

Friends of Silence

Vol. XXXVII, No. 3

March 2024

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

Dear Friends ~ Each day after morning kindergarten my mom sent me harrumphing to my childhood bedroom for a nap. The sun would shine through the tree outside my window, casting shadows on the peach hearts wallpapered around the room. Begrudgingly at first, I settled into the quiet space, but eventually the shimmying branches lulled me into stillness.

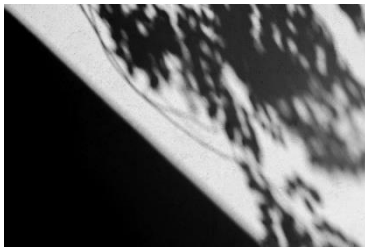
Above my dresser hung an embroidery piece—yellowed with age, and cross-stitched with pastel, looping letters like the ones in the old family Bible my mom kept in a box. I didn't know how to read very well, and the scrolling font made it a special challenge to puzzle out the stitched message. For many months I contemplated and daydreamed about what it might say, until the mysterious cipher revealed itself: a prayer for a resting child. “Now I lay me down to sleep...”



Young boy in repose

As an adult, I no longer resist quiet times. In fact, I long for solitude and space to counteract unending to-do lists; to balance out the type of hyper-productivity that dulls the senses. At times contemplation looks more like daydreaming: a quiet mind making room for the imagination to bring clarity and illumination. In silence, the jumbled-up pieces of life slowly take shape before our eyes and offer meaning we can carry with us.

Over the coming month, one season will shift into the next. May we all leave space to rest, daydream, and marvel at the newness as it unfolds. ~Joy



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You must have a room, or a certain hour or so a day, where you don't know what was in the newspapers that morning, you don't know who your friends are, you don't know what you owe anybody, you don't know what anybody owes to you. This is a place where you can simply experience and bring forth what you are and what you might be. This is the place of creative incubation. At first you may find that nothing happens there. But if you have a sacred place and use it, something eventually will happen.

~ Joseph Campbell in *THE POWER OF MYTH*

Though we do not wholly believe it yet, the interior life is a real life, and the intangible dreams of people have a tangible effect on the world.

~ James Baldwin in *NOBODY KNOWS MY NAME*

For me, imagination is synonymous with discovery. To imagine, to discover, to carry our bit of light to the living penumbra where all the infinite possibilities, forms, and numbers exist. I do not believe in creation but in discovery, and I don't believe in the seated artist but in the one who is walking the road. The imagination is a spiritual apparatus, a luminous explorer of the world it discovers. The imagination fixes and gives clear life to fragments of the invisible reality where [we are] stirring.

~ Federico Garcia Lorca from the article “Imagination, Inspiration, Evasion” in *Harpers Magazine*

I think often we get sidetracked around the public responsibility of the poet. We don't spend a lot of time talking about the private responsibility of the poet. Which maybe we should. Very recently, I had my thesis students start “required daydreaming.” They have to sit there and daydream. And they can't do anything else.

~ Meg Day from the article “Interview with Meg Day” in *Inscape Journal*

**May you grow still enough to hear
The trickling of water seeping
Into the ground, so that your soul may
Be softened and healed, and guided
In its flow.**

~ Brother David Steindl-Rast from “Winter Blessing” in *99 BLESSINGS*

**Can we talk about the moon
tonight? Low & full
in the baby-blue sky. A friend
at my door, the sound
of her laugh & well-loved
heart. I want to be held
up like that. I need a poem
about happiness I haven't
written yet, an ode
to the ducks in my neighbour's
pool, another for the pink
magnolias of spring—some trees
make it look so easy: Yes,
I can hold all this beauty up.**

~ Kyla Jamieson, “I Need A Poem”
in *BODY COUNT*



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It is a kind of love, is it not?
How the cup holds the tea,
How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,
How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes
Or toes. How soles of feet know
Where they're supposed to be.
I've been thinking about the patience
Of ordinary things, how clothes
Wait respectfully in closets
And soap dries quietly in the dish,
And towels drink the wet
From the skin of the back.
And the lovely repetition of stairs.
And what is more generous than a window?

~ Pat Schneider, "The Patience of Ordinary Things"
in *ANOTHER RIVER: NEW AND SELECTED POEMS*



Imagine what it would feel like, taste like, and smell like to believe you don't have to prove who you are by your accomplishments and labor...The culture we live under does not point you toward this deep truth. It instead has told you and reinforced the idea that you came into the world to be a machine, to accomplish, to labor, and to do. Nothing can be further from the truth and when you slowly begin to believe and understand your inherent worth, rest becomes possible in many ways.

~ Tricia Hersey in *REST IS RESISTANCE: A MANIFESTO*

We all – adults and children, writers and readers – have an obligation to daydream. We have an obligation to imagine. It is easy to pretend that nobody can change anything, that we are in a world in which society is huge and the individual is less than nothing: an atom in a wall, a grain of rice in a rice field. But the truth is, individuals change their world over and over, individuals make the future, and they do it by imagining that things can be different.

~ Neil Gaiman from the article "Why our future depends on libraries, reading and daydreaming"
in *The Guardian*

The multiplication of technologies in the name of efficiency is actually eradicating free time by making it possible to maximize the time and place for production and minimize the unstructured travel time in between... Too, the rhetoric of efficiency around these technologies suggests that what cannot be quantified cannot be valued—that that vast array of pleasures which fall into the category of doing nothing in particular, of woolgathering, cloud-gazing, wandering, window-shopping, are nothing but voids to be filled by something more definite, more production, or faster-paced... I like walking because it is slow, and I suspect that the mind, like the feet, works at about three miles an hour. If this is so, then modern life is moving faster than the speed of thought or thoughtfulness.

~ Rebecca Solnit in *WANDERLUST*

**Knowing how to be solitary
is central to the art
of loving.**

**When we can be alone,
we can be with others
without using them
as a means of escape.**

~ bell hooks, "knowing how to be solitary" in
ALL ABOUT LOVE: NEW VISIONS

**I go among the trees and sit still.
All my stirring becomes quiet
around me like circles on water.
My tasks lie in their places
where I left them, asleep like cattle.**

~ Wendell Berry from "I go among the trees and sit still"
in *SABBATHS*

