



Ars Poetica #100

By Elizabeth Alexander

Poetry, I tell my students,
is idiosyncratic. Poetry

is where we are ourselves
(though Sterling Brown said

“Every ‘I’ is a dramatic ‘I’”),
digging in the clam flats

for the shell that snaps,
emptying the proverbial pocketbook.

Poetry is what you find
in the dirt in the corner,

overhear on the bus, God
in the details, the only way

to get from here to there.
Poetry (and now my voice is rising)

is not all love, love, love,
and I’m sorry the dog died.

Poetry (here I hear myself loudest)
is the human voice,

and are we not of interest to each other?

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