

DISCUSSION OF POEMS

We have come to the end of the readings from the Stone Reader. We are moving in new directions for our Tuesday sessions. To get started with these changes, we are recommending we pay some attention to poetry. David has selected poems that he feels are good follow-ups to our last session. He is also going to do an introduction to the idea of artistic expression.

We would like to also welcome any other poems that you may feel you want discussed at the seminar. If you have such a poem, either make copies and bring to the seminar or send them to us prior to the seminar so we can make copies.

We hope to generate interesting discussion from the poems at the seminar. We look forward to seeing you there. David and Aram

WE STARTED HOME, MY SON AND I

Jaan Kaplinski

Translated from the Estonian by Jaan Kaplinski with Sam Hamill and Riina Tamm

We started home, my son and I.
Twilight already. The young moon
stood in the western sky and beside it
a single star. I showed them to my son
and explained how the moon should be greeted
and that this star is the moon's servant.
As we neared home, he said
that the moon is far, as far
as that place where we went.
I told him the moon is much, much farther
and reckoned: if one were to walk
ten kilometers each day, it would take
almost a hundred years to reach the moon.
But this was not what he wanted to hear.
The road was already almost dry.
The river was spread on the marsh; ducks and other waterfowl
crowded the beginning of night. The snow's crust
crackled underfoot- it must
have been freezing again. All the houses' windows
were dark. Only in our kitchen
a light shone. Beside our chimney, the shining moon,
and beside the moon, a single star.

A JOURNEY
Edward Field

When he got up that morning everything was different:
He enjoyed the bright spring day
But he did not realize it exactly, he just enjoyed it.

And walking down the street to the railroad station
Past magnolia trees with dying flowers like old socks
It was a long time since he had breathed so simply.

Tears filled his eyes and it felt good
But he held them back
Because men didn't walk around crying in that town.

Waiting on the platform at the station
The fear came over him of something terrible about to happen:
The train was late and he recited the alphabet to keep hold.

And in its time it came screeching in
And as it went on making its usual stops,
People coming and going, telephone poles passing.

He hid his head behind a newspaper
No longer able to hold back the sobs and willed his eyes
To follow the rational weavings of the seat fabric.

He didn't do anything violent as he had imagined.
He cried for a long time, but when he finally quieted down
A place in him that had been closed like a fist was open.

And at the end of the ride he stood up and got off that train:
And through the streets and in all the places he lived later on
He walked, himself at last, a man among men,
With such radiance that everyone looked up and wondered.

JELALUDDIN RUMI

Translated by Coleman Barks and John Moyne

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
the world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase *each other*
doesn't make any sense.

MAXIMUS

D.H. Lawrence

God is older than the sun and moon
and the eye cannot behold him
nor voice describe him.

But a naked man, a stranger leaned on the gate
with his cloak over his arm, waiting to be asked in.
So I called him: Come in, if you will! –
He came in slowly, and sat down by the hearth.
I said to him: And what is your name? –
He looked at me without answer, but such a loveliness
entered me, I smiled to myself saying: He is God!
So he said: *Hermes!*

God is older than the sun and moon
and the eye cannot behold him
nor the voice describe him:
and still, this is the God Hermes, sitting by my hearth.

[Hermes: Hermes, Greek god, son of Zeus and the Pleiad Maia; often identified with the Roman Mercury and with Casmilus or Cadmilus, one of the Cabeiri. His name is probably derived from herma (see herm), the Greek word for a heap of stones, such as was used in the country to indicate boundaries]

KIKAU

Translated from the Japanese by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto

Above the boat,
bellies,
of wild geese.

ISSA

Translated from the Japanese by Lucien Stryk and Takashi Ikemoto

From the bough [large branch of a tree]
floating down river,
insect song

MUSIC OF SPHERES

Jean Follian

Translated from the French by Czeslaw Milosz and Robert Hass

He was walking a frozen road
in his pocket iron keys were jingling
and with his pointed shoe absent-mindedly
he kicked the cylinder
of an old can
which for a few seconds rolled its cold emptiness
wobbled for a while and stopped
under a sky studded with stars.

MOONLIGHT

From "The Merchant of Venice"
William Shakespeare

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sound of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness, and the night,
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

Sit, Jessica: look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims.
It's

HOW IT WAS

Czeslaw Milosz

Stalking a deer I wandered deep into the mountains and from there
I saw.

Or perhaps it was for some other reason that I rose above the setting sun.

Above the hills of blackwood and a slab of ocean and the steps of a
glacier, carmine-colored in the dusk.

I saw absence; the mighty power of counter-fulfillment; the penalty of a promise lost for ever.

If, in tepees of plywood, tire shreds and grimy sheet iron, ancient inhabitants of this land shook their
rattles, it was all in vain.

No eagle-creator circled in the air from which the thunderbolt of its glory had been cast out.

Protective spirits hid themselves in subterranean beds of bubbling ore, jolting the surface from time to
time so that the fabric of freeways was bursting asunder.

God the Father didn't walk about any longer tending the new shoots of a cedar, no longer did man hear
his rushing spirit.

His son did not know his sonship and turned his eyes away when passing by a neon cross flat as a movie
screen showing a striptease.

This time it was really the end of the Old and the New Testament.

No one implored, everyone picked up a nodule of agate or diorite to whisper in loneliness: I cannot live
any longer.

Bearded messengers in bead necklaces founded clandestine communes in imperial cities and in ports overseas.

But none of them announced the birth of a child-savior.

Soldiers from expeditions sent to punish nations would go disguised and masked to take part in forbidden rites, not looking for any hope.

They inhaled smoke soothing all memory and, rocking from side to side, shared with each other a word of nameless union.

Carved in black wood the Wheel of Eternal Return stood before the tents of wandering monastic orders.

And those who longed for the Kingdom took refuge like me in the mountains to become the last heirs of a dishonored myth.

PROVERBS 8

Does not wisdom call,
and does not understanding raise her voice?

²On the heights, beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;

³beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries out:

⁴"To you, O people, I call,
and my cry is to all that live.

⁵O simple ones, learn prudence;
acquire intelligence, you who lack it.

⁶Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right;

⁷for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

⁸All the words of my mouth are righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.

⁹They are all straight to one who understands
and right to those who find knowledge.

¹⁰Take my instruction instead of silver,
and knowledge rather than choice gold;

¹¹for wisdom is better than jewels,

and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.

¹²I, wisdom, live with prudence,
and I attain knowledge and discretion.

¹³The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the way of evil
and perverted speech I hate.

¹⁴I have good advice and sound wisdom;
I have insight, I have strength.

¹⁵By me kings reign,
and rulers decree what is just;

¹⁶by me rulers rule,
and nobles, all who govern rightly.

¹⁷I love those who love me,
and those who seek me diligently find me.

¹⁸Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and prosperity.

¹⁹My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.

²⁰I walk in the way of righteousness,
along the paths of justice,

²¹endowing with wealth those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.

²²The LORD created me at the beginning^l of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.

²³Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.

²⁵Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth—

²⁶when he had not yet made earth and fields,^[d]
or the world's first bits of soil.

²⁷When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

²⁸when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,

²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master worker;^[e]
and I was daily his^[f] delight,
rejoicing before him always,
³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race.
³² “And now, my children, listen to me:
happy are those who keep my ways.
³³ Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
³⁴ Happy is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
³⁵ For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD;
³⁶ but those who miss me injure themselves;
all who hate me love death.”