

No Fire Can Ever Warm Me

by [Paul Illidge](#) (July 2024)



Fire Source, Paul Klee

I

Paul Engle in a *New York Times* article:

Poetry is ordinary language
raised to the Nth power.

Poetry is boned with ideas, nerved
and blooded with emotions,
all held together by the delicate,
tough skin of words.

II

George Sand in her book *The Devil's Pool*:
She who draws noble delights
from sentiments deeply personal
is a true poet, though she has never
written a line in all her life.

III

Allen Ginsberg in *Ginsberg: A Biography*:
Poetry is not an expression of the party line.
It's that time of night, lying in bed,
thinking what you really think,
making the private world public,
that's what the poet does.

IV

Robert Graves, *Horizon Magazine*:
To be a poet is a condition, not a profession.

V

Thomas Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy*:
Poetry is emotion put into measure.
The emotion must come by nature,
but the measure must be acquired by art.

VI

Carl Sandburg, *Atlantic Magazine*:
Poetry is the journal of the sea animal
living on land, wanting to fly in the air.
Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot
at the barriers of the unknown
and the unknowable.

Poetry is a phantom script telling
how rainbows are made,
and why they go away.

VII

John Keats, *On Axioms and the Surprise of Poetry*:
Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and
not by singularity—it should strike the reader
as a wording of his own highest thoughts,
and appear almost a remembrance.

VIII

Percy Bysshe Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry*:
Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden
beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects
be as if they were not familiar.

IX

T. S. Eliot, in the essay *Dante*:
It is a test of genuine poetry that it can
communicate before it is understood.

X

William Wordsworth, from *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*:
Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings:
it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.

XI

William Butler Yeats, from *PERAMICA SILENTIA LUNAE*:
We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric,
but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry.

XII

André Gide, from his *Journals*:

'Therefore' is a word the poet must not know.

XIII

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Poetic Principle*:

I would define ... the Poetry of words as the rhythmical creation of beauty.

XIV

Salvatore Quasimodo, *Selected Writings*:

Poetry ... is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal, but which the reader recognizes as his own.

XV

E. B. White, from *One Man's Meat*:

A poet dares be just so clear and no clearer. He unzips the veil

from beauty, but does not remove it.

A poet utterly clear is a trifle glaring.

XVI

Emily Dickinson, from *On Poetry*:

If I read a book and it makes

My whole body so cold

No fire can ever warm me,

I know that is poetry.

XVII

Wallace Stevens, from *Opus Posthumous*:

The poet is the priest of the invisible.

XVIII

Oscar Wilde, from *The Children of Poets*:
A poet can survive everything but a misprint.

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Paul Illidge's most recent book is the true crime financial thriller *RSKY BZNS* (New English Review Press, 2022), a "fascinating story" (Frank Abagnale, Jr., author of *Catch Me if You Can*), a "gripping and intricate read" (Conrad Black). His book *THE BLEAKS* (ECW Press), was a *Globe & Mail* Best Book of 2014. Books in his *Shakespeare Novels* series *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, are all available internationally at www.kobobooks.com

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