

Making it Beautiful

If you look around, there are plenty of ugly things ... but can you use words to make them beautiful? Try to create a list of things that are “ugly,” and then look for a poetic way to transform them. Sometimes, just by paying attention to something “ugly,” we begin to see what might be beautiful inside of it. Here is an example from a Cuban poet, Teresita Fernández.

Ugly Things (A Song)

Teresita Fernández, born 1930, Cuba

In an old worn-out basin
I planted violets for you
and down by the river
with an empty seashell
I found you a firefly.
In a broken bottle
I kept a seashell for you
and coiled over that rusty fence
the coral snake flowered
just for you.
Cockroach wing
carried to the ant hill:
that's how I want them to take me
to the cemetery when I die.
Garbage dump, garbage dump
where nobody wants to look
but if the moon comes out
your tin cans will shine.
If you put a bit of love
into ugly things
you'll see that your sadness
will begin to change color.

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