

## Jim Thompson's Spiritual Poetry Class #52

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

5 pm PT

Dear Friends:

It's been a busy week for me so I'm getting to this late again. Here are the poems for tonight:

- **Ars Poetica #100: I Believe** by Elizabeth Alexander. My answer to her question at the end is an emphatic "Yes!" What about you?
- **The Afterlife** by Louis Jenkins. Life as a movie, kind of...
- **Remember** by Joy Harjo. An incredibly beautiful poem by a First Nation poet. Perhaps a counterpoint to the first 3 lines of Mr. Jenkins' poem above.

Here's the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81374816274?pwd=eG1PRUxoWC9iTjFaTHFBNTBrNkIvQT09>

Passcode: **704824**

Note: This link and passcode are good for classes through July 28, 2021.

+ + Jim

## **Ars Poetica #100: I Believe**

—Elizabeth Alexander

Poetry, I tell my students,  
is idiosyncratic. Poetry

is where we are ourselves  
(though Sterling Brown said

“Every ‘I’ is a dramatic ‘I’”),  
digging in the clam flats

for the shell that snaps,  
emptying the proverbial pocketbook.

Poetry is what you find  
in the dirt in the corner,

overhear on the bus, God  
in the details, the only way

to get from here to there.  
Poetry (and now my voice is rising)

is not all love, love, love,  
and I’m sorry the dog died.

Poetry (here I hear myself loudest)  
is the human voice,

and are we not of interest to each other?

## The Afterlife

—Louis Jenkins

Older people are exiting this life as if it were a movie... "I didn't get it,"  
They are saying.

He says, "It didn't seem to have any plot."

"No," she says, "it seemed like things just kept coming at me. Most of the  
time I was confused...and there was way too much sex and violence."

"Violence anyway," he says.

"It was not much for character development either; most of the time  
people were either shouting or mumbling. Then just when someone started  
to make sense and I got interested, they died. Then a whole lot of new  
characters came along and I couldn't tell who was who."

"The whole thing lacked subtlety."

"Some of the scenery was nice."

"Yes."

They walk on in silence for a while. It is a summer night and they walk  
Slowly, stopping now and then, as if they had no particular place to go.  
They walk past a streetlamp where some insects are hurling themselves at  
the light, and then on down the block, fading into the darkness.

She says, "I was never happy with the way I looked."

"The lighting was bad and I was no good at dialogue," he says.

"I would have liked to have been a little taller," she says.

## Remember

—Joy Harjo

Remember the sky that you were born under,  
know each of the star's stories.

Remember the moon, know who she is.

Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the  
strongest point of time. Remember sundown  
and the giving away to night.

Remember your birth, how your mother struggled  
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of  
her life, and her mother's, and hers.

Remember your father. He is your life, also.

Remember the earth whose skin you are:  
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth  
brown earth, we are earth.

Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their  
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,  
listen to them. They are alive poems.

Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the  
origin of this universe.

Remember you are all people and all people  
are you.

Remember you are this universe and this  
universe is you.

Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.

Remember language comes from this.

Remember the dance language is, that life is.

Remember.