

Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster

August 19, 2018

POETRY ON THE FARM

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and love and wings and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any-lifted from the no
of all nothing-human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

lee cummings

Words about poetry by poets Allen Ginsberg, Carl Sandberg, Rita Dove, T.S. Eliot, Vanna Bonta, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.):

Poetry is language at its most distilled and most powerful. It is an echo, asking a shadow to dance; it is plucking at the heartstrings and making music with them. The true poem rests between the words; it communicates before it is understood. There is not a particle of life which does not bear poetry within it. Poetry is nearer to vital truth than history; it is the journal of a sea animal living on land but wanting to fly in the air. Poetry is the priest of the invisible; it is truth in its Sunday clothes.

The poem you're looking for

The poem you're looking for
is witty. Full of unexpected twists
and turns. It ends, surprisingly,
on a profound note, but not
a sad one. A graceful allusion
to an elusive, small truth,
with a meaning more felt
than understood.

The poem you're looking for is vivid:
The words become pictures

so life-like you start to get
disoriented. You start to think
they're coming in through
Your eyes, not your ears.

The poem you're looking for says something
slightly different to each person
who hears it – in so doing it recognizes
their uniqueness. Strangely, it's just this
shared feeling of personal epiphany
that leaves everyone with the same warm sense
of belonging and togetherness.

It's a pretty good poem, but not so great
that you've heard it before. It stays
under the radar, and that makes it cool
and mildly subversive.

Subversive, but not political. This poem
doesn't have an agenda. It doesn't give
offense. It leaves you thinking
In a way slightly different from
the way you had been thinking
before you heard it. It's that little twist
that makes it magical.

Books are piling up around you.
Every poem you read opens a window
To a different place or time.
But the one you're looking for opens
A door to an undiscovered country.

You're starting to think
the poem you're looking for
doesn't exist. So now you're left
with a question: Is it time to stop
looking? Maybe just one more page.

` Larry Penner

Feeding On Stress

For breakfast, I order
my to do list poached,
covered with a sauce
of perfection, and

a side of deadlines.

Lunch comes with several choices:
do I want a salad tossed with
all the “unexpecteds” I can think of,
or a sandwich of “what ifs” pressed
between two pieces of toasted
“now you’ve done its”?

Then the day ends with dinner,
where the fish on my plate
reminds me I can swim in
doubt, and get caught on any
hook baited with anger,
irritation, or frustration.

There are so many foods connected
with stress. Earthbound carrots
living underground can be rudely
pulled up, peeled, and then steamed.

And potatoes, who give
the illusion of wholeness,
are easily smashed, and mashed
into a total breakdown.

What about a diet of calm,
custard with a silky coating of cream?
If only I had not heard that Holstein
with a bloated udder bellowing to be milked.

Maybe, I’ll just go on a fast.
` Ruth Ann Meyers Kulp

Lord of the Dance

Lord of the Dance I take your hand;
Guide me to that other land...
Where life is full and joy is free;
Don’t ever stop this dance with me.

Move with me to that silent song,
While angels dance among the throng,
of souls who in their freedom live.

Lord of the dance, I curtsy low,
Into the night we gently go.

Once again you take my hand,
And dance me on into that land.

We move as one where the colors run,
Against the canvas of the sun.
In the darkness there is light;
For distant stars do shimmer bright.

On and on and on we sway,
Without a care 'til break of day.
You pause to bow...
I wonder why...
You look at me-I feel shy.

I hear your heart which gently says,
I honor Me in You always.
My Dear One that is why I chose
to dance with you forever close.

-Deb Cone-Halsey

The Kite

My son loves it. He wishes, too,
That he were tall, trailing,
Into the blue of this morning.
Only, of course, he would want
To come back in time for lunch
And his nap.

The kite is my prayer, this morning,
For him. And yes---- for me.
That present joy will lend
A strength
When he is right for flight,
And naptimes are no more.

-Prem Dick

SATURN, SALAMANDER, SATURDAY

On Saturday I saw Saturn!
Yea...Saturn...the planet! with the RINGS!
Saturn looked so certain.
and then I saw nebula, super star clusters and galaxies that are like
70 Thousand Light Years Away...

a logic I can't wrap my mind in—out—through or—around.

Saturn...stars...up there...light years away,
THE VAST DARKNESS!

and me.

Then on a path by my feet I saw
a salamander.

A SALMON COLORED SALAMANDER

I picked her up, held her in my hand
she lifted her head like a regal queen
like a dinosaur ...(65 million years ago dinosaur)
then she turned her head
looking towards the tall grass
not anxious....
not in a hurry
I set her down
in her certainty

-Nancy Cridland Baum

From Children's Time:

Shel Silverstien:

INVITATION

If you are a dreamer, come in
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hope-er. a pray-er, a magic bean buyer...
If you're a pretender, come sit by the fire
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.
Come in!
Come in!

My skin is kind of sort of brownish pinkish yellowish white.
My eyes are greyish blueish green, but I'm told they look orange in the night.
My hair is reddish blondish brown, but its silver when its wet,
and all the colors I am inside have not been invented yet!

Alyce Jenkins:

Most days I do what nana does
We shop. We bake. We sweep.
Then nana reads aloud to me
Until I fall asleep.

Today my nana goes with me.
It's "Jammie Day" at school.
My nana's pjs are quite strange
While mine are very cool.

A pony visits school today.
I hop right on and ride.
When I get down my nana mounts
And slides right off the side!

We climb upon the trampoline.
“Look, Nana! It’s such fun!”
My nana takes a great big jump.
“Help! Catch her quick, someone!”

I bound into a pit of balls.
My nana springs in, too.
“Oh, Nana, are you there all right?
I cannot locate you!”

Next day my nana stays in bed.
Her jammies are just right.
I give her my old teddy bear.
Then kiss and say, “Sleep tight!”

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God is in the flowers
God is in the trees
God is in the butterflies
And the birds and bees

God is in the sunshine
God is in the storm
God is in the snow and frost
That makes us wrap up warm

God holds us when it’s bad
God is in what makes us happy
And in what helps us when we’re sad

God is everywhere we look
And everywhere we go
God is with us always
Because God loves us so

Scripture (Poetic Meanderings on)

A Fifth Gospel

What if Joseph
sat down with Jesus
when he was 15, told him
you’re getting too old for this,
and besides, the orders are piling up
and I need you in the shop—

*you'll have to quit
your dance lessons,
but Matthew opted not
to put it in his book?*

What if there was a Priscilla
who wrote in her journal
how she played the trombone
while Jesus strummed his guitar
and sang protest songs
about the Roman occupation,
but some scribe threw away her words,
said, *how can that be?*

What if Jesus himself
penned a poem
when he was twenty-nine
about how hard it was to always be
best man and never groom,
but some Pharisee burned the ode
said it was heresy?

And what if out in the wilderness
of temptation, after Satan crawled away,
Jesus jammed his easel in the sand
and painted camels
laden down with gold and myrrh,
plodding single file towards the Zion Gate,
(eye-of-needle size he made it look),
but Luke deemed it best
not to tell?

-Joseph Gascho

What Should we Do about that Moon?

A wine bottle fell from a wagon
And broke open in a field.
That night hundred beetles and all their cousins
Gathered
And did some serious binge drinking.
They even found some seed husks nearby
And began to play them like drums and whirl.
This made God very happy.
Then the 'night candle' rose into the sky
And one drunk creature, laying down his instrument
Said to his friend – for no apparent
Reason,
“What should we do about that moon?”

Seems to Hafiz
Most everyone has laid aside the music
Tackling such profoundly useless
Questions
-Hafiz (read by Malinda Clatterbuck)

Running
Through the streets
Screaming,
Throwing rocks through windows,
Using my own head to ring
Great bells,
Pulling out my hair,
Tearing off my clothes,
Tying everything I own
To a stick,
And setting in on
Fire.
What else can Hafiz do tonight
To celebrate the madness,
The joy,
Of seeing God
Everywhere!
-Hafiz (read by Malinda Clatterbuck)

Cicada Songs (for “Cicada Mania”)

They say your songs
portend the end of summer
just as chirping robins
usher in the spring air.

Listen to the sound
whirring, buzzing through
leaves of trees that shelter
the thrumming brood.

Insect monks chant
hymns of nature
for us and for
their silent females:

More musical than electric currents
that hum along power lines,
your symphony hovers,
guarding the sultry night like armored palatines.

Constant and pervasive,
we humans sometimes hear

sometimes ban your frequencies,
lulled to sleep by drums so dear.

Air conditioners and headphones
drown out your beautiful noise
but others sing with you
till Fall's frost steals these little joys.

- By David Granville (read by Jack Shope)

Whatever It Is

Whatever it is
it can change

Whatever has gotten buried so deep in you
it's become your blood
the only way you have ever known
the only way you have ever been

it can change.

Whatever turns in your chest like a heavy stone

whatever keeps you
clutching your heart
to try and stop the bleeding

whatever feels so
much bigger than you
you can never see its edges

it can bend
it can re-form itself into something new
it can change.

So bow to whatever it is as it is now
even as that breaks you

kiss it with every cell in you
sit down next to its fire
and let your fingers stain with ash.

Curse it too
curse it to survive
to vent the heat.

See the costs, see what's been lost
but don't weep for it

for every bird looking down at you can see
everything has its perfect timeline
like the line across your palm
its perfect arc for pain.

Sweet one:
your journey here
is like no other journey

and the gift waiting
for each of us
at the end
is the same.

– Tara Mohr (read by Ellen Kanagy)

Otherwise

I got out of bed
on two strong legs.
It might have been
otherwise. I ate
cereal, sweet
milk, ripe, flawless
peach. It might
have been otherwise.
I took the dog uphill
to the birch wood.
All morning I did
the work I love.
At noon I lay down
with my mate. It might
have been otherwise.
We ate dinner together
at a table with silver
candlesticks. It might
have been otherwise.
I slept in a bed
in a room with paintings
on the walls, and
planned another day
just like this day.
But one day, I know,
it will be otherwise.

by Jane Kenyon (chosen by Lois Martin, read by Levina Huber)

Let Go, Return

This is the need, the deep necessity of every life:
To scatter wide seed in many fields,
But build one barn.

This is our blunder, to have built
Gilt shacks for every seed,
And followed our sowing on fast anxious feet,
Desiring to grind the farthest grain.

Let go. Let go. Return
Heighten and straighten the barn's first beam.
Give shape and form. Discover the rat, the splintered stair.
Throw out the dry, gray corn.

Then may it be said of you:
Behold, he had done one thing well,
And he knows whereof he speaks, and he means what he has said,
And we may trust him.
This is sufficient for a life.

by Josephine Johnson (shared by Katy Heinzl at her Sending Blessing)

SHARING POEM:

I will not die an unlived life
I will not live in fear
of falling or catching fire.
I choose to inhabit my days,
to allow my living to open me,
to make me less afraid,
more accessible,
to loosen my heart
until it becomes a wing,
a torch, a promise.
I choose to risk my significance;
to live so that which came to me as seed
goes to the next as blossom
and that which came to me as blossom,
goes on as fruit.

Dawna Markova (read by Deb Napolitan)

BENEDICTION:

As timely as a river

As timely as a river
God's timeless life passes
Into this world. It passes
Through bodies, giving life,
And past them, giving death.
The secret fish leaps up
Into the light and is
Again darkened. The sun
Comes from the dark, it lights
The always passing river,
Shines on the great-branched tree,
And goes. Longing and dark,
We are completely filled
With breath of love, in us
Forever incomplete.

-by Wendell Berry (read by Deb Napolitan)

PRELUDE AND OFFERTORY LYRICS

Gold Dragonflies

By Jerry Lee Miller

Refrain: Gold dragonflies are following me x 2
Those gold dragonflies are following me
Everywhere I go

Sailing far above
The troubles of our land
On the wings of love
You Help us understand
Though Heavy is the load
& Dusty is the road
Life is ours today

REFRAIN

Anyone can choose
No matter what their views
(To) Take a little break
From the latest news
All anger to suspend
Sanity to mend
Life is ours today

REFRAIN

Turn your head around

No more looking down
Now's the time to savor
Beauty that you've found
Just stress a little less
Focus on the best
Life is ours today

When Did You Stop?

A Summer Dream

by Jerry Lee Miller

When did you stop/When did you stop
When did you stop dancing?
When did you stop /When did you stop
When did you stop singing?
When did you stop/When did you stop
When did you stop loving stories?
When did you stop/When did you stop
When did you stop seeking silence?

I fell into a summer dream
Dreamt you were with me by a mountain stream
The water is flowing
The breeze is so kind
Gentle thoughts filling up our mind.
Then everything stops
in this summer dream
and we all rise like the August steam.
We meet in the sky to form a cloud
Then I call your name out clear and loud.

"I remember you
You remember me
this is how it's always meant to be
I remember you/You remember me
This is who we're always meant to be."

When did you stop...don't stop!
When did you stop...don't stop!
When did you stop dancing?

When did you stop...don't stop!
When did you stop...don't stop!
When did you stop singing?

When did you stop...don't stop!
When did you stop...don't stop!
When did you stop loving stories?

When did you stop...don't stop!
When did you stop...don't stop!

When did you stop seeking silence?