

Friends of Silence

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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”



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Dear Friends ~ October, at the heart of chilly autumn, is an intricate, nuanced, bittersweet time. The glory of shimmering trees, outrageous sunsets, invigorating winds, the scent of apples and rich mulch, the gratitude and joy of the harvest feast twines with oncoming darkness, falling leaves, the sense of letting go and passing on, the ephemeral nature of everything. Particularly now when so much in our world is changing, when the discipline of loss and grieving is a daily call, it is imperative to return again and again to the inner flame that burns on the hearth of belonging, to be warmed by something eternal and unchanging, the Creative Fire, the Original Presence. Poet Marie Howe, in

“Annunciation”, might have been describing such an experience when she wrote, “[I] swam in what shone at me / only able to endure it by being no one and so / specifically myself I thought I’d die / from being loved like that.”

We are on an edge between worlds, yet it is an inner landscape wildly contoured with deep wells, high peaks, mysterious caves, open fields, if we have the capacity to see it. We may feel the edge acutely, but we are filled by beauty and wonder, by everything always becoming. Knowing this in our bones is how we keep our balance, stay upright, and thrive.

This brings me to a word about the enclosed appeal letter and donation envelope. For more than three decades, the Friends of Silence Letter has been like a hand held out in edge times, offering something or someone to hold to: words of wisdom, a call to the Silence where we can open to Presence and the Source of Life, where we find ground. Please consider what this means to you and all that you love and take a moment to read the appeal.

We may be in a whirlwind of change, on an uncertain edge, but what amazement waits near. Indeed, “*The world is big and wide and wonderful and wicked, and our lives are murky, magnificent, malleable, and full of meaning. Oremus. Let us pray.*” (Padraig O’Tuama)

And so may you thrive. ~ Lindsay



Ripeness is
what falls away with ease.
Not only the heavy apple,
the pear,
but also the dried brown strands
of autumn iris from their core.

To let your body
love this world
that gave itself to your care

~ Jane Hirshfield, “Ripeness” in *THE OCTOBER PALACE*

in all of its ripeness,
with ease,
and will take itself from you
in equal ripeness and ease,
is also harvest.

And however sharply
you are tested —
this sorrow, that great love —
it too will leave on that clean knife.



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**May we embrace Creation as a whole and become attuned to all the world;
May we see Divinity in the within and the without of all things.
...Come into the Secret Room of our hearts and be our Guest.
Yes, as our hearts are awakened to your Presence within us,
we are led back to the Source of all life.**

~ Nan Merrill from her interpretation of “Psalm 106” in *PSALMS FOR PRAYING*

This is our modern curse: A century of conspicuous consumption has trained us to be dutiful citizens of the Republic of Not Enough, swearing allegiance to the marketable myth of scarcity, hoarding toilet paper for the apocalypse. Along the way, we have unlearned how to live wide-eyed with wonder at what Hermann Hesse called “the little joys” — those unpurchasable, unstorable emblems of aliveness that abound the moment we look up from our ledger of lack.

~ Maria Popova
in *THE MARGINALIAN* 8/6/23

“It would seem,” Höller later reflected, “that plants grow better in contact with positive human sensations.” But perhaps that’s no surprise either, that how we bear witness to what’s before us can hurt or nourish what’s before us. Our environments have always been soft to the touch, defined by how we translate them: mine or ours or simply here, the place where we happened to enjoy the outrageous luxury of remaining momentarily alive together.

~ Sumanth Prabhaker from “Wisterian” in *ORION Magazine*, Spring 2023

Look around you, love. Slowly. Do you notice this sunset? It's the only one you'll ever see. Tomorrow, you'll see another one when you come to this edge—but then it will be another sunset, incalculably different from the ones you've already seen. Such is the miracle and wonder of the world. Everything moves, nothing stays or congeals long enough to ever be fixed into being. Everything is caught in the trance of becoming.

~ Bayo Akomolafe in *THESE WILDS BEYOND OUR FENCES*



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Do you sometimes want to wake up to the singularity we once were?
 so compact nobody
 needed a bed, or food or money —
 nobody hiding in the school bathroom
 or home alone
 pulling open the drawer
 where the pills are kept.
 For every atom belonging to me as good
 Belongs to you. Remember?
 There was no Nature. No
 them. No tests
 to determine if the elephant
 grieves her calf or if
 the coral reef feels pain. Trashed
 oceans don't speak English or Farsi or French;
 would that we could wake up to what we were
 — when we were ocean and before that
 to when sky was earth, and animal was energy, and
 rock was
 liquid and stars were space and space was not
 at all — nothing
 before we came to believe humans were so important
 before this awful loneliness.
 Can molecules recall it?
 what once was? before anything happened?
 No I, no We, no one. No was
 No verb no noun
 only a tiny tiny dot brimming with
 is is is is is
 All everything home

~ Marie Howe, "Singularity" (after Stephen Hawking)

Think

how many long years

this tree waited as a seed

for an animal or bird or wind or rain

to maybe carry it to maybe the right spot

where again it waited months for seasons to change

until time and temperature were fine enough to coax it

to swell and burst its hard shell so it could send slender roots

to clutch at grains of soil and let tender shoots reach toward the sun

Think how many decades or centuries it thickened and climbed and grew

taller and deeper never knowing if it would find enough water or light

or when conditions would be right so it could keep on spreading leaves

adding blossoms and dancing

Next time

you see

a tree

think

how

much

hope

it holds

~ Padma Venkatraman, "Whenever You See a Tree" in *POETRY*, MARCH 2021

**Night,
 night of mine,
 night of the entire world,
 you have something inside you, round
 like a child
 about to be born, like
 a bursting
 seed,
 it is the miracle,
 it is the day.
 You are more beautiful
 because with your darker blood
 you feed the poppy being born,
 because you work with eyes closed
 so eyes can open,
 so water can sing,
 so our lives
 might resuscitate.**

~ Pablo Neruda, "Ode to Night" in *ALL THE ODES*



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**The way forward, the way between things,
 the way already walked before you,
 the path disappearing and re-appearing even
 as the ground gave way beneath you,
 the grief apparent only in the moment
 of forgetting, then the river, the mountain,
 the lifting song of the Sky Lark inviting
 you over the rain filled pass when your legs
 had given up....**

**...But your loss brought you here to walk
 under one name and one name only,
 and to find the guise under which all loss can live;
 other people
 seemed to know you even before you gave up
 being a shadow on the road and came into the
 light....
 pilgrim they called you again. Pilgrim.**

~ David Whyte, "Camino" in *PILGRIM*