

10 (Ten) Poems + 1 (One)

By Gerald Wilson

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: *Gerald Wilson is a sheer delight. He has blessed us with a synoptic anthology. Here is a simple editor, editing the lines he longs to quote: “Fondling my belly button I was shocked / I wasn’t still tied to mom.” “I didn’t know then while living among / Appearances I would sink to far” “the other eyes blinked as the third / eye saw” “knowing we suffer when // we bleach the dark out of life” “In no way does the table say / what it is / the word for it waits to be said” Okay, there are way too many. Wilson is “a decoder of clouds” The poet is wild and untamed. It is a singular formula for living reclusively and un-caged. Yes, I read the Bio’s. It may not be due to a longing for lack of company. It happens when your own mind is, and thoughts are, so enthralling everything else seems mundane and immaterial—or so I have heard. Gratefully, read on, Charles Pinch, the head of the Fleas, ‘The Lord of the Flies’ has something to say...*

Senior Editor Charles writes: *Gerald Wilson’s poems are the private and personal sutras (suttas) of a literary artist who lays himself bare and to read them is to stand on hallowed ground. Dharma’s river runs its blood through every tributary of feeling and with extraordinary plasticity words combine, words shapeshift to re-create the stillness at the centre of things, or, in Eliot’s words, ‘the still point in the turning world.’ Though much of it resembles ordinary speech, this quietly visionary poetry is in fact, closer to a structuralist like Horace or the late work of Robert Frost. The mysteries of Sein and Dasein rise imperceptibly to the surface and exquisitely crafted phonic swellings, sweetened here and there with discreet coloratura, hit the reader with a combustible charge. Everywhere language is sacred; everywhere introspection roars. Genius is a word we hesitate to use—even in the most deserving of cases—but we had no hesitation here. A unique reading experience that will stop the breath in your throat. Five stars.*

***Poetry editor's note:** The first six poems are from How It Hides, Jugdish Publishing, Sault Ste. Marie, ON, 2014. The remaining five are from Swirling in the Stream, by the same publisher, 2020. In order to keep poet's dedicated spacing, each poem is published on a separate page. HS*

HOW IT HIDES

Form is Emptiness

Emptiness is Form...The Heart Sutra

Fondling my belly button I was shocked
I wasn't still tied to mom.

to fill the void I wore a mask
a life without a core

a puppet I became who would learn
to stutter lies far from the truth

I didn't know then while living among
Appearances I would sink to far

from sight I couldn't hardly come back
feeling there must be something

missing I began the great search for
a glimpse of the shore that cannot

be reached, a woman's touch without

seeing what was behind her caress

all this seemed like pulp rot from
the centre of a dead tree, an emptiness

that swelled the hunger for something
true, an explanatory stay

the other eyes blinked as the third
eye saw the space of awareness

the subtle effulgence enflaming the world
the leaves from a tree, the waves

from a field, the hole from whole
when I read the words on paper

I sometimes saw in the page what made it
the logger's splinter, the earth, the rain

and sun, but usually I looked in
error through a skewed lens

through which I seemed

THE PEARL

The trouble with happiness
is the bottomless longing
that surfaces to drown me
without any warning
and goes before I know

it waves its hunger
in my face when I believe
something outside fills
the fathomless within
that seems to complete me

though happiness promises
the craving gives chase
to something that can turn
the unbroken to pieces

INTO THE DARKNESS

In the womb of night, in the abstruse mystery
a man walks the soaked streets
the darkness folds around his

white suit which he always wears
like a second shining skin into
which he might have been born

out of the mother dark
others would look out from
their lighted windows asking

themselves what human heart
would only want the dark
the ocean's inky depths

they who upon hearing the
creaking hinges of the door
would imagine what lurks

in the blackness meanwhile

the man will ascend the
stairs through the moonless air

up to his dingy room where
he will weep for the others
knowing we suffer when

we bleach the dark out of life
that it is good to be blind
for the light of day

allows us only to see so far

HISTORY OF POSSIBILITY

If you hadn't fallen for the note
of the sound *I am*

that was folded into the unbroken
field of flaming flowers

your smoky eye wouldn't
have made enclosures

of span, sphere
depth, shore and core

you wouldn't be trying to cling
to the wings of sparks
feeling unsatisfied

if your eye had remained unclouded
you would feel happily implanted

among the petals of blaze without
ever having the need to war

you could have loved

TABLE

In no way does the table say
what it is
the word for it waits to be said

to be seen as the tiny picture
in the back of your mind

the one coming from the someone
who first tells you what
the four legs are four

(not to be confused with the dog)

the one responsible for all tables
you have seen and stored

that makes you see the connection
between the word and the table

you are a decoder of clouds

the table itself is like a blooming
flower

EDITOR'S NOTE

Apparently our poet lost
one of his poems in space
between the top of his head
and the end of his pen
our gain in the relief
from his boring sadness
thanks to a universe
that has two ends
to the same stick
where are the poets of
old who told us how
we were happy

The following five poems are from Swirling in the Stream.

SITTING IN A CHAIR

(For Claire)

Sitting in a chair, I can't do anything else at the moment. I am the complete experience of sitting in it right now: I can't also be walking outside on the driveway at the same time. Compelled to select only those sensations and perceptions engaged in sitting in the chair, my brain is limited to this experience to avoid a sensuous blizzard of chaos and confusion. At the same time, I am making an idea of myself sitting here. As well, countless causes have led me here: all that has happened causes all that happens. Like the wind causing the waves to blow in one direction, then changing to blow in another, the cosmic gesture moves me to sit here. A wave on the ocean can no more change its flow on its own, then I can get up from this chair on my own without the support of the total universe. Where I go from here is not up to me.

THE DARK WAY

If a man wants to be sure of his road, he must close his eyes and walk in the dark. --St. John of the Cross

Spring's been overcast in rain and cold. The concealed sprouts still lie like the dead in their branches. We come from the dark and seem to go in the dark—where the mysteries are, where the ancients prayed in their caves, where the mystics turned their searchlights on to see their centers. Our somber longings reach for release. I am drawn to the moon, a child of the dark: star dark and star shine. But who among us are good at welcoming the sorrow into which we are plunged? The ills are frail bodies fall prey to? Do we shut down and shut out? Resisting, we are told, adds more misery. Better, they say, to walk through the night. Embrace it's bracing ache as a friend. At the end of the day, the darkness empties us of our bodies, of ourselves, so cleanly.

I AM WATER

When you landed in the sand at the bottom, stirring up a little cloud, you were on your back, looking up through the sunlit, shimmering water, something happened to your body. It disappeared for a moment. We just stared down in the spot we last saw you: the empty space below the wavering water, then you reappeared. Pulling you up to the boat, your dripping body glistened like you were covered in oil, we heard you say softly, "I am water. Let me go." You began to heave and fall into one long gathering wave, then splashed and disappeared below.

SAMANTHA SPEAKS
(FOR LISA AND HER FAMILY)

None can imagine your grief when I left. Best rest, knowing I am the infinite ocean. I was once one stream becoming flesh when I knocked and entered when you knew me as your daughter. Now the same atoms that made up my body are made of the same stuff as the stars. When you walk through the air, I am the shapeless space touching your face. My mind, the cosmic mind, as the one gesture whirling the streams. Listen to your hearts truth sing the mystery of the water's curling. I am held in the sea's memory of you and the earth. When you look at the sun, see me as love.

THE COMING OF LOVE
(FOR NEDA AND TIM)

Even now it happens again: the emergence of love beyond the romance of it. You wake in a place where the old shore slips away beneath your feet as if you are floating forward on wings. There, already in your heart sits the sea inching gently toward you. Stepping onto the new shore as if you are explorers of an unknown world. preparing to build your settlement out of all that matters in your lives, you are light, lyrical and wise.

THE POET SPEAKS: *The map is not the territory. The world is not the thing. From that perspective I am suspicious of the thinking, writing process: its limitations and contradictions. What I think about anything frequently doesn't match my actual experience. So what I say and I think is a sort of façade, a deception. So I hesitate to say much about the writing. Or if I do it's with a lot of caution because I know it has a falseness, a spin, a bias—plain, not the truth. This view in itself is a bias. So what is one to do? What is the truth anyway? Living and writing involves uncertainty, a mystery in which I live. I accept that and surrender to it. Enough said: let the poems speak for themselves. P.S. I write in longhand.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: Gerald Wilson was born in Sault Ste. Marie (ON) where he now resides. He has published two previous books of poetry.