

Jim Thompson's Spiritual Poetry Class #54

Wednesday, May 12, 2021

5 pm PT

Poetry can break open locked chambers of possibility, restore numbed zones to feeling, recharge desire.

—Adrienne Rich

Dear Friends:

Let's break open some chambers of possibility today:

- **Small Boat** by Guarionex Delgado. "I lash the words together..."
- **The End** by Mark Strand. Let's just overlook the masculine pronoun, shall we?
- **Minor Miracle** by Marilyn Nelson. Maybe not so minor?

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

Small Boat

— Guarionex Delgado

Words stick to one another
desperate to float
across the sea of unconsciousness
A boat of words
over the great unknown
I lash the words together
so I may stand and watch
the billowing flatness
full of fantastic creatures
that resemble me as I resemble
sperm that swam in my mother's womb
Seeking a union that was destruction
and fulfillment of old forms
a human waiting to be
This raft, this boat of words
giving form and history to thoughts
and a sense of being
This temporary continuity that fools
me into believing that I am
separate from this sea
This holding together engenders pride
in my ability to exist as something
apart from this terrible sea
not a reason for being but a cup
to carry it in as I travel from one
land to another
I may remember why I am as I move
across this vast unknown
or plunge into its depths
a treasure waits as wet knowing
the sea pumps through my veins
a most passionate redness
blue it is, bluer than a sea
until mixed with sweet air
blood red when mixed with spirit

THE END

—Mark Strand

Not every man knows what he shall sing at the end,
Watching the pier as the ship sails away, or what it will seem like
When he's held by the sea's roar, motionless, there at the end,
Or what he shall hope for once it is clear that he'll never go back.

When the time has passed to prune the rose or caress the cat,
When the sunset torching the lawn and the full moon icing it down
No longer appear, not every man knows what he'll discover instead.
When the weight of the past leans against nothing, and the sky

Is no more than remembered light, and the stories of cirrus
And cumulus come to a close, and all the birds are suspended in flight,
Not every man knows what is waiting for him, or what he shall sing
When the ship he is on slips into darkness, there at the end.

Minor Miracle

—Marilyn Nelson

Which reminds me of another knock-on-wood memory. I was cycling with a male friend, through a small midwestern town. We came to a 4-way stop and stopped, chatting. As we started again, a rusty old pick-up truck, ignoring the stop sign, hurricaned past scant inches from our front wheels. My partner called, "Hey, that was a 4-way stop!" The truck driver, stringy blond hair a long fringe under his brand-name beer cap, looked back and yelled, "You fucking niggers!"

And sped off.

My friend and I looked at each other and shook our heads.

We remounted our bikes and headed out of town.

We were pedaling through a clear blue afternoon between two fields of almost-ripened wheat bordered by cornflowers and Queen Anne's lace when we heard an unmuffled motor, a honk-honking.

We stopped, closed ranks, made fists.

It was the same truck. It pulled over.

A tall, very much in shape young white guy slid out: greasy jeans, homemade finger tattoos, probably a Marine Corps boot-camp footlockerful of martial arts techniques.

"What did you say back there!" he shouted.

My friend said, "I said it was a 4-way stop.

You went through it."

"And what did I say?" the white guy asked.

"You said: 'You fucking niggers.'"

The afternoon froze.

"Well," said the white guy, shoving his hands into his pockets and pushing dirt around with the pointed toe of his boot, "I just want to say I'm sorry." He climbed back into his truck and drove away.