

17. NEW YORK POETRY FORUM AWARD

HE ASKED: WHY WASTE YOUR TIME CREATING POEMS?

I write them down, I said, to delve, to wonder,
to make the noisy world be still awhile.
But create them? More likely they infect me,
colonize in me, take over. I can sense
their cells dividing to claim space
like squatters. It may take weeks to coax them
to fully surface, work them out of my system.
Still, I'm a volunteer host if I feel
I can furnish a nurturing place
for certain strains to flourish.

Some poems taunt me. Tentative and wary, they
scuttle off like scorpions, stingers raised.
I go after them with a torch and a bare hand,
no creator, not even a trapper,
just a wanter of them, a willingness to suffer
their strikes for the power they transmit. Hidden
in earthy corners, spring-loaded with chemistry,
they're potent instruments of thrust, animate
with ways to disturb old apathies.
Not meant to finalize breath or beat--
but maybe to make each pause
then quicken-- if only for a moment.