

# Two Poems

**Peter Goldstein**

*Reading co-sponsored by Kvasir and Aghwick Poets and Writers*

## **Hemlock**

From dark roots, strong as the centuries,  
Slow as the slow hard thoughts of my brothers,  
I rise. You do not know me.  
At my feet the rhododendrons wrestle,  
Climbing in tangles, twined above the path  
That will not last; the playful maples  
Stretch their laughing fingers to my face,  
Age brushing ages; oaks, white and red,  
Lead the simple birches in their lessons,  
One, two, twig, bark, heart—  
And the sky lights the green, growing silence,  
The photosynthesis of purpose.

I have been ready all this time.  
In seed and needle, trunk and branch, I know  
A living Presence, a deeper radiance:  
Thickening in rings, swelling in sap,  
Gathering birds and wind and elements.  
So in these last moments, hear my history:  
From the first seed I have measured the sun,  
Drawn the light down to the utmost core,  
Released the shine to passionate hands,  
Scattered the shadows in the web of lives.  
And in the next bright moment I will shed the veil,  
And see, and breathe, and leap across the world.

## Poetry

I lined the Muses up against a wall  
And shot them dead. Erato's fading cries  
Were pleasing music, something like the lies  
Of lords and loves to keep themselves in thrall.  
And then I was reminded of the tall,  
Sleek, and handsome hero, the one with wise  
And gentle hands, whose rippling pools of eyes  
Expand in waves that could encompass all. . .

So anyway, the myths lay at my feet.  
Strapping each corpse to its appointed slab,  
I sliced the veins, extracted all that sweet  
Celestial ichor, made each sample sure  
In Pyrex tubes, then took them to the lab  
To calibrate depiction's dumb allure.