

frog M.U.S.I.C(!)... & Other Poems 0000 000

By Buff Bradley-W.H.I.T.M.A.N

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes... I find Whitman-Bradley consummately charming. It is so contenting, appealing and pleasing to rove and roam where Buff's words take us...drifting through his imagery. He is pleasantly pastorally winsome; subjects replete with substance, transforming talking-points into exquisite listening pleasures...certainly worth reaching out from...(To maintain poet's spacing each poem is on its own page.)*

Frog music

Despite their natural exuberance
And their unmatched vocal virtuosity
In performing the masterworks
Of the great Jurassic composers
The busking frogs in the inundated bog
Cease their performance
As I approach,
A thousand voices braking simultaneously
On the same dime,
Reminding me
That there is an immemorial music
Humming and thrumming
Through the biome
And audible to us as the calls of birds
The howls of wolves
The electric whine of cicadas
The countertenor descants
Of the frogs eyeing me now from the mud
And refusing to resume their oratorio
Until they are good and ready,
For they sing only to praise the life within them,
They do not sing for me.

Another memorable performance

Whenever I get out of a chair
These days
I pause for a moment or two
To acknowledge the attention
Of the inner audience
Waiting breathlessly
To see if my various joints
Will successfully execute
The complex maneuver
Necessary to take me
From sitting to standing
Without a catastrophic collapse
And when it becomes clear
That I have delivered
Another memorable performance
Then modestly I nod and wave
As I swan along the boulevards
To wild applause

Beside themselves

In the large ceanothus out front
Entirely covered with small purple blossoms
And redolent with a beguiling fragrance
Of distant lilacs
The bees are beside themselves
Unable to pause
For the merest instant
As they pub-hop from flower to flower
To drink themselves silly
On the season's finest draughts.
And watching their boozy frenzy
I can't help but wonder
What it will be like in the hive
When they return home tonight.
Will each one grab a partner
To mazurka and jig and fandango
With utter abandon
Into the wee hours
While their patient queen mother
Oversees the wild goings-on
Smiling to herself
That bees will be bees?
Or filled with flagons
Of the joy juice of spring
Will they sink into sweet stupor
And dream of the siren ceanothus
With all her lascivious wiles and delights
Beckoning them
To buzz on over to her place for a drink or two
First thing in the morning.

Listen

When I was a boy in Nebraska
The grownups used to say
On summer nights
That you could hear the corn grow.
I listened and listened
But all I could hear
Were the crickets and cicadas
Pleading under the stars
And the occasional *thunk*
Of a moth
Smacking into a window screen
In a desperate attempt to get to the glow
Inside the house.
And yet I told my own children
When they were little ones
That at night you could hear the grass grow
In the back yard
To which they responded
Oh, Daddy.
But I hoped they would listen.
I hoped they would hear with pleasure
The crickets and cicadas
And the poor, crashing moths.
I hoped they would imagine with pleasure
The faint rustlings of summer grasses
Growing taller in the moonlight.

In touch

I am hoping that whichever of us
Departs first
For the undiscovered country
Will have the presence of mind
To bring along a mobile phone.
Whether I'm the dead one
Or the living
What would I do if we couldn't discuss
All that we talk about every day –
What is being done about climate change?
Is there any progress toward reparations?
Who's really behind the coup attempt in XYZ?
Will the grandkids be spending the weekend?
Are there radishes yet at the market?
Did the dog eat the checkbook?
Unbearable, unacceptable, to think those conversations
Will ever come to an end.
So we should head to the mall right now
To purchase two very smart phones
Brainy enough to connect us to each other
Wherever in space and time we might be,
And then let's cross our hearts: No matter when
No matter how, no matter what
We'll always stay in touch.

THE POET SPEAKS...*I have been writing poems for nearly 60 years and continue to find myself most inspired by small, daily moments that encourage me to stop and pay deeper attention to what's going on. Sometimes those moments occur on walks out in the natural world, sometimes when I'm doing chores around the house, sometimes when I'm sitting quietly and thinking about nothing at all. As I age, I write more and more about the physical, mental, and emotional territory I am navigating. Using imagination to experience aging is a good way to surprise yourself. I have a million influences, probably every poet I've ever read. As I look at my bedside shelf right now, I see Jim Harrison's *After Ikkyu*, Ted Kooser's *Splitting an Order*, Naomi Shihab Nye's *Tiny Journalist*, and Tom Hennen's *Darkness Sticks to Everything*. If I could write like any of those poets, I'd be a happy guy. And I am a happy guy to be able to read their wonderful work.*

AUTHOR BIO: *Buff Whitman-Bradley's poems have appeared in many print and online journals. His new book is *At the Driveway Guitar Sale* from Main Street Rag Publishing. He podcasts poems on aging at thirdactpoems.podbean.com and lives in northern California with his wife, Cynthia.*

