

Wellspring: Poetry for the Journey

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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 Parks¹

Reflections

Cecily Parks' collection *Field Folly Snow* includes beautiful meditations on the natural world, its creatures and habitats, and creates an emotional landscape that one critic describes as one “made strange by human consciousness, [where] 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 think we know well.

“Luna Moth” is a direct address 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, its four eyes and greenness and underself; her concern or, more accurately, her delight is much more than mere observation. Indeed, the moth becomes a kind of muse, the thing that—when gazed upon long enough, when given this kind of strict attention—transports her. Suddenly, a noticed creature becomes as mysterious as consciousness itself and rather than this poem belonging only to moth or witness, it comes to belong to all of us. In her meditation, the

¹ “Luna Moth” by Cecily Parks from *Field Folly Snow*. University of Georgia Press. Used by permission.

speaker recognizes what the moth cannot: that all creatures' fates are shared, that we are more alike than not. And that one world is separated from another by but a thin veil, thin as a window screen.

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"). What enchants me more than fact is the poet's three-fold desire: to "be the creature circling," that is, to be the watcher, the witness; to be the one 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 prayer, my desire to be made less aware of time passing, to hold my life more gently, to waste nothing, to worry none. I suppose it is yet more of the wisdom nature has to offer if we pay attention. And I never tire of poems like this one that seem to grow more mysterious the longer I live with it, poems 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 that the appearance of the moth, the existence of it at all, might be response enough. Perhaps it is but one more reminder that the world—despite all its sharp edges, its catastrophe and chaos—is a winged wonder, circling and unfurling; drink deep, listen closely: wing-beats hover close by.

✧ 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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