Schreiner

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
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And she stood far off on the bank of the river. And she said, "For what do I go to this far land which no one has ever reached? *Oh, I am alone! I am utterly alone!*"

And Reason, that old man, said to her, "Silence! what do you hear?"

And she listened intently, and she said, "I hear the sound of feet, a thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, and they beat this way!"

He said, "They are the feet of those that shall follow you. Lead on!"



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from **Coretta Scott King** (wife of Martin Luther King)

Struggle is a never ending process. Freedom is never really won, you earn it and win it in every generation.

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#SharedReading

**The Book of Ruth and Naomi** (from *A Little Aloud with Love*)  
by Marge Piercy

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

When you pick up the Tanakh and read the Book of Ruth, it is a shock how little it resembles memory. It's concerned with inheritance, lands, men's names, how women must wiggle and wobble to live.

Yet women have kept it dear for the beloved elder who cherished Ruth, more friend than daughter. Daughters leave. Ruth

brought even the baby she made with Boaz home as a gift.

Where you go, I will go too,  
your people shall be my people,  
I will be a Jew for you,  
for what is yours I will love  
as I love you, oh Naomi  
my mother, my sister, my heart.



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#SharedReading

**The Book of Ruth and Naomi** (from *A Little Aloud with Love*)  
by Marge Piercy

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Show me a woman who does not dream  
a double, heart's twin, a sister  
of the mind in whose ear she can whisper,  
whose hair she can braid as her life  
twists its pleasure and pain and shame.  
Show me a woman who does not hide  
in the locket of bone that deep  
eye beam of fiercely gentle love  
she had once from mother, daughter,  
sister; once like a warm moon  
that radiance aligned the tides  
of her blood into potent order.

At the season of first fruits, we recall  
two travellers, co-conspirators, scavengers  
making do with leftovers and mill ends,  
whose friendship was stronger than fear,  
stronger than hunger, who walked together,  
the road of shards, hands joined.



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# We Talked as Girls Do

by Emily Dickinson

We talked as Girls do –  
Fond, and late –  
We speculated fair, on every subject, but the Grave –  
Of ours, none affair –

We handled Destinies, as cool –  
As we – Disposers – be –  
And God, a Quiet Party  
To our Authority –

But fondest, dwelt upon Ourselves  
As we eventual – be –  
When Girls to Women, softly raised  
We – occupy – Degree –

We parted with a contract  
To cherish, and to write  
But Heaven made both, impossible  
Before another night.

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

# The House

by Warsan Shire

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

I  
Mother says there are locked rooms inside all women,  
kitchen of lust, bedroom of grief, bathroom of apathy.  
Sometimes the men they come with keys,  
and sometimes the men they come with hammers.

II  
Nin soo joog laga waayo, soo jiiifso aa laga helaa,  
I said Stop, I said No and he did not listen.



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#SharedReading

# The House

by Warsan Shire

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

III

Perhaps Rihanna has a plan, perhaps she takes Chris back to hers  
only for him to wake up hours later in a bathtub full of ice,  
with a dry mouth, looking down at his new, neat procedure.

IV

I point to my body and say Oh this old thing? No, I just slipped it on.

V

Are you going to eat that? I say to my mother, pointing to my father who is lying on the  
dining room table, his mouth stuffed with a red apple.



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#SharedReading

# The House

by Warsan Shire

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

VI

The bigger my body is, the more locked rooms there are, the more men come with keys. Anwar didn't push it all the way in, I still think about what he could have opened up inside of me. Basil came and hesitated at the door for three years. Johnny with the blue eyes came with a bag of tools he had used on other women: one hairpin, a bottle of bleach, a switchblade and a jar of Vaseline. Yusuf called out God's name through the keyhole and no one answered. Some begged, some climbed the side of my body looking for a window, some said they were on their way and did not come.



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#SharedReading

# The House

by Warsan Shire

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

VII

Show us on the doll where you were touched, they said.  
I said I don't look like a doll, I look like a house.  
They said Show us on the house.

Like this: two fingers in the jam jar  
Like this: an elbow in the bathwater  
Like this: a hand in the drawer.



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#SharedReading



# The House

by Warsan Shire

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

VIII

I should tell you about my first love who found a trapdoor under my left breast nine years ago, fell in and hasn't been seen since. Every now and then I feel something crawling up my thigh. He should make himself known, I'd probably let him out. I hope he hasn't bumped in to the others, the missing boys from small towns, with pleasant mothers, who did bad things and got lost in the maze of my hair. I treat them well enough, a slice of bread, if they're lucky a piece of fruit. Except for Johnny with the blue eyes, who picked my locks and crawled in. Silly boy, chained to the basement of my fears, I play music to drown him out.



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**The House**  
by Warsan Shire

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

IX  
Knock knock.  
Who's there?  
No one.

X  
At parties I point to my body and say This is where love comes to die. Welcome, come in,  
make yourself at home. Everyone laughs, they think I'm joking.



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from **The Princess Saves Herself in This One**  
by Amanda Lovelace

it is strange  
how  
sisters  
can  
be  
saviors  
or  
strangers  
&  
sometimes  
a bit of both.



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**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
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from **Homestead** (chapter 12, in *A Little Aloud with Love*)

By Rosina Lippi

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Laura held out her hands to show her daughter the tadpole: a gift, a vision. Annile wanted to drink from her cupped palms.

'No, he'll jump out,' Laura said, but she tilted her hands toward the small red mouth. The tadpole leapt frantically, striking the startled child in the cheek, and fell back into the spring.

The water rippled and danced; Laura saw her reflection shift. She looked into the water and watched it draw the picture of a younger woman, a woman in a dark green dress edged with white lace at the throat, her hair long and glossy and well kept, her hands smooth and white, her nails clean and even.

'Who's that?' her daughter asked, following her mother's gaze, wanting to play this old game, to hear her mother's dreams.

'Why, that's a young woman I know,' Laura answered. 'A teacher.'

'Tell me about her, Mama.'



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#SharedReading

from **Homestead** (chapter 12, in *A Little Aloud with Love*)

By Rosini Lippi

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

She pulled the child up closer to her on the log, cast an eye at the baby digging in the mud. 'Well, let's see. She's just started teaching. She found a little apartment all to herself with a view of the Three Sisters, way off. Sometimes she just reads away the evenings in a big comfortable chair. She likes to sew, she sewed a dress to wear to a dance. Her beau comes on Friday nights in a dark gray suit and sometimes they go out to eat. Once in a while she takes a trip. Greece, to swim in the sea.'

Annile thought for a good time.

'Have you ever been there?'

'No, I haven't. Bought a book about Greece, though. I gave it to your great-great-aunt Johanna when I was a girl.'

'Is the teacher lady you?'

Laura stroked the child's hair away from her face and looked back into the depths of the spring.

'No, that was never me. But maybe it'll be you, sometime. Maybe you can take up where your great-aunt Martha left off. She was a fine teacher.'



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#SharedReading

## **A Birthday** (taken from *A Little Aloud with Love*)

by Christina Rossetti

My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;  
My heart is like an apple-tree  
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;  
My heart is like a rainbow shell  
That paddles in a halcyon sea;  
My heart is gladder than all these,  
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;  
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;  
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,  
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;  
Work it in gold and silver grapes,  
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;  
Because the birthday of my life  
Is come, my love is come to me.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

# Warning

by Jenny Joseph

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

When I am an old woman I shall wear purple  
With a red hat which doesn't go, and doesn't suit me.  
And I shall spend my pension on brandy and summer gloves  
And satin sandals, and say we've no money for butter.  
I shall sit down on the pavement when I'm tired  
And gobble up samples in shops and press alarm bells  
And run my stick along the public railings  
And make up for the sobriety of my youth.  
I shall go out in my slippers in the rain  
And pick flowers in other people's gardens  
And learn to spit.



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#SharedReading

# Warning

by Jenny Joseph

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

You can wear terrible shirts and grow more fat  
And eat three pounds of sausages at a go  
Or only bread and pickle for a week  
And hoard pens and pencils and beer mats and things in boxes.

But now we must have clothes that keep us dry  
And pay our rent and not swear in the street  
And set a good example for the children.  
We must have friends to dinner and read the papers.



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# Warning

by Jenny Joseph

But maybe I ought to practice a little now?  
So people who know me are not too shocked and surprised  
When suddenly I am old, and start to wear purple.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

from **Where Are Those Songs?**  
by Micere Githae Mugo

This I remember:  
Mother always said  
sing child sing  
make a song  
and sing  
beat out your own rhythms  
the rhythms of your life  
but make the song soulful  
and make life  
sing

Sing daughter sing  
around you are  
uncountable tunes  
some sung  
others unsung  
sing them  
to your rhythms  
observe  
listen  
absorb  
soak yourself  
bathe  
in the stream of life  
and then sing

sing  
simple songs  
for the people  
for all to hear  
and learn  
and sing  
with you

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LIVERPOOL  
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# The Crazy Woman

by Gwendolyn Brooks

I shall not sing a May song.  
A May song should be gay.  
I'll wait until November  
And sing a song of gray.

I'll wait until November  
That is the time for me.  
I'll go out in the frosty dark  
And sing most terribly.

And all the little people  
Will stare at me and say,  
"That is the Crazy Woman  
Who would not sing in May."

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

from **Amal Clooney**  
in a speech given at the Texas Conference for Women

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

The worst thing that we can do as women is not stand up for each other, and this is something we can practice every day, no matter where we are and what we do – women sticking up for other women, choosing to protect and celebrate each other instead of competing or criticizing one another.



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from **Adrienne Rich**

When a woman tells the truth she is creating the possibility for more truth around her.

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#SharedReading

from **Second Words: Selected Critical Prose**

By Margaret Atwood

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

A voice is a human gift; it should be cherished and used, to utter fully human speech as possible. Powerlessness and silence go together.



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#SharedReading

## For a Five Year Old

by Fleur Adcock

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

A snail is climbing up the window-sill  
Into your room, after a night of rain.  
You call me in to see, and I explain  
That it would be unkind to leave it there:  
It might crawl to the floor; we must take care  
That no one squashes it. You understand,  
And carry it outside, with a careful hand,  
To eat a daffodil.

I see, then, that a kind of faith prevails:  
Your gentleness is moulded still by words  
From me, who have trapped mice and shot wild birds,  
From me, who drowned your kittens, who betrayed  
Your closest relatives, who purveyed  
The harshest kind of truth to many another.  
But that is how things are: I am your mother,  
And we are kind to snails.



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#SharedReading

## Overblown Roses

by Mimi Khalvati

She held one up, twirling it in her hand  
as if to show me how the world began  
and ended in perfection. I was stunned.

How could she make a rose so woebegone,  
couldn't silk stand stiff? And how could a child,  
otherwise convinced of her mother's taste,  
know what to think? *It's overblown*, she smiled,  
*I love roses when they're past their best.*

'Overblown roses', the words swam in my head,  
making sense as I suddenly saw afresh  
the rose now, the rose ahead: where a petal  
clings to a last breath; where my mother's flesh  
and mine, going the same way, may still  
be seen as beautiful, if these words are said.

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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from **When I Hit You**  
By Meena Kandasamy

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

I am the woman who is willing to display her scars and put them within exhibition frames. I am the madwoman of moon days. I am the breast-beating woman who howls. I am the woman who wills the skies to weep in my place.



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from **The Summer Before the Dark**

By Doris Lessing

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

“I’m not going to be like my mother. You’re maniacs. You’re mad.”

“Yes,” said Kate. “I know it. And so you won’t be. The best of luck to you. And what are you going to be instead?”



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#SharedReading

from **The Golden Notebook**  
By Doris Lessing

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Ideally, what should be said to every child, repeatedly, throughout his or her school life is something like this: 'You are in the process of being indoctrinated. We have not yet evolved a system of education that is not a system of indoctrination. We are sorry, but it is the best we can do. What you are being taught here is an amalgam of current prejudice and the choices of this particular culture. The slightest look at history will show how impermanent these must be. You are being taught by people who have been able to accommodate themselves to a regime of thought laid down by their predecessors. It is a self-perpetuating system. Those of you who are more robust and individual than others will be encouraged to leave and find ways of educating yourself — educating your own judgements. Those that stay must remember, always, and all the time, that they are being moulded and patterned to fit into the narrow and particular needs of this particular society.'



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from the essay **We Should All Be Feminists**

By Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn't have the weight of gender expectations.



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#SharedReading

from **The Well of Loneliness**, chapter 27

By Radclyffe Hall

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Puddle put an arm around Stephen's bowed shoulders, and she said: "You've got work to do - come and do it! Why, just because you are what you are, you may actually find that you've got an advantage. You may write with a curious double insight - write both men and women from a personal knowledge. Nothing's completely misplaced or wasted, I'm sure of that - and we're all part of nature. Some day the world will recognize this, but meanwhile there's plenty of work that's waiting. For the sake of all the others who are like you, but less strong and less gifted perhaps, many of them, it's up to you to have the courage to make good, and I'm here to help you do it, Stephen."



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#SharedReading

from **Madeleine Albright**  
(the first woman to have become the US Secretary of State)

It took me quite a long time to develop a voice, and now that I have it, I am not going to be silent.

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

from **Persuasion**, chapter 8

By Jane Austen

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

The Admiral [...] now came up to Captain Wentworth, and without any observation of what he might be interrupting, thinking only of his own thoughts, began with - "If you had been a week later at Lisbon, last spring, Frederick, you would have been asked to give a passage to Lady Mary Grierson and her daughters." "Should I? I am glad I was not a week later then."

The admiral abused him for his want of gallantry. He defended himself: though professing that he would never willingly admit any ladies on board a ship of his, excepting for a ball, or a visit, which a few hours might comprehend.

"But, if I know myself," said he, "this is from no want of gallantry towards them. It is rather from feeling how impossible it is, with all one's efforts, and all one's sacrifices, to make the accommodations on board such as women ought to have. There can be no want of gallantry, Admiral, in rating the claims of women to every personal comfort high, and this is what I do. I hate to hear of women on board, or to see them on board; and no ship, under my command, shall ever convey a family of ladies any where, if I can help it.""



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#SharedReading

from **Persuasion**, chapter 8

By Jane Austen

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

This brought his sister upon him.

"Oh! Frederick! But I cannot believe it of you. - All idle refinement! - Women may be as comfortable on board, as in the best house in England. I believe I have lived as much on board as most women, and I know nothing superior to the accommodations of a man-of-war. I declare I have not a comfort or an indulgence about me, even at Kellynch Hall," (with a kind bow to Anne) "beyond what I always had in most of the ships I have lived in; and they have been five altogether."

"Nothing to the purpose," replied her brother. "You were living with your husband, and were the only woman on board."

"But you, yourself, brought Mrs. Harville, her sister, her cousin, and the three children, round from Portsmouth to Plymouth. Where was this superfine, extraordinary sort of gallantry of yours then?"

"All merged in my friendship, Sophia. I would assist any brother-officer's wife that I could, and I would bring any thing of Harville's from the world's end, if he wanted it. But do not imagine that I did not feel it an evil in itself."



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from **Persuasion**, chapter 8

By Jane Austen

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

"Depend upon it, they were all perfectly comfortable."

"I might not like them the better for that, perhaps. Such a number of women and children have no right to be comfortable on board."

"My dear Frederick, you are talking quite idly. Pray, what would become of us poor sailors' wives, who often want to be conveyed to one port or another, after our husbands, if every body had your feelings?"

"My feelings, you see, did not prevent my taking Mrs. Harville and all her family to Plymouth."

"But I hate to hear you talking so like a fine gentleman, and as if women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of us expect to be in smooth water all our days."



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#SharedReading

from **The Bell Jar**  
By Sylvia Plath

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

That's one of the reasons I never wanted to get married. The last thing I wanted was infinite security and to be the place an arrow shoots off from. I wanted change and excitement and to shoot off in all directions myself, like the colored arrows from a Fourth of July rocket.



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**Ursula K. Le Guin:**

a letter sent in response to a publisher's request in 1971

Dear Mr Radziewicz, I can imagine myself blurbing a book in which Brian Aldiss, predictably, sneers at my work, because then I could preen myself on magnanimity. But I cannot imagine myself blurbing a book, the first of a new series and hence presumably exemplary of the series, which not only contains no writing by women, but the tone of which is so self-contentedly, exclusively male, like a club, or a locker room. That would not be magnanimity, but foolishness. Gentlemen, I just don't belong here.

Yours truly, Ursula K. Le Guin

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

from **My Own Story**  
By Emmeline Pankhurst

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Men make the moral code and they expect women to accept it. They have decided that it is entirely right and proper for men to fight for their liberties and their rights, but that it is not right and proper for women to fight for theirs.



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from **Astrid Lindgren**  
in a speech made in 1958

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

A child alone with her book creates, somewhere in the secret room of her soul, her own pictures that surpass everything else. Human beings must have these pictures. The day when children's imaginations can no longer make them will be a day when all of humanity is impoverished. All of the great things that have happened in the world happened first in someone's imagination, and the shape of tomorrow depends largely upon the power of the imagination in those who are just now learning to read. This is why children must have books.



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## New Season by Wendy Cope

LIGHTNIGHT  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

No coats today. Buds bulge on chestnut trees,  
And on the doorstep of a big, old house  
A young man stands and plays his flute.

I watch the silver notes fly up  
And circle in the blue sky above the traffic,  
Travelling where they will.

And suddenly this paving-stone  
Midway between my front door and the bus stop  
Is a starting point.

From here I can go anywhere I choose.



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from **Maria Mitchell**

in a speech she presented as president of the Association for the Advancement of Women

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

In my younger days, when I was pained by half-educated, loose, and inaccurate ways which we all had, I used to say, 'How much women need exact science.' But since I have known some workers in science who were not always true to the teaching of nature, who have loved Self more than science, I have said, 'How much science needs women!'



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from **Mykel Sisk** (NexGeneGirls intern)

The most important thing I learned is that a scientist can look just like me.

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LIVERPOOL  
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from **Malala Yousafzai**  
in a speech she made to the UN

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Dear brothers and sisters, do remember one thing: Malala Day is not my day. Today is the day of every woman, every boy and every girl who have raised their voice for their rights.

There are hundreds of human rights activists and social workers who are not only speaking for their rights, but who are struggling to achieve their goal of peace, education and equality. Thousands of people have been killed by the terrorists and millions have been injured. I am just one of them.

So here I stand. So here I stand, one girl, among many. I speak not for myself, but so those without a voice can be heard.

[...]

There was a time when women activists asked men to stand up for their rights. But this time we will do it by ourselves. I am not telling men to step away from speaking for women's rights, but I am focusing on women to be independent and fight for themselves. So dear sisters and brothers, now it's time to speak up.



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#SharedReading

from **The Diary of a Young Girl**  
By Anne Frank

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Women should be respected as well! Generally speaking, men are held in great esteem in all parts of the world, so why shouldn't women have their share? Soldiers and war heroes are honored and commemorated, explorers are granted immortal fame, martyrs are revered, but how many people look upon women too as soldiers? ... Women, who struggle and suffer pain to ensure the continuation of the human race, make much tougher and more courageous soldiers than all those big-mouthed freedom-fighting heroes put together!



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from **Serena Williams**  
in an open letter 'to all incredible women who strive for excellence'

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

But as we know, too often women are not supported enough or are discouraged from choosing their path. I hope together we can change that. For me, it was a question of resilience. What others marked as flaws or disadvantages about myself – my race, my gender – I embraced as fuel for my success. I never let anything or anyone define me or my potential. I controlled my future.

[...]

As we know, women have to break down many barriers on the road to success. One of those barriers is the way we are constantly reminded we are not men, as if it is a flaw. People call me one of the “world’s greatest female athletes”. Do they say LeBron is one of the world’s best male athletes? Is Tiger? Federer? Why not? They are certainly not female. We should never let this go unchallenged. We should always be judged by our achievements, not by our gender.



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#SharedReading

from **Hilary Clinton**  
in her 2016 concession speech

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

To all the little girls who are watching, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and achieve your own dreams.



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#SharedReading

# Phenomenal Woman

by Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.  
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size  
But when I start to tell them,  
They think I'm telling lies.

I say,  
It's in the reach of my arms  
The span of my hips,  
The stride of my step,  
The curl of my lips.  
I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.



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I walk into a room  
Just as cool as you please,  
And to a man,  
The fellows stand or  
Fall down on their knees.  
Then they swarm around me,  
A hive of honey bees.

I say,  
It's the fire in my eyes,  
And the flash of my teeth,  
The swing in my waist,  
And the joy in my feet.  
I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
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#SharedReading

# Phenomenal Woman

by Maya Angelou

Now you understand  
Just why my head's not bowed.  
I don't shout or jump about  
Or have to talk real loud.  
When you see me passing  
It ought to make you proud.  
I say,  
It's in the click of my heels,  
The bend of my hair,  
the palm of my hand,  
The need of my care,  
'Cause I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

from the novel **Swing Time**

By Zadie Smith

‘for any daughter of hers was to do more than just survive – as my mother had – she was to thrive, learning many unnecessary skills, like tap dancing.’

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2018



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#SharedReading

from **A Room of One's Own**  
By Virginia Woolf

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working classes. Now and again an Emily Brontë or a Robert Burns blazes out and proves its presence. But certainly it never got itself on to paper. When, however, one reads of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, of some mute and inglorious Jane Austen, some Emily Brontë who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to. Indeed, I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman. It was a woman Edward Fitzgerald, I think, suggested who made the ballads and the folk songs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter's night.



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# Resumé

by Emmeline Pankhurst

Razors pain you;  
Rivers are damp;  
Acids stain you;  
And drugs cause cramp.  
Guns aren't lawful;  
Nooses give;  
Gas smells awful;  
You might as well live.

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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from **The Cushion in the Road** (2013)

By Alice Walker

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Poetry is the lifeblood of rebellion, revolution and the raising of consciousness.



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#SharedReading

## Still I Rise

by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may tread me in the very dirt,  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.  
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own back yard.

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

## Still I Rise

by Maya Angelou

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

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LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

**Now**  
by Audre Lorde

Woman power  
is  
Black power  
is  
Human power  
is  
always feeling  
my heart beats  
as my eyes open  
as my hands move  
as my mouth speaks

I am  
are you

Ready.

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018



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#SharedReading

from **Jeanette Winterson**  
in an interview given in 1994

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

Art can make a difference, because it pulls people up short. It says, don't accept things for their face value; you don't have to go along with any of this; you can think for yourself. It gives you a kind of self-reliance. We all feel powerless and we can't really manage to do anything because there's just so much. I want to try and cut through those feelings of apathy and powerlessness and be a kind of rallying point, offer a rallying cry, to people who would otherwise feel dispossessed.



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from **In Search of Our Mother's Gardens**  
By Alice Walker

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow and be perceived as fully blossomed as you were intended. Or who belittles in any fashion the gifts you labor so to bring into the world. That is why historians are generally enemies of women, certainly of blacks, and so are, all too often, the very people we must sit under in order to learn.



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from **Marie Curie**  
in a letter to her brother, written in 1894

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves. We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained.



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from **I Love Dick**  
By Chris Kraus

**LIGHTNIGHT**  
LIVERPOOL  
2018

I'm moved in writing to be irrepressible [...] I think the sheer fact of women talking, being paradoxical, inexplicable, flip, self-destructive but above all else *public* is the most revolutionary thing in the world.



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from **Beloved**  
By Toni Morrison

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2018

“She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order.”



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from **Enheduanna** (the world's earliest known poet)

"Funeral offerings were brought, as if I had never lived there.  
I approached the light, but the light scorched me  
I approached the shade, but I was covered with a storm.  
My honeyed mouth became scummed. Tell An about Lugal-Ane and my fate!  
May An undo it for me! As soon as you tell An about it, An will release me."

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from **Anais Nin**

Last night I wept. I wept because the process by which I have become a woman was painful. I wept because I was no longer a child with a child's blind faith. I wept because my eyes were opened to reality ... I wept because I could not believe anymore and I love to believe. I can still love passionately without believing. That means I love humanly. I wept because from now on I will weep less. I wept because I have lost my pain and I am not yet accustomed to its absence.

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from the novel **Kitchen**  
By Banana Yoshimoto

As I grow older, much older, I will experience many things, and I will hit rock bottom. Again and again I will suffer; again and again I will get back on my feet. I will not be defeated. I won't let my spirit be destroyed.

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from **Moominsummer Madness**  
By Tove Jansson

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There's no need to imagine that you're a wondrous beauty, because that's what you are.



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# from **Men Explain Things to Me**

By Rebecca Solnit

Some women get erased a little at a time, some all at once. Some reappear. Every woman who appears wrestles with the forces that would have her disappear. She struggles with the forces that would tell her story for her, or write her out of the story, the genealogy, the rights of man, the rule of law. The ability to tell your own story, in words or images, is already a victory, already a revolt.

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from **Ruth Gordon**

Courage is like a muscle; it is strengthened by use.

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from **Alice Walker**

The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any.

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from **Rosa Parks**

I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear; knowing what must be done does away with fear.

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from **Songs Out of Sorrow**, part 2, 'Mastery'  
by Sara Teasdale

I would not have a god come in  
To shield me suddenly from sin,  
And set my house of life to rights;  
Nor angels with bright burning wings  
Ordering my earthly thoughts and things;  
Rather my own frail guttering lights  
Wind blown and nearly beaten out;  
Rather the terror of the nights  
And long, sick groping after doubt;  
Rather be lost than let my soul  
Slip vaguely from my own control --  
Of my own spirit let me be  
In sole though feeble mastery.



from **Little Women**, chapter 44

By Louisa May Alcott

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[on being recently married to Laurie]

Amy - "I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship."

[...]

"What are you going to do with yourselves after you get settled?" asked Jo, buttoning Amy's cloak as she used to button her pinafores.

"We have our plans. We don't mean to say much about them yet, because we are such very new brooms, but we don't intend to be idle. I'm going into business with a devotion that shall delight Grandfather, and prove to him that I'm not spoiled. I need something of the sort to keep me steady. I'm tired of dawdling, and mean to work like a man."

"And Amy, what is she going to do?" asked Mrs March, well pleased at Laurie's decision and the energy with which he spoke.



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from **Little Women**, chapter 44

By Louisa May Alcott

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"After doing the civil all round, and airing our best bonnet, we shall astonish you by the elegant hospitalities of our mansion, the brilliant society we shall draw about us, and the beneficial influence we shall exert over the world at large. That's about it, isn't it, Madame Recamier?" asked Laurie with a quizzical look at Amy.

"Time will show. Come away, Impertinence, and don't shock my family by calling me names before their faces," answered Amy, resolving that there should be a home with a good wife in it before she set up a salon as a queen of society.



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from **Alison Bechdel** (cartoonist)  
in an interview with Jan Sorensen in 2013

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[on publishing her comic strip without her mother's approval]

It certainly was an important moment for me, that realization that I was not going to get what I wanted. It was very freeing. I keep using that word "freeing" or "liberating." I feel like Houdini sometimes, like I'm just getting out of one set of shackles after another, hanging upside down inside a burlap bag with handcuffs on. Hopefully one day, I'm going to get out of this tank of water.



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## **My Mother's Kitchen** by Choman Hardi

I will inherit my mother's kitchen,  
her glasses, some tall and lean others short and fat  
her plates, an ugly collection from various sets,  
cups bought in a rush on different occasions  
rusty pots she doesn't throw away.  
“Don't buy anything just yet”, she says,  
“soon all of this will be yours”.

My mother is planning another escape  
for the first time home is her destination,  
the rebuilt house which she will furnish.  
At 69 she is excited about starting from a scratch.  
It is her ninth time.



## My Mother's Kitchen by Choman Hardi

She never talks about her lost furniture  
when she kept leaving her homes behind.  
She never feels regret for things  
only her vine in the front garden  
which spread over the trellis on the porch.  
She used to sing for the grapes to ripen,  
sew cotton bags to protect them from the bees.  
I will never inherit my mother's trees.

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from **Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race**  
by Reni Eddo Lodge

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Feminism is not about equality, and certainly not about silently slipping into a world of work created by and for men. Feminism, at its best, is a movement that works to liberate all people who have been economically, socially and culturally marginalized by an ideological system that has been designed for them to fail.



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from **Wars I Have Seen** (1945)  
by Gertrude Stein

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It is funny that men who are supposed to be scientific cannot get themselves to realise the basic principle of physics, that action and reaction are equal and opposite, that when you persecute people you always rouse them to be strong and stronger.



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from **Middlemarch**  
by George Eliot

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But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.



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from the novel **Girl Meets Boy**  
by Ali Smith

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She had the swagger of a girl. She blushed like a boy. She had a girl's toughness. She has a boy's gentleness. She was as meaty as a girl. She was as graceful as a boy. She was as brave and handsome and rough as a girl. She was as pretty and delicate and dainty as a boy. She turned boys' heads like a girl. She turned girls' heads like a boy. She made love like a boy. She made love like a girl. She was so boyish it was girlish, so girlish it was boyish, she made me want to rove the world writing our names on every tree. I had simply never found someone so right. Sometimes this shocked me so much that I was unable to speak.



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# Her

by Jackie Kay

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I had been told about her.  
How she would always, always.  
How she would never, never.  
I'd watched and listened  
but I still fell for her,  
how she always, always.  
How she never, never.

In the small brave night,  
her lips, butterfly moments.  
I tried to catch her and she laughed  
a loud laugh that cracked me in two,  
but then I had been told about her,  
how she would always, always.  
How she would never, never.

We two listened to the wind.  
We two galloped a pace.  
We two, up and away, away, away.  
And now she's gone,  
like she said she would go.  
But then I had been told about her –  
how she would always, always.



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from **Are Women Human? Astute and Witty Essays on the Role of Women in Society**  
by Dorothy L. Sayers

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A man once asked me ... how I managed in my books to write such natural conversation between men when they were by themselves. Was I, by any chance, a member of a large, mixed family with a lot of male friends? I replied that, on the contrary, I was an only child and had practically never seen or spoken to any men of my own age till I was about twenty-five. "Well," said the man, "I shouldn't have expected a woman (meaning me) to have been able to make it so convincing." I replied that I had coped with this difficult problem by making my men talk, as far as possible, like ordinary human beings. This aspect of the matter seemed to surprise the other speaker; he said no more, but took it away to chew it over. One of these days it may quite likely occur to him that women, as well as men, when left to themselves, talk very much like human beings also.



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from **bell hooks**

When anyone thinks a woman who serves “gives ‘cause that’s what mothers or real women do,” they deny her full humanity and thus fail to see the generosity inherent in her acts.

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from **Arundhati Roy**  
in a lecture given in acceptance of the Sydney Peace Prize

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I must accept [the Sydney Peace Prize] as a literary prize that honours a writer for her writing, because contrary to the many virtues that are falsely attributed to me, I'm not an activist, nor the leader of any mass movement, and I'm certainly not the 'voice of the voiceless'. (We know of course there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.) I am a writer who cannot claim to represent anybody but herself.

[...]

On Peace:

The real tragedy is that most people in the world are trapped between the horror of a putative peace and the terror of war. Those are the two sheer cliffs we're hemmed in by. The question is: How do we climb out of this crevasse? For those who are materially well-off, but morally uncomfortable, the first question you must ask yourself is do you really want to climb out of it? How far are you prepared to go? Has the crevasse become too comfortable?



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from **Arundhati Roy**  
in a lecture given in acceptance of the Sydney Peace Prize

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If you really want to climb out, there's good news and bad news. The good news is that the advance party began the climb some time ago. They're already half way up. Thousands of activists across the world have been hard at work preparing footholds and securing the ropes to make it easier for the rest of us. There isn't only one path up. There are hundreds of ways of doing it. There are hundreds of battles being fought around the world that need your skills, your minds, your resources. No battle is irrelevant. No victory is too small. The bad news is that colourful demonstrations, weekend marches and annual trips to the World Social Forum are not enough. There have to be targeted acts of real civil disobedience with real consequences.



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from **To My Trans Sisters: an anthology of letters written by trans women**  
by Laverne Cox

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We are not what other people say we are. We are who we know ourselves to be, and we are what we love. That's okay.



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from **Audrey Hepburn**

As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others.

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from **Eleanor Roosevelt**

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

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from **Simone de Beauvoir**

The Point is not for women simply to take power out of men's hands, since that wouldn't change anything about the world. It's a question precisely of destroying that notion of power.

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from **Erin McKean** (lexicographer)

You don't have to be pretty. You don't owe prettiness to anyone. Not to your boyfriend/spouse/partner, not to your co-workers, especially not to random men on the street. You don't owe it to your mother, you don't owe it to your children, you don't owe it to civilization in general. Prettiness is not a rent you pay for occupying a space marked 'female'.

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from **Anthony and Cleopatra**  
(Act II, Scene ii)  
by William Shakespeare

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Enobarbus describes Queen Cleopatra:

The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne,  
Burned on the water: the poop was beaten gold;  
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that  
The winds were lovesick with them; the oars were silver,  
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made  
The water which they beat to follow faster,  
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,

It beggar'd all description: she did lie  
In her pavilion, cloth-of-gold of tissue,  
O'er picturing that Venus where we see  
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her  
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,  
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem  
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,  
And what they undid did.



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from **Wide Sargasso Sea**

by Jean Rhys

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I took the red dress down and put it against myself. 'Does it make me to look intemperate and unchaste?' I said. That man told me so. He had found out that Sandi had been to the house and that I went to see him. I never knew who told. 'Infamous daughter of an infamous mother' he said to me.

'Oh put it away,' Grace Poole said, 'come and eat your food. Here's your grey wrapper. Why they can't give you anything better is more than I can understand. They're rich enough.'...But I looked at the dress on the floor and it was as if the fire had spread across the room. It was beautiful and it reminded me of something I must do. I will remember I thought. I will remember quite soon now.



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from **Yoko Ono**

I think that all women are witches, in the sense that a witch is a magical being. And a wizard, which is a male version of a witch, is kind of revered, and people respect wizards. But a witch, my god, we have to burn them. It's the male chauvinistic society that we're living in for the longest time, 3,000 years or whatever. And so I just wanted to point out the fact that men and women are magical beings. We are very blessed that way, so I'm just bringing that out. Don't be scared of witches, because we are good witches, and you should appreciate our magical power.

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from the novel ***The Bricks that Built the Houses***  
by Kate Tempest

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“She flicks her words like lit matches. They drop delicately, burning.”



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from **Anna Quindlen**, writer of *Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake*

After all those years as a woman hearing 'not thin enough, not pretty enough, not this enough, not that enough,' almost overnight I woke up one morning and thought, I AM ENOUGH.

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from **The Princess Diarist**  
by Carrie Fisher

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Do not let what you think they think of you make you stop and question everything you are.



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from **Women and Economics** (1898)

by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

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Quote 1: In our steady insistence on proclaiming sex-distinction we have grown to consider most human attributes as masculine attributes, for the simple reason that they were allowed for men and forbidden to women.

Quote 2: What we do modifies us more than what is done to us.



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from **The Sisters**  
by Judith Wright

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In the vine-shadows on the veranda;  
under the yellow leaves, in the cooling sun,  
sit two sisters. Their slow voices run  
like little winter creeks, dwindled by frost and wind,  
and the square of sunlight moves on the veranda.

They remember the gay young men on their tall horses  
who came courting; the dancing and the smells of leather  
and wine, the girls whispering by the fire together;  
even their dolls and ponies, all they have left behind  
moves in the yellow shadows on the veranda.



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from **The Sisters**  
by Judith Wright

Thinking of their lives apart and the men they married  
thinking of the marriage-bed and the birth of their first child,  
they look down smiling. "My life was wide and wild,  
and who can know my heart? There in that golden jungle  
I walk alone," say the old sisters on the veranda.

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from ***This Bridge Called My Back, Fourth Edition: Writings by Radical Women of Colour***  
by Cherrie Moraga

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Our strategy is how we cope—how we measure and weigh what is to be said and when, what is to be done and how, and to whom, daily deciding/risking who it is we can call an ally, call a friend (whatever that person's skin, sex, or sexuality). We are women without a line. We are women who contradict each other.



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from **Won't You Celebrate With Me**  
by Lucille Clifton

won't you celebrate with me  
what i have shaped into  
a kind of life? i had no model.  
born in babylon  
both nonwhite and woman  
what did i see to be except myself?  
i made it up  
here on this bridge between  
starshine and clay,  
my one hand holding tight  
my one hand; come celebrate  
with me that everyday  
something has tried to kill me  
and has failed.

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