



A Few Inspirations from October Not Church 2018

Thank you to Doug Rye for hosting the October gathering on ZOOM, to Yella for her comments on words, Bene's meditation, Erin's talk, and to Keith and John for the inspiring poems posted below.

Thank you to all who joined us we look forward to seeing you all again on November 8th.

Before Winter by Kwame Dawes read by Keith Williamson

I imagine there is a place of deep rest—not in the resting but after,
when the body has forgotten the weight of fatigue or of its many

betrayals—how unfair that once I thought it clever to blame my body
for the wounds in me: the ankle bulbous and aching, the heaviness

in the thigh, and the fat, the encroachment of flesh. It is hard to believe
that there are those who do not know that it is possible to let things

go, to then see the expansion of flesh—it is so easy, and that knowing
is a pathology. What is unknown to me is the clear day of rest—

I carry a brain of crushed paper, everything unfolds as if by magic,
every spot of understanding is a miracle, I cannot take any credit

for the revelations, they come and go as easily as the wind.

You must know that this is a preamble to an epiphany I will record—

the late-morning light of October, the damp soiled back yard,
the verdant green lawn, the bright elegance of leaves strewn

over it all, turning nonchalantly in the wind, and the Nebraska sky
blue as a kind of watery ease, a comfort, it is all I can say, the kind

one knows, even standing there waiting for the dog to squat;
one that I will remember for years but will never have the language

to speak of—one of those precious insignificances that we collect
and hoard. The moment lasts ten breaths, and in that silence

I imagine that I can see spirits, I can know myself, and I will not fear
the betrayals of body and love and earth, and the machinations

of self-made emperors and pontificates. It will be winter soon. I know my body
is collecting water in its nether regions, the weight of the hibernating

mammal, storing everything in drowsy, slow-moving preservation.
I mean I am losing myself to the shelter we build to beat back

sorrow and the weight of our fears. I have covered thousands of miles
in a few days, and I feel my parts flaking off, a shedding of yellow

pieces covering the turning earth, and I am helpless to this soft
disappearing that some call sleep. I will stretch out and breathe.

Abyss by John Stadelmann

Free time is an abyss.

Life has changed.

A cat in a kennel

exploring a space getting smaller

and smaller.

Senses more sensitive,

awareness heightened

to the point of distress,

DEFCON 2 all the time.

Choices of what to do

are narrowing

as we head toward a sharp apex off in the distance.

We crave normalcy but the experience is too brief.

Not much of that commodity around these days.

So, we got up early to get flu shots,

an event as normal as you're likely to find these days.

Drove to the border, waited twenty minutes to cross...

Yea normalcy!

At the medical center, we parked in a space marked,

"Flu shots by appointment only, reserved space number 3."

A girl came out with needles in a red checkered paper tray,

as though we ordered burgers and fries and she on roller skates.

She verified we were us, swiped the spot with alcohol, and stuck it.

Then waited around to make sure we didn't keel over.

That was it. Ten minutes of normalcy. The highlight of our day.

Later, and home again under sheltering skies,

watching sun set on a horizon

rent by an incision along the coast.

An orange sun occluded by

a dark scar on the sky,

smoke and ash carried aloft on hot thermals

deposits itself

in our courtyard overnight.

Fire, and the palpable fear of fire
parallel the pandemic and our fear of death.

We struggle with the paradox of craving human contact,
yet avoiding contact at all costs,
maintaining social distance,
six feet might as well be a mile.

We see a neighbor walking by
on our icy blue security monitor.

We mask up and head toward the door
but they are gone like an apparition.

Our TV is on mostly these days,
assaulting our weakened immune systems,
spewing forth the daily barrage of chaos,
overbearing bluster, inuendo, threats.

The nation keeps track of daily deaths, deaths by country, deaths by state
and the grand total number of lies
told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

We are witnesses to gladiators, rabid challengers making history
on the sand floor of a Coliseum with empty bleachers
punching, kicking, assaulting life's most sensitive personal parts
with clear intent to maim, to emasculate.

How proud are we Americans?

So we seek peace and refuge
pressing the off buttons on myriad remotes,

looking for relief in free space, free time, reflection.

But our cycle of concern is on automatic start.

Our personal radar is scanning, warning, foreboding...

It's exhausting!