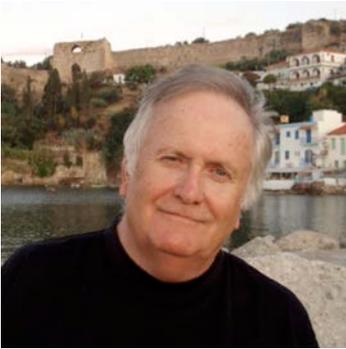


Fred Marchant – Five Poems

Feature



The Winter Squirrel

Backyard impassable for all except this one,
driven by need to leave what shelter it had,
the snow taller than our shoulders, the end

nowhere in sight, the hoped-for food buried,
an impossible hunger, the night far too long,
a life leaping into our dreams, leaving tracks.

Somnos

son of Night, brother of Death

You think I don't know
the torpor and loneliness

of the platform, my Park
Street station at night,

my sleepers on the benches,
the soot settling on them,

and the rails, the hallelujahs
of arrival, the sorrows each

departure can bring, do you
think I don't know who I

am or why the greater gods

have given me the deftness

of being to sleep with one
eye open, taught me how

to keep it trained on each
of my faithful, my beloveds,

to walk with them in the lucid
dream, and to listen to what

they say, or sometimes sing,
stretched out on the benches

as if they had forever, which
I am here to guarantee they do.

Trout

a dream in the William Stafford Archives

I am in the cellar where everything is kept, the spikey, handwritten drafts, and "put-togethers"--manila folders stapled into booklets, the photos of poets in flat, gray, archival boxes, and your letters climbing out of their files everywhere, when I find--I have been looking for it-- the first letter I wrote to you, decades ago, and your gracious note in return, a carbon copy that as I read it again makes me feel as if your hand is on my arm, and I hear you speak softly, though I know what I hear is as much or only a better part of myself:

*we could be like trout holding
steady in the onrushing stream,
and as this is where we have chosen
to live, we will have to open*

*our eyes and face what the words
bring us, be grateful for the stones
beneath and what little we can see
of the sky and forests above;*

*now that we know who we are,
and what we hope to do, there is
no reason anymore to hurry,
the poem says in order to survive*

*in this place we will need to learn
first how to breathe underwater*

Be My Be My

. . . can't read anymore can't follow the tendons of sentences that think they mean something the online headlines that curl like scorpion tails my eyesight that of a fly all globes angles prisms the o-so many selves I see shaving in the mirror, buster, you hear a bump at the window pane? could be the bird of ill omen but more likely the ticker, my moist valves deciding they have had enough . . . oh my love lay your sleeping head on the Leonard Cohen side of my chest, you can hear it really is on closing time but if we move the dial just a hair away from the static and the UFO abductions (which I do earnestly care about) . . . we'll find the oldies station, the one that says it airs only hits and more hits all the time . . . *for every kiss you give me, I'll give you three . . .*

Blacksod Bay

for John and Ursula Deane

the swift clouds have parted once again--
no, it's more a radiance opening
the lens old blue gods can peek through.

~

so clear now I see across the bay a strip
of sand, a low line of mountain,
white cottages, dark turf stacked, ready.

~

bog fuchsia bush dripping from the rain,
a flower that knows what beauty is--
& the sunlight never could help but fall for it

~

late in the day inevitably you hear sheep
turn the hillside into mourning.
how long, you on the other side, has it been . . .

~

today I watch a blue butterfly find its way--

such aimless but diligent searching,
the way these words come to mind, unbidden

at the Heinrich Boll Cottage, Achill Island, Co. Mayo

Fred Marchant's most recent collection of poetry, *Said Not Said*, was published by Graywolf Press in May 2017. Afaa Michael Weaver has written that this poetry takes us to the "interior of hope," and Mary Szybist has written that she loves the generosity in these poems, "a generosity that carries us through every heartbreak." *The Looking House* (Graywolf Press, 2009), was named by *Barnes and Noble Review* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* as one of the best books of poetry in 2009. He is also the author of *Tipping Point*, winner of the 1993 Washington Prize, that book was recently reissued in a 20th anniversary second edition. His earlier books include *Full Moon Boat* (Graywolf Press, 2000). and *House on Water, House in Air* (Dedalus Press, Dublin, Ireland, 2002). Fred Marchant is also the co-translator (with Nguyen Ba Chung) of *From a Corner of My Yard*, by Tran Dang Khoa, and *Con Dau Prison Songs* by Vo Que, both published in Hanoi. Editor of *Another World Instead: The Early Poems of William Stafford, 1937-1947* (Graywolf Press, 2008), Marchant is an emeritus professor of English at Suffolk University, and founding director of the Poetry Center at Suffolk. He is a longtime teaching affiliate of The William Joiner Institute for the Study of War and Social Consequences at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, and teaches poetry workshops across the country. He is the 2009 co-winner of the New England Poetry Club's May Sarton Award, given to poets whose work "is an inspiration to other writers."