

Hey Chloe,

Don't feel bad about your valentine; I love it. You remember that I said I would like to meet Dua Lipa. I love Dua Lipa's music or anything Dua Lipa-related. I appreciate the Dua Lipa quote and message "trust yourself."

What interests me about the poem is the personification of horror and fearer. And how fearer and farer, and hearer and horror, and reader to rider switch roles by the end of the poem. There's a change of power dynamics as the poem continues. I see why you think the poem is about someone getting the courage to finally leave an abusive relationship. At the beginning of the poem, there's a dominant and influential voice telling someone about all the danger that exists in the world simply to frighten someone as well as, cause them to panic and make them submissive and doubt themselves. The first person speaking is trying to convince the other person into staying with them. I noticed that the other person is "you," in a way, W.H. Auden made the reader "you," he is addressing us directly by writing in 2nd person, which makes the poem more intimate and bring us closer as readers to the poet and material, which I appreciate.

It made me think about the beginning of the poem "O where are you going?" and how "you/rider" is being prevented from moving forward and from leaving the house for the moment. Eventually, "you/rider" leaves and continues on their path similar to pass/the pass/history. "You/rider" must leave everything behind them if they want to continue moving forward and leave. The first voice whom I'm going to assume is reader is only holding back and standing in "you/rider's" way. Reader isn't behaving kind, caring, or respectful toward "you/rider" because they keep manipulating and making them overthink and doubt themselves. There's an imbalance between both of them. One person can't have more or less power over the other person, especially if they're going to use it to their advantage, which will then negatively impact the other person, but "you/rider" finally gets the courage to leave. "As he left them there, as he left them there." Also, "you/rider" leaves behind not only one person but what appears to be many people and things.

After reading the poem a few times, it led me back to the use of "you." I see the poem through the lens of "you/us/people/the reader." Similar to what you were saying about a person finally getting the courage to leave fear, horror, doubt, and sadness behind them and finally change as well as moving forward and developing instead of remaining the same person they were before whether they were a good or bad person. Metaphorically, literally, or both, people have to stop being afraid of everything and be a little more optimistic and hopeful in general about what's happening in the world or their personal life. People can't always fear and avoid the unknown because stress and panic aren't healthy for the body or mind. It's like waiting for someone you never met. There has to be space for movement, and people must try to be more open. People also need to stop doubting themselves and instead take risks and lean into the unknown and leave behind the "house," which can be their mind or any other obstacle they impose on themselves or impediments others try to impose on them. Reading the poem made me reflect and think about where are you going and what are you leaving behind, and the idea of what must be left behind for good to continue moving forward. It's easier said than done, especially when people are used to specific things and people. People tend to gravitate to what's familiar to them.

I enjoyed reading the poem and checked out other poems by him, which I added to my reading list. I read "Another time" and "As I Walked Out One Evening."

I agree with you that the art of handwriting is lost. I also can't read my handwriting, and at times, people confused letters for other letters and words for other words. I have read some of Charles Bukowski's poetry as well as Franz Kafka's short stories, but I haven't fully immersed myself in their work which I would like to do. And yes, I appreciate how blunt Charles Bukowski is and how his writing isn't flowery. His writing is raw and very true to who he was as a person. My top five authors are Joan Didion, George Orwell, Virginia Woolf, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Emily Dickinson. Joan Didion's essay *On Self-Respect* is one of my favorite essays to read, and this is

one of the quotes from that essay “Character — the willingness to accept responsibility for one’s own life — is the source from which self-respect springs.”

“I think we are well advised to keep on nodding terms with the people we used to be, whether we find them attractive company or not. Otherwise they turn up unannounced and surprise us, come hammering on the mind’s door at 4 a.m. of a bad night and demand to know who deserted them, who betrayed them, who is going to make amends. We forget all too soon the things we thought we could never forget. We forget the loves and the betrayals alike, forget what we whispered and what we screamed, forget who we were.

[...]

It is a good idea, then, to keep in touch, and I suppose that keeping in touch is what notebooks are all about. And we are all on our own when it comes to keeping those lines open to ourselves: your notebook will never help me, nor mine you.”

- Joan Didion

“On Keeping a Notebook,” *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* (1968)

If you feel so inclined let me know what you think about Joan Didion. Also, what are your thoughts on keeping notebooks and journals? I would love to hear from you again. By the way, my favorite animated films are *Coco*, *The Little Prince*, and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. My favorite animated television series would have to be *Dragon Ball Z*, *The Powerful Girls*, *Total Drama Island*, *Static Shock*, and *Jackie Chan Adventures* because they remind me of my childhood. I will appreciate any recommendations, whether animated films or television series to watch.

Take Care and stay safe!

Best,

Cristina Merino