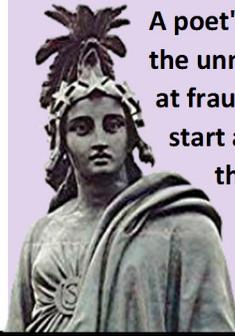


Freedom's View

A Commentary on Government from Atop the Capitol

Vol. 1 "All the other alternative facts you need to know" No. 19



A poet's work is to name
the unnameable, to point
at frauds, to take sides,
start arguments, shape
the world, and stop
it going to sleep.

~ Salman Rushdie
Page 1

IT'S NATIONAL POETRY MONTH: SOME RHYMES FOR THESE TIMES

Unimpressed by the poem read at Obama's second inauguration, *The Washington Post's* Alexandra Petri, in her January 22, 2013 column titled "Is Poetry Dead?" wrote:

"You can tell that a medium is still vital by posing the question: Can it change anything?" After saying poetry does not, she continued. "I think the medium might not be loud enough any longer. . . . All the prestige of poetry dates back to when it was the way you got the most vital news there is - your people's stories. . . . Poetry has gone from being something that you did in order to Write Your Name Large Across the Sky and sound your barbaric yawp and generally Shake Things Up to a very carefully gated medium that requires years of study and apprenticeship in order to produce meticulous, perfect, golden lines that up to ten people will ever voluntarily read. . . . Or is this too harsh? Something similar could be said of journalism, after all. . . . You do not get the news from poems, as William Carlos Williams said. Full stop. You barely get the news from the news."

Well. Harrumph! In celebration of National Poetry Month, herewith is some "barbaric yawp" aka poetry - mine and that of others - that *will* change things. At least *it will change your mood* . . . one way or another.

~ Armed Freedom

Shakin' It Up With Barbaric Yawp

Armed Freedom
February 1, 2013

I think that I shall never see
A column so daft as A. Petri's.
She says, in just the first line read,
That poetry's most surely dead.
The Iliad did spread news through
Homer,
But "obsolete"? A huge misnomer!
Where, she asks, will we get our
news?
Stories that matter come from the
Muse!
Making home within the human
heart,
She reminds us of this essential part
Of what it means to human be.
And so she prompts our poetry.
Poets' names should cross the sky?
That's not the point . . . their point is
why,
Who, what, and when:
Like reporters telling stories with
the pen
Or Linotype, or Internet
Just so their news by eyes are met.
Utilitarian the poem's not,
Giving wings, instead, to heart's
best thought.
Even when these couplets fail to
rhyme,
Poetry will be just . . . ducky.
Journalism: Not so lucky?

In this time of considerable national distemper, when the proper functioning of *all three* branches of our federal government totter toward dysfunctionality, you may be tempted to lose heart. If so, read this poem of Robert Frost and see if anything changes inside you.

Riders

Robert Frost

The surest thing there is is we are
riders,
And though none too successful at it,
guiders,
Through everything presented, land
and tide
And now the very air, of what we
ride.

What is this talked-of mystery of
birth
But being mounted bareback on the
earth?
We can just see the infant up
astride,
His small fist buried in the bushy
hide.

There is our wildest mount - a
headless horse.
But though it runs unbridled off its
course,
And all our blandishments would
seem defied,
We have ideas yet that we haven't
tried.

"To err is human. To blame someone else is politics."

~ Hubert H. Humphrey

Hanging Out My Blame Shingle . . .

(Don't Blame Me: I'm Just Following the Crowd)

Armed Freedom

When you feel that first odd tingle
You might wonder: should I mingle
With folks who scratch, and squirm and moan?
And, can I catch it over the phone?

No need to daily change your sox,
Or bolt your door and change the locks.
But if ever you've had the chickenpox,
You might expect a few hard knocks.

Between stanza one and stanza two,
The rhyme scheme doesn't match, it's true,
But we're talking about not feeling well!
So, all you pedants, just go to hell!

We're talking here about the *shingles*, and
You'll find it lots at Senior Mingles,
Though sometimes, OMG and yikes,
It hits the young . . . poor little tykes.

Great stress might hasten it to foster,
Adding your name onto its roster.
We're not talking here of the usual bumps,
But gawdawful things, like all those Trumps.

You surely know the ones I mean,
Jared, First Daughter of the Queen,
And then, of course, there is The Donald:
Him who all those women fondled.

I do not wish to be too partisan,
But at lying he's such a gifted artisan.
So, could it be that *herpes zoster*
Is triggered by that snollygoster?¹

¹ Snollygoster, (*noun*): "a shrewd & unprincipled person, especially an unprincipled politician" – *Merriam-Webster New Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th edition, 2003. Thanks to Dana Milbank for pointing this out in his *Washington Post* column of April 4, 2017, "Trump says he has the 'best words.' Merriam-Webster disagrees."

With good reason, Syria is drawing the attention of our President. However, should there be a debate about whether and how to use armed force, look for the hawks' double-speaking spin machine to go into hyperdrive. For their kind, war is always necessary.

Necessary Evils

Armed Freedom

What is the half-life of plutonium,
The time in which its glow is cut in two?
For twenty-four thousand years half persists
To power turbines, or for making war instead.
"A necessary evil," it is said.

What is the half-life of evil?
Did it smirk at our simian descent from Eden's Tree;
Or is it only the cost of doing human business?
Is that the loathsome Beast that's in the head?
"A necessary evil," it is said.

What is the half-life of an adjective?
Longer than plutonium, more persistent than evil
Are the meanings adjectives impart
When, with nouns, they conjugate themselves in bed.
"A necessary evil," it is said.

Thus war breaks loose its shackles,
Its evil not recalled; its necessity assumed.
"In order to save the village, it was
Necessary to destroy it, to leave it dead."
"A necessary evil," it was said.

What is the half-life of hope?
Necessary evils halve it, and halve it, and halve it
'Til there's no more left to have:
No longer any hopes by which we're led.
"A necessary evil," it is said.

The half-life of despair is very
Short.

The venting of a gas, a trigger's pull,
The severing of an artery turning all the world to red.
"A necessary evil," it is said.

WAITING FOR AN EASTER-LIKE REBIRTH? THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT

The poet Marianne Moore put it this way: "Poetry is the art of creating imaginary gardens with real toads."

If that is difficult to parse, then consider this from the poet Wallace Stevens: "The poet is the priest of the invisible." Combining the two: **the poet stands frog-like: knee-deep in the drek of life pointing to the verdant garden that is nourished by it . . . surrounding us . . . waiting.**

I take heart in poetry not being dead! As Maya Angelou observed: "Human beings love poetry. They don't even know it sometimes . . . whether they're the songs of Bono, or the songs of Justin Bieber . . . they're listening to poetry."

So, Alexandra, as John F. Kennedy observed, poetry *does* change things: "When power leads man toward arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the area of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses."

The frog atop this drek-filled dome/
Says on page 4 she'll end this tome/
Just two more good poetic bits/ Long,
then short, Bronx-cheer *ribbits!*

~ Armed Freedom



I Am Waiting

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

from "A Coney Island of the Mind" 1958

I am waiting for my case to come up
And I am waiting
for a rebirth of wonder
and I am waiting for someone
to really discover America
and wail
and I am waiting
for the discovery
of a new symbolic western frontier
and I am waiting
for the American Eagle
to really spread its wings
and straighten up and fly right
and I am waiting
for the Age of Anxiety
to drop dead
and I am waiting
for the war to be fought
which will make the world safe
for anarchy
and I am waiting
for the final withering away
of all governments
and I am perpetually awaiting
a rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for the Second Coming
and I am waiting
for a religious revival
to sweep thru the state of Arizona
and I am waiting
for the Grapes of Wrath to be stored
and I am waiting
for them to prove
that God is really American
and I am waiting
to see God on television
piped onto church altars
if only they can find
the right channel

to tune in on
and I am waiting
for the Last Supper to be served again
with a strange new appetizer
and I am perpetually awaiting
a rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for my number to be
called
and I am waiting
for the Salvation Army to take over
and I am waiting
for the meek to be blessed
and inherit the earth
without taxes
and I am waiting
for forests and animals
to reclaim the earth as theirs
and I am waiting
for a way to be devised
to destroy all nationalisms
without killing anybody
and I am waiting
for linnets and planets to fall like rain
and I am waiting for lovers and
weepers
to lie down together again
in a new rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for the Great Divide to
be crossed
and I am anxiously waiting
for the secret of eternal life to be
discovered
by an obscure general practitioner
and I am waiting
for the storms of life
to be over
and I am waiting
to set sail for happiness
and I am waiting
and I am waiting
for a reconstructed Mayflower
to reach America

“For decades now, one of the poetry world's favorite activities has been bemoaning its lost audience, then bemoaning the bemoaning, then bemoaning that bemoaning, until finally everyone shrugs and applies for a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.”

~ David Orr on NPR April 7, 2011

FERLINGHETTI CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

with its picture story and tv rights
sold in advance to the natives
and I am waiting
for the lost music to sound again
in the Lost Continent
in a new rebirth of wonder

I am waiting for the day
that maketh all things clear
and I am awaiting retribution
for what America did
to Tom Sawyer
and I am waiting
for Alice in Wonderland
to retransmit to me
her total dream of innocence
and I am waiting
for Childe Roland to come
to the final darkest tower
and I am waiting
for Aphrodite

to grow live arms
at a final disarmament conference
in a new rebirth of wonder

I am waiting
to get some intimations
of immortality
by recollecting my early childhood
and I am waiting
for the green mornings to come
again
youth's dumb green fields come
back again
and I am waiting
for some strains of unpremeditated
art
to shake my typewriter
and I am waiting to write
the great indelible poem
and I am waiting
for the last long careless rapture

and I am perpetually waiting
for the fleeing lovers on the Grecian
Urn
to catch each other up at last
and embrace
and I am awaiting
perpetually and forever
a renaissance of wonder

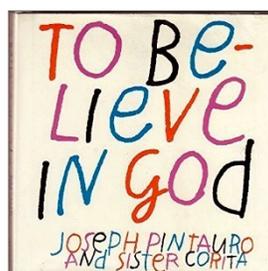
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(Above) Frog Prince Trump gets confirmation of former NSC member Stephen K. Bannon's continuing White House role as "advisor."

Our final poetic *ribbit!* is from the New York poet, Joseph Pintauro. Collaborating with Sister Mary Corita, in 1968 they published *To Believe in God*, still available on Amazon. Pintauro's poetry was often brief and always playful. Below is one of his best.

*“To believe in God is  
to have the great faith  
that somewhere  
Someone is not stupid.”*



Finally, from the late Leonard Cohen,  
not a ribbit but an **Anthem** we might  
make our own. Shalom, Rabbi Cohen.

The birds they sang  
At the break of day  
Start again  
I heard them say  
Don't dwell on what  
has passed away  
or what is yet to be.  
Ah the wars they fought will  
be fought again  
The holy dove  
She will be caught again  
bought and sold  
and bought again  
the dove is never free.

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.

We asked for signs  
the signs were sent  
the birth betrayed  
the marriage spent.  
Yeah the widowhood  
of every government --  
signs for all to see.

I can't run no more  
with that lawless crowd  
while the killers in high places  
say their prayers out loud.  
But they've summoned, they've  
summoned up  
A thundercloud  
and they're going to hear from me

....

Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in