

Library Lines 2.0

By Anne Debraggio,
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Hello fellow readers! This week's column is by Chloe Ford, a senior at Smith College and a graduate of Clinton High School.

When Chloe was in high school, she wrote several of these columns for the library. We are delighted to have her make a return guest appearance.

January may begin, for many of us, with resolutions or intentions - ways to improve our lives, better ourselves, move closer to what we actually want. In order to arrive at, and then maintain, these resolutions, we must move through a process of self-examination and then frequent re-examination.

This means looking inward to find deep truths, learning how to articulate these truths, and checking back on a regular basis to determine whether we're actually honoring them.

I believe the most difficult stage of this process may be the first stage, just encouraging ourselves to look inward and come to terms with what we honestly believe and desire.

One of my favorite ways to engage in this introspection is through poetry. The following poetry collections encourage self-reflection and deep examination of our own inner landscapes and the complex landscapes around us.

Ocean Vuong's *Night Sky With Exit Wounds* deals with war, family, and loss. He explores what it means to be "othered," isolated both by his experience as an immigrant and as a gay man.

Vuong's language is precise and I was constantly struck by the grace with which he translates complicated feelings into language. He writes lines like, "I didn't know the cost / of entering a song--was to lose / your way back."

I believe we all know the

from a seed into a sprout. Vuong's poems have the ability to allow pieces of us to grow we did not even know we had buried.

Claudia Rankine's *Don't Let Me Be Lonely* is another beautiful collection. It explores illness, loneliness, death, and race.

Rankine writes an idea to its very core, and so makes her readers feel to their very core. She does not write around, but directly at and into.

This collection is difficult to read for all the right reasons. I had to put it down frequently in order to process, and each time I stepped away I was painfully aware of the privilege this stepping away required.

My last recommendation is Louise Glück's *Averno*. It is honest and frightening. Her language reaches deep to capture the distance of childhood, the mystery of a mother, the gradual and stinging march of time.

In this collection she passes through the seasons, each representing a different period in life. She is constantly aware of the past's engagement with the present, of the present's connection to the future.

She writes, "I lived in the present, which was / that part of the future you could see. / The past floated above my head, / like the sun and moon, visible but never reachable."

This is a book that requires us to think about the sweeping movement of our lives. It made me understand this movement - the shocking speed of it - as rooted, at once, in both heartbreak and joy.

Poetry can bring us closer to big questions or themes we sometimes - consciously or not - avoid, perhaps because the size of them scares us.

Each of the above collections encourages deep reflection, examination of themes both terrifying and beautiful.

Each is perfect to explore at