

and refugee must address the systemic oppressions they encounter in their daily lives.

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JERI KROLL

What It Means After 80 Years

What do you think of
when you can't think?
What memories taunt
when you can't remember?

You recognize each physical ache
in that well-thumbed body.
Nerves almost welcome the pulse
like phone calls from friends.

Dependable pain swells the air.
You hear the thunder,
know what comes after.

But the past is a shooting star.
Is that an afterglow out in space
or did that planetary mist
always cloud the dome?

Better to stay home where the mind's propped up.
A photo, a lamp, a glass figurine—
flint against which you can light.
For minutes, the truth of a life gleams.

Relaxing as a holiday, this physical world.
You remember you should know
what it means.

This poem first appeared in Midday Horizon: First Choice of Australian Poets: 2 Sidney: Round Table Press, 1996

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