

# Two Poems

by [Martha Shelley](#) (May 2021)



*Three Women in the Garden*, Edvard Munch, 1926

*Found Under the Raspberries*

Things crawl over me,  
under me, drop into my hair,  
dangle from my glasses frames  
bring me to my knees  
down to the earth I'm weeding:  
something so small I can only name it  
by its eight-legged gait;  
something that curls into an armored ball;  
a long-legs picking its delicate way  
around a dying bee—still dangerous—  
stumbling in circles  
on a pile of moldering leaves.

Who'd hire a worker as slow as me  
to weed? To be so happy,  
distracted by every bug, every perfect  
minute thing in my small yard  
running through  
their brief lives and mine  
on this summer afternoon.

*The Ecstasy of the Banana Slug*  
(in response to Shakespeare's Sonnet 55)

Not sonnets nor the marble Taj Mahal  
can last until the universal night.  
The monuments we build to love must fall,  
our couplings brief, a meteoric flight.  
Insects and galaxies, all are in thrall  
to death, and each has its allotted time.  
The slug knows this. On dewy nights it crawls  
through leaf decay, leaving a trail of slime  
perfumed with pheromones to lure a mate.  
Each is both he and she. When they unite  
they form a yin and yang to penetrate,  
throbbing for hours in circular delight.

Seize then, and stretch the moment, hoping we can reach a gastropodal ecstasy.

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**Martha Shelley**, a native of New York's concrete jungles, now lives with her wife, Sylvia Allen, in Portland, OR, where they run a small urban farm. She is the author of four poetry collections, numerous essays and short stories, and a trilogy of historical fiction about the life of Jezebel, Queen of Israel. Her most recent work is available through [www.ebisupublications.com](http://www.ebisupublications.com).

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