

# Wellspring: Poetry for the Journey

October 16, 2017

A weekly poetry resource

from St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Virginia



## *Luna Moth*

Pale green and pressed against the window screen,  
shot through with field, you watch nighttime's corners  
curl with four white eyes, your under-self unfurled  
to my one room of word—kettle, counter,

knife block. Having lived one of your life's  
six nights, you leave a limp silhouette where you  
left off—let me be the creature circling  
your sleep. I am the most benign unknown;

I do not touch. With what nights are left, plant  
your wing beat in my sleep, be the only  
hovering thing. If only you could teach me  
survival without sustenance, unworried  
love, how to find oneself at a window  
one morning and think nothing of what happens next.

Cecily Parks<sup>1</sup>

## ☞ Reflections

This has been one of my favorite poems since I first read Cecily Parks' book, *Field Folly Snow*. Her collection is exquisite—meditations on the natural world that create an intense interiority and read like prayers. I love what one critic says: "In Cecily Parks's landscape made strange by human consciousness, being lost is a requirement, though not a guarantee, of being found." And truly there is something transcendent about the way she observes geography, habitat, the smallness of things and thereby transfigures the world we all know.

"Luna Moth" is a direct address in sonnet form to this most extraordinary creature. (If you've never seen one up close, the second best thing is to Google it: it's otherworldly!) What's remarkable to me about the poet's address is that she comments only briefly on its appearance; her concern, her delight and, ultimately, her appeal are much more cerebral than observation. Indeed, the poem is a love poem wherein the moth becomes a kind of muse, a

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<sup>1</sup> "Luna Moth" by Cecily Parks from *Field Folly Snow*. University of Georgia Press. Used by permission.

vessel that transports her from observation to reflection—on consciousness, mortality, anxiety—to desire. In her beholding, the speaker recognizes what the moth cannot: that our fates are shared.

The poem touches on a few facts about the Luna moth: it lives for only a week, it does not have a mouth, and it does not eat (thus, its “survival without sustenance”). But what enchants me is the poet’s three-fold desire: to “be the creature circling,” that is, to be the witness; to be kept safely, with its “wing beat in [her] sleep”; and, above all, to be made more *like* the moth itself, taught those things the moth is imagined to have been born knowing: “survival without sustenance, unworried / love, how to find oneself at a window / one morning and think nothing of what happens next.” Of course, the moth cannot acknowledge the speaker’s meditation nor can it respond, and so the poem feels to me as familiar as a silent prayer I might pray myself: to be made less aware of time passing, to hold my life more gently, to waste nothing. I never tire of the wisdom nature has to offer.

And I never tire of poems like this one that, to quote Cecily Parks (from an interview with the Poetry Society of America), “operate on an energetic plane that is perhaps best described as parallel to that of prayer...imagin[ing] an interlocutor, even if he/she never responds to me.”

One could argue, though, that the appearance of the moth, the existence of it at all, might be response enough.

### ✧ About the poet

Cecily Parks is the author of the poetry collections *Field Folly Snow* (University of Georgia Press, 2008) and *O’Nights* (Alice James Books, 2015), and editor of *The Echoing Green: Poems of Fields, Meadows, and Grasses* (Everyman’s Library, 2016). She teaches at Texas State University.



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