

Poetry on the Path

As far as I can tell, all human beings have poetry coming through them dozens of times each day – you know, funny turns in a conversation, something described just right in the moment, a juxtaposition of words that makes a little light go on or a bell ring but you don't know why it happened or what the bell or the light really means; one of the many voices in your head suddenly gets louder than the rest and says something just right that you really agree with (might not be great advice to act on, might be a poem though). Someone asks you a stupid question and you have a too clever by half answer but the rhythm of it all is cool. You thought you heard that slurred voice singer on the radio sing one set of words but it turns out on hearing the refrain a second time that he was singing something else entirely but you liked the words you heard her sing the first time better because they turned out to be your words. Something you're looking at morphs into something else and is about to speak to you – what does that flower or that specific shadow or her armpit or the old wooden spoon or your cat or a very small spider of a kind you have never seen before want to say to you today?

Why some of us decide to capture some of this by writing it down or word processing it or speaking it into a recorder or chanting it to a crowd or shaping it into what passes for a first paragraph in a chapter, I don't know, but it always feels like a relief or release to me whenever I put a few of these words on paper; some small thing taken from the secular world word flow and made sacred by accident, something released from captivity and made free, something captured and saved that was flowing by, something about to disappear given new life instead. I like to do a few poems every morning before and after meditating because channels seem to be more open then, but sometimes goofy or irresistible stuff comes through during the day and I put it on a handy envelope or napkin. I wake up with a dream still resonating in my head so I put it down on paper as fast as I can, awful or not – like this morning I woke up having shot someone with a rifle at a very great distance just for the curiosity of it, not even a thrill killing, just what would happen if . . . will a .22 really do damage at such a distance? Bad news, there's some kind of "drive by guy" inside me! At least I got a glimpse of my "dark side," won't go into complete and total denial over it immediately. And mysteries, positive revelations, connections to co-evolution and interbeing are made in dreamland as well.

One of my best poems came to me in a dream:

tree'd by a megafauna kangaroo
i did what any man would do
after three days i hopped in the pocket
never knowing if she could zip or lock it
we pounded across the plains together
i never worried about stormy weather

The Path I'm on just makes poeticizing, capturing some of the verbal flotsam and jetsam that goes through my mind, more fun. The Path of Participation gives me Permission. It's o.k. to be a nut. Or a squirrel. Or a blind pig. Or an acorn. To be a bit

batty. There are over 900 species of bats so maybe I'm the 932nd version of battiness, echolocating small "insects" on the wing. The "insects" are flying.

I'm flying. I send out sounds, sounds bounce back. . . . i find my prey

i eat

and pray for more letting these prose sentences drift

toward poetry and away from punctuation is o k

The insects are poems, get it? That prey/pray pun is a killer, right? Maybe I'm on to something? Maybe i'll be able to turn that unconscious "drive by guy" into a cute little bat nibbling moths.

i'm not much of a poet and i know it

but i'm all the poet i am ever going to be at any given moment

and the poet's work is done in the pulsation of an artery

says Wm Blake (Ch. 40)

sooooo. . . .

One can self-censor in advance, or maintain denial being constantly vigilant to not let a poem come through lest it embarrass you. Or you can write poems out and hide them, or just ignore the stream of poems that come through each day, pretend they don't occur, and even invent more ways to stop compassion from becoming joy, find more ways to stay stuck in the worrying self, the fidgeting self, the dithering self, the self-pitying self, the self-glorifying self, the pathetic, bathetic, blathering blithering shabble dabble yadda yadda ego-driven narcissistic self and yet

every single one of those yaddas shabbles blathers rattles

is a possible poem to throw into the rattle bag

quite possibly a funny and liberating one too

A few of the many, many, tricks of just letting yourself be a poet on the Path:

Let a lot of the shabble dabble dribble on to the page each day, proliferociously (see Ch. 37), come back to it later, usually months or years later is best.

Don't compare. Identify. You could spend a few years just identifying with a different species of bat each day. Many of them have such big beautiful ears. Move on to shrews, or whales, or republican senators, or spiders, or birds, or cartoonists, or monsters and angels of your imagination, or flowers, or friends, or Just be sure to identify (Blake's double vision). Don't compare.

Associate freely. Mix it up with others, especially other people who have figured out that we are all poets and have moments when they drop comparison completely.

Free associate. Let klang associations klang. Cling to them.

Leave it to Beulah the Mother of Dreams and write down dreams sloppily while you're still half asleep and the angel is revealed in the details.

Homologous mandala. You are a tiny speck-connect to the Universe, a teeny piece of the Vast, containing all there is in miniature. So just manifest this universal with every breath, every pulsation of the artery, as musicking, dancing, poetizing, painting, flowing.

"Now I a fourfold vision see
And a fourfold vision is given to me
Tis fourfold in my supreme delight
And threefold in soft Beulah's night
And twofold always; may God us keep
From single vision and Newton's sleep"

Use the oodles of Buddhist "wake up" slogans, "wake up" calls, "wake up" sounds, "wake up" practices to put you in the poetry head.
Do live music for dancers, indoors and outdoors.
Keep sounding.
Stay on the Path.

Pat Campbell:

Poetic stream-of-consciousness. We all have rhythmic language, and rhymes are floating free in the air, ready to grab and use. Why is it that children have all of the fun, learning rhyming words in kindergarten and first grade, rhyming still in their second and third grade language arts classes? Poetry takes a break or seems to disappear in the middle grades, and by secondary school it is elevated to the level of Chaucer, Dickenson, Field and Frost, Shakespeare, Tennyson, Whitman and Wordsworth. This is rich territory, and right for the age. Yet high school poetry units are not what they could be, as class time is too often spent in discussion of literary techniques and symbolic meanings, where nary a word may be read aloud for the meter and music it holds. After all, poetry is meant to be heard, isn't it? Some poetic forms, like rap, are off-limits in many classes and schools—at least, as performance of rhymed verse complete with accents, dynamics, textures, turns, and twists. As a contemporary artistic-expressive form that appeals to the young, it deserves mention and even front-line inclusion in schools; teachers just need to use their discretion as to what fits and what does not. Music teachers can lead in bringing the aural-oral form of poetry to life, alone and joined with teachers of other subjects, teaming together to encourage poetry to be chanted, sung, played—performed.

* Why not assign children poetry-writing and poetry-reading on a regular basis? Once any rhythm is established in a class poetry can be plugged into it. Even a few rhymed words or a couplet will do. Children can be helped further by their introduction to varied rhyme schemes, and to limericks and sonnets. Let them try unrhymed patterns like haiku, keeping imagery in mind.