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A Student's Poetry: Earth Day Pledges

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Why are we here, the poet asks? To burrow lice-like into some giant wheel of cheese, surrounding ourselves with the fat of the world until death takes us? Or are we here to recognize what we have been given – air, water, light, nourishment, knowledge, friendship, art – and thus give praise back to our Creator. “Glory be to God for dappled things,” Hopkins sang, for the kaleidoscopic variety and freshness in all things,

For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings...

For if the world is charged with the grandeur of God, then we are charged with acknowledging that grandeur, since we are the only creatures consciously aware of that beauty and so of praising the Creator of Brother Sun and Sister Moon. For where else, Hopkins tells us as he witnesses the terrible effects of strip mining which leaves huge brow-like slags to scar the earth for generations after. How else can the earth cry out in its hurt? What other “eye, tongue, or heart else, where/ Else, but in dear and dogged man?” Man, so dear to his Creator, and yet so “selfbent” on himself “that he would strip “our rich round world bare,” without a care for those who come after. Earth with those monstrous slagheaps for eyebrows, not unlike that massive methane leak in California’s Aliso Canyon. Methane in the air we breathe, lead in the water we drink, waste everywhere. The poor, the poor everywhere, without work, their dignity stripped from them, “Udenizenized, beyond bound/ Of earth’s glory, earth’s ease,” he wrote late in his too-short life. The unemployed no longer a viable part of the commonwealth, and no one to share that care. This, he warned us, was to weigh those about us down with a hangdog dullness, a dullness which would morph to despair and then rage, turning those hangdogs to man wolves, whose packs would infest the age.

Paul Mariani is University Professor in the department of English at Boston College. His is the author of seven books of poetry and multiple biographies, including Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life (2008) and, most recently, The Whole Harmonium: The Life of Wallace Stevens (2016). He is also author of a memoir, Thirty Days: On Retreat with the Exercises of St. Ignatius (2002).

A STUDENT’S POETRY

Earth Day Pledges

Remember Earth Day?

Yeah me either but at one point we all pledged to take care of the earth around us, to do our darndest to pick up trash and plant more trees. Yet I went to the top of a mountain, imagine it won’t you? The rolling hills, trees, birds, and critters letting us so graciously enter their homes as we trample through to the top. We come to a point where you see the top, excited you climb the ridge and what do you find?

No mountains. Only rubbish.

A coal mine sits just behind that mountain, the beeps and explosions periodically interrupt your thoughts as you look around at no mountains, no the beasts that used to reside here have long since been conquered by humans.

Layer by layer.

Rock by rock they disassembled the mountains. Remember those earth day promises when they showed us all that stuff our parent’s screwed up? WE screwed up now. I sat on this mountain and looked at what was left of its brothers and sisters, a little mound there and a little rock here.

Nothing worth seeing.

Haikus:

I have a dream, one
Where my kids see the mountains
Majestic, beautiful

Hiking all day, all
Night. Top of mountain, no top
No nature, where did it-

Flying high in the
Skies. Humans should know beauty
Like a bird; freedom

Megan Trainor is a junior at Rockhurst University working towards a degree in English with minor in journalism. She hopes one day to travel and explore the world either alleviating some of the burdens others face or shedding light on them through her writing.