

JANUARY POEM OF THE MONTH

At the Time of My Birth, by Oliver De La Paz

is a picturesque poem that will get your year started with fresh child-like eyes. The sharp contrast between new life and the humdrum of what becomes of them is what drew me to this poem. The newborn uses a cacophony of words such as nerves, boiling, snapped and throbbed to describe these

strange and novel experience. A harsh reality they have unwillingly entered. The child states, "I kept/a fist in my mouth..." as if to indicate the need to have a familiar tactile feeling close by. The word 'kept' let's the reader know the fist is recognizable from initial birth and the 'fist' indicates the uncertainty and and jarring awareness that is settling into this 'strident' child. This unweildy feeling begins to dissipate as the child's world becomes smaller and smaller. From outdoor sounds of cars and unrelenting world to the sweeing feeling of being embraced, this child reminds us that when the noise outside becomes too much, we need to find a soft, natural space to breathe.



Caleb Young

AT THE TIME OF MY BIRTH
BY **OLIVER DE LA PAZ**

I wondered how long I could go on
once the rain had stopped. My nerves

were wedged like wings under a hat.
Corncobs bobbed in boiling water. I kept

a fist in my mouth. I was strident.
The neat house curved like a draining sink.

Hot cars shined outside. Their engines
snapped like a chamois. I never

wanted to leave. The streets were suet-thick.
The hucksters had tinny voices. They had

swollen drums. They had gravel underfoot
and tongues that could peel citrus.

Radios throbbed. The wet hush
of my breath flung itself to mother.

The soft dark skin. The sweet
curl of the arm. The hum.