

15:02:45 For Mindful Poetry Moments. And as many of you know, I'll state it again, in case we have in comers. This is a wonderful potent hour we spend together, during poetry month as well as other times of the year, where we feature a single poem, start with a meditation, offered by one of our fantastic collaborators, to settle us together.

15:02:53 And then we listen to another collaborator speak of a poem. We do writing and do some sharing.

15:03:11 And today we have Troy Bronsink from The Hive who many of you have met before and will share how do you find out more about The Hive and their fantastic programs.

15:03:25 We are thrilled to welcome back Manuel Iris to talk about James Wrihs poem the blessing.

15:03:34 We will share information with you about huh you get your hands on this gorgeous piece of writing.

15:04:03 And then at the end, after we do the poem sharing, we are going to get a glimpse into what the wonderful Mercantile Library looks like before the pandemic made this our room.

15:04:08 And then we will read the poem and we will be done.

15:04:35 One more thing, when it comes to the part where you're raising your hand to share a poem, you do not have to share if you don't want to. Write your name in the chat "I would like to read" and then you can also raise your hand in the reaction button, which is a raise the hand.

15:04:45 If you can't find a raise the hand you can do some other kind of icon. That helps Rowe unmute you.

15:05:10 Before I turn it to Troy. We do have Savy with us providing closed captions. If you're interested in having your experienced fortified through closed caption, go to the bottom and click on "live transcript" and that will be a real-time transcription of what we are hearing.

15:05:21 Without any further ado, I turn it over to Troy.

15:05:43 >> Thanks, Stary. Good to see y'all. So, the poem we will spend time with today, I can't wait to see what Manuel does with it, what we do with it. Where it strike me is the vulnerable work of leaping into the world and learning from it and living through it.

15:05:50 And there's a couple of ways I would like to invite us to consider that as a practice.

15:06:22 Sometimes we do mindfulness work as a sense over coming to my own life. John Dony who has a great vision of the fact that we live in a lighthouse but spend our life pulled up to one window, so what is it like to pull back and listen to life from all perspectives? What keeps us from that a dell of allusion or delusion, stories we tell about ourselves. In my experience, that helps with you and me too.

15:06:28 It happens with me and the tree in my backyard, with me and my dog.

15:06:45 There are delusions I have about you, projections we often call them. And they are interrupting forces for me to enter into, the energetic quality of your life or the other things around us and what they are teaching us.

15:07:12 So maybe you've used a mindfulness practice, Howard Thurman

describes as the nerve center of consent. And I would ask you in the few minutes we have together and in the practice ahead, to consider how do I soften not just what is arising in me, but to what is arising in another?

15:07:32 A trick I use, I don't know if I shared it in this group before, but my dog Hugo is a lot of fun for my kids. And at first in my mind was a nuisance.

15:07:54 And I thought, what else would Thomas Merton be reincarnated as, other than a family dog. And that little bit of trick in allowing myself to get into Hugo's experience, to give it the same validity as my own experience has a softening powerful quality.

15:08:27 Mister Recar says when I was the sky and the moon and rivers, when I was ever hoof, foot, wing, no one asked me what is your purpose. Because there's nothing I could not love. So, the power of allowing ourselves to drop into the big "it" and the experiences of others, to get into the soil of the world around us, as much as the soil of our life.

15:08:31 So I want to invite us into a practice of that for a moment here.

15:09:00 First, just for goodness sakes, enjoy this body of yours. Just, notice that you showed up to do this in a body. This isn't a bunch of brains or ideas. So look at your body, your hands, your jeans. I've been walking for a bit and I might smell differently than I would have if I would have prepared to meet you in person.

15:09:10 Whatever your body is doing and take a big exhale.

15:09:24 And if it's helpful to close your eyes, do that for a minute. Or soften your gaze. Notice the experience you're having.

15:09:49 Letting yourself move past the stories and delusions, just to be present. Your life has given you so much.

15:10:01 Then I want you to consider another living thing. It might be easier for you to think about someone you care about, a human. Picture their face.

15:10:17 Maybe you want to move into more adventurous place, the irises in the yard that are about to wilt if we have another day like this.

15:10:27 Or maybe it's your cat or dog. It could be a weed in a vacant lot.

15:10:37 Give yourselves a moment to drop into one of those fellow beings.

15:10:55 Rather than jumping to projection and easy metaphors and symbolism, let it tell you its story.

15:11:08 Give it regard and preciousness.

15:11:28 Think of its body and what its body has been telling it.

15:12:34 Take a risk in letting it love you and maybe even living into some kind of "I love you too" whatever that might mean.

15:13:26 As we start to open up into the room, don't do it quite yet, but if your mind's eye or maybe with your body, you want to bow to that thing, to that "other". "Thing" seems too neutral a word. What is it like to see the, as they would say AshayAshay. And almost to tiptoe out.

15:13:35 Slowly open your eyes but without the need to do radical transitions.

15:13:50 As we dive into these words and practice together.

15:14:02 I'm going to pass it to Manuel now.

15:14:14 >> Thank you, Troy.

15:14:36 >> Now that we are silenced in the inside, we can receive the gift. I had a friend that taught me that poetry is a lot like praying.

15:14:50 That you have to give yourself space to receive, like writing a poem. You have to make silence, and then you receive the gift and leave testimony and the testimony is the poem itself.

15:14:55 Something like that happens when we read a poem.

15:15:02 This poem in particular, I want to read it first.

15:15:04 It's about receiving the gift.

15:15:18 And in this case, it's the realization that you had the gift all along. And the gift was there.

15:15:23 Just off the Ohio to Rochesterester Minnesota.

15:15:27 Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.

15:15:31 And the eyes of those two Indian ponies.

15:15:33 Darken with kindness.

15:15:39 They have come gladly out of the willows.

15:15:41 To welcome my friend and me.

15:15:48 We step over the barbed wire into the pasture.

15:15:52 Where they have been in grazing all the day alone.

15:16:04 They bow shyly as wet swans, they love each other.

15:16:07 There is no loneliness like theirs.

15:16:16 At home, once more, they begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.

15:16:20 I would like to hold the slender one in my arms.

15:16:23 For she has walked over to me.

15:16:29 And nuzzled my left-hand.

15:16:30 She is black and white.

15:16:35 And her mane falls wild on her forehead.

15:16:45 And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear.

15:16:52 That is dell Kate as the skin over the girls wrist.

15:16:59 Suddenly I realize that if I stepped out of my body I would break into blossom.

15:17:19 Those two last ones are the eh epiphany. This is called A Blessing. In the religious tone of the poem, it's evidence.

15:17:45 The word religion itself coming from the Latin Religare, reconnect, relink. And that's what is happening in this poem. In this poem we have these 4 individuals.

15:17:55 Two ponies, speaker of the poem and friend. An they are happy to see each other.

15:18:04 But it's a happiness that goes beyond happiness. It's joy.

15:18:09 They are enjoying.

15:18:29 Their souls are connecting with that experience in that moment. And they are -- and this is important. They are not asking for the meaning of what is happening they are just enjoying what is happening because it's happening in the moment.

15:18:42 And the realization, the mindfulness, awareness of what that encounter entails of the joy is the blessing itself.

15:18:59 Even though we see the blessing. Even though the poem is called the blessing, there is no one given blessing to anyone. There is no priest, no saint, no opening in the sky or in the clouds. No voice of God talking from somewhere.

15:19:11 There is nobody having an out of the body mystical experience. All of this is happening inside the body, because they are completely aware of the beauty of the moment.

15:19:36 There is this moment in the poem where she says, I would like to hold the slender one in my arms, for she has walked over me. And nuzzle my left-hand, she's black and white, her mane falls wild on her forehead.

15:19:39 I stops first on touch. She touched me.

15:20:03 And then we go to describe how she looks, how she is. That is contemplation. Contemplation as a spiritual practice. Contemplate the moment does not mean to be away from one we contemplate. It's the opposite.

15:20:07 It's a way to go into whatever we are contemplating.

15:20:37 It's not to be detached from reality. But to be fully immersed in it, realizing that you are part of it. And this beautiful communion between the natural and human, this has to do with nature. With the purity of love and emotions.

15:20:47 There's no way they are going to share words. But language is not necessary.

15:20:55 It is necessary for the poet to communicate with us, but not necessary for the protagonist to communicate among them.

15:21:03 And the blessing is the not need for language.

15:21:12 Is the full awareness, and, the speaker is aware of the beauty of the moment.

15:21:27 And the ponies are aware of the beauty of the moment and everybody is aware that the others are also and that is the blessing.

15:21:35 The blessing in this moment is the realization of what they already have.

15:21:38 This is not about getting a blessing when there was not.

15:21:50 It's about unveiling the blessing below what is common.

15:22:00 These are not two extraordinary unicorns. This is not a friend that came back from the death. This is the friend he already have.

15:22:11 And this encounter is beautiful but not super natural.

15:22:32 It's not full of marvels. It's based on love, beauty and serenity. And the blessing is to realize that the blessing has been there all along. T awareness.

15:22:47 Because it comes from the inside, the beautiful imagine at the end make us sure that the blessing is not coming from the outside. He does not say "and I realize there were falling flowers from the sky."

15:23:08 No. He says, "suddenly I realize" and then the verb. The blessing is a realization, not a gift. It's a realization. Suddenly I realized that if I stepped out of my body, I would break into

blossom.

15:23:15 Because he is already bloomed in the inside.

15:23:25 And everybody is already flowering in the inside. And the realization of that is the blessing.

15:23:32 Blessing in this case, is the awareness of the beauty that is already happening.

15:23:39 This is not -- this poem is not to call for blessings.

15:23:54 This poem is to call for the awareness and the realization that we have been blessed already.

15:24:14 And if we pay attention, those two ponies, also exist in our own life. Maybe that friend that we see, in the hallway, is maybe those flowers that we have in our nonfancy garden.

15:24:16 Maybe the smile of that person.

15:24:19 Those blessings are there.

15:24:23 In the most nonholy places.

15:24:36 I love how this poem that starts, that has this title called "A Blessing" starts with "just off the Ohio to Rochesterester Minnesota."

15:25:02 It has to be the most common place. When Thomas had his second mystical experience, was in the least holy of places. It was in the business district of Louisville Kentucky. That place does not invite prayer, guys. But that was the place. And I think that something like this is happening in this poem.

15:25:21 There is this beautiful realization, that also makes, if you think about the sound of the poem, based on slowness. This is not a fast poem.

15:25:31 It invites us to slow down, and look at the horses and describe them in detail. Contemplation. Is a form of awareness.

15:25:45 And awareness is a form of blessing. I think this poem is an invitation to assume that attitude.

15:25:47 And to keep with ourselves and with our hearts.

15:26:03 The knowledge and certainty that we shouldn't look for the blessings outside, because they are not outside.

15:26:17 They are blocking from the inside out. That's all I'm going to say about the poem. Thank you.

15:26:20 >> Do you have an idea about a prompt for us?

15:26:25 >> Yes, I do. I have a prompt.

15:26:49 >> Precisely because I think this poem is talking about something that is hidden in plain sight, we are going to start with that. I'm going to give you the beginning and end of the poem and you tell me what is your blessing.

15:26:56 The first verse is, it was hidden in plain sight.

15:27:05 And you're going to make, you're going to describe one thing in detail, or you're going to make a list of thing if you want to make a list.

15:27:20 And your last verse, after you do all of that, will be "it was a blessing".

15:27:35 So it will be something like, it was hidden on plain sight, on the flower pot, and its cracks, etc., etc., etc., it was a blessing.

15:27:56 For this author the blessing was in this encounter with the horses. But I don't know yours. I would have never written about encounters with horses, I don't feel comfortable around horses. But where is yours.

15:28:08 >> All right, friends, that was gorgeous. Both Troy and Manuel. It's like we are at 28 minutes, that was an extraordinary amount of beauty. Thank you.

15:28:10 >> Did I take that long?

15:28:14 >> No, all together, all that beauty. All that beauty.

15:28:15 >> Thank you.

15:37:32 >> Not even half an hour. So I'm going to set the timer for ten minutes and we will -- I'll chime when we are getting close and we will come back and hear what we make out of our prompt.

15:39:23 We have another of couple of minutes before we return to the room together. I'll chime when we get there.

15:39:32 Bring yourself back.

15:39:45 I love the image of the bow and backing away. Perhaps that's what you'll be doing as you back away from your poem.

15:39:56 Manuel, we'll turn it back over to you. And just a reminder, to everyone, two steps, if possible.

15:40:09 Write your name in the chat or your "I would like to read" and if you can, go to the reactions and raise your hand also, so Rowe can unmute you.

15:40:24 If only one of those things works, then we will make it work.

15:40:32 Looks like we have Hadley. Oh, wow. There's one in the chat, too.

15:41:07 >> Now we want to hear from you guys. Um, we may not have time to have everybody read out loud. So please have your name in the chat saying "I would like to read" and we can start with you in that order. Lilla.

15:41:16 >> I don't think mine is that good but this is what I came up with. Should I read it?

15:41:19 >> Yes.

15:41:39 >> A meat grinder is just a pair of jaws you borrow when you're too old to chew things. It waited for the moment to shine, it resolved a domestic dispute between my love of duck hearts and my father's condition.

15:41:45 A minded person would have eliminated it a long, long time before.

15:42:05 Sometimes clutter is a blessing. I wonder treasure might help me arrange my perfect ending. Old age is still an option, not a duty.

15:42:11 >> Thank you. A clutter is a blessing.

15:42:16 How many blessing we ever see?

15:42:20 Almost every day. Thank you.

15:42:23 Hadley, you want to read us your poem?

15:42:26 >> Yeah.

15:42:29 Thank you.

15:43:13 As the ocean, at the ocean as the ocean night, at the ocean's knife edge, wing halve buried in the sand, one flapping, the other

suction to its wet, the butterfly, I heard the cry of its wings, I scooped up sand and butterfly. Sifted the sand between my fingers, until all was a delicate caress. Drying.

15:43:40 I open -- it's a hard time today. During my hands tucked like a prayer, I open my hands to the sky in a blessing winged into the sun.

15:43:49 >> So the blessing came out of you to the sky.

15:44:02 That's an unusual description. And it's a poetic find.

15:44:16 >> It was hidden in plain sight, all sharing their homes with me. This year in the house, this year of walking hundreds of miles through their homes.

15:44:25 They have grown accustomed to my presence, not tame, but something else, something new and soon gone.

15:44:33 Now the children's voices return, the lights dim as old obligation takes hold once again.

15:44:42 It was many things at once. It was a blessing.

15:45:14 >> Thank you, Wade. Thank you. It is a lot being aware. It happens also with writing, it's the same. We are looking for something to write about but it's a prompt.

15:45:25 >> I love that it was the minded person, that's going to stick with me.

15:46:19 It was hidden in plain sight, as I rose down from slumber. It was balled up, striped leggings, in my uncurling it and soaking it in the bop tis mall water. It was getting snuck in the back door at the last minute. It was the new adult acne peppering my cheeks, blemishes of youth still here and a new ritual or caressing the skin. It was "I hate math" screamed for all of Virginia to hear and being able to wait for a better moment. It was a small voice, "mom."

15:46:34 When I still have 60 unread e-mails and 3 other things, I can't remember what they are to do, asking for snuggles.

15:46:41 It was garden beds, I don't know much about, tangles and getting messier and messier.

15:46:49 It was a touch cushion with a black marker smiley face greeting me.

15:47:19 It was a series of stickers shouting "teach tolerance" a reminder while breathing by one's self in the bathroom. It was a blessing.

15:48:21 >> Also, the sense of humor is rare in poetry. I muted myself because I was laughing too much. Thank you. The sticker parts is funny. That is also important, when we think about joy and blessings, laughing is part of it. Sometimes we think about it in this serious way, everything has to be in the Buddha like, and finding humor is a connection.

15:48:26 Thank you for the poem.

15:48:44 >> You, you hear right now. I can't believe you're here now. Not many the church. Not when I close my eyes, but even now. Am I good enough for you? Holy enough for you?

15:49:00 I want to be that holy woman you call me to become. Can you wait until I have the head scarf on my head an live to serve people and have children and am pure and elegant and stop drinking all

together and give myself to you?

15:49:31 Can you see me and love me then? No. You love me now. You love my tummy and puffy hay fever eye. You love me. You love me. You love us. You love each one. You are hidden in plain sight that the realization of you is so real. Can we really be friends? Can I really be your father?

15:49:43 In the call light of day, I choose to believe. May my life look like this choice. It is a blessing.

15:49:56 >> Thank you, Lola. Thank you. That's a beautiful piece. Beautiful piece.

15:50:06 I think I'm reading the chat, and you guys are fun.

15:50:23 I think for the sake of time, we are going to end here, this part of the sharing. We can keep sharing through e-mail and etc.

15:50:47 But now there's this message that Amy has for all of us about the program in the city of Cincinnati. Before we go there, I have to say thank you, thank you to all of you, not only for your poems but for the silence before then and for being here.

15:50:54 Thank you so much.

15:51:03 Thank you everyone for that beautiful work. I agree. It is um, san the, making.

15:51:14 It's not entirely, um -- excuse me.

15:51:41 >> Sorry. Um, library is usually not this noisy. I was upstairs on the 12th story and when we started writing, I came down to the main reading room to show you the library where we would have been a little over a year ago, gathering. But, um, you know -- now we are gathering from all over the country and world.

15:51:49 But, okay, Eddie. It's really loud right here.

15:51:58 I'm the programs and marketing manager at the Mercantile Library.

15:52:18 It inaugurated its first Poet Laureate. She held the post for two years and library hosted her induction, and um, we have been the de facto home for the poet laureate of sense Annaty since then.

15:52:32 And in 2018 Emanuel Eres became our second poet laureate. Thanks to the pandemic, he has had an extra year plus or being our poet laureate.

15:53:10 And in the last year or so we have been in conversation and came to a conclusion, the Mercantile Library is the official home. The city is partnering is us but we are taking over sort of managing it, the new poet laureate, once chosen, will be the physical and likely virtual home for programming and all sorts of work that the new poet laureate is going to do.

15:53:15 We are going to be announcing a call for submissions in the next few days.

15:53:18 It's going to be extraordinary.

15:53:25 Even if you're not in the city, I welcome you to follow along the process.

15:53:42 We have a ten person selection committee. Manuel is on it. He has been an extraordinary artist in bringing the community together and exposing us to his beautiful words, including, other peoples, words.

15:53:47 He's held open poetry nights.

15:53:59 So you are the first ones to hear. We haven't made it public yet. Sense we had this opportunity I wanted to share it with you first.

15:54:03 Manuel, is there anything I'm missing?

15:54:46 >> Yes, I mean, nothing that you're missing, just something I would like to add. The season poet laureate position has been a community building position. It's not about reading your own poems all the time. It's about helping the city to bring its many communities together. This is a community building position. This is um, this is a matter of love, not only for words and poetry.

15:55:03 But for what poetry and words do, bringing people together. SPSHLGly, I think, um, given the political times we are still living in the country.

15:55:28 And is social turmoil we continue to say. I believe the poet laureate of the city of Cincinnati has the responsibility of being some or the of agent of healing and change.

15:55:41 That's what we are looking forward to keep doing. All of the um, now poet laureates, like myself, and the next poet laureate.

15:55:58 But we are very happy that now is the library and not the office in government. If the Mercantile Library has the poet laureate program, it means it's not going to disappear, depending on who is in power.

15:56:04 This makes the program solid for the future.

15:56:06 And that makes me happy.

15:56:15 >> It's true and I should mention, we are a membership library and we have been at the same address since 1840.

15:56:21 This building I'm sitting in right now, we have been in since 1904.

15:56:53 So really, we are not going anywhere. We are one of the oldest institutions in the city. And um, we are um, just -- and everyone is welcome, I should say. Even if you're far away, we have tons of virtual events. You can e-mail me directly. Rowe, do you mind if I share my e-mail? I'll share it in the chat. If you would like to know more about the library or the poet laureate program, I'll put my e-mail address.

15:57:01 >> I know the library looks beautiful from this background, but I promise you it does not makes it justice.

15:57:03 That place is a gorgeous.

15:57:30 >> It's pretty special. And actually, when I was thinking about blessings hidden, I notice them every day here, the way the light plays through the windows and fixtures and happening upon different books on the shelf and all sorts of stuff. It's a great gift and a blessing to be here every day.

15:57:33 Pretty extraordinary. Thanks everybody.

15:57:51 >> Beautiful, beautiful. It's a gorgeous place. We are going to get all of us together one of these days. Even from Hungry. Just come and move here. That would be easier for all of us.

15:58:16 So, Manuel is going to read us out in a second. Also, Amy just shared with Rowe in an e-mail and she can share with all of us

the link to get Manuels book, how to connect with Troy at The Hive.  
So we will follow up with that.  
15:58:26 It will give you a way to send your poem that you write and perhaps didn't get time to read.  
15:58:34 Sorry. I'm looking at the chat.  
15:58:35 Send us your poem.  
15:58:55 And then we will again. The poems that I've heard this month have just blown me away. I think that's it.  
15:59:14 Next time we have Eddie and Sarah joining us, um, for our final mindful poetry month session and we talk about what happens after that.  
15:59:35 Thank you, thank you. Beautiful Troy. Beautiful. Manuel. But also, to the rest of you, my God, those were amazing poems that you shared. So we will have Manuel read us out.  
16:00:06 >> I love the English language, since it's not my first language, I notice things. How any verb can work in anyway. She said, "To read us out" like, in the song when he says, to the end of love, dance me to the en, is untranslatable. You cannot say that in other languages. But in English, it's so plastic.  
16:00:11 So, a blessing.