

Poetry for Heart to Heart Day
Nov 19, 2022

Why Psalmody?

Two doves, back and forth,
chant: "Such is life, such is life",
making morning soft.

They only exist
for such sounds, sounds this hard world
needs to make it softer.

Choir-monks, back and forth,
In psalms recite dread, war, bliss,
insisting that this

sounds the truth of life.
It's enough for monks to live
for truth, truth that stays

as one by one they
depart unto truth, sounding
a kindlier life.

On Approaching My Eighty-First Birthday

Under the frosty stars I slept.
Stars' fallen tears froze, blanketing
my sleeping bag, adding insulation.

Orion risen boldly, stepped higher,
to say, I suspect:
"Pathetic is your counting years.
In my scale of time no more
than the flash of a meteorite.

Those numberless points of frost
covering your sleeping form
will melt in risen sun,
evaporate as your days
to vanish in the sky."

Time Passing

Wait as time passes.

Yes, *become* time passing by,
it's a sacrament.

You're not killing time.

Time is living in you, yes,
you're alive in time.

You are the one who is passing.

Staying Parked

I go out and park myself on a chair.

I stay parked.

I don't think I am meditating.

I wouldn't think at all if I could help it,
but mostly I can't.

But at least I'm parked.

I'm not helpless with staying parked. Best to stay parked,
better yet in a park facing hills, facing trees, facing a sunrise.

Let experts call this the practice of staying parked

—until Tierce bell rings and then

I unpark. The rest of the day is mostly
making the usual rounds.

Searching End of Night

I step out from early Mass, eager to go
into darkness dense with drizzle,
to watch within a nook
and search inscrutable night.

Falling rain shines in passing headlights,
diffuse globes drive through stands of trees
to be swallowed into the forest.
Darkness remains, shows nothing,
nothing but the darkness I came to probe,
yielding no promise of finding more,
any more than headlights find.

Onward I probe—on through sound spreads
of rain and rushing streambed,
etched by tap-tap in eaves and spouts.

Stayed beneath an overhang, I search.
This rain cannot remain,
dark will soften to pale grey,
will be gone before I ever find. Yet onward I search
sensing—as long as I search, I find.

Ridiculous Prayer

Forgive me Lord
for the ridiculous things I ask,
over and over for mercy,
as if you needed to be asked.
Here I am, well cushioned in mercy—
I keep asking anyway.

It's habit, done for me, for others,
keeps me awake,
from going to sleep,
something to stay connected.
You get it, right?

So, forgive me even for begging forgiveness,
best to keep quiet, just simple communion.
But that doesn't always work,
and work of sorts is what I need.
So, take this for what it's worth. You get it.

“Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me.”

Sleep Deficit

I must pay my debt to sleep,
pay on time or sleep will wrest
from me my mind and thrust
me into mindless time, imprisoned
until I pay my last penny to rest.

My debt to death I must pay,
pay on time to me unknown,
when at my door, open or closed,
Death claims mortgage
to the dogged Bank Mortis.

I wake to briefly knowing not
place or time, whether reclined right or left,
knowing pure, refreshing kindness
of knowing not, most fleeting shown,
as walls close in of where and when,
of difference and same,
of equal or not,

of life as distinct from death.
Is death alone debt, or depth of freedom
unconfined by place and time—
a boundless treasure of all for all
wherein nothing is mine?

7.

Focus Complete

Consciousness focused,
Whose consciousness, whose focus?
No more mine alone.

Pure, simple regard—
but who's regarding whom?
Sight immersed in sight.

Deep contemplation—
deep into what? Depths within
depths of vaster depths.

8,

To be Honest

Have I ever written a poem?
All my life—have I really written a poem?

The stars are silent.

When will I write a poem?

The silence is pregnant.
God waits.

All this time, have I not written a poem?

God implores:
“When will you but listen?”

9.