

A Poem is Meant

A poem is meant to linger  
in the mind, haunt  
days after, cause  
you to cock your head like  
a wary sparrow,  
hearkening to an echo  
from yesterday.  
Even if it is good  
for a laugh, it is meant  
to tickle an old ache—  
not just that, but shine  
a light, narrow, yet bright,  
a light that bends around  
corners of your mind,  
bounces off forgotten  
experience and creates its  
own experience. It is  
earthy and transcendent.  
Listen now! Do you hear  
the rushing in your ears  
when the room is still?  
A poem is happening—it is  
crawling up your back,  
over the knot in your spine, feeling it,  
but moving, tracing an old  
scar, playing neck muscles like  
harp strings. Heart-pumped,  
it is bubbling through your  
veins, coursing toward toes  
and fingers, blossoming  
out of your palm: a poem is action.  
Do you see the grass reaching  
toward the sun, ninety-three million  
miles from earth? Do you smell  
the greenness? Taste the warmth?  
Do you feel the breathing earth  
shudder like a sleepy mammoth?  
Poems are moving everywhere,  
toward us and away, beckoning:  
listen, feel, smell.

Gail Radley

The earth is erupting  
in poems, strong and gentle,  
sweet and bitter, violent, life-  
giving, sorrowful, healing,  
peacemaking poems. A poem  
is meant. A poem is movement.  
A poem is you.