

Aperture

I float up the steps to a rooftop garden
Bees hula hoop around my head,
filling my ears with warm buzzing
as I wander to each cluster
tipping my water can
to drizzle circles on dusty soil.
I zoom in on my iris,
whose bud swells, pressed to peel open,
spill limbs and beard
for the breeze to flutter.
Trusting, unruffled, it blooms.

Insects probe the perianth for nectar,
giving as they enter, taking as they leave.
This flower could be rolled like grass
and burned from a lightening bolt
of the pagan god Perun, but not me.
I am covered with tattoos, protected
by circular thunder marks, gromoviti znaci,
like the ones carved into
the roof beams of my ancestors.

If I could find my babooshka's home
Would I find the same markings?
Her husband was to send for her.
When he did not, she carried
her catholic god and left Andrijevca.
I would ask her if the pagan symbols
were scored into her rafters
but of course she is dead.

I will go to Andrijevca. I tell myself,
though neither god is mine.
*The iris does not belong to you either, Nic Nic,
because nothing does. Not even you.*
Now might be a good time to come apart,
pry the lens open, push past taboos and mores
and explode in lemon zest,
That way, when it is time to die,
I can let my spotted sepals fall softly,
sink deep into the soil
and say it was enough.

TWENTY LITTLE POETRY PROJECTS

Jim Simmerman

1. Begin the poem with a metaphor.
2. Say something specific but utterly preposterous.
3. Use at least one image for each of the five senses, either in succession or scattered randomly throughout the poem.
4. Use one example of synesthesia (mixing the senses).
5. Use the proper name of a person and the proper name of a place.
6. Contradict something you said earlier in the poem.
7. Change direction or digress from the last thing you said.
8. Use a word (slang?) you've never seen in a poem.
9. Use an example of false cause-effect logic.
10. Use a piece of talk you've actually heard (preferably in dialect and/or which you don't understand).
11. Create a metaphor using the following construction: "The (adjective) (concrete noun) of (abstract noun) . . ."
12. Use an image in such a way as to reverse its usual associative qualities.
13. Make the persona or character in the poem do something he or she could not do in "real life."
14. Refer to yourself by nickname and in the third

person.

15. Write in the future tense, such that part of the poem seems to be a prediction.

16. Modify a noun with an unlikely adjective.

17. Make a declarative assertion that sounds convincing but that finally makes no sense.

18. Use a phrase from a language other than English.

19. Make a non-human object say or do something human (personification).

20. Close the poem with a vivid image that makes no statement, but that "echoes" an image from earlier in the poem.

Open the poem with the first project and close it with the last. Otherwise use the projects in whatever order you like, giving each project at least one line. Try to use all twenty projects. Feel free to repeat those you like. Fool around. Enjoy.