

* Commentary on work that appears in NDR (Dana Roeser)

Anti-poem

I am so happy to have my poem “Honeycrisp” appear in *Notre Dame Review*! I have a special love for the occasional poem, possibly because of its potential homeliness and flatness. To persist, anyway, with what my friend poet and editor John Gallaher calls my ‘stick to it and plow forward’ poem is its own kind of adventure. The interface between lived life and art is electric frisson. I am sometimes pushed to write the “I-did-this-I-did-that” (like Frank O’Hara) poem on Grind Daily, an online email writing accountability group, which I participate in about three or four months per year. Some days, it’s a matter of “saying what happened,” to paraphrase Robert Lowell. Which is not to say that I don’t fictionalize as needed. The anti-poetic, anti-beauty, anti-lyric aesthetic can tender the mundane world changed ever so slightly with faithfulness and attention. Plus, there is a talking horse!

Here is Robert Lowell’s “Epilogue,” which says it better than I ever could:

Epilogue

Those blessed structures, plot and rhyme—
why are they no help to me now
I want to make
something imagined, not recalled?
I hear the noise of my own voice:
*The painter’s vision is not a lens,
it trembles to caress the light.*
But sometimes everything I write
with the threadbare art of my eye
seems a snapshot,
lurid, rapid, garish, grouped,
heightened from life,
yet paralyzed by fact.
All’s misalliance.
Yet why not say what happened?
Pray for the grace of accuracy
Vermeer gave to the sun’s illumination
stealing like the tide across a map
to his girl solid with yearning.
We are poor passing facts,
warned by that to give
each figure in the photograph
his living name.