



Sunday, February 15, 2026

In the Third Sleep; or, The Hermit Sage Relates the Quest as Told Him at His Lodge Near the Spring in the Forest by Sir Kay the Seneschal Returning Gaunt and Wounded Toward Camelot

by **A. F. Moritz**  
(after Kay Sage)

It was a long trudge  
the straight way perfectly  
straight with various dreamily  
winding traces  
streaking that flat pounded  
path of a material  
unknown to science he said  
snaky threads or veins or rills  
as if of fresh blood  
running before them  
but it couldn't be fresh  
it lay there so long  
no matter how far  
they trudged no source  
no wounded side  
of any animal  
appeared there were  
no animals no matter  
how long they trudged  
if it was blood it had  
to have dried up  
long ago they could  
have touched tasted  
if the maroon on their finger  
whorls was sticky like  
menses or dry as the old  
saying says as dust but they  
refrained they were  
afraid

    though it was in fact  
a long trudge they  
took on the straight  
way there wasn't much

"Kay Sage" by wererabbit

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1. Kay Sage    00:00 / 03:25

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**EKPHRASTIC POEMS CURATED BY PAUL VERMEERSCH**

From 2010 to 2014, I curated a blog where I invited poets to write ekphrastic poems responding to, and titled after, Arshile Gorky's 1944 abstract expressionist painting "They Will Take My Island." You can look at the project here:  
<https://theywilltakemyisland.blogspot.com>

Then, from 2015 to 2018, I did a similar thing challenging poets to take on J. M. W. Turner's Romantic painting "Sunrise with Sea Monsters." You can visit that project here:  
<https://sunrisewithseamonsters.blogspot.com>

Now, I'm inviting selected poets to respond to Kay Sage's 1944 surrealist painting "In The Third Sleep." The parameters are simple: the poem must be called "In The Third Sleep," and it must respond to, engage with, or build on some element of Kay Sage's painting, but it should not merely describe her painting. Beyond that, the poem can take any form.

"In the Third Sleep" is in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, and you can visit it online here:  
<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/53237/in-the-third-sleep>

Paul Vermeersch

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there they ever came to no  
coverts giants caves chapels and it's  
over now yet somehow  
remembering it they remember  
they don't remember it they  
never made it it's  
the it's yet to come  
it will still happen to them some  
day they saw then but now  
they were going to  
rest after it relieved having  
survived were going to  
pant silently so they slept and  
waked with me here maybe  
three times and then  
passed on they have  
come through as the  
poet said he told me and  
told me

there were  
sheets or sails there something  
at least collapsed clouds  
that fell and smothered  
the garden umbrellas a sea  
breeze suddenly folded  
and their daiquiris are  
inside there unreachable  
the nonexistent intestines  
of a school child's  
costume ghost we  
truly did survive it though  
he said we yet might not but  
never fear it feels beside  
this well that all will be  
well and all will be well and it was  
beautiful at least thank  
goodness for that beautiful truly  
there in the  
unmoving wind  
and light and dry so  
at least it proved  
the real  
existence  
of the three universals  
Thomas mentions and since  
we have to agree on that much  
the fourth is  
also proven  
unity  
but we saw  
nothing

at [February 15, 2026](#)



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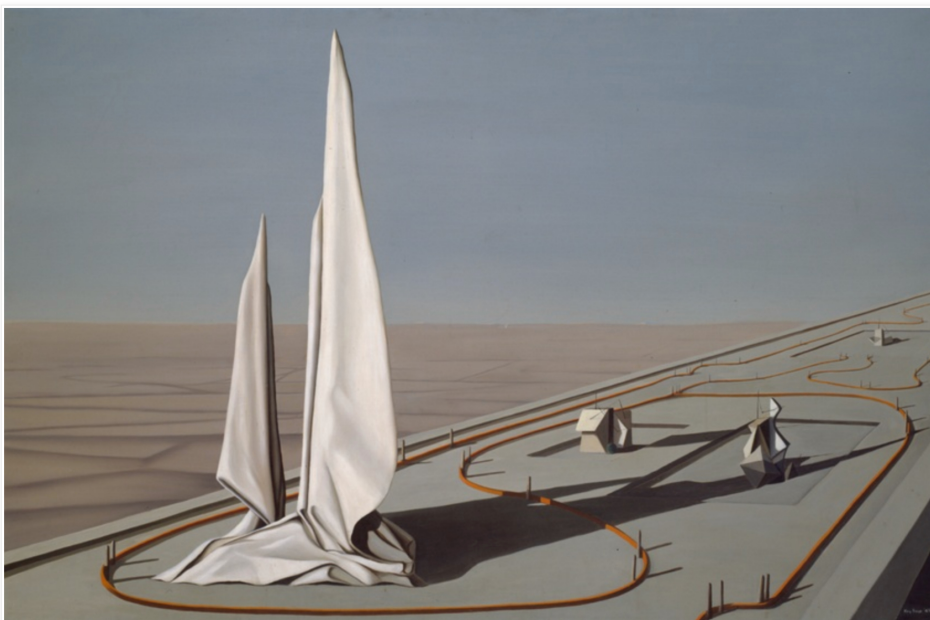
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"In the Third Sleep" by Kay Sage. 1944.

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