It's That Time of Year
Bob Cording

when everyone is taking off their clothes
on this first day of sunny seventy-five degrees
of Zen-weather, airing out, answering some instinct
for rapture that's been mothballed for months.
I'm talking in earnest about Milton,
but my class has long stopped listening to me.

Windows thrown open, my students
have become verbs, and the object they're seeking is
sitting right next to them, the jubilations of bare skin
like a paradise they've walked back into.
They just want to be happy as dogs rolling in the grass,
which is where they're headed as class ends.

How electric and irreversible
is the steady flow of energy right out the door!–
my students' idea of truth inseparable from the body
sprawled in the sun, hot to be part of the carnival
of every whistling bird, every seed-dropping flower
and tree, every fattening blade of grass.

"Find thyself a teacher," the Talmud says,
and today I choose my students
who have to be nowhere else but here,
each of them the center of one another's attention,
citizens in a democracy that truly welcomes
the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness.

So praise be to flip-flops, to discarded shirts
lying like drunks in the grass;
to amped-up dorms cranking out the healing touch
of Marley and the slow hand of Clapton;
and praise to these hours in which the solidarity
of the flesh defeats the worm of worry;

and to my teachers, relaxed masters, without thought
of past or future, who know how to welcome

this moment of pumped-up Chaucerian sparrows
singing their heads off from the ivy-covered
garden of a classroom building as they gather
their many separate desires into one flock.