

QUIET WORLD and other poems...

By Ted Millar

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: *Put on a flannel shirt and roll-up your sleeves and breeze through Millar's words: "Quiet Worlds:" 'The refrigerator isn't humming / like a Buddhist monk; ...' And now dress in formal attire. Next: "This" is as profound as anything Fleas' could possibly publish ... 'this is' not 'what I hid.'* "Agape" is one to tuck in your wallet or recall verbatim. "Cliché Convictions" Can one grow tired of being inspired? And "The Risen" reads like the ascendance, the rapture, after the tribulation, not in the least profane—secular jocularly, with a pinch of religiosity. These write like a laundry list of profundity, its rhythm, its rhyming. I love things that rhyme...(Spacing is poet's own.)HS

Quiet World

Another Central Hudson truck
just lumbered up the road,
the third since the power went out
sometime after we turned in.

The refrigerator isn't humming
like a Buddhist monk; the cats'
water fountain isn't gurgling
in the corner; the kids'
bedroom fans aren't wafting
white noise down the hall.

Once the sun rises, everyone
will be out in the road staring
up at the sky wondering
when we can get back to having
trouble hearing ourselves think.

This

Whatever it should have been,
this it is instead.

Whatever I should be thinking,
this is in my head.

Whatever I planned to do,
this is what I did.

Whatever you came to see,
this is what I hid.

Agape

Always remember:
God exists in everything.
Allow yourself the
Peace with which we were all born.
Everyone is kith and kin.

Cliche Conviction

If I've told you once, I've told you a thousands times,
it's the cover-up, not the crime.

Now I've got you dead to rights,
a deer in headlights,

grinning from ear to ear
as if you're in the clear,

flying under the radar.
I guess from the tree the apple doesn't fall far.

I always say, there's no place like home;
in your case, it's the "big house", where you're going

to which we'll throw away the key,
where you'll be fine and dandy,

sitting pretty.
What a pity.

When you see it's for the birds,
no doubt you'll eat your words

and start singing like a canary.
You could use a Hail Mary.

You win some, you lose some.
The harder they come,

the harder they fall.
I hope you have yourself a ball

alone making amends.
Remember to keep your friends

close, your enemies closer
and maybe in a few years you'll be a poster

child for parole
for all those in the hole

awaiting trial at The Hague
for not avoiding cliches like the plague.

The Risen

When it hits, some might survive.
They might consider themselves lucky.
But they won't want to be alive
in a radioactive dung heap.
It will be as if we pressed reset,
except no settings will remain,
only shame, anger, regret.
We'll have ourselves to blame.

If I'm among the quick
I'll consider it a sign
I was picked
by something inscrutable, divine
to preach to those who might listen
to songs prophets sang about who will be risen.

THE POET SPEAKS: *I was inspired to write "This" out of the constant frustration I feel over maintaining a life committed to high standards and optimism in direct conflict with often disappointing reality. The poem's parallelism is an attempt to suggest this. I remember writing it quickly, which happens occasionally despite mostly plugging away at poems for weeks before I arrive at satisfying drafts.*

My literary influences are varied but vital to my art. Poets like Emily Dickinson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Natasha Trethewey, Mary Oliver, Ted Kooser, Billy Collins, Sharon Olds, Wendell Berry, Yusef Komunyakaa, and so many other amazing contemporary poets are as inspiring to me as Thomas Paine. I also consume a lot of history and politics, so Thom Hartmann, Richard D. Wolff, Matt Taibbi, Chris Hedges, John Nichols are constantly on my reading list.

Poetry is important to me because it is my meditation on life. I don't seem to have much patience with prose, despite having composed some essays and publishing a flash fiction story this year. I require sustained, concentrated attention to every word, punctuation mark, syllable, and letter while at the same time leaving room for audiences to identify themselves. That poetry's beauty. It's how I attempt to make sense of this whole mess called life through which we find ourselves floundering.

BIO: *I teach English at Mahopac High School and composition at Dutchess Community College. I reside in New York's Hudson Valley with my wife and two children. My previous work has appeared in Valley Voices, Better Than Starbucks, Straight Forward Poetry, Reflecting Pool: Poets and the Creative Process (Codhill Press, 2018), Crossways, Caesura, Circle Show, The Broke Bohemian, The Voices Project, Third Wednesday, Tiny Poetry: Macropoetics, Scintilla, GFT Press, Inklette, The Grief*

Diaries, Cactus Heart, Aji, Wordpool Press, The Artistic Muse, Chronogram, Brickplight and Inkwell. *I was also among 65 poets to have work accepted for the 2018 Arts Mid-Hudson exhibit Artists Respond to Poetry.*